

Research Highlights

Topic: Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Turnbull, A.P., Friesen, B.J., & Ramirez, C. (1998). Participatory action research as a model for conducting family research. *Journal of The Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 23(3), 178-188.

BOTTOM LINE

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a collaborative process between researchers and the people who are expected to benefit from the research, including family members of people with disabilities. Families are stakeholders of the PAR research along with the researchers. The PAR approach is consistent with the conceptualization of researchers and stakeholders collaborating throughout the entire research process, as defined by the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR). Advantages and challenges inherent in the PAR process are discussed.

TIPS

- Recognize that cohesion and trust between faculty, staff, and family members are best created in face-to-face situations and person-to-person interactions.
- Consider that family members who have professional degrees or research experience may perform bridging and translation functions and serve as peer reviewers in the PAR process.
- Take advantage of opportunities for learning such as conference participation and attending college classes.
- Make an effort to plan and to share information before a PAR study is undertaken.
- Establish clear expectations about mutual responsibility and decision-making processes.

- Weigh carefully how time and costs affect the scope of the study and the ability of families to participate; provide support accordingly.

KEY FINDINGS

- Advantages of PAR
 - ◆ Research is more relevant to the concerns of family members.
 - ◆ Research is more rigorous and better geared towards participants than with other methods.
 - ◆ Researchers experience fewer logistical problems with recruitment and completion rates.
 - ◆ Research findings are more likely to be used by PAR participants.
 - ◆ PAR informs and empowers researchers as well as all other participants.
 - ◆ PAR inspires action through the realization of collective strength.
 - ◆ PAR leads to an identification of research topics that are relevant to all families with children who have disabilities.
 - ◆ PAR approach may require adaptations to university, funding agency, and institutional rules.
- Challenges of the PAR approach
 - ◆ Research may take more time to plan and conduct.
 - ◆ More time is needed to build reciprocal trust.
 - ◆ Communication gaps, perceived criticism of researchers, and negative attitudes about research and researchers may have an effect on collaboration.
 - ◆ Research may cost more because family participants should be paid for their time/participation.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

Markey, U.A. (2000). PARTnerships. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 2(3), 188-189, 192.

Markey, U., Santelli, B., & Turnbull, A.P. (1998). Participatory action research involving families from underserved communities and researchers: Respecting cultural and linguistic diversity. In B.A. Ford (Ed.), *Compendium: Writings on effective practice for culturally and linguistically diverse exceptional learners* (pp. 20-33). Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children, Division for Culturally and Linguistically and Diverse Exceptional Learners.

RELATED
PUBLICATIONS
cont.

Santelli, B., Ginsberg, C., Sullivan, S., & Niederhouser, C. (2002) A collaborative study of Parent to Parent support: Implications for positive behavioral support. In J. Lucyshyn, G. Dunlap, & R. W. Albin (Eds.), *Families and positive behavioral supports: Addressing the challenge of problem behaviors on family contexts* (pp. 439-456). Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes.

Santelli, B., Markey, U., Johnson, A., Turnbull, R., & Turnbull, A. (2001). The evolution of an unlikely partnership between researchers and culturally diverse families: Lessons learned. *TASH Newsletter*, March/April, 21-25.

Santelli, B., Singer, G.H.S., DiVenere, N., Ginsberg, C., & Powers, L. (1998). Participatory action research: Reflections on critical incidents in a PAR project. *Journal of the Association for Persons with Severe Handicaps*, 23(3), 211-222.

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