ACTION RESEARCH PRINCIPLES AND METHODS FOR IDENTIFICATION AND SOLVING COMMUNITY PROBLEMS

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Objectives of the Lecture

- 1. To introduce, improve understanding and appreciation of action research as one of the new areas in social science research methods which is very useful in policy debate on governance, community development and social policy as well as programme implementation.

INTRODUCTION

- Why make a case for action research (AR)?
  - *Top down   vs. bottom up   approach to development issues*
    - *Poor development, conflict of interest, poor acceptance and participation, destruction of government project and et c.*
- Few quotations, showing importance of AR
  - "If you want it done right, you may as well do it yourself." (O'Brien, 1998).
    - Action research (AR) allows you to supervise. Since you cannot do every thing/ all things by yourself

Some organization interested in AR

- **International Education in Action Research**

  GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit-Germany) *Training and Action Research in Family Health and Family Planning project; HIV/AIDS Programme*

- *Partnership for Africa Social and Governance Research (PASGR-Nairobi Kenya)*

- *World Health Organization-UNICEF-immunization project*

- *United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)*

- Africa Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS *Nairobi*)

- Community Based Monitoring Systems (Poverty and

- **UNECA -Innovation Prize for Africa**
- Prize award of $150,000 USD to winners who deliver market-oriented solutions for African-led Development
- First price $100,000 , Second price $50,000
- Strategy/Approach for selection of winners
  - Innovative Solutions
  - Participation and local ownership
  - Measurable Results
  - Transparent Processes

  AIM: To Recognize Innovations that Unlock African Potentials (recall Julius Nyerere, GTZ 2003   )

UNECA -Innovation Prize for Africa 2013 to Recognize Innovations that Unlock African Potential

- At an event to be organized by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and African Innovation Foundation (AIF), researchers, entrepreneurs and innovators will be invited to propose projects that unlock new African potential under one of five categories which include:
- 1) agriculture and agribusiness;
- 2) ICT applications;
- 3) health and wellbeing;
- 4) environment, energy and water; and
- 5) manufacturing and services industries.

Definition of Action Research

- Action research is viewed as a *participatory*, *democratic* process concerned with developing practical knowing (know-how) 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 (Reason & Bradbury, 2006, p. 1)

Some concepts associated with AR

Action research has been conceived/ known by many other names:

- Participatory research
- Collaborative inquiry
- Emancipatory research
- Action learning
- Contextual action research

[*All of these are variations on a theme*].

- Put simply, action research is "learning by doing" - a group of people identify a problem, do something to resolve it, see how successful their efforts were, and if not satisfied, try again (Module six: Action research PASGR).

- PASGR is giving much emphasis on AR
- In PASGR's composite advanced research course called Multi-Method Research Course, AR is one of the major topics that is thought for three days

The cycle of Action Research
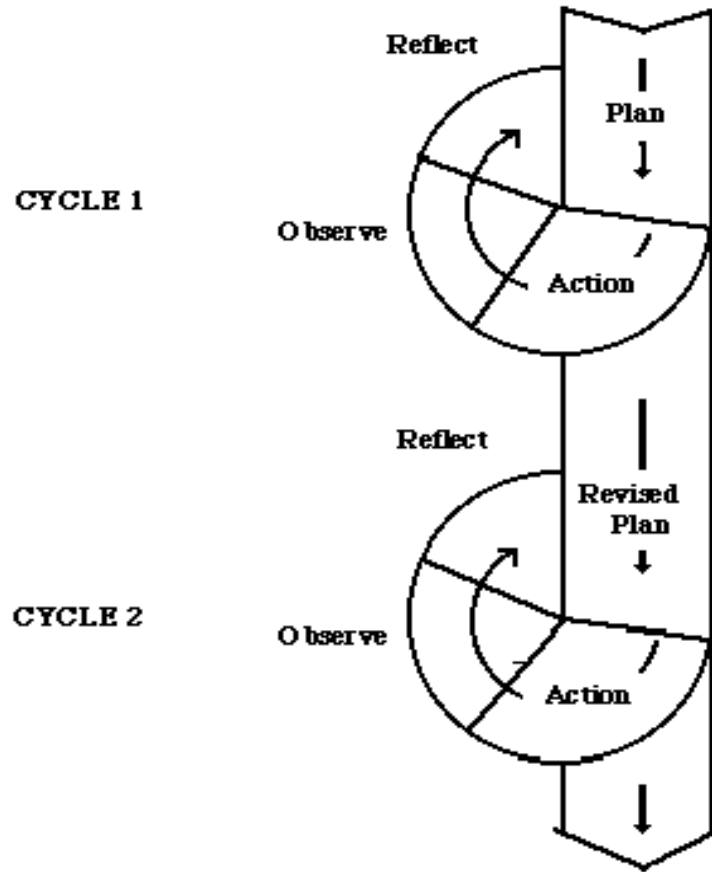
Source: Module six: Action research PASGR

The cycle of Action Research Cont.

- Participatory Action Research is a *continuous cycle* in which **insiders** and **outsiders** together decide what needs to be researched, design the research, determine what will be measured and how; collect the necessary data/information and implement a course of action.
- The information and output are then put into practical applications or used to identify new research ideas and actions.
- Action Research deals with **formative evaluation**
- It is opposed to summative evaluation
- **FUOYE academic staff have to mold students with AR**
- Also directors and head of units have to mentor staff with AR

The cycle of Action Research Cont.

- Turning or making the people involved to become co- researchers because people learn best, and more willingly apply what they have learned, *when they do it themselves.*

- It also has a social dimension - the research takes place in real-world situations, and aims to solve real problems (Module six: Action research PASGR)

Roles/functions of action researcher

- Action Researchers must be a good:

- Planner   and   leader

- Catalyzer and facilitator (thermostat thermometer)

- Teacher   and   designer

- Listener   and   observer and a Learner

- Synthesizer   and   reporter

Challenges of action researchers:
1. change of social structure
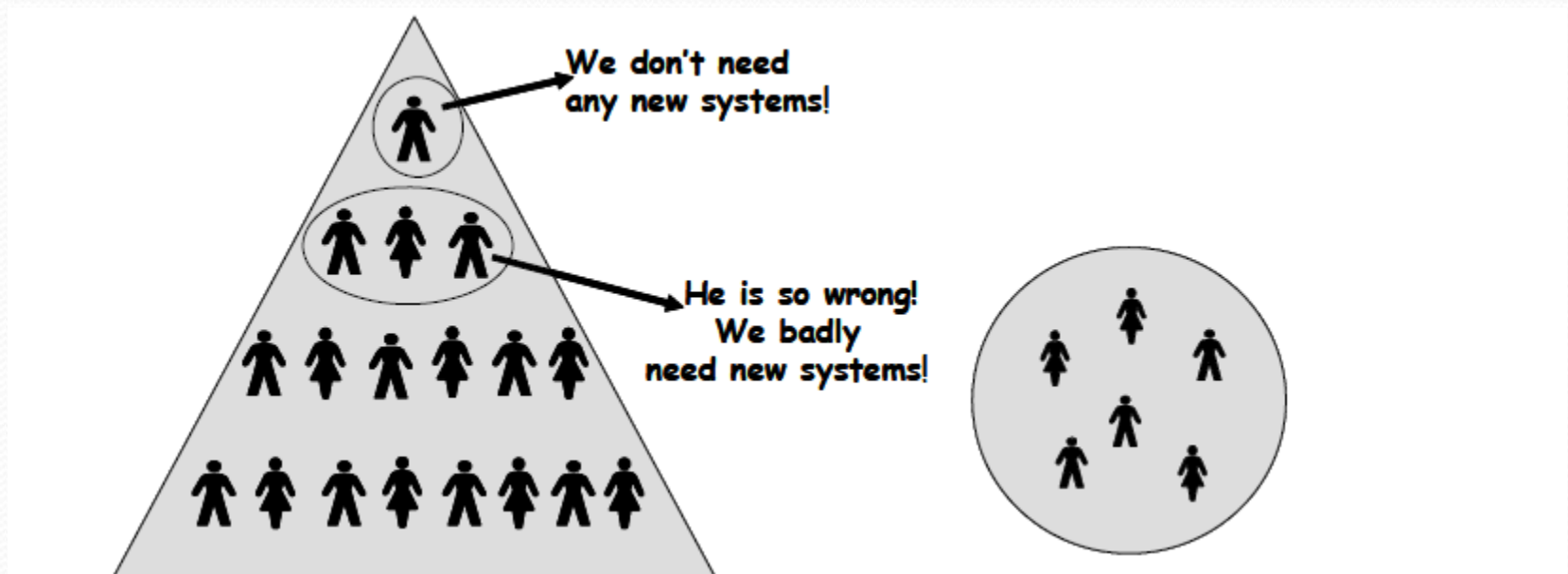
Source: PASGR Module 6

Challenges of action researcher cont.

- **2. Mobilization of people and encouraging participation**
  - Participation is a very difficult concept
  - Self motivation and mobilization of others
  - Motivation of the people for participation
    - Give reasons why!, discuss the benefits and risks of the project
    - Discuss approaches to the issues
  - Encourage Functional participation
  - Participation by interaction
  - Participation by sharing of information
  - Participation by consultation
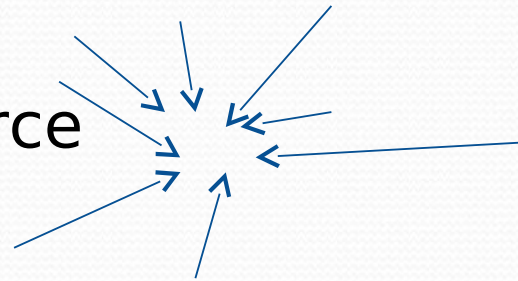 - Passive participation should be minimum eg from

Principles and Methods

- **Principles by** Winter (1989)
  - Reflexive (premeditated) critique
  - Dialectical critique

  - Collaborative Resource

  - Risk(s)
  - Plural Structure

  - Theory ⬌ Practice
    Transformation

Peace and conflict resolutions

Action Research Principles Cont.

1) Reflexive (premeditated) critique source of information

- An account of a situation, such as notes, transcripts or official documents, will make implicit claims to be authoritative, i.e., it implies that it is factual and true.

- Truth in a social setting, however, is relative to the teller.

  - An orator (a pompous speaker) can carry you away !

- The principle of reflective critique ensures people reflect on issues and processes and make **explicit** the interpretations, biases, assumptions and concerns upon which judgments are made.

- In this way, practical accounts can give rise to

Action Research Principles Cont

- 2) Dialectical critique (investigation of truth through discussion and scrutinising)

Reality, particularly social reality, is consensually validated, or shared through language by mutual consent.

Phenomena or the paradigms can be conceptualized in dialogue, therefore a dialectical critique is required to understand the set of relationships both between the phenomenon and its context, and between the elements constituting the phenomenon.

The key elements to focus attention on are those constituent elements that are unstable, or in opposition to one another. These are the ones

Action Research Principles Cont

3) Collaborative Resource

- Participants are co-researchers.

- The principle of collaborative resource presupposes that each person's ideas are equally significant as potential resources for creating interpretive categories of analysis, negotiated among the participants.

- It strives to avoid the skewing of credibility stemming from the prior status of an idea-holder (the researcher).

- Collaborative Resources (materials and human resources)are needed in solving the problem

- Sources of Resources- individual, community

Action Research Principles Cont

- 4. Risk: The change process potentially threatens all previously established ways of doing things, thus AR creates psychic fears among the practitioners.

- One of the more prominent fears comes from the risk to ego stemming from open discussion of one's interpretations, ideas, and judgments.

- Initiators of action research will use this principle to allay others' fears and invite participation by pointing out that they, too, will be subject to the same process, and that whatever the outcome, learning will take

Action Research Principles Cont

- 5) Plural Structure
- The nature of the research embodies a multiplicity of views, commentaries and critiques, leading to multiple possible actions and interpretations.
- This plural structure of inquiry requires a plural text for reporting.
- This means that there will be many accounts made explicit, with commentaries on their contradictions, and a range of options for action presented.
- A report, therefore, acts as a support for ongoing discussion among collaborators, rather than a final conclusion of fact.

Action Research Principles Cont

- 6) Theory, ⟷ Practice, ⟷ Transformation
- For action researchers, theory informs practice, practice refines theory, in a continuous transformation.
- Recall that in the definition of theory, time is a factor
- In any setting, people's actions are based on implicitly held assumptions, theories and hypotheses, and with every observed result, theoretical knowledge is enhanced.
- The two are intertwined aspects of a single change process.
- It is up to the researchers to make explicit the theoretical justifications for the actions, and to question the bases of those justifications.
- The ensuing practical applications that follow are subjected to further analysis, in a transformative cycle that continuously alternates emphasis between theory

Methods

- Action research employs a number of tools (Observation, Interviews, Key Informant Interviews (KIs), Focus Group Discussion, Matrixes, Rankings, Photography, Score Cards, etc)
- **Observation, Interviews, KIs are very important**
- The fundamental questions normally addressed by qualitative research are the ones normally concerned with social issues or with individual experience.
- People's main words tell us a lot about their own experience and meanings
- In depth understanding of the

Methods cont.
Focus group discussion

Source: Module six: Action research PASGR

Focus group discussion by segments of a community to develop performance score card

Source: World Bank 2003

Visioning:
Women draw their vision for better community with H_2O, forests, better hygiene etc

Source: Module six: Action research PASGR

Visioning- imagine how it can be

- It can be an indication of how much the community is affected in vivid terms (hopelessness and opportunism)
- Good for those grossly affected
- It can be used for evaluation just like other methods (visions before and visions after).
- Vision how you want FUOYE to be in the next 10 years
- Vision how you want Your Faculty to be in the next 10 years
- Vision how you want yourself/family to be in the next 5 years; 10 years

A vision of a standard class room for FUOYE

Mapping

Source: Module six: Action research PASGR

Mapping Cont.

- The can easily be used for resources available at community level
- The distribution of the resources
- The changes that have happened to those resources over time
- It is used in planning farmstead
- GIS mapping: eg mapping of University farm, etc
- Building of physical structures in FUOYE needs inputs from staff who will be using the structures eg
  - Laboratories, Faculty complexes, Lecture Halls

Photography: From where we are to where we are going

Photography: From where we are to where we are going

Photography: From where we are to where we are going cont.

- Family planning
- Nutritional status of children less than five years via anthropometric indicators
- Agricultural development and improved production eg
  - Maize, yams, rice, catfish, grass cutter,
  - Storage methods, processing methods,
- Poor working vs. Good working environments

Interviews

- Key informant interviews
  - Good for generation of expert views
  - The can be useful in understanding individual experiences
- In-dept interviews
  - Understanding individual experiences from lay perspectives
  - In depth knowledge on structures and systems

Matrixes and Ranking

TABLE 1: Scoring and ranking of livelihood activities

Activity	Income	Food	Other subsistence products	Total score	Overall rank
Crop production	3	5	1	9	1
Animal husbandry	1	2	1	4	4
Wage labour (non-agriculture)	5	0	0	5	2
Forest products	2	1	3	6	3

Source: Module six: Action research PASGR

Matrixes and Ranking Cont.

HYPOTHETICAL SITUATION: CORRUPTION AMONG OFFICERS

OFFICERS	score	rank	Remarks
POLICE OFFICERS	70	2	
TEACHERS	40	5	
DOCTORS	45	4	
LAWYERS	60	3	
POLITICIANS	80	1	

Matrixes and pair wise ranking

5.7.1 Pair wise ranking
Choice of a crop for package

Bedeno woreda

	Maize	Sorghum	Coffee	Wheat	Score	Rank
Maize	X	S	C	M	1	3
Sorghum	X	X	S	S	3	1
Coffee	X	X	X	C	2	2
Wheat	X	X	X	X	0	4

Source: PASGR Module 6

Score cards

THE COMMUNITY SCORE CARD PROCESS

Input Tracking Scorecard

Performance Scorecard

Self - Evaluation Scorecard

Interface Meeting

Source: World bank 2003
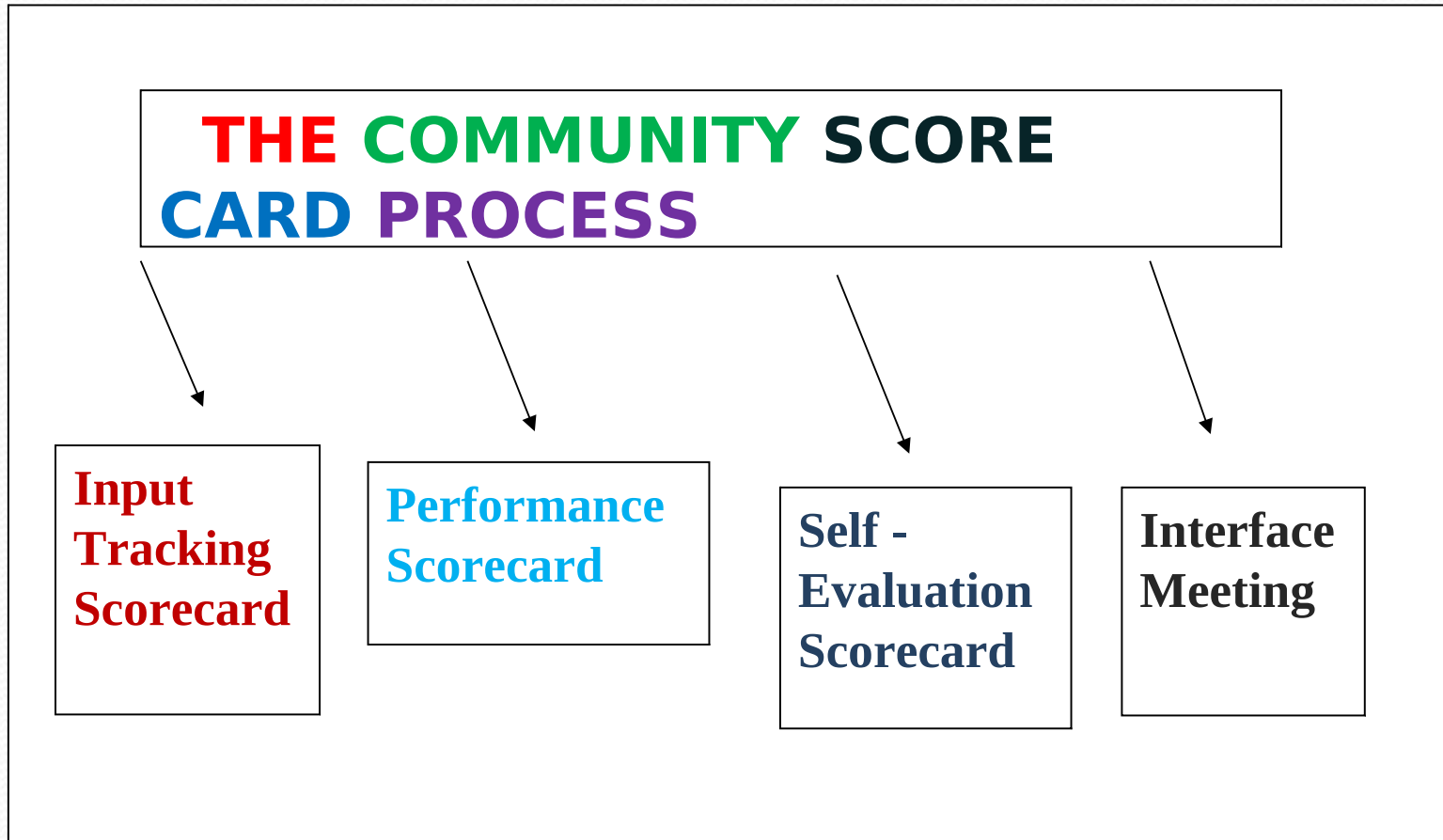
Difference between Community Scorecards and Citizen Report Cards

Citizen Report Cards	Community Scorecards
Survey instrument - data collected through questionnaires	Participatory process – data through focus group discussions
Unit – household/individual	Unit – community
Emphasis on monitoring - demand side data on performance and actual scores/report	Emphasis on immediate feedback and accountability, less on actual data
Implementation time longer (3-6 months)	Implementation time short (3-6 weeks)
Feedback later, through media	Immediate Feedback
Requires strong technical skills	Requires strong facilitation skills
More for macro level	Meant for local level

Source: World Bank 2003: The Community Score Card Process _Nov.03

Source: World Bank 2003

The community score card approach

- Is a tool for Participatory Monitoring and evaluation
- It encourages *Accountability* and Community *Empowerment*
- Hybrid of – social audit and citizen report card
- Emphasis is on the *'Process'* not just 'scorecard'
- Emphasis on immediate feedback and reform
- Flexible and adaptive approach – no one way to implement it

Community Score Card Methodology Allows for these:

- Tracking of inputs or expenditures
  - (e.g. availability of Drugs, fertilizers, seeds, water etc)
- Monitoring of the quality of services/projects
- Generating benchmark performance criteria that can be used in resource allocation and budget decision
- Comparison of performance across facilities/districts
- Mechanisms of direct feedback between providers and users
- Building local capacity
- Strengthening citizen voice and community

Stages in the Community Scorecard Process Cont

- 1. Preparatory groundwork
- 2. Developing the input tracking scorecard
  - In business environment survey, infrastructures becomes inputs
- 3. Developing the performance scorecard
- 4. Developing the self-evaluation scorecard
- 5. The Interface meeting
- 6. Follow-up and institutionalization

Preparatory Groundwork for score card

- Identification of Scope
  - - e.g. District, service, sector, project, etc.
- Preliminary Stratification of Community eg village units
  - Breakdown by Gender/Ethnicity/Occupation/Peer groups
  - Breakdown by Usage/Supply
  - Breakdown by Poverty (Poverty Mapping)
  - Breakdown by Type of Investment
- Mobilize Community – ensure participation (particularly of women, Youth)
  - (Field Visits, Awareness Campaign, Advocacy…)
- Logistics
  - Travel, Materials – papers,   pencils, Pen Megaphone/Blackboard…

Input tracking score card

Name of input / Village A	Quantity allocated	Actual qty received	Remark	Evidence
Fertilizer				
Fuel Kerosene				
Bags of Rice				
Maize Seeds				
Banana Suckers				
Mosquito nets				

Focus group discussion by segments of a community to develop performance score card

Source: World Bank 2003

Some Key Points in the Methodology of performance score card

- Four stages of Focus Group Discussions:
  - To identify criteria
  - To prioritize and finalizing criteria
  - To explain scores
  - To suggest recommendations for improvement
- • Needs adequate mix of users and non-users
- • Supply side information needed for input tracking
- • Performance criteria should be objective
- • Evidence is provided for high/low scores – claims are cross checked
- • Process tries to facilitate a reform agenda – gives legitimacy, ensures future participation

Interface meeting

- Prepare both communities
- Ensure participation
- Show both the community and providers each others' results
- Having an intermediary group helps; can also invite outside people like local government and state officials
- Facilitate productive dialogue not arguments
- Come up with some concrete reforms
- Obtain some commitment for follow-up
- Now imagine an interface meeting of FUOYE staff at Ikole and Oye on access to University

Interface meeting on supply of mushroom production facilities in Nsukka Agricultural Zone, Enugu State, Nigeria

AN INTERFACE MEETING Cont.

Source: World Bank 2003

Follow-up and Institutionalization:
Making an Impact…Using Information

- Introducing regular monitoring system
- Generating performance benchmarks
- Comparing levels of governance
- Choosing best level to target funds
- Performance based resource allocation
- Reducing corruption
- Improving Quality of Community Projects

Limitations/Caution of the Community Scorecard

- It depends a great deal on quality of facilitation
- Input tracking dependent on supply side data
- Interface can get confrontational
- Standardization needed when scaling up
- Small sample size can bias perceptions
- Scoring is not always applicable to every situation

Dealing with validity issues in action research

- Triangulation
- Theoretical comparism
- Keeping to the insider's view
- Qualitative analysis
- Some statistical tests like
  - Kolmogorov-Simirov test (K-S Statistics)
  - Cronbach's Alpha
  - Correlations analysis
  - Chi-square test
  - Even student t-test (it depends on the nature of data)

SOME OUTLET FOR PUBLISHING ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

- Apart form the cash award you get
- You can publish AR works in
- Action Research http://arj.sagepub.com/
- Field Actions Science Reports (http://factsreports.revues.org/)
- **Community Development Journal Canada**
- International Journal of Rural Management
- *Journal of Agricultural education and extension*

A few projects involving AR

- Design, Construction, and Testing of a Low Cost Maize Thresher by Nwakire and Mkpado
  - Agricultural innovations for sustainable development Vol 3 No 2 , deduced from 2009/2010 African-Wide Women and Young Professional Science Competition Finalist, Ethiopia
  - Participatory Evaluation and Promotion of Improved Pepper Cultivars among Small Holder Farmers by Prof. A.M. Omotayo et al 2012.
    - Africa –Brazil Market Place project
  - Developing the Capacity and Improving Access of Small-scale Farmers to Low Cost Artificial Substrate Mushroom Cultivation in South-Eastern Nigeria, by Mkpado M, 2010
    - ATPS African Youth Science Competition Finalist and Ward winner of Climate Change Innovation Award, Egypt, 2010
  - Base-Line Survey and Establishment of data-base for Community Based Poverty Monitoring System in Nigeria- A Community Participatory Approach, by A.I. Achike, H.E. Ichoku, M. Mkpado and J.Onah (2009).
    - PEP-CBMS 2009-   PEP Research Network, Canada
  - **Reflective learning in action research : A case of micro-interventions for HIV prevention among the youth in Kakira-Kabembe, Jinja, Uganda by Eddy Joshua Walakira *Action Research* 2010 Vol. 8 (1) Pp 53-70**

Challenges/Competitions Action Researcher Face

- Presenting/submitting poor research proposals due to the capacity of the researcher
  - Brain Drain may have caused Nigeria the 1st position in competitive research in Africa
- Research capacity of the Faculty and Institution (FUOYE)
- Poor awareness of calls for research proposals
- Poor infrastructure- internet, electricity, etc
- Inadequate research funds/funding
  - Tertiary education fund,
  - Step B programme
  - Climate change funds, and etc

Conclusion

- AR has come to stay. It is a pathway to sustainable development
- International organisation interested in African development are embracing Action Research
- AR takes democratic process and empowers the people
- AR may present challenges that researchers has to face

Recommendations

- We need to embrace action research principles and methods to encourage rapid and sustainable development of ourselves, FUOYE, Nigeria and Africa
- Building of physical structures in FUOYE needs inputs from staff who will be using the structures
- FUOYE academic staff have to mold students with AR
- FUOYE directors and head of units have to mentor staff with AR
- Researchers in FUOYE should compete and

APPRECIATIONS

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