

International Education for Action Research in Health, Ageing and Development

Preliminary concept for cooperation between The University of Sydney and Sichuan University

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International Education for Action Research in Health, Ageing and Development is a collaborative project combining education, research and action to benefit communities in China and South East Asia.

Collaborating organisations for this project are:

- Action & Research Open Web (AROW), School of Behavioural & Community Health, The University of Sydney, Australia
- Health Promotion and Training Center on Ageing of the West China Medical Center (HPTCOA) Sichuan University, PR China
- Help Aged International Asia-Pacific Development Centre (APRDC)

This project builds on previous cooperation between AROW, The University of Sydney, Australia; Centre International de Formation en Recherche Action (CIFRA), Burkina Faso and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) Germany.

Collaboration may be extended to include other university, government and non-government organisations, especially in the South East Asia region.

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Key Elements

Education

- In-service career development in
 - Health, development & social administration
 - Health promotion
 - Community development
 - Service development & quality improvement
 - Education, research & consulting
- Non-award course in Action Research
- Graduate Certificate in Action Research & Improving Health Systems
- Action Research PhD or Master of Applied Science

Research

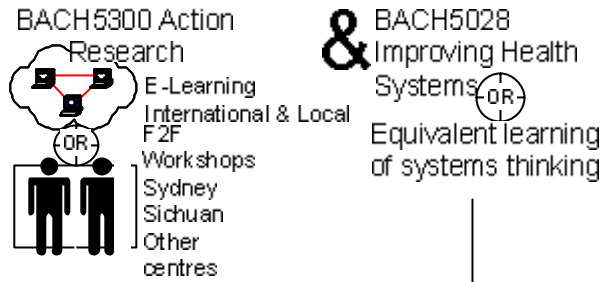
- Build systems theory relevant to local situations & problems
- Develop local knowledge systems & link to wider knowledge
- Practical knowledge about local situations & problems
- Practical knowledge relevant to national & regional priorities
- Knowledge of local health & development needs, problems and solutions

Action

- Practical solutions to pressing local problems
- Develop & improve local health systems
- Build education, action & research capability
- Build international understanding & cooperation

International Education
for Action Research
CONCEPT

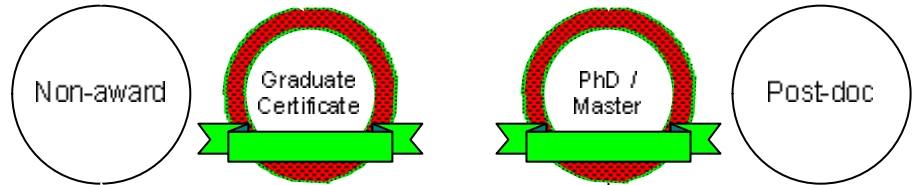
Preparation



Project



Award



Outcomes

Practical knowing
Practical solutions

National research &
system development
priorities

Pragmatic
approaches to
intractable problems

Explanation of concept diagram

Preparation courses:

1. BACH5300 Action Research offered in English by e-learning OR equivalent local workshops based on common curriculum (Preparation for non-award action research project)
2. BACH5028 Improving Health Systems offered in English by e-learning (with 1, preparation for Graduate Certificate action research project)
3. DHSC7003 Foundations for Doctoral Studies (with 1 and 2, preparation for action research PhD project).

Project

- Action research projects (non-award, graduate certificate (12cp), Masters, PhD supported by either face-to-face or on-line learning circles, all facilitated or supported by AROW.
- Non-award & graduate certificate projects support local needs
- PhD projects address system development or national research priorities, and include mentoring in learning circle facilitation
- Post-doctoral projects develop action research approaches to complex and intractable problems in health, ageing or development.

Awards

- Non-award courses lead to certificate of participation or achievement
- Graduate certificate gives course credit to Master of Health Science coursework
- Successful PhD students become mentors and consultants in International Education for Action Research, and develop local sustainability.

Outcomes

- Practical knowing & practical solutions for local needs, issues and problems
- Action research capability to address regional & national priorities
- Pragmatic solutions to intractable problems

Participating together in action and reflection, theory and practice in pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, contributing to the health and happiness of people and their communities.

What is action research?

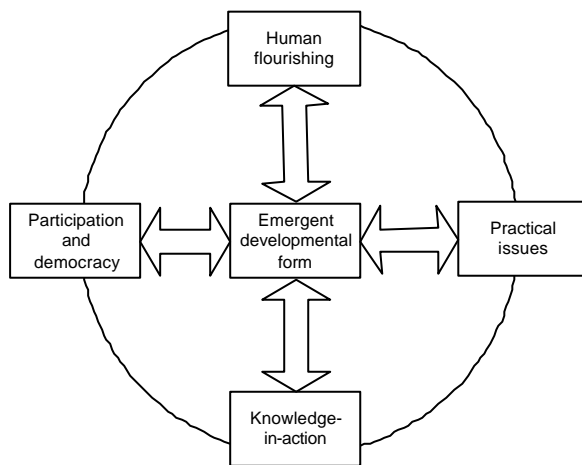
Action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview... It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally, the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (Reason & Bradbury, 2001: 1)

The purpose of action research is to improve our lives, through knowledge and action. Action researchers do not pursue knowledge for its own sake, but for the contribution we can make to human happiness. Action research can help to build a better, freer world for us to share.

Action research is an effective instrument for solving practical problems. It works towards practical solutions to pressing issues that concern people at home and work. Our issues for inquiry are not derived from theoretical constructs, but emerge from the suffering and contradictions of people's everyday lives.

Participatory action research is peoples' research (Park, 2001: 81), a social practice for people to emancipate themselves. It involves people's direct participation in decision making that affects their lives. A philosophy of non-violent action (Sharp, 1973) underlies action and research to develop a more peaceful, fairer society; and informs interventions that do not depend on external coercion and control.

Action researchers go beyond empirical, rational, propositional knowledge, to communicate ways of knowing-in-action, including experiential, tacit, reflexive, and practical knowing.



Knowing, is not just as an academic pursuit, but also an everyday practice of creating meaning in relationship with others.

The underling epistemology of action research is not inductive nor deductive, but emergent. Practical knowing of solutions develops in interaction at specific times and places. Action research cannot be fully programmed and predicted. Good action research emerges over time as people develop skills, and communities of inquiry develop in communities of practice.

Characteristics of action research

(Source: Reason & Bradbury 2001 p.2.)

References

- Park, P. (2001). Knowledge and participatory research. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook for Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice* (pp. 81-90). London: Sage.
- Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (2001). Introduction: Inquiry and participation in search of a world worthy of human aspiration. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook for Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice* (pp. 1-14). London: Sage.
- Sharp, G. (1973). *The politics of nonviolent action*. 3 vols. Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers.