

Action Research: A Methodology For Change And Development

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UNDERSTANDING PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OPTION

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ABSTRACT

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a qualitative research methodology option that requires further understanding and consideration. PAR is considered democratic, equitable, liberating, and life-enhancing qualitative inquiry that remains distinct from other qualitative methodologies (Kach & Kralik, 2006). Using PAR, qualitative features of an individual's feelings, views, and patterns are revealed without control or manipulation from the researcher. The participant is active in making informed decisions throughout all aspects of the research process for the primary purpose of imparting social change; a specific action (or actions) is the ultimate goal. The following paper will contextualize PAR in terms of its history, principles, definitions, and strengths, as well as discuss challenges and practical suggestions for using PAR. In addition, it will examine focus groups and interviews as methods for data collection, the role of PAR in education, and the types of research for which PAR is best suited.

"You cannot understand a system until you try to change it" (Lewin, 1946)

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is one option in qualitative research methodology that should be considered and understood. Qualitative research integrates the methods and techniques of observing, documenting, analyzing, and interpreting characteristics, patterns, attributes, and meanings of human phenomena under study (Gillis & Jackson, 2002; Leininger, 1985). The purpose of qualitative methodology is to describe and understand, rather than to predict and control (Streubert & Carpenter, 1995). Qualitative methods focus on the whole of human experience and the meanings ascribed by individuals living

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