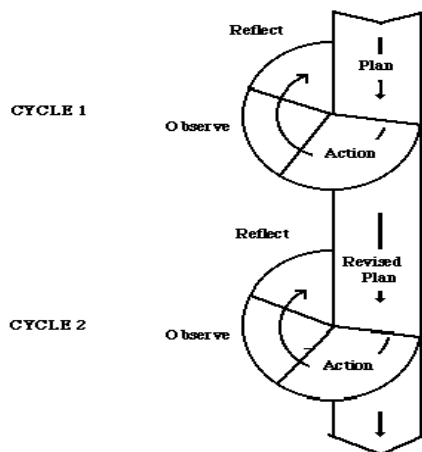


## Action research methodology concept and process<sup>1</sup>

Action research (AR) is a systematic form of inquiry that is collective, collaborative, self-reflective, critical and is undertaken by the participants of the inquiry.<sup>2</sup> Action research, sometimes called “practitioner research,” is a reflective investigation of a personal interest, problem or challenge. Communication for development<sup>3</sup> and social change measurements are included in this perspective.<sup>4</sup>

### Ground-based

The first characteristic is that the importance given to praxis and of context permits participatory and ground-based evaluation. The process begins with the development of questions, which may be answered by the collection of data. Action implies that the practitioner will be acting as the collector of data, the analyst, and the interpreter of the results. Action research *leads to a re-framing of a problem*; then experiments are performed to bring about outcomes that are subjected to further analysis. Reflection-in-action recognizes that there is little or no separation of research from practice, of knowing and doing.<sup>5</sup> This methodology results in learning by doing developing capabilities for monitoring, impact assessment and evaluation by the CR practitioners and stakeholders. The methodology is open to realities on the ground as it recognizes the importance of context and its influence on institutional performance.



### Process approach

The second aspect is that action research is interactive and cyclical and is similar in nature to the numerical computing technique known as *successive approximation* – the idea is to close in upon

1 See AMARC, *Community Radio Social Impact: Removing Barriers Increasing Effectiveness* (Montreal, 2007).

2 McCutcheon, G., and B. Jung, “Alternative perspectives on action research,” *Theory into Practice* 29 3 (1990): 144-151.

3 See, among others, Paolo Mefalopoulos and others, *Participatory Communication Strategy Design* (FAO: Rome, 2004).

4 Maria Elena Figueroa and others, “Communication for Social Change: An Integrated Model for Measuring the Process and Its Outcomes,” *Communication for Social Change Working Paper Series 1* (2002).

5 D. A. Schon, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

a final goal or outcome by repeated iterations. This characteristic allows for process intervention through knowledge sharing leading to deeper understanding. Action research starts with the understanding of a problem, what in turn leads to an intervention plan that brings Action to introduce social change.<sup>6</sup> During the action, pertinent observations are collected in various forms. (Monitoring the implementation by *Observation*.) The new interventional strategies are carried out, and the cyclic process repeats, continuing until a sufficient understanding of (or implementable solution for) the problem is achieved (*Reflection and Revision*). A representation of AR protocol by Kemmis is provided in Figure 1.<sup>7</sup>

### **Empowerment approach**

A third characteristic of action research is the degree of empowerment given to all participants and thus to the social movement of community radio practitioners itself. Involvement is of a knowing nature, with no hidden controls or pre-emption of direction by the researcher. All participants negotiate meaning from the data and contribute to the selection of intervention strategies; the need for communication between all participants is of paramount importance. Action research refers to using evaluation logic and processes to help people in programs and organizations learn to think evaluatively. This is distinct from using the substantive findings in an evaluation report. It's equivalent to the difference between learning how to learn versus learning substantive knowledge about something. Learning how to think evaluatively is learning how to learn. Learning to think and act evaluatively can have an ongoing impact, especially when it is built into ongoing organizational development. By providing a mechanism and process for clarifying values and goals, evaluation has an impact even before data is collected. Likewise, the process of designing an assessment often raises questions that have an immediate impact on program implementation. Such effects can be quite pronounced, as when the process of clarifying the program's logic model or theory-of-action leads to changes in delivery well before any evaluative data is ever collected.

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<sup>6</sup> Taken from [An Introduction to Action Research](#) by Dan MacIsaac.

<sup>7</sup> S. Kemmis and R. McTaggart, eds., *The Action Research Reader* (Victoria: Deakin University, 1990b).