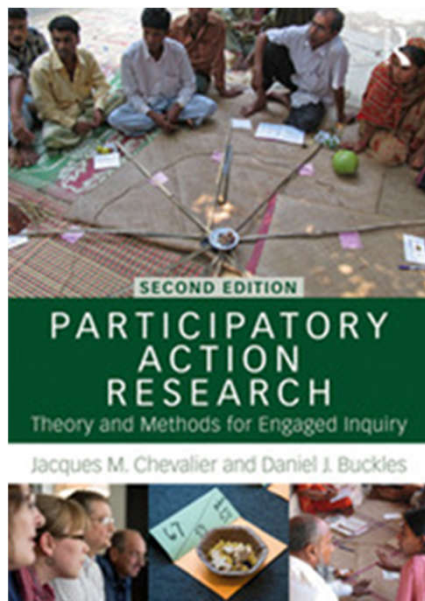


Participatory Learning and Action Research

Principles, approaches, tools and validation

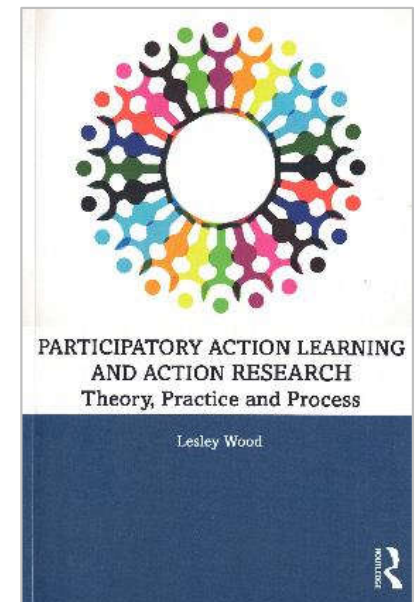


Chevalier and Buckles, 2020;

LE:NOTRE Institute
Linking landscape education, research and innovative practice

*Dr Roxana Triboi
Jeroen de Vries
LE:NOTRE Institute*

Wood, 2020



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.

Concepts and principles

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

Principle of Participatory Action Learning and 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.

Principles 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.

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.

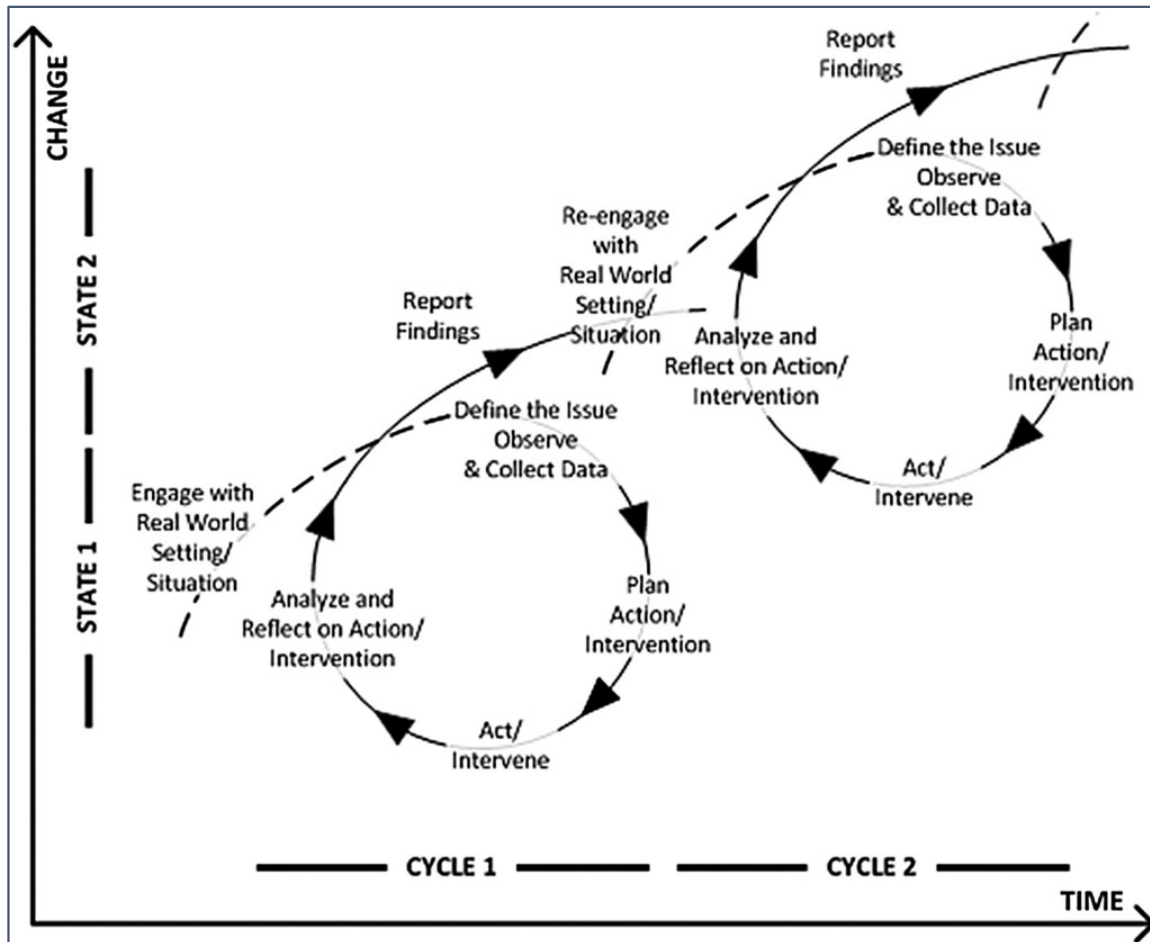
Democratic: everybody should have an equal say in decision making about what, why, how, who, where and when of the collaborative learning process.

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.

Rules for engaged researchers

- 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, and supporting profound transformations in social life.
- 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.

Values: education as a common good

A humanistic vision of education and development based on the principles of *respect for life and human dignity, equal rights and social justice, respect for cultural diversity and international solidarity and shared responsibility*, all of which are fundamental aspects of our common humanity.

Wood, 2020, p 29- referring to UNESCO (2015) Rethinking Education as a global common good.

Common good defined by Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030)

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Challenges

Collecting and organising ideas for possible change

Making a quadrant with two axes: Chance of Success and Level of Certainty.

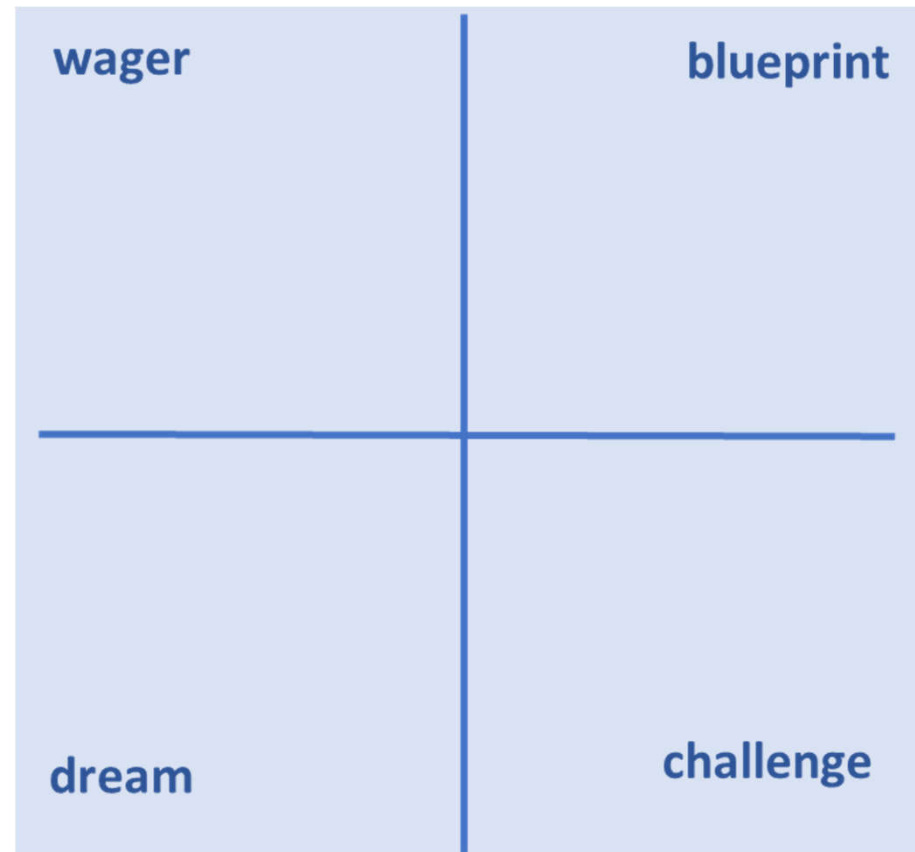
Ideas and proposals can be placed in the quadrant defining these as a:

Dream: an idea that may seem unclear and unpractical

Challenge: effort at change pursued with the knowledge of difficulties involved.

Wager: effort at change that looks promising but is risky, because of limited knowledge

Blueprint: effort at change likely to succeed for reasons that are well known.



PAR, Theory and Methods, Chevalier and Buckles, 2020, p 77

Steps for a student group to explore mapping challenges

1. Invite students to think of an event/situation that illustrated a meaningful challenge they had/have to face and writes this on a card (possible details on the back).
2. Students form groups around similar challenge cards. Those who do not know which group to join, explain what their cards are about, and can be 'adopted' by a group.
3. Each group prepares a skit to represent the key challenge that matters most to them.
4. Listening to the presentation, students note down what they find the most important after all: the one they first thought of or one they heard. After the presentations the facilitator invites all to join the group that addresses the challenge they consider most important.
5. Newly formed groups prepare a pitch on why their challenge should matter greatly to everyone and how they could respond to it.
6. After the presentation the facilitator describes recent findings from a refereed journal on the challenges faced by this type of stakeholders. Asks the group to compare and discuss.
7. All ends with a brief discussion on how the methods of action inquiry differ from the conventional approach and tools they used before.

PAR, Theory and Methods, Chevalier
and Buckles, 2020, p 119

Stakeholder mapping

Tips for stakeholder mapping

- a. Remember that **stakeholders** are not necessarily individuals
- b. Consider when to **combine** certain actors into a broader stakeholder category and when to **separate** broad categories into smaller groups. The first may mask significant differences within the group, the second may fragment stakeholders unnecessary and overlook the common ground.
- c. Decide whether to recognize the **community of all stakeholders** as a group with its own profile.
- d. Consider assigning some actors to **more than one stakeholder group** (e.g. leaders and public officials may have their own stakeholder profile and at the same time speak and act for a broader group).
- e. When identifying stakeholders, remember that some people may accept ancestors, future generations, spirits and **non-human species** as legitimate parties to the situation.
- f. Make sure to **flag** in the list of stakeholders those who are doing the analysis, including convening organisations and funders. This helps to avoid the artifice of 'disinterested' actors, when in reality they have an **agenda of their own**.

Ways to carry out stakeholder mapping

- Define stakeholders at the local, regional and national levels, separate private from public sector stakeholders
- Define levels of influence and level of how much these are affected
- Storytelling by representants of stakeholders making use of major events in the past or planned activities.
- Using improvisational theatre or personas

Critical stakeholder thinking

Keeping mind the following aspects of stakeholders:

- a. Stakeholders' **multiple interests and objectives** in a given situation
- b. Their **values and views** on existing problems and possible solutions
- c. Their recognised **rights and responsibilities** and their resolve to act on them
- d. The actual **resources, influence, authority and power** at their disposal
- e. The **networks they belong** to and **histories of interaction** between them, collaborative or conflictive
- f. The distribution of **social impacts of existing or proposed policies and projects** (winners and losers, potential trade-offs and conflicts, estimated risk-benefit balance)
- g. Feasible **coalitions of project sponsorship and ownership** aimed at efficient, equitable and sustainable strategies (based on compromises between public goals and divergent stakeholder interests).

Limits of Stakeholder Analysis

The appropriate **type or degree of participation** of different stakeholders may vary at **successive stages** of a project cycle. For each phase the questions are: “Who is the process for?”, “what is the action for?”.

Remember to give a **voice to the unheard**. There is a need to look further than the social order as we general know it. We need to challenge existing boundaries and develop strategies that include those who are generally excluded, have no voice and play no part in the ‘order of things’.

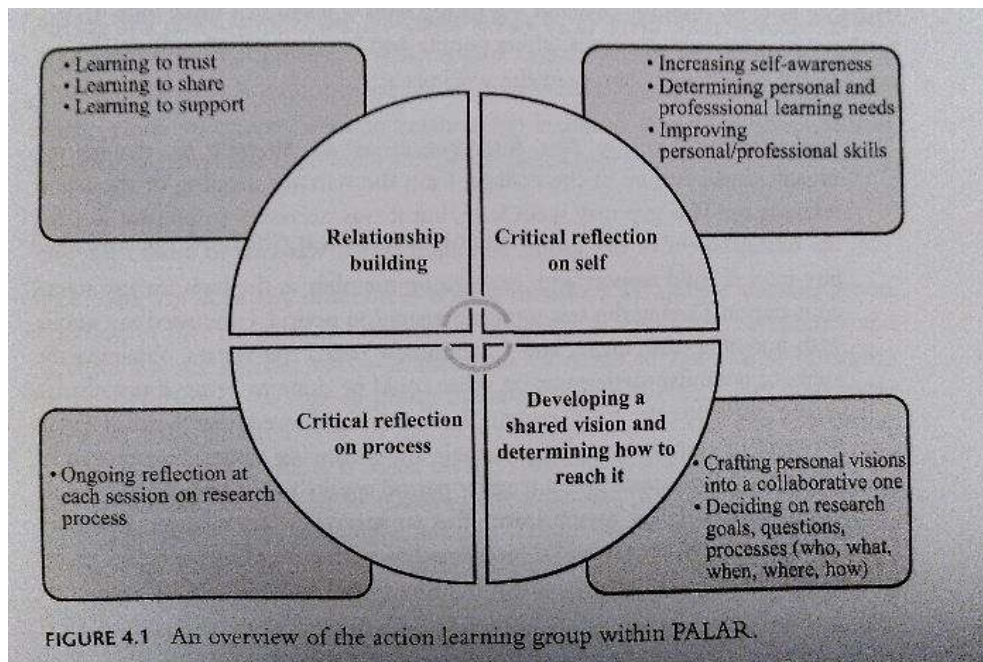
PAR, Theory and Methods, Chevalier
and Buckles, 2020, page 260 and 262

Process, monitoring, and evaluation

The Action Learning Collaboration

A group that includes teachers, researchers and students:

- collaborating towards a shared vision
- giving mutual support
- enabling all to learn with and from each other
- where ideas are evaluated, rather than people



It requires competence to facilitate the process without dominating it. Academics who are used to leading, may find it difficult to guide people and project without directing.

Wood, 2020, p 67 and 78

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?

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.

Research process is more fixed beforehand.

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.

Research process emerges, changing / evolving as participants gain new insights.

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”.

Suggested methods/tools for data generation

- Nominal Group Technique
- Fishbone analysis
- Digital storytelling / Photo voice
- Participatory video production
- Drawing
- Future creating workshop
- Asset mapping
- Collaborative way to decide on topic/issue to be addressed
- To analyse the root causes/consequences of a problem
- To learn about people's lived experience, used as an advocacy tool
- To explore an issue, used as an advocacy tool
- To explore an issue, determine change, used as an advocacy tool
- To identify current state of affairs, imagine new possibilities and find ways to enact them
- To identify existing assets

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)
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www.w.vistacampus.gov/ what-asset-mapping

Quality Criteria for PALAR projects

- 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.

Validation of Living Lab Research

- 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.

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.

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