Pragmatic Action Research*

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AR is not just one more social science “method”; it is a fundamentally different way of conducting research and social change work together. Participation in AR is not just a moral value but essential to successful AR because the complexities of the problems addressed require the knowledge and experience of a broad and diverse array of stakeholders. I argue that there is no one ideal form of AR and that what is useful is situationally dependent which is also why AR cannot respect or operate within the disciplinary boundaries or departmental structures of academic. For these reasons, Morten Levin and I prefer to call our work “pragmatic AR”. To complete the paper, I present two cases, one from industry and one from community development, to show how I practice pragmatic AR in context.

Key words: Pragmatic AR, method, participation

AR is neither a method nor a technique; it is an approach to living in the world that includes the creation of arenas for collaborative learning and the design, enactment, and evaluation of liberating actions. I practice AR pragmatically as a strategy for research that self-consciously and strategically combines multiple methods and techniques according to the concrete needs of particular groups and situations.

* I would particularly like to thank Werner Fricke, not only for the invitation to participate in this issue of the International Journal of Action Research, but for his thoughtful, critical, and kind editorial hand. As much a mentor as an editor, Werner deserves no blame for the weaknesses of this essay and much credit for whatever strengths it has.