

Notes on Rigor in PAR Methods -- Greenwood and Levin pp 98-100

Basic task of social science: to create credible knowledge.

Basic task of PAR: "to co-create with communities credible knowledge about an important context-specific challenge and use it to design and guide actions and evaluate the results. In the process, PAR seeks to build research AND democratic (deliberative/discursive) capacity in the community.

Because PAR seeks to address important problems effectively (*workability* — see below), it must adhere to high standards of rigor. **PAR must actually be research.** The knowledge generated through a PAR process must have "the texture that displays the raw materials entering into arguments and the local process by which they are compressed and re-arranged to make conclusions credible" p. 99.

PAR is not just qualitative research. PAR processes must use qualitative, quantitative, and/or mixed method techniques wherever and whenever the conditions and subject at hand require. The particular mix of methods is contextually determined.

- If the task at hand requires counting, sampling, factor analysis, path analysis, or regression analysis, then these techniques will be used.
- If issues of voice, community story, the logico-meaningful universe of discourses and culturally constructed human situations are central to an AR project, then the collaborative research will make use of the appropriate qualitative methods. Text-based database analyses (formal, informal, OT-assisted), narrative analysis, life histories, autobiographies, focus groups, interviews of all sorts, documentary analyses and many other methods can ... be used. p. 98

PAR researchers must use "a transparent process of data analysis that will eventually lead to credible knowledge, a core aim of scientific knowledge generation."

The research process must be convincing for the persons that access the communications from research.

Doing good in and of itself is not what makes a project PAR-like. There must be "action and research held in close relationship to each other in a co-generative arena for a project to deserve the name of AR." p. 99

The dilemma of workability -- judging the adequacy of an interpretation according to how well it works when acted on in a local context:

- Conventional social sciences research shows no concern with workability. Instead,

professional tests -- statistical probability, replication, peer critique are used to assess the quality of the research results.

- But ... What works in context is not therefore fully understood. Put another way, successful workability does not automatically create a credible understanding of why something worked. It only shows that it did work. p.100.
- Thus, **workability is a key datapoint but not the end point of an AR process.** It does, however show you that you provided a practical solution to a particular problem.
- Moving from workability to credible knowledge that can be shared beyond the local project requires subjecting the workable outcomes to a variety of additional tests.e.g., counter-factual analyses and searching the literature and known cases for other approaches that create similar outcomes. If cases can be found ... Then the local AR interpretation of why actions were taken and why they had the effects they did can be contrasted with other possible interpretations that might account for the results. p. 100

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