

Chapter 3: INITIATING AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY: METHODOLOGY

Stringer, E. & Dwyer, R. (2005). *Action research in human services*. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.

A. Identifying Sources and Form of Information – Data Gathering

Identify types of information leading to a resolution of your issue. Major source of information is acquired from interviews with research participants who are stakeholders or from literature reviews.

B. Community Research

1. Selecting participants

- a. Sampling – selecting a small group to provide data on which the research is grounded
- b. Purposeful sampling – ensures that the diverse perspectives of people likely to affect the issue are included; focus on variations of perspectives and experiences
 - 1) Maximal variation – people who represent the diverse perspectives found in any social context
 - 2) Extreme case sampling – particularly troublesome or enlightening cases
 - 3) Typical sampling – participants who are typical of people in the setting
 - 4) Theory or concept sampling – participants who have particular knowledge related to the issue studied
- c. First task
 - 1) Primary group -- group most centrally involved or affected by the group
 - 2) ***Consider the anticipated project and who is really your primary group
- d. Second task
 - 1) Identify other stakeholders – have a significant impact or likely to be impacted most
 - 2) Demographic issues: gender, class, race, ethnicity, economic status, different social cliques, religious affiliations, professions, groups
- e. Snowballing – extend research to relevant people as study progresses
- f. Natural/opinion leaders—Able to sway opinions or perspectives of others

2. Overview

- a. Sources
 - 1) Participant accounts
 - 2) Review of literature
 - 3) Observations of sites, settings, events, and activities
 - 4) Reviews of other relevant information sources: materials, equipment, work samples, documents, records, reports
- b. Research Plan
 - 1) Stipulate type of data to be acquired [qualitative or quantitative]
 - 2) Stipulate methods to be employed to gather different types of information
 - i. Interviews
 - ii. Focus groups

- iii. Observations
 - iv. Reviews
 - v. Photographs
 - vi. Videotapes
 - vii. Audiotapes
- 3) Provide information to participants regarding *where, when, how, and from whom* information will be acquired, and indicate the number and duration of interviews and observations

3. Research Ethics

- a. Need for ethical protocols that protect the well-being and interests of research participants
 - 1) Do not knowingly or unknowingly put research participants at risk or violate privacy
- b. How will ethical considerations be taken into consideration? What procedures will be included to ensure safety and address situations of potential harm?
- c. Confidentiality, Care, and Sensitivity
 - 1) Treat all information as confidential; consider how to treat information that participant might not want to be associated with – disguising resources
 - 2) Obligation of duty to care for information – store documents securely and do not share information without permission

4. Permission – IRB [review sheet] [p. 45-46]

- a. Research is a public process...involves colleagues, clients, families, other agencies or services; people's privacy or personal well-being may be at risk...written permission is required from
 - 1) Participants
 - 2) Person in a position of responsibility
 - 3) Association with an educational facility, the institution requires review by an Ethics Committee
- b. Obtain an Informed Consent [Fig. 3.2, p. 47]
- c. Establish trust and credibility with participants

5. Establish trustworthiness and credibility for research

- a. Credibility – is the project plausible, and does it have integrity
- b. Transferability – can the results be applied to contexts other than the research setting
- c. Dependability – are research processes clearly defined and open to scrutiny
- d. Confirmability – can the outcomes of the study be demonstrably drawn from the data
- e. Validity – enhanced by participation...the extent of stakeholder participation
 - enhanced by the extent to which practical outcomes are achieved