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Action Research in Hospitality and Tourism Research

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Chapter 16

Action Research in Hospitality and Tourism Research

Denise O'Leary and David Coghlan

Abstract

In the context of tourism and hospitality studies, the potential of action research for generating robust actionable knowledge has not been yet realized. This chapter provides an account of the theory and practice of action research, demonstrates how it may be designed and implemented, and how it may generate actionable knowledge. It provides illustrative examples and shows how this research approach aligns effectively with some of the themes that currently engage the attention of researchers in the fields of tourism and hospitality such as process improvement, sustainability, and community-based tourism development. Thus, it makes a case for more widespread use of action research in the field.

Keywords: Action research; tourism; hospitality; practical knowledge; collaborative research; research approach

Introduction

In the context of tourism and hospitality studies, the potential of action research for generating robust actionable knowledge has not been yet realized. While there are historical reasons for this with roots in different social paradigms there are areas of common ground that may be explored fruitfully. Indeed, recurrent research themes in tourism and hospitality research such as sustainable tourism development, delivery of quality tourism and hospitality experiences, empowerment of indigenous populations, skills development and social entrepreneurship are ideally suited to an action research approach. This chapter introduces action research, a research approach that has been in use for decades in other fields, and highlights how its potential could be better exploited in tourism and hospitality.

This chapter provides a contribution to the field of research methodology in tourism and hospitality by presenting the theory and practice of action research,

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by highlighting how it may be designed and implemented and by demonstrating how it may generate actionable knowledge. It provides illustrative examples and shows how this research approach aligns effectively with some of the themes that currently engage the attention of researchers in the field such as process improvement, sustainability, and community-based tourism development.

What Is Action Research?

Reason and Bradbury (2008, p. 4) define action research as:

A participatory process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.

As shown in Fig. 1, this definition identifies five characteristics of action research. It has an emergent developmental form as it engages with events as they

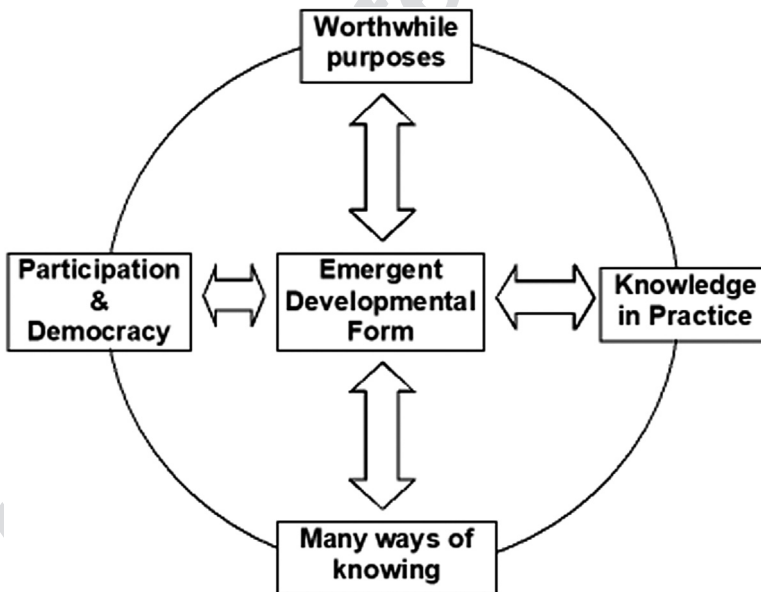


Fig. 1. Characteristics of Action Research. Reproduced with permission from: *The Sage Handbook of Action Research*, Ed. Reason and Bradbury (2008, p. 5).

unfold and as data changes through participants taking action and where it is not possible to control or predict outcomes. It addresses worthwhile issues through generating knowledge-in practice. What constitutes a worthwhile issue is itself a focus for inquiry. It draws on many ways of knowing, with practical knowing the integrating form. Finally, action research is conducted in a spirit of participation and democracy, whereby it is undertaken *with* people, rather than *on* or *for* them and that the researcher is an active intervener.

In the context of the subject of this volume, the practical issues that can be engaged with through action research are issues that people encounter in the development and delivery of tourism and hospitality services and experiences. Therefore, action research can be undertaken at different levels. First, because action research values practical knowing, involves stakeholder participation, and acknowledges context and complexity, it is an ideal research approach to use at *regional level* (Fricke & Hofmaier, 1996). There have long been arguments in the literature around the best approaches to tourism development, to ensure that resources within a destination are optimally, but not overly, used and that benefits are optimized while negative impacts are minimized (Timothy, 1999). Often, there is a gap between the policies developed at a national or international level on the one hand and the needs and desires of local communities on the other, especially in developing countries. Action research can provide a way to bridge this gap, exemplified by a study undertaken by Schmitz and Tsohgou (2016) in rural Cameroon. The authors conclude that action research can be a means of developing tourism in a context-specific and authentic way which can prioritize local values, traditional knowledge and local culture.

Second, action research can be a useful approach when studying change at an *organizational level*. Waser and Johns (2003) and Croes and Tesone (2007) conducted action research studies in hotels and aimed to achieve improvements in host-guest communication and staff engagement, respectively. By taking an action research approach, the researchers in both cases initiated change, researched the change as it was occurring, observed and reported on the effects, and adjusted subsequent cycles of change to take account of issues that arose. The studies contributed to practical knowledge by addressing a local issue, as well as contributing to theoretical knowledge, grounded in action, that could be shared with a wider community of academics and practitioners.

Third, action research can be used to engage with change at the *team level*. Teams can be within a community, within an agency or an organization, or be made up of stakeholders from different organizations with a common issue to address. Garcia-Rosell and Makinen (2013) provide an example of the latter in a study on the development of a framework for sustainability evaluation in Lapland where the team was made up of eight entrepreneurs and an academic. The entrepreneurs engaged with the research project to learn techniques related to sustainable product development. The research took a co-inquiry approach where stakeholders reflected on theory and engaged with multiple perspectives within the team in order to co-construct knowledge.

Finally, action research can be conducted at *individual level*. This type of action research is not commonly seen outside the realm of education, and

individual educators use the approach as a means of improving their own teaching practice. Jennings, Kensbock, and Kachel (2010) describe such an initiative, highlighting how an action research-informed curriculum development process supported a shift in focus from content to skills development and a stronger emphasis on experiential learning. The researchers reported enhanced student learning as an outcome.

Origins and Philosophy of Action Research

Kurt Lewin (1890–1946) is considered to be one of the core founders of action research. Lewin's insight was that it is through changing a system that one comes to understand it. Engaging organizational members in a change process uncovers the hidden dynamics of a system and exposes valid data about how the system actually works (Schein, 1980). Susman and Evered (1978) proposed that action research provides a necessary corrective to the deficiencies of positivist science by being future-oriented, collaborative, agnostic and situational and by being oriented to system development. Consequently, action research generates theory that is grounded in action.

Action research has roots in the tradition of organizational renewal that developed in western industrial economy over the past 70 years and in emancipatory movements (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). It has mushroomed into being understood as a family of approaches, rather than as a single unitary concept where there is only one way of conducting it (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Examples of the modalities of action research may be identified as: action learning, appreciative inquiry, collaborative management research, learning history and participatory action research among others. Selecting a modality as appropriate to a particular inquiry requires an insight into both the modality itself and what might be required to inquire rigorously in a given situation (Coghlan, 2010).

What Action Research Is Not

The action research process of engaging in cycles of action and reflection parallels similar processes in the fields of experiential learning, project management and quality improvement. But they should not be confused. Action research is not project management or quality improvement though it may be conducted in these fields and may use their methods (Whitehead, 2005). The fundamental difference is in the use of the term research. Action research has some implications beyond those involved directly in it and has an explicit aim to elaborate or develop theory as well as be useful to the organization. A similar contrast may be made with consulting. Action research has many characteristics that are found in consulting, particularly in what is called organization development (OD), but as noted earlier, action research is also researching and is aiming to elaborate or develop *useful, actionable* theory. Generating theory is not typically the focus for consulting or project management.

Why Use Action Research in Tourism and Hospitality Research?

Because of the collaborative nature of action research, action researchers often take a multi-stakeholder approach to identifying barriers and coming up with solutions. This allows researchers and participants to share their perspectives, learn from each other and learn with each other to co-construct joint understanding and shared action. Garcia-Rosell and Makinen (2013) highlight the usefulness of this co-construction approach in developing a sustainability evaluation framework for tourism product development in Lapland. The research took place in a region characterized by tension between tourism development on one hand and preservation of the local ecology, culture and traditions on the other. Similarly, Schmitz and Tsobgou (2016), in an action research study to develop tourism products in rural Cameroon, highlight how stakeholders learned from and with each other in order to improve tourism provision. Using action research facilitated researchers in both studies to work with stakeholders, engage with traditional knowledge and co-construct new knowledge to develop practical solutions to local problems.

Action research also allows for the uniqueness of tourism destinations and individual tourism and hospitality organizations to be exploited. This is possible because action research takes account of context, rejects the need for results to be generalizable and values practical knowing (Coghlan, 2011). Indeed, this appreciation of practical knowing is an important part of the action research process as it facilitates not only the identification of issues but also solutions that will work in a particular context. A destination development approach that works in an Alpine area may not work in a city and an organization development approach that works in a five-star city-center hotel may not work in a three-star airport hotel. The people best placed to determine this are stakeholders in the destinations or management and staff in the hotels. This is highlighted by Cole's (2006) study on tourism development in villages in Indonesia. Prior to the study, the Department of Tourism imposed a particular tourism development approach within small villages, centering on a "home-stay" model yet it emerged during the study that villagers did not know what "home-stays" were and how to operate them. Thus, action research can provide a bridge between, on the one hand, academic and political discourses which emphasize the importance of participation and bottom-up tourism development and, on the other, what actually happens on the ground, which may be participatory in name only.

Similarly, integral to the idea of participation and collaboration are power and empowerment. Empowerment of the local community is viewed as a vital element in sustainable tourism development (Joo, Woosnam, Strzelecka, & Boley, 2020). In action research, and in particular, participatory action research (which is a modality of action research that emerged from a concerned focus on power inequalities, oppression and social change set within a non-first world context), power and power relationships are viewed as central to any research project rather than something to be examined from afar. Thus, in the context of tourism development, action researchers actively engage with local residents and other stakeholders. In this role, an action researcher acts as recorder, advocate and

facilitator to co-generate knowledge and instigate action to confront power inequalities (Greenwood & Levin, 2007). By doing so, they can actively support empowerment of communities which in turn supports sustainability in tourism development (Cole, 2006; Schmitz & Tsohgou, 2016).

As highlighted by Khoo-Lattimore and Gibson (2018) action research can also be a useful way of studying a phenomenon as it is happening, rather than retrospectively. The pragmatic nature of the research and the engagement of stakeholders means that solutions to an issue can be planned, actioned and evaluated in successive cycles until a mutually agreed end point is reached. In the project women-focused accommodation experiences were planned, created and then tested by female guests. The approach addressed the limitation inherent in other types of research approaches, namely a dependence on participant recall of events.

Action Research in Academic Research Programs

Although the previous sections have provided a general overview of action research for a broad audience, the remainder of this chapter focuses on students and academic supervisors. In the context of being registered in an academic research program, it is critical to note that typically there are two action research projects coexisting in parallel (Zuber-Skerritt & Perry, 2002). First there is what is called the *core* action research project which is the practical project which is driven by practical needs within the system. This project has its own identity and may be taking place, irrespective of whether or not it is being studied. It therefore, may represent an opportunity for the student researcher to tap into an already active agenda for action and change. Second, there is the *thesis* action research project. This project involves the action researcher's inquiry into the *core* project as it happens. This distinction is useful as it is the *thesis* project which will be submitted for examination, rather than the *core* project. While the *core* project may be successful or unsuccessful in achieving its goals, it is the researcher's inquiry into the process (rather than the outcome) and the associated contribution to knowledge in the tourism and hospitality domains which merits the academic award that the student researcher is pursuing.

What Is Needed before Entering into Action Research

Before entering into action research, the researcher needs to position the proposed research in relation both to the needs of the system and to the academic research education program. Regarding the former, three things are needed to position the action research in relation to the needs of the system: a real issue, access and a contract. A *real issue*, such as whether a compensation strategy can impact on hotel staff behavior (Croes & Tesone, 2007) or whether tourism can be developed in a sustainable way in a destination (Cole, 2006) must: be of significance; have an uncertain outcome; be an issue which the group or organization is willing to subject to rigorous inquiry and action; and have research significance for the researcher.

Such a study cannot be carried out from a distance (or, indeed, from the researcher's office). Rather, the action researcher has to *gain physical access* to the organization and be contracted as an action researcher. This access may result from an invitation from the stakeholders to the academic supervisor to help. Alternatively, the access may result from a request by the researcher (or supervisor) to inquire into an existing or a forthcoming project. Developing the *contract* requires recognition of the different stakeholders of the issue, their differing expectations of interrelationships, process, and outcomes; interaction with the stakeholders in real time; data gathering and data generating opportunities; and confidence that they can be relied upon to engage in joint-exploration of the issue. The stakeholders (or parties to this contract) include the key individuals within the system who recognize the value of the action research approach and are willing (and, indeed, tolerant) to have the action researcher working with them through inquiring into the *core* project, reflecting on it as it progresses, posing critical questions and generating shared insights as they progress toward workable solutions.

Designing the Thesis Action Research Project

The previous section opened up the positioning of the action research project in relation to the academic program and the needs of the participants. As with any research, designing the thesis project confronts the researcher with challenges of framing the issue, determining its scope, gaining access and negotiating an appropriate role.

Framing the Thesis Research Issue

In the tourism and hospitality sector, there are many and complex connections between inputs, transformations and outputs. Ensuring sustainability in tourism destinations or excellent customer service in hospitality, for example, yields a wide and diverse set of issues all vying for management attention. Not every issue will volunteer itself automatically for action research, as the solution to some issues, e.g. a service delivery problem, may be blatantly obvious. It is human construction that makes the difference thus leading us to conclude that stakeholders' interpretations are pivotal in this whole process. Furthermore, the actors involved may not have framed the issue sufficiently to invite the academic supervisor to provide help. Alternatively, the actors may respond to the offer of the researcher to enquire into an issue. Finally, the scale, scope, and temporal nature of these issues may extend beyond the boundaries of a single thesis research project and may even support a number of thesis researchers at the same time. So, framing and selecting the *thesis* research issue from the *core* issue is a complex process.

Gaining Access

For the action researcher working toward a masters or a PhD, primary access (ability to get into the system and to contract to undertake action research)

may come through the university and more specifically through the academic supervisor. Secondary access (to specific areas within the system or specific levels of information and activity) tends to be negotiated as the project proceeds.

Action researchers may play one of two roles in an action research project: outside agent and insider. The two roles are related but different. More commonly, action researchers, especially if they are full-time students and are entering the system through the university, are outside agents who act as facilitators of the action and reflection within a system. In this role, the action researcher is acting as an external facilitator to help the tourism providers, policy makers or community members to inquire into their own issues and create and implement solutions (Schein, 1995). This role contrasts with the expert model where experts provide professional diagnosis and prescriptive direction. What is key is that external action researchers get to know the system and the people as quickly as possible to allow the members of the system to get to know and trust them.

There is also a growing incidence of action research being done from within systems by insiders, as when practicing managers undertake action research projects in and on their own organizations (Coghlan, 2001, 2019). This role is increasingly common in the context of managers participating in part-time academic programs, such as an MBA or a practitioner doctorate. In this context the manager takes on the role of action researcher in addition to their regular organizational roles and may be both managing the project and studying it at the same time. The manager is likely to have a personal and professional stake in the outcome of the project. What is critical for such insider action researchers is that they question their insider knowledge of the system critically, manage the dual roles of manager and action researcher, and be astute in managing organizational politics in an ethical manner (Coghlan, 2019).

Implementing Action Research

Implementing action research involves implementing the two related but different projects: the *core* action project and the *thesis* research project. Each goes through iterative cycles of planning, action, and evaluation. For the researcher, the *core* project is located in the world of practice and may be understood in terms of key operational knowledge of the tourism and hospitality system and its management and drawing on knowledge of project management, quality of improvement, and change processes. This knowledge base is a prerequisite for engaging in the *thesis* action research based upon the core project. Research-based inquiry into the *core* project through action research (the *thesis* project) may be framed as cycles of action and reflection matching the *core* project as it develops iteratively and drawing on relevant literature from the tourism and hospitality and action research fields. Engaging in such cycles places action at the heart of the research process and thereby marks action research as fundamentally distinct from research approaches that are typically referred to as “applied.” In action research, the stakeholders and the researcher are co-researchers. It is through the

collaborative study of cycles of action and reflection that the actionable knowledge from the *core* project is generated and *thesis* project develops.

In its original Lewinian and simplest form (Lewin, 1997), the action research cycle comprises a pre-step and three core activities: planning action, taking action, and fact-finding: the pre-step involves naming the general objective; planning comprises having an overall plan and a decision regarding what the first step to take is; action involves taking that first step and fact-finding involves evaluating the first step, seeing what was learned and creating the basis for constructing the next step. There is a continuing “spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action” (Lewin, 1997, p. 146). In working within the realm of practical knowing where knowing is always incomplete, engaging in, paying attention to, and reflecting on what emerges through these cycles is paramount.

During cycles of action research, data can be gathered in a variety of ways and action researchers often use both qualitative and quantitative methods (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Common methods include focus groups, observation, interviews, and questionnaires. Action researchers often use more than one method in recognition of the fact that scrutinizing human behavior is a complex process and using only one method may only provide a partial picture of the phenomenon. For example, in a planning phase in an action research project on community-based tourism, a researcher might gather data from a broad range of community stakeholders using questionnaires, analyze the quantitative data, and use the results of the analysis to plan an action. Once action has been taken, they might, in an evaluation step, use focus groups and interviews with a smaller group of stakeholders who were directly involved or directly impacted by that action, and analyze the data to see what was learned. A further step can then be planned and action taken. That action can be evaluated using the same or different data collection methods. These methods work through engaging in collaborative inquiry that draws out participants’ experience of the situation, how they understand it, and how they come to judgment as to what needs to be done (Shani & Coghlan, 2021).

Fig. 2 outlines the twin challenges of the core and thesis projects. Implementing the *core* action research project may be informed by the process of planned change: understanding the need for change, envisioning a desired outcome, planning and implementing action, consolidating and evaluating the change and articulating learning (Coghlan & Shani, 2018). In the *thesis* action research project, these steps are paralleled by the activities of building collaborative relationships with key actors as co-researchers, engaging in shared reflection on the progress of the project, and articulating emergent learning and practical knowledge. While an action project may include forms of data gathering from quantitative and qualitative research traditions, for the action researcher, these are interventions into the system and act as lead-ins for further planning and action. For example, a low response to a survey may provoked an inquiry into why the response was low and may uncover a degree of apathy or anxiety about the change that then can become the focus for attention. The central actions for the action researcher are the enactment of skills and methods in building and

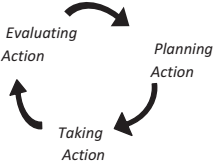
Core Action Research Project	Thesis Action Research Project
Identifying the need for change	What practical knowledge might result? Building a collaborative research group
Enactment of iterative cycles of action & reflection: 	Inquiry into enactment of cycles of action & reflection: How is planning informed by theory? How are actions being taken? What outcomes are expected/unexpected? How are the outcomes informed by theory?
Outcomes for the system (human, economic, ecological)	What practical knowledge is generated for others?

Fig. 2. The Twin Challenges of the Core and Thesis Action Research Projects.

supporting collaborative inquiry, joint action and shared learning. The enactment of the cycles of planning, taking action and evaluating can be anticipated but cannot be designed or planned in detail in advance. The philosophy underlying action research is that the stated aims of the project lead to planning and implementing the first action, which is then evaluated. Through learning about learning, the second action cannot be planned in detail until evaluation of the first action has taken place.

Action Research Skills

Action research is a challenging approach to research because it requires confident and experienced researchers to work collaboratively in the context of the uncertainty of the unfolding story of the *core* project and the expectations of scholarship in the *thesis* project. For the neophyte action researcher working in a research team is an important way to develop action research skills. To work as an action researcher a researcher needs to be able to contribute to the *core* project when exposed to the reality of organizational change in real time. In contrast, to develop the *thesis* project as an action researcher, the researcher needs to be able to take the lead in uncovering meaning and framing theoretical understanding and explanation and communicating the emerging insights. Fulfilling both of these expectations requires skills in collaborating with others, in analyzing data and in learning in action (Shani & Coghlan, 2021). Learning reflective skills through keeping a journal is also useful.

Generating Theory through Action Research

Theory is fundamental to research. Typically, action research does not begin with a perceived gap in knowledge as uncovered in a literature review, but with a practical challenge. However, it is intended that the action research can contribute to theories which are context-specific to tourism and hospitality. The aim of action research is to enact a process that those reading the research can recover.

Action research intentionally merges theory with practice on the grounds that actionable knowledge can result from the interplay of knowledge with action. The theory generated through action research is practical (it enables learning from the action). Accordingly, it is situation specific and does not aim to create universal knowledge. Action research generates emergent theory, in which the theory develops from a synthesis of the understanding which emerges from reflection on the *core* project data and from the use in practice of the body of theory which informed the research purpose. In contrast to positivist science, where the theory to be tested is defined from the outset, theoretical understanding in action research is generated through the cycles of action and reflection.

Quality in Action Research

As with all approaches to rigorous inquiry, the action research paradigm requires its own quality criteria. The point is that an action research thesis needs to be judged within the criteria of its own terms and not by the criteria of positivist or interpretive science. In keeping with the above definition of action research, Reason and Bradbury (2008) suggest four criteria for judging the quality of an action research study:

- Criterion 1: To what extent has it produced practical knowledge that is useful to people in the delivery of tourism and hospitality?
- Criterion 2: To what extent did the action research involve all stakeholders both in the questioning and sensemaking that informed the research, and in the action?
- Criterion 3: To what extent was the action research pursuing a worthwhile purpose?
- Criterion 4: To what extent did it develop over time in an evolutionary and developmental process, as individuals developed skills of inquiry and as a community of inquiry developed within a community of practice?

Applying the four criteria outlined here facilitates an analysis of the quality of a study, such as the research undertaken by Paül, Trillo-Santamaría, and Pérez-Costas (2016), who worked with locals in a marginalized region in Galicia, Spain to identify potential tourism resources that could be developed by community members. Criterion 1 can be said to have been met, as actionable knowledge about potential tourism attractions was an output of the research. However, this knowledge was not actioned in tourism development. Applying criterion 2 allows us to understand why. Although there was a clear focus on participation within

the study with research being conducted with rather than on, community stakeholders, the authors acknowledge that the focus was too narrow and local politicians and other stakeholders should have been included. The exclusion of these stakeholders meant that cycles of action to develop tourism were not undertaken. Similarly, an examination of the study through the lens of criterion 4 highlights that the study did not reach its full potential in developing a community of inquiry. As the authors highlight (Paül, Trillo-Santamaría, & Pérez-Costas, 2016, p. 162) “ideally, this initiative should have gone a step forward, to achieve a more balanced co-learning.” On the other hand, applying criterion 3 demonstrates that the research met this quality criterion by identifying ways to overcome marginalization to encourage human flourishing at an individual and community level.

The application of these quality criteria while undertaking a *core* action project and a *thesis* research project requires a concurrent focus on different aspects of quality. Depending on the focus of the *core* action project, exploring the quality in action research dimensions involves different cycles of engagement with multiple stakeholders, such as project teams, suppliers, or tourists. In order to maintain quality, action researchers must consciously and deliberately enact these action research cycles, testing their own assumptions and subjecting their assumptions to public testing. Correspondingly, for the *thesis* project, the process of gathering, generation and reflection on the data must demonstrate an explicit method and orderliness in order to generate the theoretical content of each episode and the process whereby issues are planned and implemented. As a project draws on different forms of knowing, such as technical scientific and financial data, the creativity of envisioning new tourism initiatives and the relational knowledge of building collaboration among diverse participants, how these form of knowledge combine in in the practical knowledge of designing and implementing change is a mark of the quality of the project. Furthermore, managing quality involves being attentive as the *core* action project is initiated and unfolds and engaging in shared inquiry into the planned and unanticipated events that occur throughout the implementation.

Action research involves taking a value-laden stance which focuses on improvement within a system and as a result, reflexivity is of key importance. In sum and in general, action researchers need to show how they engaged in cycles of action and reflection in collaboration with others, how they accessed multiple data sources to provide contradictory and confirming interpretations, what choices were made along the way and how they were made, provide evidence of how they challenged and tested their assumptions and interpretations continuously throughout the project and how their interpretations and outcomes were challenged, supported or disconfirmed from existing literature (Eden & Huxham, 1996).

Conclusions

This chapter has presented an introduction to action research as a rigorous, reflective, and relevant methodology for research in tourism and hospitality into

various strategic and operational realities that are both intellectually interesting and practically challenging. Inquiry into these realities requires a methodology respectful of the emergent nature of the data and of the active involvement of key actors. The set of iterative action research cycles yields unique insights that can deepen understanding, improve practice and extend theory. Action research is an approach to research that does not distinguish between research and action; it addresses the theme of *research in action*. Accordingly, compared with other approaches to research it accommodates the imprecise, uncertain, and sometimes unstable activity that characterizes operations in practice. Similarly, it allows academics to address the critique of existing in “ivory towers” from which they observe the world at a distance, as it involves the production of actionable knowledge focused on issues of concern to stakeholders.

Nevertheless, action research is not a widely used approach in tourism and hospitality research, which is surprising, given that it is an ideal approach to exploring some of the topics absorbing the attention of researchers in the field such as authenticity, sustainability, and community engagement. As tourism and hospitality researchers, we are more likely to use quantitative or qualitative approaches to engage in research *on* stakeholders rather than *with* them. But, using action research could ensure that, for example, the voices of all stakeholders are heard and included in tourism development; that knowledge about the best way to improve the organizational capability of a hospitality organization is co-constructed by all concerned; that developing tourism experiences around intangible cultural heritage are co-created with community stakeholder; and that practical solutions are found to overcoming barriers to sustainability at organizational and destination level. Perhaps a reluctance to step outside the boundaries of “traditional” research can be attributed to the relative newness of tourism and hospitality as a stand-alone research discipline, despite the fact that tourism research has developed significantly since John Tribe (1997) bemoaned a lack of theoretical underpinnings in the field. Action research is a form of social science, which differs from experimental physics but is genuinely scientific in its emphasis on careful observation and study of behavior in human systems engaging in change. Quality action research is characterized by rigorous, relevant, and reflective research. Achieving that quality demands a holistic attention to the enactment of the cycles of action and reflection, the quality of participation in the core action project, the development of emergent theory from the action in the thesis project, and the co-generation of actionable knowledge. Thus, this chapter has provided guidance on how quality action research can be designed and undertaken to generate knowledge-in-practice that is of interest from both a practical and theoretical perspective.

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Queries and/or remarks

[Q1]	The Ref. [Schein, 2009] is not cited in text; please indicate where a citation should appear or delete it from the reference list.
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