

ACTION RESEARCH

Fourth Edition

Ernest T. Stringer

Curtin University of Technology

©SAGE

Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC

CONTENTS

Foreword	x
<i>Egon G. Guba</i>	
Preface	xv
About the Author	xxii
1. Research in Professional and Public Life	1
The Purposes and Applications of Action Research:	
Who Does Action Research, and Why Do They Do It?	1
<i>Action Research: Systematic Processes of Inquiry</i>	5
Making a Difference: Practical, Solutions-Oriented Inquiry	10
Participatory Approaches to Inquiry	14
The Role of the Researcher	20
Working Principles	23
<i>Relationships</i>	24
<i>Communication</i>	26
<i>Participation</i>	28
<i>Inclusion</i>	31
2. The Theory Behind the Practice	36
The Theoretical Foundations of Action Research	36
The Place of Theory in Action Research	37
The Theory Behind the Practice	40
"But It's Not Scientific": The Question of Legitimacy	41
Power, Control, and Subordination	45
Understanding Power and Control: Postmodern Perspectives	47
Action Research: The Next Generation	54
Giving Voice: Representing People's Experience	57
Changing Work and Social Practices: "Scripts" for Policies, Plans, and Procedures	59
What We Learn From the Literature	64
In the Company of Friends	68

3. Setting the Stage: Planning a Research Process	73
Designing Effective Research	73
Seeking Consensus: Designing Meaningful Research	75
Entering the Field: Building a Picture	76
<i>Establishing Contact</i>	76
<i>Sampling: Identifying Stakeholding Groups</i>	77
<i>Sampling: Identifying Key People</i>	79
<i>Establishing a Role</i>	81
<i>Agenda</i>	82
<i>Stance</i>	82
<i>Position</i>	82
Mapping the Context: Constructing a Preliminary Picture	85
Ethics in Action Research	88
<i>Formal Ethics Approval: Internal Review Boards</i>	
<i>and Agency Procedures</i>	91
Checking for Rigor	91
<i>Credibility</i>	92
<i>Transferability</i>	93
<i>Dependability</i>	94
<i>Confirmability</i>	94
Sociable Research Processes	94
Collaborative Design: A Foundation for Effective Research	96
4. Look: Gathering Data	99
Focusing: Framing the Research Question	99
Gathering Data: Acquiring Information	101
Sources of Information	103
Interviews: Guided Reflection	105
<i>Semistructured Questioning Procedures</i>	106
<i>Field Notes: Applying the Verbatim Principle</i>	110
<i>Tape Recorders</i>	110
Focus Groups	111
Participant Observation	113
Documents, Records, and Reports	115
Visual Media	116
<i>Photographs and Videos</i>	116
Surveys	118
Reviewing the Literature: Evidence From Research Studies	120
Gathering Statistical Information—How Many . . . ?	122
Extended Understanding: Descriptive Analysis	123

<i>Alternative 1: Working Ethnographically—Collaborative Descriptive Accounts</i>	124
<i>Alternative 2: Six Questions—Why, What, How, Who, Where, When</i>	124
<i>Alternative 3: Community Profile</i>	125
Meetings: Group Processes for Collaborative Inquiry	127
<i>Preliminary Meetings</i>	127
<i>Organizing Meetings</i>	128
5. Think: Reflection and Analysis	135
Interpretation: Developing Understanding	136
Analysis and Interpretation Phase I: Distilling the Data	139
<i>Categorizing and Coding</i>	139
<i>Analyzing Key Experiences, Epiphanic Events, or Critical Incidents</i>	144
<i>Case Example: Facilitating Workshops</i>	145
Analysis and Interpretation Phase II: Enriching the Analysis	147
Frameworks for Enriching the Analysis	148
<i>Alternative 1: Interpretive Questions—Why, What, How, Who, Where, When</i>	148
<i>Alternative 2: Organizational Review</i>	150
<i>Alternative 3: Concept Mapping</i>	152
<i>Alternative 4: Problem Analysis—Antecedents and Consequences</i>	155
Writing Reports Collaboratively	157
<i>Organizing Meetings</i>	157
<i>Procedures for Analysis</i>	157
<i>Constructing Reports</i>	159
<i>Participatory Visual Methods: Presentations and Performances</i>	160
Conclusion	163
6. Act: Action Plans—Implementing Sustainable Solutions	166
Constructing Action Plans	166
Planning	168
<i>Identifying Priorities for Action</i>	168
<i>Constructing Action Plans</i>	169
<i>Quality Check</i>	173
Implementing	175
<i>Supporting</i>	175
<i>Modeling</i>	178

<i>Linking</i>	179
Reviewing	180
Evaluating	182
Conclusion	183
7. Strategic Planning	187
<u>Managing Sustainable Change</u>	187
Managing Processes of Change and Development	189
Strategic Planning	191
<i>A Unifying Vision</i>	192
<i>Operational Statements: Enacting the Vision</i>	194
<i>Action Plans</i>	195
<i>Reviewing the Plans</i>	196
<i>Political Dimensions</i>	196
<i>Budgeting and Financial Planning</i>	198
Guiding the Research Process	200
<i>Principles in Operation</i>	200
<i>Appropriate Language</i>	201
<i>Making Decisions</i>	202
<i>Support and Monitoring</i>	203
Evaluating	204
Steps to Evaluation	204
Celebrating	207
8. Reports: Informing Stakeholders	210
The Purpose of Reporting	210
Constructing General Reports	210
Formal Reports	211
Giving Voice: Reporting in Action Research	212
Reports, Theses, and Dissertations	214
Structure of a Report	217
<i>Section 1: Introduction—Focus and Framing</i>	218
<i>Section 2: Review of the Literature</i>	218
<i>Section 3: Methodology</i>	219
<i>Section 4: Research Outcomes or Findings</i>	223
<i>Section 5: Conclusion—Discussion of Findings</i>	225
Giving Voice: Alternative Report Structures	227
9. Action Research and the Internet	231
Social Media and Online Collaborative Tools	231
<i>Blogs</i>	231
<i>Twitter</i>	233

<i>Facebook</i>	234
<i>Second Life</i>	235
<i>Skype</i>	236
<i>ooVoo</i>	<i>Til</i>
<i>Google Docs</i>	237
<i>Dropbox</i>	237
<i>Wiki</i>	238
<i>Cloud Storage</i>	239
<i>PhotoVoice</i>	239
Action Research Websites	240
<i>General</i>	240
<i>Education</i>	241
<i>Community Development and Community Organizations</i>	242
<i>Disabilities</i>	243
<i>Health</i>	244
<i>Project Management and Evaluation</i>	246
<i>Gender Issues</i>	246
fowf/i	246
Appendix: Case Examples of Formal Reports	247
<i>Transitions: The Experiences of Older Women From Hospital to Home</i>	247
<i>Transitions: Experiences of Older People From Hospital to Home—Progress Report</i>	258
<i>A New Mathematics Curriculum</i>	264
<i>Understanding the "Understanding": Preliminary Findings on Aboriginal Perspectives on Engagement With Governments</i>	277
<i>Milyirrtjarra Kuurl Mirrka Palyalpayi (Making Good Food at Warburton School)</i>	287
References	293
Index	299