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Understanding the Nature of Participatory Action Research in Health

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ABSTRACT

Not until one has understand and fully realized that participatory action research is less objective that any other shapes of scientific investigation, the conduct of such process remains mysterious and difficult to achieve. This article is aimed at bridging myths in cultivating community of people with facilities of identifying their current stance, investigating their own practices, and able to address the problem to transform them under the limelight of experts. Moreover, the manuscript includes discussions on the nature, dimension and frameworks of participatory action research activity to improve situation, reflect and act again until they see transformation in process through synergistic exertions between those involved.

Keywords: action research; participatory action research; caring; research; nursing

INTRODUCTION

It is a type of research closely allied to both critical and feminist research. It is based principle that the generation of knowledge can be political and is used to exert power. Action study generally work with community or group of vulnerable population, oppressed, controlled or dominated culture. As the name implies, study participants collaborate in defining the problem, selecting methods, analyzing the data and deciding on the use to which findings are placed. PAR is attempted to develop action, raising consciousness among the participants, not just authentic knowledge.

Sometimes referred to *action research*, it is an attribute of active research in which the problem is determined by the people who believe and feel that the problem is really a perceived difficulty in the local setting and the solution to the is within the same setting without intention of generalizing its results. In other words, in participatory action research, the concerned people of the problem cooperate together to solve the issue.

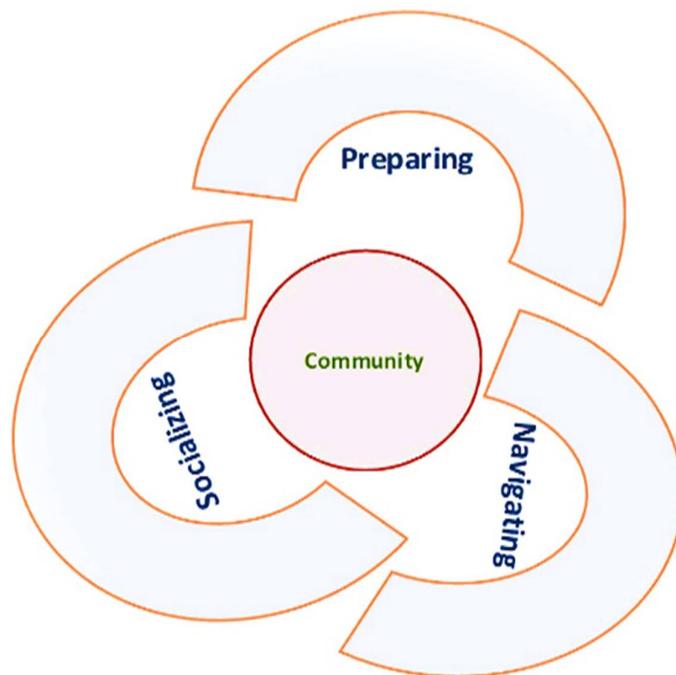


Figure 1. Dimension of participatory action research

Participatory action research is community-engaged undertaking with practice-related issue or a question which motivates stakeholders to explore their own process. It is not advised to employ the system among learners or community partners who do not recognize the problem in same angle as perceived by you being the project initiator. It is imperative to consider the aims, possible obstacles, available support in the context of the vulnerable population and most importantly, how the project achieves or meets the needs of the community. On

one hand, from the pedagogical perspective, it is also worth considering to think of intervention outside the box without changing the principle of 'deemed' transformation, not alienated from the actual recipients of care.

PREPARING PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Preparing of action research should be sensible in terms of timeframe. Following the SMART context (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Timebounded), the project manifests organization around revolving stage cycles. The stage starts with an exploratory stage concentrated on preliminary scrutinies and deliberations around the issue to address. Smith (2015) stresses the importance of understanding the context and issue with care before shifting forward with an action agenda to secure that context-responsiveness is attained.

By navigating, this means performing the action research project. Implementers should also possess a flexible attitude and openness to changes as their participants may also speak for suggestions in the context of their course of action. Suggestively, navigating for the project demands confidence and awareness as both the doers and recipients will record noticeable changes, contemplative climate of what has been done and needs to be executed, and sharing experiences with others. The writing activity through journaling helps the implementers and community partners to systematically document progress and gray areas which serves as basis for future development.

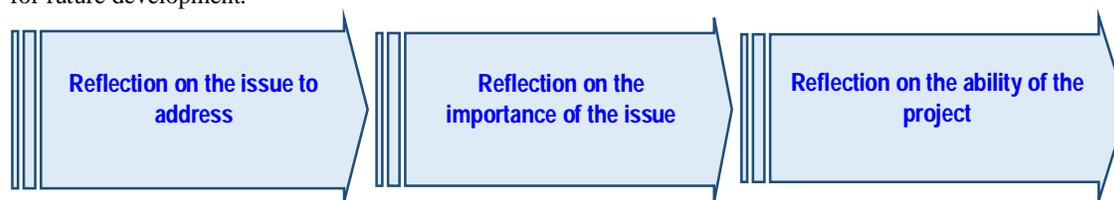


Figure 2. Reflective preparatory stage

Investigators should always recollect and recognize that PAR is not highly objective, rather intersubjective and contextual, encompassing that the desire to give attention to the context of the community people, their own voice and stories. With clearer aims and a well-defined philosophy, gathering of data will be a lot easier through observations, surveys and questionnaire used. Whatever data collection measurements one desires to embrace, written consent should be accomplished beforehand. The identity of the participants, confidentiality and/or anonymity are in place (Banegas, et'al., 2019) except when they (partakers) wanted their individuality to appear in the report for dissemination.

Another moral issue of certainty that the research methods do not debate or in disagreement with the educational aims of the protocol, but rather to confirm that the students' learning and skills are gauged and evaluated within a context beneficial and inquisitive for the learners- that is, within the condition that proceeds to be educative.

Research is dead if it is not disseminated to congregation both local and international in scope. Communication of research findings and outcomes bearing significant role for societal changes is ensured. The reporting of results is socialization which provides further chances to objectify, criticize, compare and contrast views through peer deliberation. In the case of publication, this refers to blind reviews of peer experts who have the command to enhance the work. Findings are shared in multiple ways through presentation in the scientific audience during conferences or meetings.

PRINCIPLES OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

The principles of participatory action research are as follows

1. The methods used in participatory action research have direct relevance on the beliefs and vision of the participants in the society or the masses.
2. Participatory action research should intend for the solution of the issue in order that the concerned people in the congregation be benefited as promptly as possible.
3. All the participants in the study process must be comprised in the formulation of the problem issue to its outcome conceptualization and execution.
4. The components of the research team should be made up of the researchers and the people representing all elements in the situation.
5. The research players should view the investigation process as a total community experience where community conditions are ascertained; cognition, insights and commitment within the community are increased.

This suggests further that the aim of the research process is to tap individuals who are research-oriented, efficient, scientific, functional, resourceful, ingenious, honest, economical, and religious or those who possess the qualities, in order to decipher colonial problems effectively.

FACETS OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

There are five characteristics of participatory action research.

1. **People-oriented**
It is people-oriented in the sense that they are responsible to believe and feel that the problem exists. Everybody is comprised to solving the crisis from the planning stage to the implementation stage.
2. **Community involvement**
The community is involved in conducting participatory action research. Project leader or researcher’s task is guiding the community in the identification of the project through technical skills used to extract the very need of the hour. Community people are partners, not recipients of any care program (Acob, 2018).
3. **Group-research**
The group is composed of the research team and the research participants should cooperate with each other to solve social problems, from planning stage to implementation phase.
4. **Big crowd**
PAR involves huge crowd especially during the general assembly meeting with research team and participants. Even if a big crowd is involved during the GA, everybody’s idea is entertained by the research team leader who presides the meeting.
5. **Political involvement**
The politicians such as the congressman, governor, mayor, community chairperson as key personnel and the like should get involved in the research process to make the solving of the social problems easier and faster. The project should clearly define one’s roles and functions prior to commencing the project. Investigators are bound to link the community to agencies distinct with roles that are deemed necessary for intervention purposes, not to spoon feed the perceived shortage of that constituency.

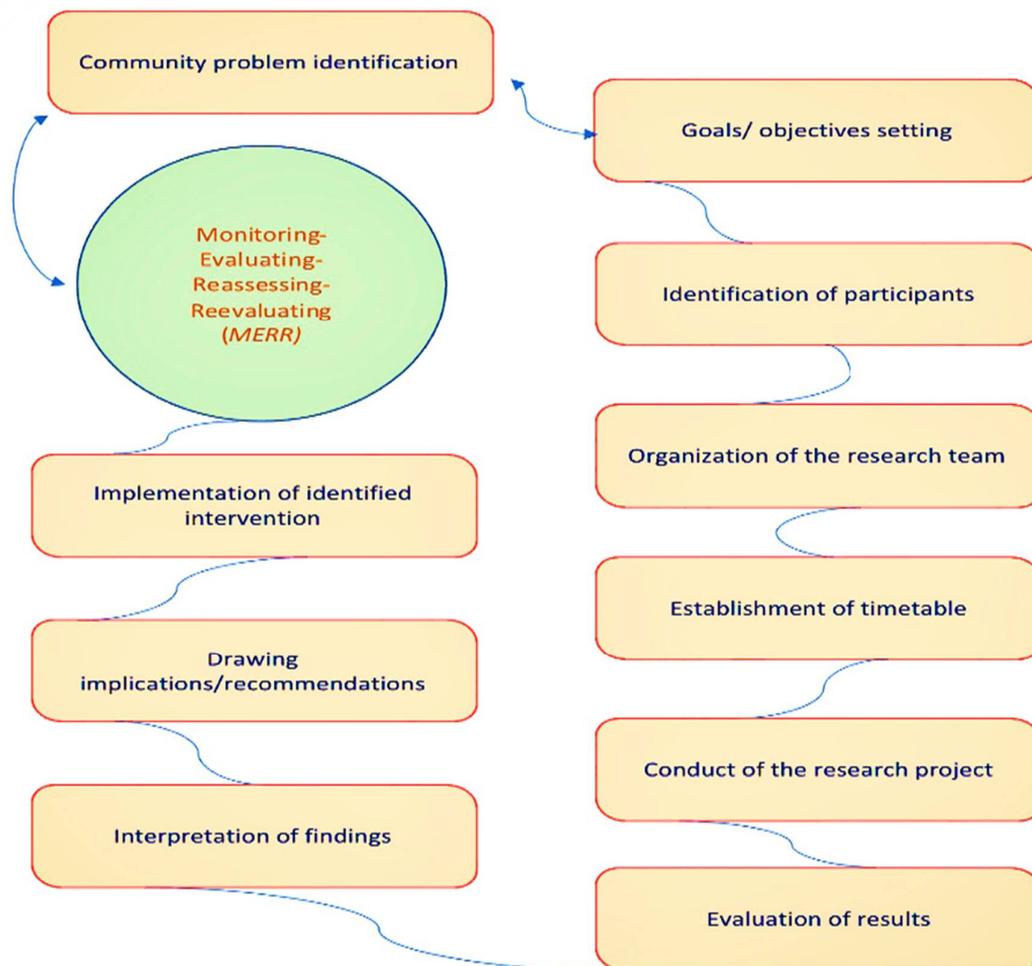


Figure 3. Framework of participatory action research

The framework (Figure 3) indicates the process of conducting participatory action research. Straightly speaking, community inspection is done to spot the most common issues which interventions are considered urgent. Note that the problem or concerns is intersubjective and is recognized far better by them, not by the project implementer. In other words, needs assessment and prioritization took place. By barely distinguishing their perceived priority need, objective is set. It must be fully reviewed by all stakeholders; this way the distribution of risk is fairly executed.

The problem may come in terms of management leadership crisis, nutrition of health related. In any shape and form, the project leader must critically determine organization of his/her team. The project lasts for a specific period depicted in the Gantt chart. This will guide researchers especially on the evaluation phase declaring how far have they gone through. It will also serve as point of reference to review if the implementation is acceptable within the predefined protocols of the study. In whichever aspects of the process, evaluation is the sole component with the ability to traverse to all parts of the cycle.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

The advantages of participatory action research were:

1. Research participants increase their knowledge and ideas as well as valid analysis of social reality, thus, more relevant solutions are achieved.
2. Both researchers and subjects of the study gain more from the research process when the researchers attain greater sensitivity and self-awareness of the problems.
3. The subjects of the study gain trust and self-confidence at their own rate and resources to improve their condition.
4. Good relationship can be developed among the research team, research participants, and the people in the community
5. Humanistic approach is enhanced through involvement of everyone in solving social problems

The disadvantages of participatory action research were:

1. It is time consuming
2. It is difficult to gather people and manage to attend the general assembly due to a large number of people involved
3. The research team may use their power to personal needs and most of the benefits go to them
4. Abuse of discretion by the research team may be practiced due to too much trust and confidence by the research participants and subjects of the study to them and they don't check and balance their activities.

CUE IN CRITIQUING PARTICIPATION ACTION RESEARCH:

1. Were the findings able to answer or congruent that of the predefined set of objectives?
2. What evidence does the report provide that the researcher's analysis is accurate and replicable?
3. Were the results acceptable to the community that literally becomes benefactors of the findings?
4. Were the monitoring scheme reveal no disruption or alteration of the project implementation?
5. Does the report include any descriptive statistics which sufficiently describes the major characteristics of the community?
6. From the outputs presented, what enhancement or proposal can be developed as follow-up initiative; how and in what way it can done better?

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