

Action Research as a Tool for Development



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We'll show how this important research method is appropriate for theses and dissertations. We'll discuss why it is one of the most appropriate tools in management consulting and evaluation research.

this seminar is designed for...

- ✓ Researchers
- ✓ Evaluators
- ✓ Educators
- ✓ Social Entrepreneur
- ✓ Post-graduate Students
- ✓ Management Consultants



Fri. 5th July, 2022
4.00PM (GMT)
Virtual (Zoom)

Register Here

jpdswb.com/ar



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Action Research: A Tool for Development

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Outline

1. Action Research: What It Is.
2. Origin/History.
3. Rationale. Why?
4. Mixed Methods Value of AR.
5. Essential Elements.
6. How We Do It.
7. Action Research in Communication Research ,
Consultancy, Organizational Change.
8. Action Research in Business
9. Summary/Conclusion.
10. Recommended Readings.

Action Research: What It Is

It is the most applied, practical, and problem-solving oriented research approach to using data to seek for actionable solutions to pressing problems of our contemporary society, especially in the education and knowledge management sector.

Action researchers explore practical problems with quantitative and/or qualitative data with the aim of developing actionable solutions.

Action Research: Explanations

Like Mixed Methods Research, AR uses different methods to collect appropriate data for analyses, interpretation, and use in addressing specific practical issues to bring about solutions. Improvement is at the heart of AR studies.

Although it is traditionally associated more with education research, it has been found useful in the study of communication, media, messages, audiences, and effects.

We'll provide some examples in communication research and also show that some theses and dissertations from UNIMAID and BUK could use Action Research.

Origin/History

The term “Action Research” was coined by the social-psychologist Kurt Lewin (of Gatekeeping Theory fame) in the 1930s. He was famous for promoting group discussions for addressing problems and improvement of intercultural group relations. His group process consisted of four steps (which today apply to Action Research): 1) Planning. 2) Acting. 3) Observing. 4) Reflecting.

Kurt Lewin’s ideas spread from the field of social research to schools and the education sector and were adopted at Columbia University’s Teachers College (USA) and the Tavistock Institute (UK).

Since the 1970s, there has been a resurgence in the popularity of AR in the broad fields of applied social research beyond schools and the education sector. The journal “*Action Research*”, established in 2003, is published by Sage Publications as one of highly reputable international interdisciplinary refereed research journals. *International Journal of Action Research* (IJAR) is another AR journal, and it is more international than *Action Research*.

Rationale – Why Action Research?

The growing interest in AR has been attributed to the following:

It is practical and applied. It addresses real problems of schools, education, communication, and society.

Fosters involvement of constituents and partners as co-researchers for data collection, interpretation, and applications.

Promotes collaboration and recognizes the value of the practitioner as a change agent and veritable source of improvement.

It promotes a progressive ideology which encourages positive change

Why Action Research

Research combines with practice as co-equal activities to yield better understanding and the proffering of actionable solutions.

It places new knowledge from research results at the disposal of the researcher and practitioner.

Results, being based on practice, can contribute to new knowledge to enhance practice and theory building. As Kurt Lewin famously said: “There is nothing more practical than a good theory.”

Above all, it is not too difficult to do. Some detractors say it is “common sense” and not research. This is not true.

Action Research and Mixed Methods

Like Mixed Methods, Action Research can use quantitative and/or qualitative data. However, it (AR) differs by its focus on specific, practical problems that require urgent immediate solutions.

Action Research is often used/done by teachers and practitioners, unlike Mixed Methods, with its wider scope. However, the techniques for data collection, analysis, and interpretation of Mixed Methods can also apply in Action Research, thereby enriching it.

Action Research is best when it uses Mixed Methods because the advantages of quantitative data will make up for the disadvantages of qualitative data, and vice versa, thus yielding better results than when only one type of data was used.

Essential Elements/Essence of Action Research

Based on Kurt Lewin's original quartet of Planning, Action, Observing and Reflecting, the typical Action Research process involves:

1. **Identifying a problem** area of interest (Situation analysis and Literature review).
2. **Collecting quantitative and/or qualitative data** (from multiple sources, different methods, and iterations).
3. **Analyzing and integrating the data** (themes, sense making, additional data if necessary, non-linear process).
4. **Developing an action implementation plan** (recommended interventions, evaluations, next phase).

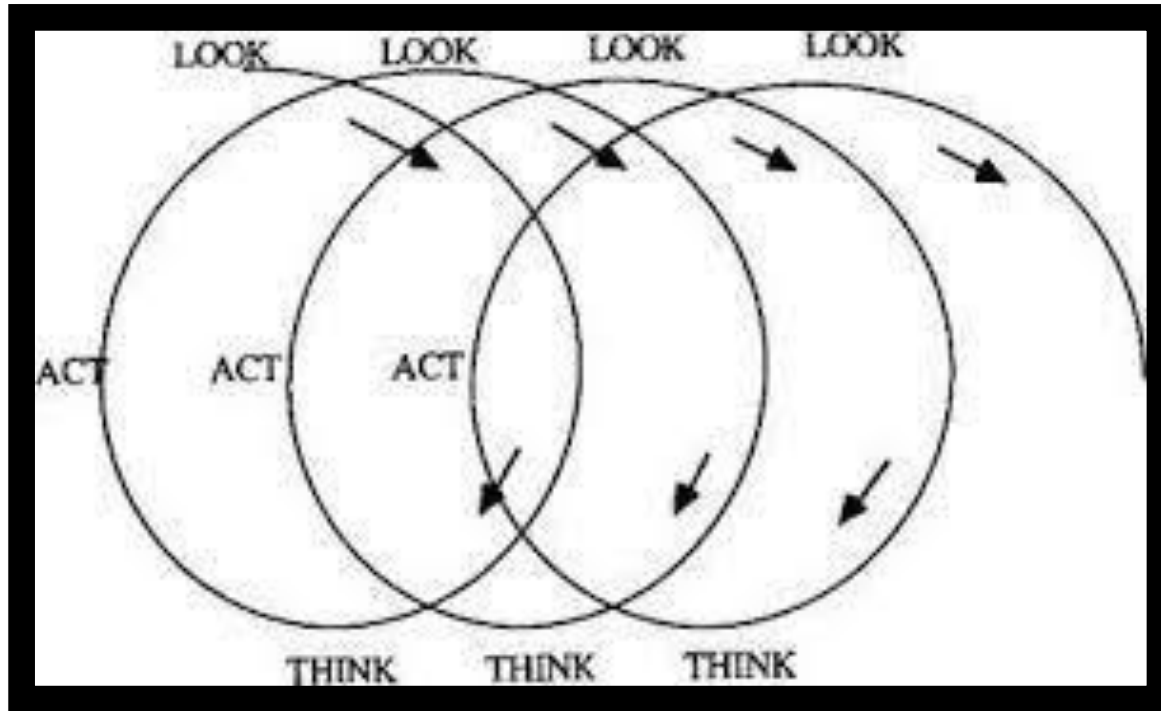
More on Essential Elements: Recursive

AR method is recursive and cyclical (non-linear) in a repeating pattern of Looking – Thinking – Acting, called “the interacting spiral” (Stringer 1999).

Creswell (2005, p. 556): “Action Research is not neat, orderly, and linear, but is a process of repeating and revising procedures and interpretations.”

AR is suited for education and communication research because the problems in these areas hardly end with finality. One solution can lead to new problems that yield new data and new results that are applied as solutions that can lead to new problems....

Action Research Spiral: Look, Think, & Act



<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/A-Closer-Look-at-Using-Stringer%27s-Action-Research-Nasrollahi/6cc95b41c981fcc96282b04c9adc56cdd5dac97>

How We Do Action Research

1. Determine that Action Research is the most appropriate design.
2. Problem Statement – involving situation analysis.
3. Resources needed and available. Literature review. Consultations with experts.
4. Data sources. Quantitative, qualitative, and triangulation. Validity issues.
5. Implement data collection, allowing for iterations. AR is not linear.
6. Analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. Interpretation of findings.
7. Develop an action plan, using the results to address the practical problems.
8. Share the findings with relevant publics. Remember that results lead to actions which can yield new data for analysis and further results to be studied.
9. Evaluate. Results often lead to empowerment, changing people and improving understanding and new knowledge.
10. New definitions of the problem – phase 2.

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Action Research in Communication , Consultancy, & Organizational Change.

Action Research

- Action Research is a useful method for facilitating organizational change by collaborating and involving the client in the entire process of diagnostic, problem identification, experiential learning, and problem-solving process (Juneja, 2015).



Why use Action Research?

- Action researchers undertake a study because they want to know whether they can do something in a better way
- It is conducted by people who want to do something to improve their own situation.
- It is concerned with changing situations, not just interpreting them

Why Conduct Action Research

- To explore and experiment with different teaching methods.
- To improve communication and networking
- To promote personal and professional development.
- To stimulate a sense of empowerment.

First Example

Findings:

- This study by Dr. Amina Abana was an assessment of the Nigerian Press coverage of Maternal Health issues as the fifth goal of the Millennium Development of Goals (MDGs).
- It examined and analysed 282 editions of The Guardian, New Nigerian, ThisDay, and Daily Trust newspapers from 2001-2007 to measure their contributions in terms of coverage towards the achievement of the MGDs.
- The findings revealed that that there was low coverage of maternal health issues.
- That prominence was not given to the coverage of Maternal Health issues and most reports carried were negative stories which may explain why the Maternal Health goal was not achieved in 2015 as planned.
- this gave rise to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030.



Second Example

- The second example to assist us understand Action research is a study by Dr Abdulmutallip A. Abubakar Analysis of Political Actors' Engagement with Social Media In Nigeria's 2011, 2015 and 2019 Presidential Elections
- The study used in-depth interviews, content analysis and document analysis for data collection
- That the political actors engage mostly with Facebook and Twitter.
- That the political actors' way of engagement with social media collectively improves in the elections.
- That the electoral management body and civil society organisations, recorded increased engagement with social media in the elections.
- that the way political parties engaged with social media decline the moment it gets power.
- That political actors also faced challenge such as bullying, poor internet connectivity and fake information which limits social media engagement
- That the engagement is mostly one way without feedback.

Third Example

- The third example is . PRP Research Report: Reconciliation And Reintegration in Communities In Borno State conducted by yours sincerely and colleagues in BOCODEP
- The research was conducted in Borno State in four local government areas: Jere, Konduga, Kaga and Maiduguri Metropolitan Council (MMC). Eleven communities were covered: Auno, Benisheikh, Bulabulin Ngarnam, Bulumkuttu, Gwange, Mainok, Mairi Kuwait, Moromti, Ngomari Airport, Ngamdu and Njimtillo
- Two research instruments, FGD and Individual Interview Guides, were used to collect data from male and female respondents resident in those communities. The respondents were made up of young males and females, elderly males and females, at risk youths, including IDPs in host communities.



Third Example Cont.

- The violence in the North East led to the stigmatization of individuals in several communities. The type of people that suffer stigma are Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), persons detained by the security agencies on suspicion of being members of Boko Haram but who were cleared and released after investigation, abducted women, friends of Boko Haram foot soldiers. People viewed them with suspicion and often avoid them. This has made to relocate to other places, within and outside Borno State, in the hope that they will shed off the stigma. However, the experiences of a few among them did not did not exonerate them from being seen as innocent but as members or sympathisers of Boko Haram.

Third Example Cont.

- The experience from most of the host of the host communities indicates that the repentant terrorist were being rejected in the communities because of the atrocities committed by them.
- The findings from this research gave birth to another Project “Smart Peace “ whose main focus is reconciliation and reintegration of displaced people and repentant members of Boko Haram who have passed through a rehabilitation process at the operation safe corridor.

Action Research for Management Consulting

- In the first step, the consultant conducts preliminary research. (The action-research)
- In the case of an external change agent, some of this preliminary research might amount to a marketing study in order to find clients, but it also would
- include the casual and formal information gathering that occurs during the initial meetings between client and consultant

Action Research and Management Consulting

- For internal consultants, preliminary research occurs during the period of trust building required to obtain managerial commitment to the change process.
- During this period, the consultant learns about the organization's problems and opportunities and informs the client about the methods and anticipated benefits of the action research process.

Action Research in Management Consulting

- That action research is not a “quick fix” or a “patch up” for ailing organizations. Instead, action research is an on-going process of renewal for action research. Instead, action research is an on-going process of renewal for organizations that wish to optimize their health.

Action Research for Successful Organizational Change

- A Systematic Approach to Problem Resolution and Dealing with the Challenges of Business
- Helps in Analysis of Issues and Developing the Interventions Accordingly
- Facilitates a Learning Culture
- Key Involvement of Senior Leaders and Various Stakeholders
- Facilitates Collaboration
- Results in Performance Improvement in all areas

Advantages of Action Research

- High level of practical relevance of the business research
- Can be used with quantitative, as well as, qualitative data
- Possibility to gain in-depth knowledge about the problem (Bryman, & Bell, 2011).

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Action Research in Business

Action Research in Business

What?

- Customer service, technology management, HR management, supply chain, organizational change

Why?

- Generating actionable knowledge

Examples

- Leadership Development (Bhatnagar, 2017)
- Merger of 2 companies (Canterino et al., 2016)
- Interorganizational innovations (Ystrom et al., 2019)

• Disciplines/Arenas

- Customer service
- Innovation
- Technology management
- HR management
- Supply chain
- Organizational change
- Finance
- Strategy
- Organizational development
- E-commerce
- Mergers/acquisitions

• Purpose

- To address important organizational, community, and social issues
TOGETHER WITH those who experience them
- To generate ACTIONABLE knowledge

Summary and Conclusions

Action Research started in the 1930s and has found increasing acceptance among social science researchers because of its applicability and practicality in many areas especially education and communication.

Although some detractors think say it is nothing more than common sense and good judgement, no doubt it employs scientific thinking and accepted research methods to real-life problems thereby representing a great improvement over practitioners' subjective judgment or decisions based on folklore or limited personal experiences (Best & Kuhn, 2003, p. 20).

When combined with Mixed Methods, it holds great promise for program evaluation and management consulting practices.

Recommended Readings

Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall.

Johnson, B. and Christensen, L. (2004). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods*. Boston: Pearson Education.

Lewin, K. (1946). Action research and minority problems. *Journal of Social Issues*, 2, 34-46.

Mills, E. (2000). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.