LPRV ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY ON PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Part II

by

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The Action Research Reader


This reader is older material but comprehensive. Prepared for a course called ‘Action Research and the Critical Analysis of Pedagogy’ offered by an Australian university in the mid-1980s.

Section One, ‘The History of Action Research’, discusses the origins of action research in social and organisational psychology, its history and early failures and successes as applied in education. Two papers by the 1930s sociologist Kurt Lewin begin Section One. The first asserts his view that research in social planning and action should produce knowledge of utility for social actors while the second relates group decisions to social change. Immediately following is one of the most influential papers in the popularisation of action research. In a reinterpretation of Lewin’s ideas, it examines work between 1944 and 1957 and argues for involvement of the wider community in the definition of social problems addressed by action research. Next is an article that had major influence in establishing action research as a tool for school and curriculum development that leads into a paper offering advice to teachers on how best to conduct action research. A history action research in Britain ends the section.

‘International perspectives’, Section Two, looks at regional disparities between North America, Continental Europe, the United Kingdom and the Third World. It explores North American action research first. Topics include the use of action research in in-service education for teachers, the importance of encouraging self-reflection in teaching and learning and an account advocating classroom practice as the right place to begin teacher’s action research, rather than educational theory. The United Kingdom is the second region explored. The large and influential Ford Teaching project is the initial subject addressing main activities of project. Other papers present a moral argument for teacher accountability and warn that action research may not always be an effective way of achieving school reform. Contributions from Continental Europe illustrate that European social science is informed by different intellectual traditions than in Britain and North American. Authors from Germany and Norway think through a number of themes emphasising curriculum development rather than teaching, action research’s contributions to the wider democratisation of society as a whole and the application of German critical theory to education. The role of the concept of emancipation in action research is also raised. South American writings under the Third World heading are the only examples of participatory research in the reader, with the dual objectives to raise political awareness and to development action campaigns. Theoretical themes consider the dangers inherent in outsiders’ introduction of a ‘scientific’ construction of the world alien to local cultures, problems in cross-cultural research and a warning against action research as a form of Western imperialism.

Papers in Section Three, ‘Action Research in Australia’, are representative of action research as understood, practised and revised by Australian practitioners from the early to
mid 1980s. Topics range from two papers on teachers’ self-reflection on their own research and strategies toward improving practice to the substantive role and contribution action research can make to practice and knowledge of practice to the intellectual history implicit in action research. There also several papers commenting on a series of annual sessions for educators held at Deakin University beginning with the 1981 National Seminar on Action Research. One significant concern is the reduction of action research to a tool for solving problems, detached from broader concerns about curriculum and social change.

**Teachers Investigate Their Work: An introduction to the methods of action research**


Revised for English-speaking audiences, this Austrian book focuses on research conducted by teachers to develop their own practices. All authors were involved and highly influenced by an initiative called Teacher-Pupil Interaction and the Quality of Learning Project (TIQL) in the early 1980s that inquired into how students learn and how best to enable learning in the classroom. Consistent with this background in writing *Teachers Investigate Their Work: An Introduction to the Methods of Action Research* they had two objectives. First, they sought to provide practical suggestions for classroom and school system innovations developed by teacher action researchers. Secondly, they wanted to place these suggestions in the context of action research theory to give the teachers’ insights deeper meaning. Essentially the book is intended as a tool for teachers and principals who wish to reflect upon issues from their own practices and engage in action research to promote classroom innovation and school development. As such, it is descriptive not prescriptive.

One method of beginning a research process is a research diary. In the opening chapter the usefulness of research diaries is discussed along with suggestions on writing them and different types of entries. Theoretical notes, methodological notes, planning notes and ethical issues are all addressed. Diaries can assist in determining a fruitful starting point for doing research, the next chapter’s focus. Differences between action research and traditions of positivist approaches are identified. In action research, a hypothesis is not fixed but can change over time and, also, the clarity possible at the onset of a research is only a surface understanding of a problem, as new factors and possibilities for action will emerge over time. Greater detail about how to make the starting point of research clearer follows in a separate chapter. In-depth analysis of a problem in teaching practice first requires isolating specific issues that need solutions and acquiring new information, or knowledge, about a classroom situation. The authors suggest several approaches of obtaining new knowledge: self-reflection; data collection (by observation, interviews *etc.*); non-participants’ views on similar situations; interpretation using ‘practical theory.’ Once obtained, this knowledge can be more clearly understood through dialogue between
Data collection and data analysis are the focus of two subsequent chapters. Methods of acquiring data are listed and explained in detail. Characteristics of data and criteria for judging the quality of action research are the initial focus leading into a discussion of recording data using methods ranging from photography to interviews, written surveys and observations conducted during classroom work. After collection, analysis of data organizes it into a reliable basis for planning future action. Ways to make best use of data are separated into three main types: constructive methods, critical methods and complex methods. A data summary, test for findings and pattern analysis are examples of each respective method. How to develop action strategies and put them into practice is the next step, and chapter. When a teacher researcher has developed a ‘practical theory’ about a way to improve learning and teaching in a particular situation, a number of questions can be asked to assess the validity of the new knowledge. For example, whether or not a prescribed action will improve a situation is an important consideration. Teachers are encouraged to make their research publicly available after completion. Avenues for reporting research are explored as well as advice on written reports including a toolbox for production. The thesis that theory should only develop as a reflection upon practice is the discussed in isolation, concluding the book.

**Research for Change: Participatory Action Research for Community Groups**


This guide and tool kit is addressed specifically to grassroots community groups to assist them in conducting meaningful action research designed to improve the everyday lives of people in their communities. It is intended to be used as a material for workshops or other educational settings and includes step by step instructions on how to decide on appropriate research for problems facing groups and the communities they represent to take relevant and useful steps toward accomplishing solutions.

The authors' rationale for doing research is that it is a means through which community activists can isolate information they need to develop effective strategies for the purpose of taking action and making change. *Research for Change* applies a particular method of participatory action research (shortened to ‘action research’ throughout the guide) that has four defining principles. Research should lead to action; be from the community's perspective, be kept simple; allow the questions to decide the appropriate research tool to use; and follow certain basic rules. These latter are stipulated as criteria. Research should have a design or plan; have questions or topics agreed upon in advance; assumptions or biases made transparent; respect confidentiality of interviewees; have analysis based on information taking into account the experience of all interviewees; and provide evidence
“checkable” by the community. Generally, research should also focus on qualitative methods that provide descriptions of how people actually experience specific issues or problems so that solutions found make practical differences to people's lives.

The book is split into five parts concerned respectively with defining participatory action research, reviewing the entire research process, gathering data, interpretation and analysis of data and acting on the research. The authors stress that change be achieved through community participation at all stages of the research process (shown in Box 1).

Community participation extends from setting the questions to running the research process to conducting the research if that is the consensual preference. Steps One to Four give practical advice is given on how to proceed with basic administrative and planning tasks, brainstorming needed information, identifying expertise in the community group and stating group assumptions. Steps Five to Nine describe the research context, define goals and objectives and offer help on choosing the right data-gathering tools (interviews, simple questionnaires, focus groups, popular education techniques, face sheet, literature review), and deciding who and how many are the best informants to contact and developing data-gathering tools used.

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<th>Box 1. Ten Step Research Process</th>
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<td>1. Deal with the planning and administrative tasks</td>
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<td>2. Develop the information matrix—what do you want to know?</td>
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<td>3. Do you need help?</td>
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<td>4. Develop the research assumptions</td>
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<td>5. Describe the research context</td>
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<td>6. Define your research goals and objectives</td>
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<td>7. Choose which data gathering tools to use</td>
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<td>8. Decide who your informants will be</td>
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<td>9. Decide how many informants you need</td>
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<td>10. Develop your data-gathering tools</td>
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Detailed suggestions for action research are provided are provided at the end of the guide in the tool kit. It contains information on how to devise basic planning steps; do an interview, administer a questionnaire, facilitate a focus group; and examples of a questionnaire, a face sheet and the production of a research report. Lastly, a series of appendices give further suggestions for organisations on how to approach members to decide if research is necessary, set goals and objectives, test strategies for research, develop a work-plan, address budget issues, hire outside researchers and research ethics.
People’s Self Development. Perspectives on Participatory Action Research.


Anisur Rahman’s *People’s Self Development: Perspectives in Participatory Action Research* is an influential work in the field of participatory action research. In this book, Rahman, a Bangladesh economist, offers a series of essays that chronologically trace his increasingly sophisticated philosophical and methodological thought about ‘participatory development’ or the term he prefers, ‘people’s self-development.’ Generally speaking, he advocates self-reliant rural development as an alternative to market economy and external ‘assistance’ approaches to development. Formerly a member of Bangladesh Planning Commission, he resigned from that post in 1974 because the agency’s bureaucratic practices were removed from civil society efforts to mobilize rural communities for development initiatives. Upon resignation he became Coordinator of the International Labour Office’s (ILO) Programme on Participatory Organizations of the Urban Poor (PORP) in 1977. During his time with ILO Rahman became aware of significant crossovers between approaches and experiences in of grassroots movements in several countries. The book takes the reader through Rahman’s Bangladesh and ILO fieldwork experiences of which his theoretical development is an outcome. Originally written separately, the essays can be read independently in any order.

The opening chapter, “Planners and Society”, presents Rahman’s farewell address to the Bangladesh Planning Commission in which he rejected standard top-down planning practice as not in touch with the people. As a first response to the deficiencies of traditional planning in Bangladesh he introduces his theoretical ideas in “Mobilization Without Tears: A Conceptual Discussion of Self-Reliant Development.” Historical case studies (Russia, China) demonstrating the role of institutions in promoting self-reliant development lay the conceptual groundwork for a discussion of institution-building and allocation of powers to institutions in a development strategy based on self-reliance. “Dimensions of People’s Participation in the Bhoomi Sena Movement”, the following chapter, looks at grassroots initiatives in the early 1970s by the *adivasis* people in Maharashtra, India that evolved largely without assistance of a political party or non-government organization. Another example of people’s self-initiative is the subject of “SARILAKAS Means Strength—Initiating People’s Organisations in Philippine Barangays.” Meaning ‘strength’, ‘SARILALAS’ were collaborative efforts between ILO, the Bureau of Rural Workers Philippines and other partners designed to promote people’s participation in select villages in the early 1980s. “The Praxis of PORP: A Programme in Participatory Rural Development” discusses participatory action research as a new paradigm through a review of collaborative efforts in PORP research and programs. Theoretical reflections on Rahman’s fieldwork experiences in Bangladesh follow in the next two chapters.
Substantial consideration of grassroots initiatives in practice is followed by “The Theory and Practice of Participatory Action Research”, Rahman’s first formal meditation on the concept of participatory action research. He places his emphasis on action research and participatory research that generates scientific knowledge capable of guiding social practice. “Glimpses of the ‘Other Africa’” warns against the wastefulness and inflexibility of state-led development. Using PORP African projects as examples he argues that ‘authentic development’ can only occur through community-based reflection and action. In “People’s Self-Development” Rahman theoretically contrasts the conceptual foundation of people’s self-development movements with ‘liberal’ and ‘socialist’ trends in development thinking.

Finally, “Toward an Alternative Development Paradigm” argues for people’s self-development as a new paradigm which can reinterprets ‘development’ as grassroots self-determined economic improvements and identity instead of paternalistic ‘economic growth’.

**Participatory Evaluation in Education: Studies in Evaluation Use and Organizational Learning**


This book is about change in educational organizations. A series of case studies are presented contributed by those most directly involved in educational settings: teachers, school administrators, district administrators and researchers. It takes a critical approach to organizational change in education, acknowledging failures as well as successes. Motivated by a vision to institutionalize applied research methods into the day-to-day operations of schools and school systems, the authors hope to convince teachers to adopt a new role as researchers beyond their usual classroom responsibilities. Consistent with this primary objective, the intended audiences of *Participatory Evaluation in Education: Studies in Evaluation Use and Organizational Learning* are those engaged in education systems and schools. It is especially targeted at individuals considering action research in their own practice although no previous experience is needed to use the book’s ideas and methods.

Part 1 explains and justifies participatory evaluation. All ideas presented are based on the authors’ experiences working in schools and school systems with educators on applied research projects. Opening with a description of participatory evaluation, their conceptual framework and its justification is based on a review of empirical and theoretical research. Throughout organizational learning theory is approached as a conceptual framework for considering strategies or interventions designed to enhance the learning capacity of organizations. Participatory evaluation is justifiable, and useful, because it can help create learning systems in schools and school systems that enable and enhance organizational learning subsequently leading to better informed decision. Once justified, participatory
evaluation as a method is carefully defined. For these authors it is an applied social research that involves trained evaluation personnel (or research specialists) and practice-based decision-makers (teachers, administrators etc.) working in partnership to improve educational programs and systems within a ‘multi-stakeholder’ model. Data gathered is to be used for either discrete decisions or in educational programs designed to develop organizational learning. It is not concerned with the generation of either social theory or social justice.

Five independent empirical studies discussed in Part 2 were originally presented at the 1993 annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association in Atlanta, Georgia. One paper examines a region-wide evaluation of school improvements coordinated by the local school district research department with the direct participation of school and school board administrators as well as private consultants. A similar model of evaluation in a smaller district with fewer participants is a separate contribution. Another article assesses program needs using participatory evaluation achieved through a school-university partnership. Evaluation consulting and its role in school improvement projects is a further topic while the viability of collaborative evaluation involving teachers rounds out the cases leading into Part 3 which looks at examples of different variations of educational participatory evaluation. Topics covered: a school-university partnership producing quality collaborative research and innovative approaches to classroom assessment in elementary schools; and participatory evaluation at work in an international context as a transnational coordinated special education training project in Egypt. Associated political and cultural issues are addressed.

Part 4 concludes with a look at the benefits, and costs, of participatory evaluation. Although user and practitioner involvement in school and school system evaluation does create better organization learning, the process of developing the necessary partnerships is not always easy, as there are costs in time, energy, and participant fatigue.

**Participatory Curriculum Development in Agricultural Education: A Training**


The Food and Agriculture Organization’s *Participatory Curriculum Development in Agricultural Education: A Training Guide* brings together two disparate fields of activity in education: participation and curriculum development. Although, Participatory Curriculum Development (PCD) can be used to develop curriculum in any subject this guide’s focus is agricultural education. A step by step approach explains the benefits of PCD, how to proceed with its practice and provides ‘Activity Boxes’ for readers to apply ideas discussed to their own situations and experiences. PCD methods are also demonstrated in case studies throughout. The guide is intended as a tool for those engaged in various kinds of curriculum development within formal educational settings.
(i.e. colleges or other educational institutions), non-formal settings (e.g. agricultural education) and other educational programs. While the PCD approach and general principles are proposed as essential to increasing effectiveness in any kind of curriculum development, readers are encouraged to use the guide critically by adapting it for use in real situations.

The substantive content of the guide begins with an examination of definitions of and perspectives on curriculum development. Broadly defined as ‘the process by which students actively learn’ the authors’ concept of curriculum encompasses what, how and why a subject is taught. Other topics discussed include who develops curriculum, which individuals and groups tend to be excluded in the development process and support for student participation in curriculum development. The guide adopts a participatory decision-making model in which the curriculum developer is a facilitator guided by the normative principle that all stakeholders with an interest in curriculum should be included in its development. These will include ‘insiders’, those concerned with implementation (i.e. administrators, teachers and students) and ‘outsiders’, external actors desiring input into education decisions (e.g. parents, government). Special emphasis is placed on the importance of identifying all stakeholders and ensuring experts do not control or dominate a PCD process, creating a top-down situation.

A separate section of the guide is dedicated to the authors’ ideas about participation and curriculum development. Throughout the authors assume that if people and groups from outside educational institutions assist in developing education and training curriculum, implementation of education and training programs will be more effective. Several aspects of PCD are considered in detail such as: the meaning of participation, how participation works in practice, why curriculum developers should work with all stakeholders, problems associated with stakeholder participation and how to select which stakeholders should participate. Once a participatory stakeholder process is established, steps towards creating a curriculum can begin. Soliciting stakeholders for learning objectives is suggested as step one. From there, curriculum developers are advised to work with stakeholders to choose a select number of objectives compatible with time and resources available for a given curriculum, to develop curriculum activities consistent with chosen objectives and to co-develop a participatory evaluation framework. The latter must allow stakeholders ongoing input regarding curriculum successes and failures. Management of curriculum is the final section. Difficulties experienced in implementing curriculum and their sources examined stress lack of participation leads to weak stakeholder commitment, motivation and enthusiasm for desired changes. Similarly, authors argue that without the participation of educators and support staff, attempts at PCD in institutional settings will fail. Authors conclude with the statement that PCD is an important tool in ‘people’s self-development’ as it promotes lasting development and is itself a development activity.
Participatory Action Research: International Contexts and Consequences


This international reader carefully distinguishes between ‘participatory action research’ and ‘action research.’ This is seen as necessary because the term ‘action research’ has strayed from its original meaning of ‘people doing research for themselves’ to be identified with every method that learns from action. The book presents common as well as disparate themes in theories, practices and forms of organization of participatory action research practiced around the world. Twelve papers follow the Introduction.

Robin McTaggart in the first substantive paper, “Guiding Principles for Participatory Action Research” discusses the need to establish some criteria or characteristics for what is and is not participatory action research. He identifies the origins of current conceptions of participatory action research in the intellectual traditions and practice in a number of fields: agriculture, social work, health, obstetrics, housing and community development. In the second article “Action Research: A Closed Chapter in the History of German Social Science?” Herbert Altrichter and Peter Gestetttner critique the history of the theory and practice of action research through the eyes of the movement’s opponents and supporters. “The Problem of Participation”, Clem Adelman’s contribution, seeks to merge information gained through the 1930s studies by Lewin and the Ford Teaching Project (1972-1974) with well-documented examples of staff development. As a sociologist turned politician, Orlando Fals Borda shares insights in “Participatory Action Research in Colombia: Some Personal Feelings.” He approaches participatory action research as a way of life dedicated to social injustice, advocating a new paradigm for social science directed toward breaking down relationships of exploitation and oppression. “Toward an Epistemology of Participatory Research”, by Anil Chaudhary, argues that it is necessary to develop participatory research as an alternative epistemological framework that gives due recognition to popular knowledge. The themes continues in “Participatory Education Research in Australia: The First Wave—1976 to 1986” in which Shirley Grundy describes a debate during this period to decide an epistemology appropriately inclusive of the concepts of collaboration and participation.

John Dinan and Yuraima Garcia observe that institutional structures are obstacles to successful collaborative action research projects in “Participatory Research in Venezuela: 1973 to 1991.” Maria Saez Brezmes in “A Background to Action Research in Spain” illustrates another problem: although participatory action research was successfully institutionalized in the school system structure, curriculum development and classroom practice were not implementing its democratic principles. Two experienced teachers and curriculum theorists, William H. Schubert and Ann Lopez-Schubert, worry about the co-option of education by economic and political interests. “Sources of a Theory for Action Research in the United States of America” pushes for a revival of participatory action research in the classroom by teachers and teacher-developed theory of best practice. John
Delion’s “Integrating Participatory Action Research Tools in New Caledonia” takes the position that participatory action research cannot and will not be successful without broad political and institutional support, in government and higher education. Arphon Chuaprapaisilp strong advocates participatory research in “Action Research: Improving Learning from Experience in Nurse Education in Thailand.” Nonetheless, she questions difficulties associated with transplanting action research to a non-Western culture. An example of participatory epistemology in practice concludes the reader: Srilatha Batliwala & Sheela Patel enabling very poor women in Bombay to learn about their environment and begin to find solutions to problems is documented as “A Census as Participatory Research.”

**Nurtured by Knowledge: Learning to Do Participatory Action Research**


*Nurtured by Knowledge: Learning To Do Participatory Action Research* is a compilation of international case studies putting participatory research into action. Eight chapters apply its general principles to agriculture, health care, medicine and community development. The book’s introduction places development in the context of four contemporary global crises: poverty, war and militarization, ecological destruction and human rights violation, or social, cultural, political repression. Three dominating forces behind human poverty are identified: ‘scientism’, ‘developmentalism’ and ‘statism’, respectively descriptive of positivism, the imperative of economic growth and domestic and international power dynamics. Participatory action research is proposed as an approach to research and social change that can help shift human development away from poverty by respecting and using knowledge based on experience, local knowledge, to find solutions.

The first study, “Cows for Campesinos”, is an account of a Canadian dairy farmer who journeys to Mexico to assist campesinos (subsistence farmers). He tells how the experience gave him a deeper understanding of himself as economically privileged and of the economic inequities faced by farmers in Mexico. Working alongside him, a Mexican educator contributes to the paper by considering links between the farmer’s experiences and the methodological ideas of participatory research action. “Changing Disabling Environments Through Participatory Action Research: A Canadian Experience” documents an academic’s first attempt at participatory action research. The author organises a group-controlled study of disabled children in Ontario, Canada in which families with disabled children not only build a sense of solidarity but also form an organisation to address difficulties hindering their children. Topics turn to health care with “Doctors, Dias, and Nurse-Midwives: Women’s Health Services Utilization in Northern India.” A primary-care physician’s tells of a year spent in India studying rural
women’s approaches to health care. The author questions her assumptions about the women’s priorities and continuously revises her views on local participation in research.

Medicine continues as the focus in “We Are Dying: It is Finished!: Linking an Ethnographic Research Design to an HIV/AIDS Participatory Approach in Uganda.” A research team studying women in a small Uganda town wrestle with how to initiate a participatory action research process after achieving a deeper understanding of the local community’s experience and feelings of hopelessness and despair. Women are again research participants in a project directed at community development among the Aymara people of northern Chile. Presented as “Grounding a Long-Term Ideal: Working With Aymara For Community Development”, the authors’ describe their personal approach to participatory action research as a way of life dedicated to justice and democratic participation. They also demonstrate many ways in which knowledge and social change can be produced and the dialectic between participatory action research and participatory development. A case study from Honduras, “Pasantias and Social Participation: Participatory Action-Research As a Way of Life”, profiles a community hospital of a small town. It describes a series of workshops known as pasantias in each of which a research team help health personnel and community members to collaboratively re-find the purpose of their hospital. Lastly, “Deepening Participatory Action Research” proposes a new holistic framework for participatory action research methodology. Although emphasizing the power of research to enable personal and social redirection, it also observes that the personal development accompanying processes of social participation and change is painful and difficult.

New Directions in Action Research


New Dimensions in Action Research adopts the idea of emancipatory or critical action research of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory to assess action research theory and practice. Each author in this collection of papers has written either an influential book or dissertation on the subject of action research and condenses their work into chapters they contribute. Intended audiences for this book are action researchers in education, higher education, management education and consultants in organizational change and development who may benefit from a new perspective to their established knowledge base.

In the Introduction (Part I), editor Zuber-Skerritt lays out basic concepts of the book. First, she identifies two main objectives of emancipatory action research: promotion of professional development of practitioners through self-reflection and of changes to the systems professionals work within or conditions that impede desired change in those systems. Next, she addresses emancipatory action research as a process. It is defined as collaborative, critical and self-critical inquiry into a problem or issue in a practitioner’s
own work that follows a cyclical process of planning, action, observation (evaluation and self-evaluation) and reflection. Following the Introduction three additional parts make up the remainder of the volume. Part II examines models, principles and procedures for critical action research. Barriers to change and suggested solutions are raised in Part III. Chapters relating postmodernism to critical action research make up Part IV.

Excerpts from Richard Winter’s book, *Learning from Experience: Principles and Practice in Action Research* are presented in Part II and set the theoretical stage for the book. Action research is defined and practical advice provided on problems and issues such as finding a focus, selecting the right method for projects and research ethics. The author also proposes in this theory six principles for the action research process: reflexive critique, dialectic critique, collaboration, risking disturbance, creating plural structures and internalizing theory and practice. All of these are further developed explicitly or implicitly in later chapters. Winter’s ideas are picked up by Susan Hall who argues that the credibility and quality of emancipatory action research can be enhanced by the use of the principle of reflexive critique. Mary Melrose focuses on three paradigms—functional, transactional and critical—to look at application of action research specifically to curriculum development, curriculum evaluation and leadership theory and practice. Lastly, Michael Schratz considers the use of the method of memory-work that emphasizes using reflection in action research to uncover forgotten aspects of past events.

Problems and suggested solutions are discussed in Part III. Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt argues that emancipatory action research is a method especially appropriate for education development, organization development, manager professional development and teachers in the role of action researchers. She also addresses barriers to successful outcomes of change in the framework’s application. Graham Webb, however, critiques the utility of action research in terms of emancipation, power, autonomy, democracy, consensus, rationality, solidarity and social justice. The eclectic and pragmatic approach of postmodernism is proposed as viable alternative. Part IV focuses on the postmodern alternative. Further arguments for its utility in the process of critical action research are presented. An application of postmodernism to an action research project on professional staff appraisal is examined. Finally, Robin McTaggart concludes the volume by defending emancipatory action research in the postmodern era stating that while participatory action research does face practical, theoretical and organizational challenges it still has considerable potential.
Mapping How We Use Our Land: Using Participatory Action Research


Mapping How We Use Our Land: Using Participatory Action Research documents a community-initiated participatory research project. It is an example of a Traditional Land Use and Occupancy Study (TLUOC), the first of its kind in Alberta, Canada. ‘Traditional land use and occupancy’ is a term used by social scientists to describe the reliance of Aboriginal people on land for hunting, fishing, gathering edible plants, and generally living and travelling in the Canadian bush. TLUOC projects are community-based, involve community knowledge and are intended to serve community needs. In this case Aboriginal (Athapaskan, Cree and Metis) peoples in a region of northern Alberta decided to undertake a research process to study traditional activities practised in order to create maps indicating this information for areas immediate surrounding Aboriginal communities. Athabasca Native Development Corporation (ANDC) led the process motivated by concern that a forestry company’s tree harvesting plans would negatively impact traditional ways of life. Initiation of the process by ANDC was an outcome of a regional forest co-management agreement between Aboriginal leaders, the Alberta and Canadian governments and the forestry company. Such co-management agreements seek to apply traditional and scientific knowledge in decision-making about conservation, land-use planning and economic development.

The book’s content provides step by step advice and suggestions on gathering and collating information in a TLUOC study that may be applicable beyond this type of participatory action research project. Community participation is the first topic addressed. Several steps are suggested: a community should identify a need to engage in research; establish a project budget and secure funding; decide on a method for mapping and hire a participatory action research consultant. Advice on how to do the latter is given in considerable detail. Data collection methods appropriate for gathering traditional knowledge are examined next. The interview process proposed strongly emphasizes that any consultant’s role should be one of trainer and co-ordinator but not project leader. Local people should conduct interviews in their own communities with a consultant to assist only with administrative and planning tasks. The authors further stress as essential community control of all aspects of a project process and goals and community ownership of all resultant information.

Two topics complete the study: organizing traditional knowledge into meaningful data sets and co-management of findings for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal purposes. Archiving and storage is discussed as one method of making traditional knowledge accessible for potential users. This section, however, primarily focuses on how to map TLUOC data. Details on map preparation concentrate on physical characteristics of the maps, symbols and types of data selected for geographical representation. In ANDC study, 50 land use and occupancy elements were labelled in total, such as local place
names, residences, birds, big game and fish, medicinal plants and minerals. Map
texts are included in the book. Although community ownership of maps is
advocated, TLUOC findings are shown to better enable government decisions regarding
conservation area designations, compensation for negative impacts of industry on
Aboriginal groups and species protection. Government collected non-traditional
‘scientific’ knowledge, on the other hand, may assist Aboriginal groups in traditional
practices. Co-management of information is therefore beneficial to each side, community
and government, as well as industry and other external actors. The study ends with a
concise list of twelve steps to be taken in TLUOC projects.

Creating Practical Knowledge Through Action Research: Posing
Problems, Solving Problems, and Improving Daily Life


Creating Practical Knowledge Through Action Research: Posing Problems, Solving
Problems and Improving Daily Life is a sourcebook on action research in adult education.
Its intended audience is teachers, tutors, counselors and administrators working in adult
education who seek better ways to address education problems. However, it is also useful
for researchers concerned with the future of adult education research and policymakers
interested in current research and practice. Information it contains falls under five main
headings: the role of research in the practice of adult education, understanding and using
action research in practice settings, case studies of action research in various adult
education settings, reflections on action research and reactions, reflections and closing
comments.

There are three overall aims for this publication. First, it is intended as sourcebook for
educators and trainers of adults in formal settings from higher education to health
education and for those who work in informal adult education activities such as volunteer
training and community development work. Second, it poses a process of inquiry that
encourages professionals to adopt a critical perspective on aspects of their work and work
environment. Third, it challenges the assumptions and ideology underlying traditional
methodologies in adult education. This last objective is picked up in Chapter 1, ‘The Role
of Research in the Practice of Adult Education.” Quigley discusses traditions of adult
education research, which ‘experts’ should produce research-based knowledge
(researchers or teachers/practitioners?) and proposes a new framework for research
methods in adult education. Overall, his concern is with the production of knowledge
taught in the classroom. Should it be produced by education research experts in
universities isolated or from input from teacher practitioners? He proposes the latter.
Other topics include the ideological debate about the normative direction of adult
education (i.e. formal schooling in systems organized by institutions or learning processes
organized in workplaces and communities with no formal institutional structure) and the possible fruitfulness of integrating action research in the formal schooling system.

Chapter 2, “Understanding and Using Action Research in Practice Settings” lays out the author’s theoretical framework and step by step plan for conducting an action research project. They propose four core processes or phases for action research projects rooted in the educational theories of Dewey and Lewin: planning, acting, reflecting and observing. Their plan is a six-step iterative cycle model intended for response to problems that arise in the practice setting. They also compliment this plan with a practical guide to developing action research projects. In Chapter 3, “Case Studies of Action Research in Various Adult Education Settings”, adult education practitioners give accounts of action research applications in six settings: a museum, a church, a prison, a homeless shelter, a university, and a hospital. In application each study follows the six steps of the model: as one example, the museum study examines problems experienced with university professors hired to teach staff who because of their lecture-style approach were not respectful of the adult students’ needs, abilities, or experiences. Chapter 4, “Reflections on Action Research” a lecturer from the University of Tennessee, USA critiques the sourcebook. Amongst other comments he observes that the authors do not address what researchers can learn about themselves and the influence their own knowledge, intentions and values have on the knowledge, intentions and values of other participants in a research study. Nor do they consider how other participants influence the researcher. Quigley and Kuhne respond in Chapter 5, by asking questions about research intentions. Can researchers really know what they intend? On what basis can researchers both accept and learn from the research intentions of others? They end by saying a few words about research ethics.

Community-Based Ethnography: Breaking Traditional Boundaries of Research, Teaching and Learning


This collaborative volume presents thirteen separate papers written by student enrolled in an advanced methods Community-Based Ethnography graduate course held in the 1993 Fall term at Texas A&M University by instructor and contributing author, Ernie Stringer. Each writes their impressions and thoughts about their experience of participating in two similar previous courses held earlier in 1993 also conducted by Stringer at the same university. Selections in Community-Based Ethnography: Breaking Traditional Boundaries of Research, Teaching and Learning explore qualitative research methods, community-building and action research and finds ways lessons learned by individual experiences in ethnographic writing are relevant to the broader public arenas in which research and education are engaged.
Ernie Stringer in Chapter One, "Reinterpreting Teaching", rethinks the structure of the institution of education, the kinds of knowledge developed and imparted and positivist approaches to schooling that focus on teachers as experts who control all aspects of a course or curriculum. He argues for pedagogy that enables learners to acquire necessary knowledge and skills in ways that reflect the philosophical principles of a community-based approach to development adapted for education. In Chapter Two, "Teaching Community-Based Ethnography", he goes on to explain his pedagogical methodology in more detail highlighting the value of its core principles of empowerment, participation and collaborative approach to teaching-learning. How the course enabled students to learn practically useful information while challenging their own thinking, the thinking of others, community-building, building relationships and achieving personal development is also emphasised.

Stringer's students contribute Chapters Three through to Chapter Twelve. Chapter Two, "Community Building in Small Groups" looks at ways a sense of community was built among a diverse group. Personal development is the subject of Chapter Three, "Philosophical Pedagogical Development: An Ethnographic Process". The author argues that the active learning process of a community-based approached triggered radical changes in some students' philosophical and pedagogical beliefs. "Everything is Different Now: Surviving Ethnographic Research", Chapter Five, gives a biographical response to the course telling how it enabled her to understand herself and her place in society differently after applying principles learned to a self-directed research study. Chapters Six and Seven concentrate on the common experiences of four participants addressing their development of community and re-definitions of individual identify respectively. Chapter Eight, "Reaching Consensus and Writing Collaborative Accounts” is a description of the group's experience of the participatory process and collaborative writing. The difficulty of avoiding power dynamics and pedagogical conventions in the classroom are addressed in Chapter Nine, “Community Ethnography: Reproduction and Resistance in Writing the Collaborative Text.” Chapter Ten and Eleven discuss how lessons learned from the community-based approach spilled over into the students' professional lives in education fields. Finally, Chapter Twelve, "A Learning Journey (In Progress): A Personal Biographical Ethnography" both is an account of not only how the course altered the author's thinking but an insight into process of collaborative learning as potentially a source of more questions than answers.

At the end of the volume Stringer has one further contribution. "Teaching Re-interpreted" broaches lessons learned collaboratively identified by course participants within relevant broader philosophical and academic contexts. It also provides a typification of an ideal enhanced teaching-learning context consisting of principles (community, knowledge, authenticity), structures (relationships, decision-making, setting) and processes (teaching, learning activities, quality of learning activities, curriculum, outcomes).
Collaborative Action Research: A Development Approach


A case study of an American project called Action Research on Change in Schools (ARCS) is analyzed in this book as a means to isolate the main characteristics of effective collaborative research. The primary normative assumption directing Collaborative Action Research: A Development Approach is that teachers should be involved in all aspects of the education research process. Group dynamics and adult development theories are used to explain how individuals and groups achieve personal and professional growth through engagement in action research. The authors’ intended audience is university researchers and teachers who practice action research. They nonetheless present it as of potential interest to other groups, specifically non-teaching education professionals in public schools and universities with or without background in educational research, group process or adult development, and education graduate students. In general, the book sets out to determine those factors in collaborative action research projects that contribute to encouraging, or impeding, achievement of three broad goals: improved practice, greater theoretical understanding and professional development.

Chapter 1, ‘Collaborative Action Research’ gives a history of action research in education, observing that past and present such projects have tended to involve collaboration between numerous individuals. Problems experienced by education practitioners are discussed through examples from recent projects in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia. The substantive discussion and study of ‘The ARCS Project’ conducted in New Hampshire and Michigan junior high schools begin in Chapter 2. Authors identify unique objectives and characteristics distinguishing the ARCS case from other recent collaborative research projects in education. Details included are biographical information about team members and the project’s school context (administrators; students etc.). Five stages of change in the research tasks and interpersonal dynamics on the ARCS team over the two year duration of the project are presented in Chapter 3, ‘The Group Process of Collaborative Action Research’. A two-way relationship developed: research directions and demands influenced how groups interacted and interpersonal tensions affected the research process and project outcomes. Authors also show how teachers grew to self-define the meaning of research, began to see themselves as researchers and clarified their personal and professional goals through participation.

Adult development theory is applied in Chapter 4, ‘Collaborative Action Research and Adult Development’, to provide deeper insight into teachers’ experiences with the ARCS in order to stimulate knowledge on how best to enable individuals to develop their thinking and behaviour while engaged in a collaborative action research process. Authors consider how the self-development five teacher-participants informs their respective positions on certain issues, including group organization and process, power, authority and leadership and outcomes. The latter leads into Chapter 5, ‘Collaboration. Leadership
and Roles’, in which the authors show that participant roles changed as team members addressed shifts in research tasks and individual and group demands. Tensions between teacher ownership of projects and the role of ‘outsider’ university researchers as developmental leaders are explored. ‘Issues in Action Research’ is the concluding chapter. It centres on the general need to establish productive working relationships between a project team and the wider school context; to balance leadership and shared project control between participants; and how to choose and achieve project goals. Responses to these issues in recent action research initiatives are analyzed to yield suggestions on which approaches are more likely to result in successful school-based collaborative action research.

Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research


The subject of Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research is the 1980s ‘teacher as researcher’ movement in the United States and Great Britain which saw teachers for the first time participating in development of new theories about curriculum and in educational research. It began as a pragmatic response to particular social circumstances, political pressures and personal goals of professional teachers and was consequently initially both practically uncoordinated and lacking in a common theoretical rationale that could clarify its meaning, defend it from critics and define its future directions. The provision of such a justification of a special role for teachers as contributing researchers in the development of educational research as a critical social science is the purpose of this book.

The book seeks four general tasks. One: an overview of some of the dominant views of educational theory and research and their relationship to educational practice. Two: a critical response to these approaches. Three: an outline of the corresponding variety of images of the teacher professional suggested by the range of views. Four: a proposal by the authors of an emerging theoretical approach to curriculum development proposed that tries to both adequately account for the interplay between theory, research and practice and to philosophically defend the role of teaching professionals as important actors in normative assessments of education methodologies. Seven chapters make up the bulk of the book leading up to this last argument.

Chapter One examines inter-relationships between educational theory, research and practice as these apply specifically to the field of curriculum research. It considers many definitions of and approaches to curriculum research, what it is for and who should be engaged in its study and development. More narrowly, it looks at how differing approaches to curriculum research convey divergent ideas about the professional role of teachers and the kinds of knowledge educators require within the broader context of theory and practice. Theory and practice are the exclusive subjects of Chapter Two. It
focuses on the positivism at the foundations of educational research as a scientific discipline and then is critical of the positivist approach to educational research. Chapter Three offers a critique of the ‘interpretive’ approach to education research.

Chapters Four through Nine build up to the author's new approach to the social science of education. Chapter Four lays out some of the formal criteria they believe any coherent educational science model would need to incorporate while Chapter Five proposes critical theory as the best approach to satisfy these criteria. Potential applications of critical theory as an educational research methodology are then described. Chapter Six outlines a form of educational research that meets the practical concerns of practitioners and assists them in the critical analysis and development of education as they experience it in the classroom everyday and identifies collaboration as a practical process through which to realize this ideal. Finally, Chapter Seven defends a particular image of the teacher professional as one member of a critical community further consisting of students, parents and others dedicated to education development and reform. The authors suggest educators should create conditions allowing for on-going collaboration among education's critical community so that teachers may organize their colleagues, act in support of common educational values, set up models for reviewing and improving educational processes and become actively involved in the development of education. The book concludes with the assertion that the participatory democratic approach of collaborative action research concretely realizes the ideal of a self-reflective critical community committed to the development of education.

**Action Research: from practice to writing in an international action research development program**


This volume is the product of reflection upon the Scandinavian Action Research Development Program or ACRES (Action Research in Scandinavia) by participant staff members from Norway, Sweden, Finland, Holland, Great Britain and the United States. Its content breaks down into two parts. The first explores six topics generally descriptive of the ACRES context while the second examines a series of eight case studies as representative of participants’ work.

The book opens with ‘On the Design of the ACRES Program’ which examines the epistemological and methodological basis of their approach to the overall ACRES design. The Program is placed in the context of the origins of action research in Sweden and Norway in workplace reform. ‘Action Research Paradigms’, Chapter 2, observes the wide variety of research practice from which project participants came and demonstrates that the diversity in action research globally has made a coherent uniform paradigm of action research impossible. This chapter nevertheless highlights common themes in a history of
action research practice and in methodologies used throughout the ACRES Program. Chapter 3, ‘Research in ACRES’, looks at epistemological and methodological characteristics of action research to forward improvements in the quality of its application and publication, one of the primary tasks of ACRES. The importance of deep thinking about action research is proposed because it is widely misunderstood among academics. An honest account of conflict between staff members, arising out of their disparate experiences, theoretical backgrounds and personal styles is given in Chapter 4, ‘Organisational Process in ACRES.’ Chapter 5, ‘The Rhetoric of Action Research: Writing in the ACRES Program’ explores what participants learned together about the process of writing up their findings after the project’s completion. All staff members strongly supported the significance of the writing process in action research. Finally, Chapter 6, ‘The Rhetoric of Action Research: Views from ACRES Participants’ contains reports from participants reflecting on their individual experiences of writing to meet the deadline imposed for the book’s compilation.

Many aspects of the ACRES Program are explored in the case studies of participants’ work. The need to establish action research as valid social science is discussed. The author argues that action research is a variant of applied research. This lack of distinction suggests that a distinctive epistemology of action research is unnecessary. The role of universities as actors in regional development strategies is another theme examined. The case studied is a regionally based social science action research project conducted at a Swedish university. It describes problems that arose during development and institution building of a research program as well as practical solutions. One paper argues for social science that moves away from esoteric studies to socially useful work with the conclusion that a participatory action research approach can revitalise American social science in this direction. The famous Segerstrom case of bottom-up workplace organizational change is included. The work reform theme carries through in two papers focusing on gender analysis. One explores an open dialogue between men and women about their respective problems working with the opposite sex, while the other presses for the view that practitioners have a responsibility to include gender perspectives in work-based action research. Education as a venue for the application of participatory action research is the theme of an American paper about school system reform in New York. Finally, the volume ends with a reminder that the purpose of doing all action research is to improve practice.

**Action Research as a Living Practice**


This is a fairly large collection of essays on action research directed by a common question, “What are the relationships among forms of educational action research, written reports of action research and the lived experiences of action researchers?” In *Action Research as a Living Tradition* the aim is to show that participation in educational action
research practices requires more of the researcher than mere “application” of research methods. Rather, it requires the researcher to understand and provide an account of how inquiry shapes the investigator as well as shaping the subjects of study. The authors adopt a somewhat unconventional approach to this idea by equating the practices of action research as ways of living drawing on a variety of interdisciplinary influences to support their perspective. Influences include complexity theory, deep ecology, Buddhism, hermeneutic phenomenology, postmodern philosophy, post-structural and literary theories and psychoanalysis. Taken as a whole the essays are more concerned with lived experiences of building complex relationships through participation action research than on a detailed analysis of research methodologies or procedures.

Communicative action is one theme among several in the book. One writer applies Habermas’ theory of communicative action in a teacher education university course. The instructors struggle to develop a community among student teachers, classroom teachers and teacher educators while acknowledging that inequities built into the structure of the curriculum make relationship building difficult. Several papers explore action research through the lens of psychoanalysis. For instance, Lacan is applied to the topic of raising awareness among researchers of conflicts between themselves in addition to emphasizing reflection on research and teaching practices. Interpersonal and personal development are common to a few contributions. One essay addresses difficulties in the process of teachers and students learning together while another looks at new interpretations of the self experienced by educators in the action research process. Report writing is informed by an essay contributed by four writers who argue that memories are a type of data and that writing that is collaborative is an important form of interpretation in which the process does not simply practice reflection but becomes a way of reflecting.

The theme of identity is raised more than once. In an essay examining the imposition of Western notions of development in Third World teacher education, the African-born Western-educated author questions her identity and beliefs and difficulties of cross-cultural collaborations with teachers in a Third World country. On the other hand, a graduate course on curriculum enabled the instructor and students to observe a breakdown of boundaries between their individual and collective identities in a collaborative project. Problems with collaboration are, though, discussed in a paper describing a joint project effort between university professors and classroom teachers on matters of common interest. The author draws attention, nonetheless, to the value of these difficulties as a way to recognize the extent to which the beliefs and practices of educators are conditioned by their respective institutional contexts. Lastly the influence of Eastern thought on action research is explored. By adopting Eastern notions of ‘thinking’, ‘contemplation’ and ‘meditation’ to Western schooling, a teacher suggests a new role of teachers as protectors of the conditions under which each student “in his or her way can find his or her way.” Lastly, an author encourages researchers to not only be self-aware of how they conduct investigations but also to consider the ways in which they live their lives.
Participatory Action Research for the Advancement of Practice in Education and Teaching (PARAPET) Project at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) began in 1995. This loose collaborative network facilitated exchanges of experience across a range of participatory projects in schools and universities. Researchers at all levels were actively involved including university staff, teacher support personnel, teachers and parents. In its second year of operation projects participants decided it would be useful to share their findings with a wider audience. This book is the outcome of that decision. The case studies are ordered according to educational setting: primary and secondary schools are discussed first, followed by school support centres, then universities. Three themes span the observations about the project detailed in this book: participatory action research, social justice and partnerships in research. These are approached as interdependent throughout but each chapter can nevertheless be read in isolation.

Part 1 describes the first year of the meta-project addressing issues/difficulties and changes the project underwent to resolve them. There were, however, accomplishments. Goals achieved include establishing a forum through which project leaders could swap constructive criticism, networking between practitioners to share information and funding resources, and raising consciousness about the role participatory action research can play in educational, cultural and community development. Issues that arose were time restraints, uneven levels of participation among project participants, and the acknowledgement that the collaborative process had served the self-interests of some groups at the expense of others. Various strategies were undertaken to try to overcome these difficulties the major one being development of a new project statement outlining criteria for membership and participants’ current thinking about the group. Common themes between projects are picked up in Part 2 where participatory action research is theoretically examined. Authors in this section define its central characteristics, its relation to the study of education practice, relationships between the methodologies and perspectives of different (than participatory action) traditions in the study of practice and the role of participatory action research. Lastly, it proposes principles for the development of communities of professional researchers and discusses contemporary social justice theories.

School-based projects and collaborations between schools and immediate communities are the subjects of Part 3. One paper in this section examines the role of parents in a community action project focused on changing environmental education and health promotion in primary schools. Another assesses the collaborative efforts of a group of parents, a university and a (Australian) Ministry of Education for struggles, problems, losses and gains. It serves as an example of outcomes that can result when different actors from divergent backgrounds come together to work on a project. In a third, student
researchers play a big role in a participatory action survey in a high school in Australia. Part 4 looks at again partnerships this time in projects aimed at supporting teachers and school personnel. One representative chapter looks at a professional development project in which teachers, regional staff and university academics reflect upon their values and teaching practices with respect to their compatibility with gender issues. This exercise did eventually result in changes in school structures. Finally, in Part 5 practitioners share experiences about partnerships within universities. Faculty at Queensland University of Technology who have tried the ‘Teaching, Reflection and Collaboration’ (TRAC) approach to academic staff development argue that its interdisciplinary orientation to research is more motivating, enriching and led to greater productivity. The book ends with some observations about the value of collaborative writing between actors, partners, in any educational setting.