



## SECTION SIX

### ACTION RESEARCH RESOURCES



#### References/Further Reading

##### The Reconnect Action Research web site: 'Reconnectar'

There is a special web site to support Reconnect services that are carrying out Action Research.

The School of Human Services at the Queensland University of Technology is contracted to provide the Department of Family and Community Services with a number of services related to the web site, including an On-Line Teaching system for Reconnect Action Research. The information on the site is interactive so that services can have some 'ownership' and confidence in its capacity to assist them.

This kit is also available on the web site, as well as copies of useful publications about Action Research. (*For more information about publications, see below*).

Visit the web site at: <http://www.olt.qut.edu.au/udf/reconnectar/>

## Action Research and the Youth Homelessness Pilot Programme

Below are details of the publications referred to in this Action Research kit.

Most of these are available on-line through the 'Reconnectar' web site at:

<http://www.olt.qut.edu.au/udf/reconnectar/>

The list will be updated regularly on the web site to include information and input from the practitioners and services that are involved in Action Research.

ARTD (1998), 'Evaluation of the Youth Homeless Pilot Programme' in Evaluation Committee, Prime Ministerial Youth Homeless Taskforce, *Putting Families in the Picture: Supplementary Report*, Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra.

This provides program evaluation of the 26 Youth Homelessness Pilot Programme projects. It also includes the findings of the Programme, identifying good practice insights, critical success factors and barriers and gaps.

Crane, P. and Brannock, J. (1996), *Homelessness among young people in Australia: Early intervention and prevention*, A report to the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme, National Clearinghouse for Youth Studies, Hobart, Tasmania.

This study contributed to the development of the Youth Homelessness Pilot Programme framework, with reference to concepts like as 'soft entry' points, 'immediacy of responses' and 'first to know' agencies. In the report, Crane and Brannock state that, '*[T]he purpose of the study was to determine models of best practice in the prevention of, and early intervention into, youth homelessness*'.

Crane, P. (1998), 'Incorporation of Action Research into Government Social Programs', Conference paper, *Action learning*, Action Research and Process Management (ALARPM) National Conference, Brisbane, July.

Evaluation Committee, Prime Ministerial Youth Homeless Taskforce (1998), *Putting Families in the Picture: Supplementary Report*, Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra.

This report summarises the main findings and statistics from the evaluation of the Youth Homelessness Pilot Programme. It contains a section on the best practice principles that came out of the evaluation. The Evaluation Committee said that, '*[T]he primary purpose of this report is to present, contextualise, and briefly critique the body of evidence generated by the evaluation strategy*'.





Prime Ministerial Youth Homeless Taskforce (1996), *First Report of the Prime Ministerial Youth Homeless Taskforce: Framework for the Youth Homelessness Pilot Programme*, AGPS, Canberra.

This first report outlines the framework for the Youth Homelessness Pilot Programme and discusses its context and underlying principles.

Prime Ministerial Youth Homeless Taskforce (1998), *Youth Homelessness Pilot Programme: Interim Report*, AGPS, Canberra.

This reference provides information about the implementation of the pilot programme, details of the pilot projects and some of the emerging themes.

Prime Ministerial Youth Homeless Taskforce (1998), *Putting Families in the Picture: Early Intervention into Youth Homelessness*, Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra.

The author says that, '[T]his final report summarises the outcomes of the pilot programme and presents the Taskforce's recommendations in response to its terms of reference'.

Quixley, S. (1997), *The Action Research Resource Kit*, Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services, Canberra.

This Action Research kit was developed for the Youth Homelessness Pilot Programme to assist with implementation of Action Research in the pilots. Its programme-specific focus and step-by-step framework makes it recommended reading.

Quixley, S. (1998), 'A Commentary on the Process of Implementing Action Research in the Youth Homelessness Pilot Programme' in Evaluation Committee, Prime Ministerial Youth Homeless Taskforce, *Putting Families in the Picture: Supplementary Report*, Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra.

This commentary takes a detailed look at how Action Research was implemented in the Youth Homelessness Pilot Programme. It has valuable insights about the methods used; the implications for practice; the advantages and challenges of the participatory Action Research framework; and characteristics of effective Action Research. It contains information about improving future application of Action Research to the Reconnect Program.

RPR Consulting (1998), *Report of youth homelessness pilot projects good practice forums*, Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra.

This report includes the material collated from the four Good Practice Forums held in May 1998 that was attended by Youth Homelessness Pilot services. The report also contains good practice early intervention principles that were proposed at the forums for working with young people and their families. The report discusses the main intervention strategies

used by projects, and the relationship between these and the good practice principles. It also covers gaps and barriers to effective intervention, including a discussion about systemic issues.

### **References to Action Research and related processes**

Cancian, F. & Armstead, C. (1993), 'Subject Biography: Participatory Research' in *Collaborative Inquiry*, No.9.

Quixley (1997) writes that this text, '*...is a useful starting point if you want to take a look at Action Research in depth. The listing includes material on theory and practice, internationally and looks at the application of participatory approaches in addressing a range of 1st and 3rd world problems*'.

Carr, W. & Kemmis, S. (1986), *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research*, Deakin University, Geelong.

Coover, V., Deacon, E., Esser, C. and Moore, C. (1985), *Resource manual for a Living Revolution: A Handbook of Skills and Tools for social Change Activists*, New Society Publishers, Philadelphia.

Quixley (1997) writes, '*[F]or those with a group/team work bent, this is a really practical resource...it is not directly addressing Action Research but explores processes and techniques suited to a range of participatory endeavours. I have found it a really useful stimulus to process design*'.

Dick, B. (1999), 'Sources of rigour in Action Research: addressing the issues of trustworthiness and credibility', A paper presented at the Association for Qualitative Research Conference, Issues of rigour in qualitative research, Melbourne 6-10 July.

This explains the concept of rigour and how it is achieved in Action Research by capitalising on the inherent features of the Action Research process.

Everitt, A., Hariker, P., Littlewood, J. and Mullender, A. (1992), *Applied research for better practice*, The Macmillan Press, London.

In this book, there are chapters on being a 'research-minded practitioner' with an emphasis on the participatory framework, and what this looks like in practice. It contains a particularly good chapter called 'Developing a Methodology'.

Goff, S and Associates (1998), *Restraint of love: participatory Action Research into the meaning of family violence to young people*, Southern Cross University Press, Lismore.





The publisher of *Restraint of Love* refers to it as, ‘...a description of participatory Action Research (PAR) in practice...The project used PAR to explore the meaning of family violence to young people. The purpose of the project was to extend the assumptions underpinning youth work and domestic violence intervention about this issue, in order to stimulate more effective intervention strategies.’ This book gives an excellent account of how service researchers and participants work together in the Action Research process from a ‘both sides’ perspective.

Grundy, S. (1982), ‘Three modes of Action Research’, *Curriculum Perspectives*, Vol.2 (3), pp. 23-24.

Hart, E. and Bond, M. (1995), *Action Research for health and social care: a guide to practice*, Open University Press, Philadelphia.

This guide provides a cohesive discussion about how Action Research can bridge the gap between theory, research and practice. While mainly focused on the application of Action Research in health settings, it does make comparisons and links them to practitioners in social/welfare work.

The guide also discusses:

- Action Research concepts in context and practice and issues such as the impact of existing organisational cultures, resistance to change and time constraints;
- Action Research methodologies clearly and plainly, with ways of keeping the focus on ‘process’ and the use of diaries and work journals; and
- useful case studies that tease out ‘real life’ applications. They cover areas like the rewards and difficulties of Action Research in practice; involving management; negotiating ‘understanding’ between different groups; and ideas about data collection.

Kemmis, S. & McTaggart, R. (Eds.) (1988), *The Action Research reader*, Third Edition, Deakin University, Geelong.

With a range of contributions about Action Research values and processes, this is a good place to start reading.

McArdle, J. (1999), *Community development in the market economy*, Vista Publications, Melbourne.

While primarily a book about community development and community action (particularly within an economic rationalist environment), many of the concepts and strategies in this book may help you with your Action Research, such as:

- sections on empowerment and participation in community action;
- principles and strategies for consultation; and
- practical strategies such as discussion groups, community conferences, focus groups and community resources auditing.

Seymour-Rolls, K and Hughes, I. (1995), *Participatory Action Research: Getting the job done*, University of Sydney.

This publication discusses the three concepts of participatory Action Research and outlines the 'moments' in the Action Research cycle.

Stringer, Ernie, (1999), *Action Research: A handbook for practitioners*, Second Edition, Sage, Thousand Oaks.

Bob Dick, on his Action Research web site at: [www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arhome.html](http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arhome.html) comments on this text. He says that, '*[E]mphasising community applications of Action Research, this clearly written book explains how to conduct Action Research in very practical terms, yet is consistent with the theoretical literature*' It provides a good discussion about participation, communication and inclusion with many practical examples of Action Research processes. It also remodels the four phases in this Action Research kit as 'look, think, act'.

Uhlmann, V. (1995), *Action Research and participation*, [On-line], available at: <http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/partic.html>

Wadsworth, Y. (1984), *Do It Yourself Social Research*, Victorian Council of Social Service and Melbourne Family Care Organisation, Melbourne.

This resource deals with practical issues such as time management and different forms of documentation. It has an extensive section on Action Research techniques/methodologies and is particularly useful for comparing traditional/positivist research methods with Action Research, as well as outlining the benefits of Action Research in particular settings such as human service contexts.

Wadsworth, Y. (1991), *Everyday Evaluation on the Run*, Action Research Issues Association Incorporated, Melbourne.

This article discusses evaluation from an Action Research perspective. It takes you through research and evaluation processes in a practical way with a good section on using critical reference groups.

Wadsworth, Y. (1993), *What is participatory Action Research?—work in progress*, Action Research Issues Association Incorporated, Melbourne.





## On-line resources

### ***Action Research web site maintained by Bob Dick***

[www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arhome.html](http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arhome.html) ©1997

This site is definitely worth a good look. The web site's content is accessible and 'reader friendly'. It contains an extensive range of resources from basic information and discussion pages, introductory overviews to Action Research concepts, through to more specific papers on rigour, methodology, and critical issues in Action Research processes. It includes:

- an extensive annotated bibliography of source material;
- a list of links to other sites (Australian and international) and discussion groups;
- contributions by other authors on Action Research and associated topics; and
- a public course with weekly sessions about Action Research. (The resource papers from this are available on-line.)

### ***Action Research on Web***

<http://www.cchs.usyd.edu.au/arow>

Ian Hughes who is based at the University of Sydney maintains this site. There are a number of on line articles and reference that are updated regularly. Keep on checking the 'electronic reader' section, as there are a number of contributions on Action Research processes from different authors and sources, including in discussion papers, articles, links and other resources.

### ***Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management Association Incorporated (ALARPM)***

Each year the Brisbane branch of this Association sponsors a two-day conference with workshop-oriented sessions about Action Research from academics and practitioners in the field.

For details of their 2000 World Congress, visit the web site at:

<http://www.alarpm.org.au/wc5&9/>

## Glossary

### ***Action learning***

Action learning can be defined as a process in which a group of people come together more or less regularly to help each other to learn from their experience (Dick, 1997).

### ***Action Research***

Action Research is a process by which change and understanding can be pursued at the one time. It is usually described as cyclic, with action and critical reflection taking place in turn. The reflection is used to review the previous action and plan the next one (Dick, 1997).

### ***Experiential learning***

This is a process for drawing learning from experience. The experience can be something which is taking place, or more often is set up for the occasion by a trainer or facilitator. Both Action Research and Action Learning are about learning from experience. The experience is usually drawn from some task assumed by a person or team. Experiential learning is the basis for the learning component of both Action Learning and Action Research (Dick, 1997).

### ***Early intervention***

Involves the development and implementation of policies, practices and strategies which address situational factors affecting specific young people. These: a) respond to a perceived difficulty or crisis which may be a precursor to a specific instance of homelessness; or b) respond after homelessness has occurred, but before such time as the shift to chronic homelessness has taken place (Crane & Brannock, 1996, p. 15).

Any activity that would assist in re-engaging young people who had recently left home or saw themselves at risk of homelessness when they, or their family members, sought help from friends, schools, community or government agencies (Final Report of the Prime Minister's Youth Homeless Taskforce, 1998, p. 12).

### ***Early home leaving***

Early home leaving occurs when a young person and the family of origin (parent, parents, long-term care giver) separate, for whatever reason, at a stage when there is general community consensus that the young person and family of origin should live together, and where a degree of parental guidance and dependence is appropriate. This definition of early home leaving takes into account a wide range of circumstances, including protective intervention by the state, the abandonment of children and the expulsion of children from the family or foster home (Final Report of the Prime Minister's Youth Homeless Taskforce, 1998, p. 8).





### ***First to know agencies***

Those services most likely to be the first point of contact for young people or parents experiencing difficulties related to early home leaving (Crane & Brannock, 1996, p. viii). For example, schools are often an important 'first to know' agency.

### ***Participatory Action Research***

Participatory Action Research is a form of Action Research where the people involved in a practice or situation are participants, and where possible co-researchers in the inquiry and change processes.

### ***Reconnect early intervention strategy***

In keeping with the values and aims of the Commonwealth Reconnect Program, Reconnect services are an important element of the 'holistic' approach to building communities' early intervention capacities to help young people and their families around issues of homelessness. The term '*Reconnect early intervention strategy*' is seen as 'inclusive' because the program aims to improve the early intervention capacity of a particular community in which the Reconnect service is located.

### ***Soft entry points***

Providing parents, young people and other family members with a range of universally accessible, non-stigmatising support services. Such services should provide a 'soft entry' point of first contact where parents or young people, separately or together, can access support to more specialised services. (Crane & Brannock, 1996, p. viii). An example of this would be a service that is attached to a café where people are happy to go without feeling like they are accessing 'welfare' or asking for help.

### ***Technical Action Research***

It is a conventional research process, undertaken separately from practice. It may, or may not involve (selected) stakeholders. Stakeholders seen as informants rather than participants, in the research process. The researchers' determine the questions for research (Quixley, 1998, p. 9).

### ***Youth Homelessness Pilot Programme***

In May 1996, the Prime Minister announced the formation of a Taskforce to explore more effective responses to youth homelessness, with a particular focus on early intervention. The Taskforce's main responsibility was to oversee the Youth Homelessness Pilot Programme in which 26 services Australia-wide trialed a range of early intervention and family relations' approaches to youth homelessness. (*For more information about the Youth Homelessness Pilot Programme, see 'References/further reading' above.*)

