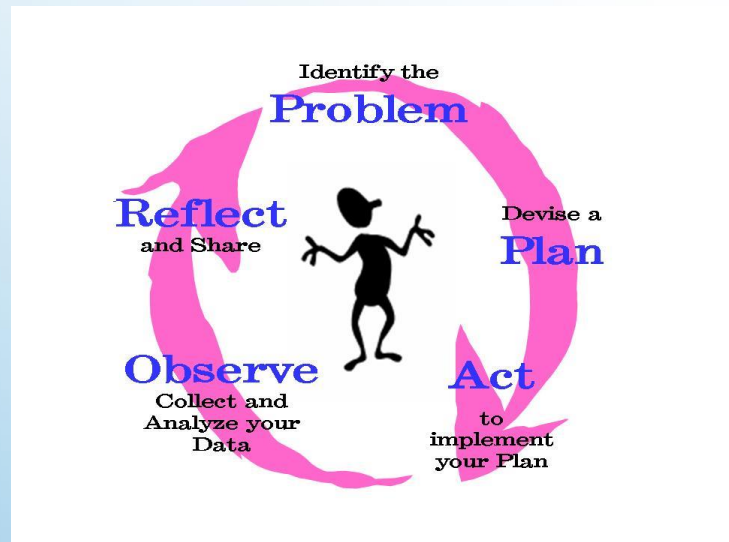# Action Research Workshop
ERA Conference

Betty Haralambous,

Paulene Mackell

NARI

December 2015

National Ageing Research Institute

- Australia's only independent research institute dedicated to ageing
- Affiliated with the University of Melbourne and Melbourne Health
- Founded in 1975 to be the centre of excellence for research into ageing
- 50 staff
- Key research areas: dementia, mental health, falls and balance, pain, carers' health, healthy ageing, physical activity, cultural diversity, service system evaluation and improvements

1. Introduction

Today's session

ACTION RESEARCH

- This workshop will describe participatory action research (PAR) and the benefits of using action research.

- In this workshop, participants will gain an understanding of the concepts and components of PAR.

- The workshop will involve presentations, case study discussions, how to get started with action research, and group work on how to apply action research in practice.

		Facilitator/presenter
9.00-9.30	Introductions and Welcome • Outline of the session • Learning objectives • In pairs discuss research topic and share with group	Paulene Group work
9.30-9.50	Research design, methods and processes • Types of methodology	Betty
9.50-10.00	What is action research • In different pairs, 3 points that describe action research for you	Group work and feedback (Paulene)
10.00-10.30	What is action research: presentation • Definitions, history, example	Betty
10.30-11.00	MORNING TEA	
11.00-11.45	Action research in practice • In residential care • With CALD communities • With indigenous communities	Betty/Paulene
11.45-12.15	What are the translational aspects • Volunteer a scenario • What are the barriers/enablers/reality of the environment? • What are the ethical issues? • What are the skills a researcher would need?	Paulene
12.15-12.30	Summary	Betty

Group work

In pairs discuss your own research and share with group

2. Research methods and processes

Research design

- Research design or method is the way of going about the data collection processes

- Research design includes the plan and/or techniques used

Research methods

- Types of research methods
  - Qualitative:
    - generates non- numerical data
    - interviews, focus groups, case studies
    - often used to explore and understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, and behaviour
    - Examples in social work setting
  - Quantitative
    - generates numerical data which can then undergo statistical analysis
    - descriptive vs experimental studies
    - often used to quantify the relationships between variables
    - Examples in social work setting
  - Mixed methods
    - collect both qualitative and quantitative data
    - these different types of data combined to provide a more complete picture
    - E.g, a survey followed by focus groups with some participants to further explore their responses

The research process

A 14-step research process

1. Choose a problem
2. Review the literature
3. Evaluate the literature
4. Be aware of all ethical issues
5. Be aware of all cultural issues
6. State the research question or hypothesis
7. Select the research approach

Fang, L., Manuel, J. Bledsoe, S.E. & Bellamy, J. (2008). Finding existing knowledge. In Grinnell, R.M. & Unrau, Y.A. (Eds.), Social work research and evaluation: Foundations of evidence-based practice (p. 466). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

A 14-step research process

8. Determine how the variables are going to be measured

9. Select a sample

10. Select a data collection method

11. Collect and code the data

12. Analyze and interpret the data

13. Write the report

14. Disseminate the report

Fang, L., Manuel, J. Bledsoe, S.E. & Bellamy, J. (2008). Finding existing knowledge. In Grinnell, R.M. & Unrau, Y.A. (Eds.), Social work research and evaluation: Foundations of evidence-based practice (p. 466). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

3.   What is action research?

Action research

- In the implementation and management of qualitative studies, a key research method used is that of action research.

Group work

In different pairs,

- 3 points that describe action research for you

- What attracted you to this workshop

Definitions

Action research is a form of **participatory research** and recognises that change is built into the research process through **engaging** with participants (Wadsworth 1984).

It allows participants to be involved in all stages of the process, including **planning**, taking **action**, **evaluation** and **reflection**. It allows participants to engage and participate in the process of change and **translate evidence into practice**.

Alston and Bowles (1998, p169) state that action research is 'an ongoing process of **action**, **reflection** and **planning** for further improvements' (Alston and Bowles, 1998); it is used to improve practice by implementing and evaluating **outcomes** (Haralambous B et al., 2010).

Wadsworth (1984, p81) further states:

- Just as in some sense, all research is really **evaluation**, so also all research is action research, however, again, the term is generally used for research that recognises *explicitly* its **action and change-inducing component**.

- That is, the idea that change inevitably results (whether intended, unintended, visible or unnoticed) from the research process is actually recognised and consciously built into the basic design of:

Plan change > act > observe > reflect > plan new change, and so on.

Wadsworth (1984, p81)

Action research cycle

(Australian Government, 2008)

- These factors reflect those of the **iterative** process and human centred approach of design thinking (Brown, 2008) as well as **critical thinking** whereby it is described as a process of **reflection, identification, inquiry, interpretation** and **analysis**, and **reasoning** and **judgment** (Riddel, 2007).

Lindeman (2008) states:

- Action learning is a process of **learning** and **reflection** that occurs within an **organised group process** (commonly in work teams) where colleagues work on a common problem or issue (McGill and Beaty, 2001).

- It is **learner-driven**, and it always has the two elements of the growth and development of people and of the organisation, and the simultaneous finding of **solutions to problems** (Inglis, 1994).

Lindeman (cont'd)

- Action learning is a **cyclic** (usually **facilitated**) process for drawing learning from **experience**, and involves both **action** and **reflection** on that action (Dick, 1999).

Lindeman (cont'd)

- Action learning is also an approach that does not require the trainer/facilitator to have a detailed knowledge of the 'content', or subject area, allowing for specialist input to be organised where necessary in response to the particular needs of the group.

Morning tea break

4.   Action research in practice

Example of action research

Example 1: Resident footwear program and falls

- CONCERN: Staff in Facility XX were concerned that many residents were wearing footwear that is either inappropriate or unsafe in some way. Examples: high heels, slippers, loose fitting or tight fitting shoes, broken laces, Velcro not sticking and shoes that lack support. Poor footwear is the likely cause of some of the falls at the facility. Better footwear will improve residents' comfort and make it easier for staff to put shoes on residents.

Example of action research

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Example 1: Resident footwear program and falls

- PLAN OF ACTION:

- identifying footwear issues and options, in consultation with the podiatrist and the physiotherapist;

- preparing memos for families/state trustees and staff; and

- preparing a communication strategy for residents or families who may be resistant to a change in footwear.

Example of action research

Example 1: Resident footwear program and falls

- MONITORING: Using a footwear checklist, two ARG members involved with implementing this action plan documented the number of residents requiring new footwear, whether they had a consultation with the podiatrist, the number of residents who obtained new footwear and their compliance with wearing the new footwear. Systems were used to track specific residents for whom footwear issues may be the cause of their falls. It was anticipated that 10 minutes daily was required for 1-2 ARG members to complete the checklist. The ARG met regularly to discuss progress with the program and troubleshoot any problems.

Example of action research

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Example 2: Enhancing an exercise program

- CONCERN: According to an audit of existing falls and falls injury prevention activities at facility xxx, all residents participate in daily exercise. The program is instructed by the Activities Coordinator. However, sessions appear to be only 10 mins duration and not include balance exercises. There would be value in reviewing the exercise options provided in the context of what would be most beneficial from a falls prevention perspective. The members of the Action Research Group (ARG) decided that this was an issue worth addressing.

Example of action research

Example 2: Enhancing an exercise program

- <u>PLAN OF ACTION:</u>

- The proposed action was to enlist the help of the physiotherapist to design an exercise program to increase leg muscle strength and improve balance amongst ambulatory residents. He identified six residents to pilot test the program and train the assistant to the Activities Coordinator to deliver the program three times per week. The 15-30 minute program comprised weight-bearing exercises.

- The ARG members anticipated that outcomes of this action plan may include:

    – An exercise program more tailored to the needs of higher-functioning residents;

    – Better functional ability of ambulatory residents; and

    – Reduced falls risk.

Example of action research
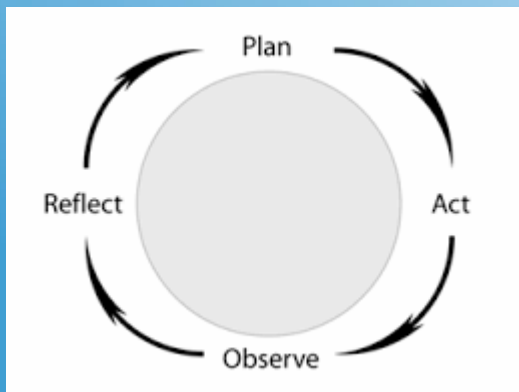
Example 2: Enhancing an exercise program

- MONITORING/EVALUATION:

- PT attended an ARG meeting to discuss the logistics of organising the new exercise program. The ARG members continued to meet regularly to discuss the progress of this action plan and troubleshoot any issues that should arise.

- Two ARG members were trained by PT to conduct brief, simple field tests of lower body strength and balance such as the sit-to-stand test, the Timed Up-and-Go (TUG) Test and timed tandem / one leg stands. Residents were assessed prior to starting the exercise program and after two to three months of participation.

Getting started

- What is the problem/concern?

- What is the plan of action?

- How will you implement?

- How will you monitor/evaluate?

Action research in practice with older people from CALD backgrounds

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TITLE

Assessing the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS) and the Geriatric Anxiety Inventory (GAI) and education about depression and anxiety amongst the older Chinese community in Australia

Action research in practice with older people from CALD backgrounds

AIM

The overall aim of this project was to improve our understanding of depression and anxiety amongst older immigrant Chinese Australians and in turn to improve detection and treatment of these psychological disorders.
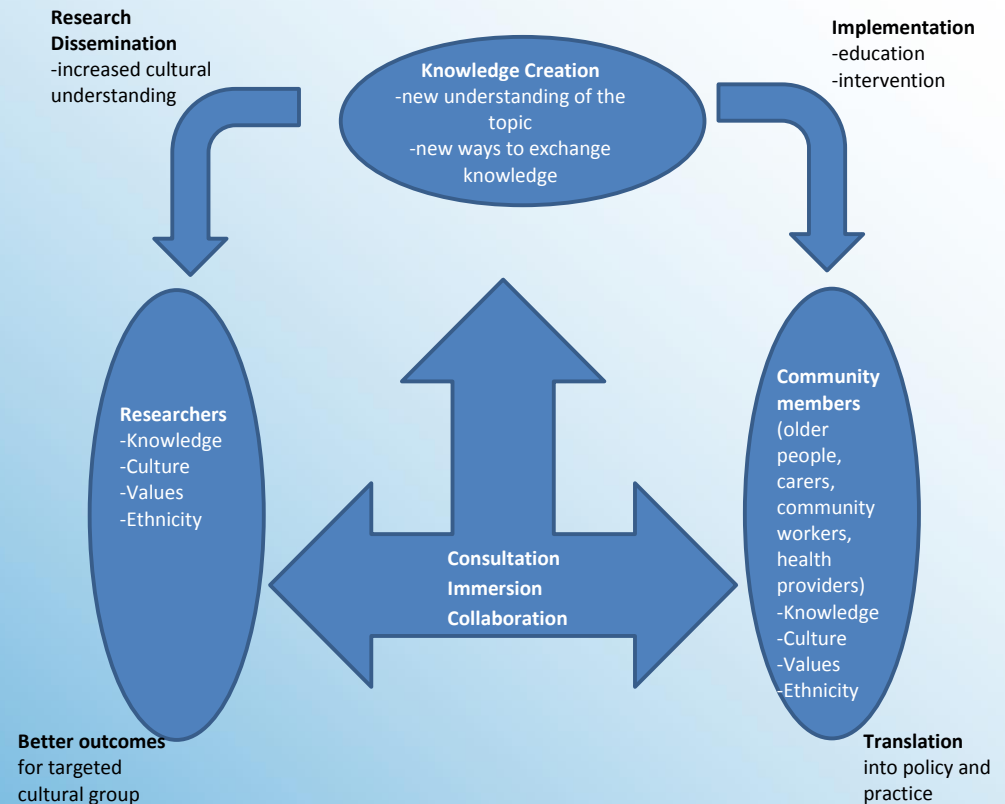
Action research in practice with older people from CALD backgrounds

METHOD

The study was based on NARI's Cultural Exchange Model; an iterative process of exchange between researchers and stakeholders recognising that knowledge development is not a one-way flow of information from researchers/experts to health professionals or consumers but a process of knowledge exchange.

Action research in practice with older people from CALD backgrounds

THE CULTURAL EXCHANGE MODEL

Research Dissemination
-increased cultural understanding

Implementation
-education
-intervention

Knowledge Creation
-new understanding of the topic
-new ways to exchange knowledge

Researchers
-Knowledge
-Culture
-Values
-Ethnicity

Community members
(older people, carers, community workers, health providers)
-Knowledge
-Culture
-Values
-Ethnicity

Consultation Immersion Collaboration

Better outcomes
for targeted cultural group

Translation
into policy and practice

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Action research in practice with older people from CALD backgrounds

Based on the Cultural Exchange model, the research team established an advisory group, that included academics, health professionals, community workers and advocacy groups, to ensure the knowledge exchange process was undertaken and enable it to occur in this study.

Action research in practice with older people from CALD backgrounds

METHOD

- A literature review

- Consultations with health professionals and community workers

- Piloting the Chinese version of the GDS and GAI through interviews with older Chinese immigrants

- Education and promotion activities.

Action research in practice with older people from CALD backgrounds

- The "Cultural Exchange Model" also drew upon aspects of the knowledge-to-action process by Graham and Tetroe (2007) whereby researchers and service providers work collaboratively to translate an evidence base into a community setting, through adaptation of both the content and process according to the knowledge gained from that community (Straus et al. 2011).

Action research in practice
with older people from indigenous backgrounds

5. What are the translational issues?

Using the supplied scenarios:

- Develop an action research plan (see next slide)

- What are the barriers/enablers/reality of the environment?

- Are there ethical issues?

- What are the research and other skills required?

Developing an action plan

Identify the issue	Identify the plan of action	How will you implement	Identify how the issue will be monitored
Service users are not attending consumer reference group (aimed at discussing issues for older people)			

Identify the issue	Identify the plan of action	How will you implement	Identify how the issue will be monitored	Identify timelines
Residents and family members concerned about the nutritional value of meals at a residential aged care facility				

Group work

In groups of 4 work through this exercise

6. Summary

How/why you choose

- Budget

- Time

- Reporting requirements

- Skill of the team

- Who you have access to

- Organisational commitment
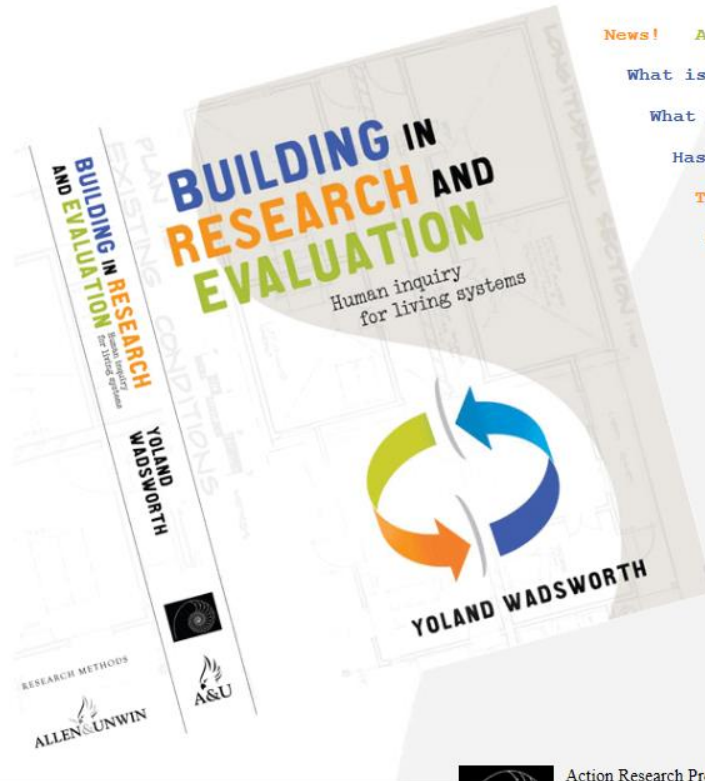
- Built into policy

7.   References

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