



Action Research in Firefighter Training: Using Libraries to Connect Students to Knowledge

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What is Participatory Action Research (AR)?

- **Based upon reflection, data collection, and action that aims to improve the position of the learner (Baum, 2006).**
- **Reflective process is directly linked to action, influenced by history, culture, and local context embedded in social relationships.**
- **Post-positivist.**



PAR differs from traditional research

- **The purpose is to enable action which results from a reflective, iterative cycle.**
- **Pays careful attention to power relationships, sharing power between the researcher and the research subjects.**
- **Data and information remain in context. Persons in the research are not subjects, participants, or respondents- they are partners in the research process.**



Where is PAR being used?

- **Freire's work with oppressed groups.**
 - Understand the roots and nature of oppression to liberate people.
- **Madison School System**
 - What's best for specific classrooms?
- **Public Health research**
 - Maternal and neonatal health problems in Bolivia.
 - Guinea worm



Advantages of PAR

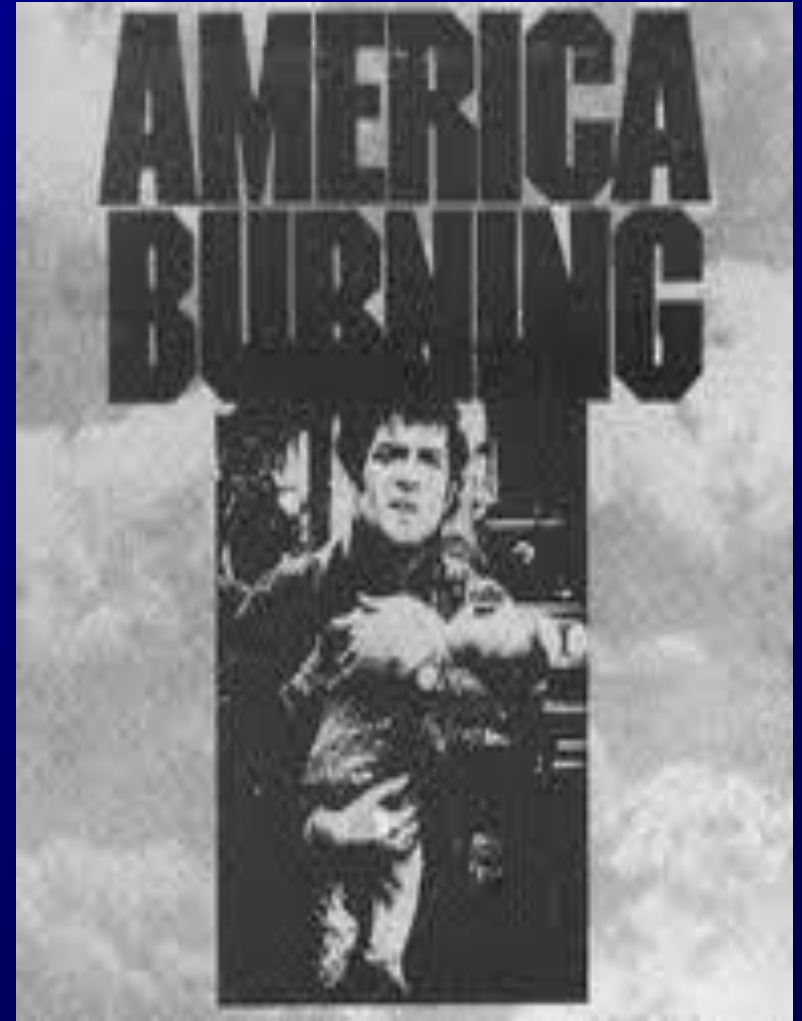
- **Treats people respectfully**
- **Shares power with the participants**
- **Immediate and long-term benefits to persons involved**
- **Establishes self-critical communities**
- **Tests assumptions**
- **Is systematic, collaborative, and critical**





Why apply PAR to the fire service?

- **Since 1973:**
 - 44% reduction in civilian fire deaths
 - 40% reduction in the cost of fire
 - Firefighter death and injury have remained unchanged, with more injuries per year than the US Military, and a constant fatality rate of ~110 FF per year.





Fire Fighting is fundamentally different than any other high-hazard occupation.

- **Other occupations focus on “defenses in depth” and hazard avoidance.**
- **Fire Fighting relies on preparative and operational measures, since avoidance is typically not an option.**
- **There are common “high frequency recommendations” in fatality reports that go unheeded (Kunadharaju, 2011).**



Academy LODD Project

- **Started in 2001**
- **Students work in small groups**
- **Several choices for fatalities to study**
- **Orient to library**
- **Time provided in class to go to the library for research**



Resources Used

- **Library Staff!**
- **NIOSH and similar reports**
- **Media (newspapers, trade journals)**
- **Near Miss Reporting**
- **Trade web resources**
- **Books (non-fiction)**



“All that glitters is not gold”

My corollary:

– **“All that Googles is not true”**

**Students have to be taught how to filter
information to find good data**

NIOSH reports versus news accounts



Chicago Fire Department

- **2010 Incident Safety Officer Program**
- **Lost-time accidents**
- **Customized to the risks of the CFD**