

Participatory Action Research

Research validation

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Principle of Participatory Action Research

A form of co-operative enquiry where knowledge is created through dialogue and the development of critical subjectivity.

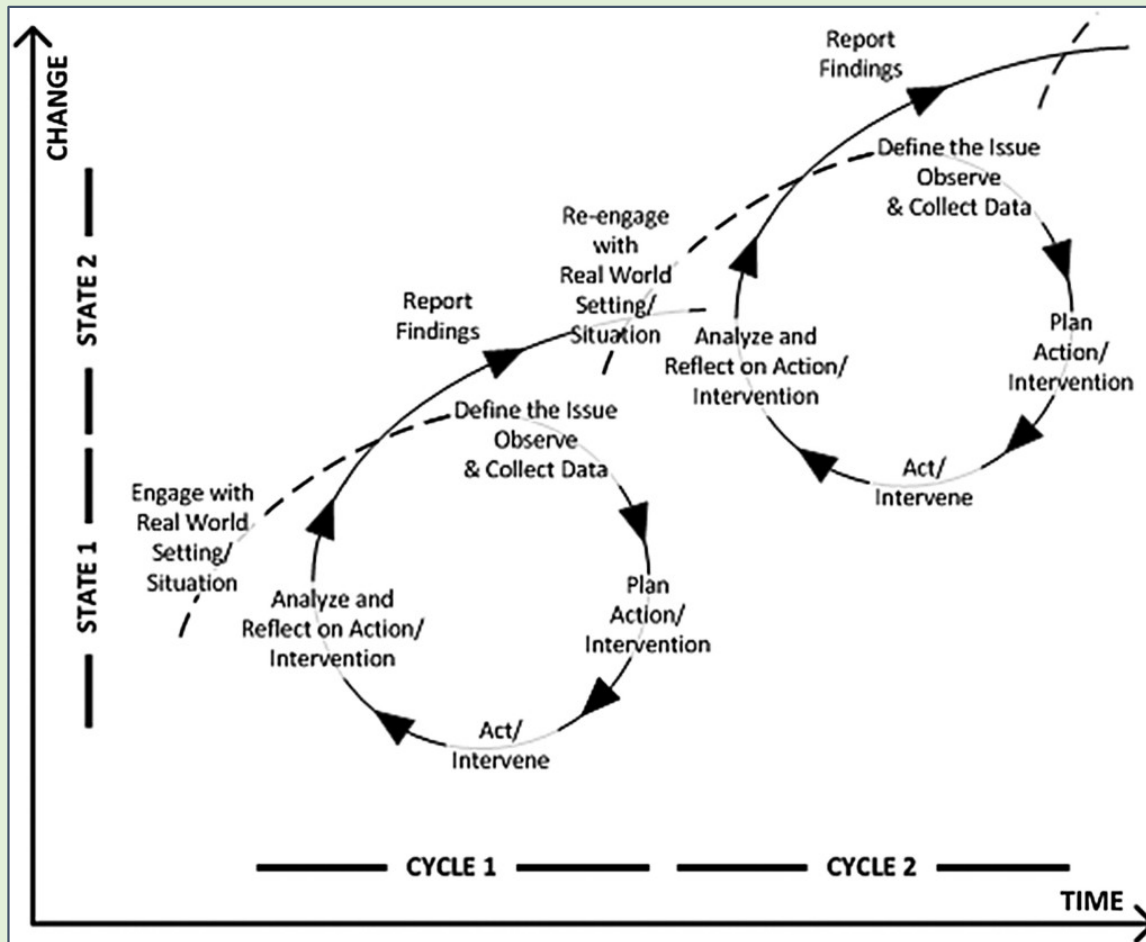
Subjectivity refers to the development of an awareness of self and others as entities with agency, identity, perspectives, feelings, beliefs and desires.

Change is Research

Action Research

“...a respect for people and for the knowledge and experience they bring to the research process, a belief in the ability of democratic processes to achieve positive social change, and a commitment to action”

Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, Maguire, 2003, p. 15.



Adapted by Tommelein, I. from www.brighthub.com; quoted by <http://p2sl.berkeley.edu/glossary/a/>; retrieved: 03.10.2020.

Quality Criteria for PAR research

- How to **ground** the validity?
- What are the **criteria** for validity **about**?
- What is needed for an **authentic research**?
- How can you manage your validation while your aim and research questions might **change due to the adaptations** during the process?
- What kind of **final proof** do you need to present?

Theory of knowledge for PAR

- People are active seekers of knowledge and negotiate meaning through dialogue
- All people are capable of producing useful and relevant knowledge
- There are multiple forms (e.g. cultural, spiritual) and representations (e.g. art, dance, music) of knowledge.
- Knowledge can best be validated by the people who create and use it.

*This in contrast that knowledge is created by **validated experts**, must be based on scientific facts and represented in text.*

And that there are universal standards for ensuring the truth and validity of knowledge.

Rules for engaged researchers -1

Never lose sight of the complementary and mutually interrelated goals of three things:

- **rational** analysis and planning
- working through psychological states in the **here and now**
- supporting **profound transformations** in social life

Rules for engaged researchers -2

- Exercise judgements in considering which aspect of the process should come to **the foreground** in a given context and moment of time.
- Remain open to the possibility that issues on the fringe might create **blind spots** and oblique angles of a hazardous nature. This might call for a change of perspective.

Quality criteria and validation

Validity criteria of research

Traditional

Researcher competence accepted if s/he has PhD or is guided by an experienced researcher.

Researcher must be objective and bracket their own assumptions.

Researcher determines ethical measures before contacting participants.

Researcher decides beforehand on design and controls implementation and evaluation.

Change in researcher, 'participants' or context is not a criterion for assessing validity.

PAR

Both academic and non- academic participants have to develop and demonstrate competence to facilitate collaboration as process proceeds.

Researcher is a full participant in the process, making assumptions, thoughts, etc. explicit in the learning set meetings.

Researcher and other participants negotiate ethical measures.

Action learning set collaboratively decides on design, implements and evaluates research.

Change in participants, context, policy or systems must be evidenced as a key criteria for validity.

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Suggested methods/tools for data generation and proof of validity

- Nominal Group Technique
- Fishbone analysis
- Digital storytelling / Photo voice
- Participatory video production
- Drawing
- Future creating workshop
- Games
- Collaborative way to decide on topic/issue to be addressed; you can show the board / murals
- To present the analysis of the root causes/ consequences of a problem
- To learn about people's lived experience, used as an advocacy tool and to demonstrate the impact
- To explore an issue, used as an advocacy tool and presentation of impact
- To explore an issue, determine change, used as an advocacy tool and showing the process
- To identify current state of affairs, imagine new possibilities and find ways to enact them
- To experience, generate and communicate other types of knowledge

Source: Wood, 2020, p113

[www.uaex.edu/support-* units/program-staff-development/docs/ NGTProcess%2012.pdf](http://www.uaex.edu/support-*%20units/program-staff-development/docs/NGTProcess%2012.pdf)
[www.project-management-skills.com/fishbone-diagram. html](http://www.project-management-skills.com/fishbone-diagram.html) [http://elab.athabascau.ca/ workshop/digital-storytelling](http://elab.athabascau.ca/workshop/digital-storytelling)
www.heaid.ac.za/site/assets/ files/ 1233/using-a-different-lens.pdf www.w.utu.fi/fi/yksikot/ ffr/kehittamispalvelut/ futuresfocus/Documents/ futures-workshops.pdf
www.w.vistacampus.gov/ what-asset-mapping

Validation by peers

- The research should be **made public**, in order to be open to criticism, to make sure that the explanations are as valid as possible.
- There needs to be a **process of social validation**. For instance by a validation **group of peers** answering four questions:
 1. how might the researcher improve the **comprehensibility** of the research?
 2. Does the research provide **sufficient evidence** to justify the **claims** in the explanation? How could this be strengthened?
 3. Does it show the understanding of the socio-culture basis of the **researchers and participants own values**, e.g. democratic design.
 4. Is the research **authentic**: does the researcher takes personal responsibility and really acts upon the values that he/she claims.

Conclusion

- The validity has to be grounded in claims of **positive transformation**, ideally at **personal, professional and systemic / policy levels**.
- Criteria for validity relate to the **design, authenticity and the ability to bring about benefit** for all the participants including the academic researcher. For each aspect **evidence** needs to be reported.
- Authenticity: this is manifest if the results are **recognisable** and **confirmed by the participants** in the research in terms of **mutual benefits**.
- Since the process is per definition unpredictable, part of the validation consists of showing how the project partners **adapt to change** and how they use **findings of reflections to improve** the next steps of the cycle.
- Proof needs to be presented that the **action has led to positive change**, in which it is clear that the **participants** have contributed to generate this proof.

PAR – playful and fun

Validation of

- Process and changes
- Results

Validation through

- Games - records
- Pre- and post surveys
- Feedback on prototyping
- Feedback on publications
- Story telling

Validation by

- peers
- by the researcher and research team
- by members of the community



Figure 38 Messages of the Tiny Protest. Photo by Ellen Fetzer.



Figure 34 Tiny Protest Office. Photo by Anna Szilágyi-Nagy.

Thank you for your attention



Figure 52 the construction of raised beds. Photo by Ellen Fetzer.

Definitions and References

Definitions related to PAR

Power – the ability to influence others and use resources to achieve goals.

Resources may include economic wealth, political authority, the ability to use force or threats of force, access to knowledge and skills, and the means to communicate.

Interests are the gains and losses experienced as a result of an existing situation or proposed action. These gains and losses affect the various forms of power and uses of resources.

Legitimacy is when the rights and responsibilities of a stakeholder are recognised by other parties through law or local customs,, and are exercised with resolve by the stakeholder involved.

Social relations involve existing ties of collaboration and conflict (including group memberships) that affect stakeholder in a certain situation and that they can use to influence the situation or the course of action.

Civil society - all non-market and non-state organisations (excluding the family) in which people organise themselves to pursue shared interests in the public domain. Examples range from community based organisations, village organisations to environmental groups, farmers' associations, faith-based organisations, labour unions, cooperatives, independent research institutes, etcetera.

References

Chevalier, J. M. & Daniel J. Buckles, 2019. Participatory Action Research. Theory and Methods for Engaged Inquiry, Routledge

Wood, L., 2020. Participatory Action Learning and Action Research, Theory, Practice and Process, Routledge

Internet sources:

- Action Research: <https://journals.sagepub.com/home/arj>
- Action Learning, Research and Practice: www.tandfonline.com/loi/calr20
- www.sas2.net/mca
- United Nations Sustainability Goals: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/>
- Video by Jack Whitehead on Supervision and Validity in Explanations of Educational Influence; <https://youtu.be/Cy5UlabWaEU>, consulted on 2021-12-29

Concepts and principles

Freire

Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other.

PAR, Theory and Methods, Chevalier and Buckles, 2020, page 406-407, on Freire, 1970, p 72.

The scope of PAR

Rational pragmatics of problem solving

Psycho-social focus on awareness building and transformative learning

Critical-emancipatory struggle for greater social justice

PAR is only meaningful if it meets and integrates the minimum threshold of genuine participation, tangible action and scientific research.

PAR, Theory and Methods, Chevalier and Buckles, 2020, page 3 and 31

Transformative, collaborative and democratic

Transformative: a way of thinking that is continually open to change, and constantly in search of new ideas, innovations and ways to bring about improvements

Collaborative: actively seeking out and liaising with others, particularly those who hold knowledge that we may not have access to, to create a synergy that will broaden our minds to the possibilities of change as we work toward attaining mutual goals.

Democratic: everybody should have an equal say in decision making about what, why, how, who, where and when of the collaborative learning process.

Forms of validity applicable to PAR

Process validity	Adherence to principles of PAR, evidence of cycles of action, reflection and learning, evidence of sound relationships between participants and facilitator
Dialogic validity	Documentation of action learning set formation and sessions; evidence of the voice of participants being acknowledged and included in all decisions, actions, etcetera
Catalytic validity	Evidence that the participants are aware of their potential to learn and effect change in their own lives; of their self-directedness; of incidents that show agency within and beyond the project.
Democratic validity	Evidence that research has been done in collaboration with all parties who have a stake in the problem under investigation; of outcomes relevant to local setting; that multiple perspectives are taken into account.
Outcome validity	The achievement of epistemological / emancipatory / practical outcomes through evidence of participant (including university researcher) learning and development; documentation of unexpected outcomes; and learning through “failing forward”.

Monitoring and evaluation

Communication	Are we happy with our communication? What must change?
Commitment	Are we sticking to the outcomes we committed to?
Competence	Do we have the skills we need to do this project? What development do we need?
Compromise	Do we listen to other points of view and reach agreement to the benefits of all?
Critical reflection	Are our attitudes, feelings and behaviour helping to develop the partnership with the universities and relationships with each other?
Collaboration	Do we collaborate, participate and have space to voice our opinion?
Coaching	How can we ensure participants receive the monitoring / capacity building required for authentic participation?
Reflection	How well are we adhering to the contract?
Relationships	How can our relationship be improved to advance equal power relations and democratic participation?
Recognition	How will we recognise the contributions to knowledge generation / authorship? How will findings be used?