



How to Plan Good Projects

How to Do Projects as a Team: Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Sometimes people see problems in the world or in their community that they want to fix. They may have an idea of how to make things better. Or they may need to learn more about the problem before they can find a solution. They may choose to do a kind of project called “participatory action research” or “PAR.”

What is PAR?

PAR gets its name from the idea that the people affected by the problem *participate* in finding the solution. Their aim is to take *action* against the problem. And they do *research* to help them solve real world problems.

Participation

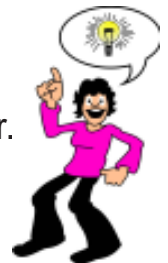
Sometimes community groups do PAR projects. They decide what is important to them. They decide as a team what to do and how to do it. They set the rules for how they will work together. If they disagree about what to do, they work out their disagreements together.



The group may ask a researcher to help them plan the project. Or maybe someone in the group knows how to plan the project. Even if they ask a researcher to help them, the group stays in control of what happens in the project.

Action

Sometimes the group already has an idea of how to make things better. If they do, they try it out. This is the “action” in their PAR project.

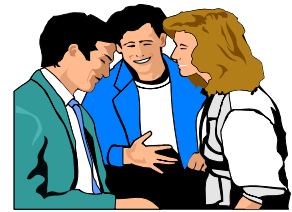


Research

Then they gather information from each other or from other people to find out how well their idea worked. This is the “research” part of their PAR project. PAR projects use the same methods as other types of research projects.

Team Work

It is important that everyone in the group understands what they will do. Sometimes, people feel left out, but they do not say how they feel. The group must have a way to check with members to see if they all feel like they can participate as much as they want to.



In PAR, the group members work together to figure out what the information they gathered means. They all help make sense of what they found out.



If their idea worked well, then they tell other groups so that other people can take action to make things better, too. In PAR, the group decides together what they will do with what they learned. They may speak up at meetings about their results. They may write a paper or make a video about what they learned. The group will pick who will speak at meetings or write the paper or be in the video. In PAR, the group controls the project from start to end.

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