

# Seven quality choicepoints for ARJ: Ambition is welcome!

Action Research  
2025, Vol. 23(1) 3–7  
© The Author(s) 2025  
Article reuse guidelines:  
[sagepub.com/journals-permissions](https://sagepub.com/journals-permissions)  
DOI: 10.1177/14767503241306927  
[journals.sagepub.com/home/arj](https://journals.sagepub.com/home/arj)



*Action Research* has developed and published actionable knowledge since 2003. Our intention is to support learning for transformations among people, organizations, communities and societies at multiple levels, inner and outer: personal, organizational, methodological, conceptual/discursive. In seeking also to support a community among international scholar-practitioners, we share authors' blogs and host journal symposia.

Action Research is not a method, but an orientation to inquiry, with diverse schools, labels, theories and practices. We honor the original working definition from the founding of the journal: Action research is “*a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. 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, 2001: 1).

Today, in the face of our eco-social crisis, *Action Research* highlights what is transforming and how lives - of all beings – are being improved. The journal's seven quality choicepoints articulate our understanding of action research. We use these for assessing and developing articles. In sharing them we make the review process more transparent.

## Quality matters

Clarifying our view of quality allows, on the one hand, allow us to avoid practice that is poorly articulated and, on the other hand, prevent borrowing uncritically from conventional, yet inappropriate, quality standards of Ivory Tower scholarship.

## Choicepoints for quality

At first an action researcher might read the seven choicepoints as a sequence of priorities; a more seasoned scholar-practitioner may also see the integrative and impactful interdependence. Because action research is constantly evolving, these choicepoints continue to evolve as well.

The seven quality choicepoints invite a combination of objective, intersubjective and subjective elements needed for action research to empower system actors in impactfully shaping and catalyzing the world of their aspirations.

### *Quality of intention and transformative purpose*

This choicepoint refers to the extent to which the action research insights are significant in support of transformation and – over time – contribution to a more sustainable, democratic, and equitable world. The goals of the research and the manuscript should be clearly stated. Relevance to the flourishing of persons, communities, and the wider ecology is invited alongside critically reflecting in detail on how (rather than that) the action research approach and process made a difference. We seek papers that help our thinking about processes of social justice which can serve as a guide toward mitigating global inequity, stimulating wellbeing, and promoting our collective resilience and thriving on this planet.

### *Quality of partnership*

This choicepoint refers to the extent to, and means by which, stakeholders' or system actors' engagement and participative values are evident. We understand that partnership exists on a continuum from consultation with system actors to stakeholders as full co-researchers. We look for clarity on the relational component of research with its choices about partnership as reflected in issues of power/empowerment, learning and collaboration. We expect authors to explicitly reflect on the appropriateness of the depth and breadth of participation of different stakeholders in the design, implementation, and outcomes of their action research. We look also for the strategies and methods that support system actors to develop a strong and authentic sense of evolution in their lives, their understandings, their practices, and thus transformation - from disruption of dynamics that perpetuate exclusion, violence, oppression - toward beneficial influence on the situations in which they practice.

### *Quality of contribution to action research theory/practice*

This choicepoint refers to the extent to which authors build on and create explicit links to previously published work, so that they extend practice, knowledge, and theory. We encourage authors to read extant publications and note the variety of exemplars that may inform your work. We ask in particular, what is the transformational impact of this paper for the field of action research and the global community of action researchers?

### *Quality of participative methods and processes*

This choicepoint refers to the extent to which the action research approach is clearly articulated. We look to see multiple ways of knowing-for-action that ensures room for

questions of “whose knowledge counts?” In addition, we look at the extent to which papers expand the palette of innovative - including digital and creative - methods and data considered appropriate to their intentions and objectives.

### *Quality of sustaining*

This choicepoint refers to the extent to which the action research offers new ideas whose related practices can endure and spread as appropriate, helping to expand and deepen action in response to the urgency of transformations needed. We ask in particular, what is the author doing to ensure that the benefits discovered or created do not simply end? What is a next horizon for scholar-practitioners looking to move beyond limited, local knowledge creation to creating social impact, e.g., through networking, scaling, emergence etc. We therefore consider how experiments can increase sustainable endurance, impact, depth, breath and/or scope and scale of work described.

### *Quality of learning as developmental reflexivity*

This choicepoint refers to the extent to which authors include a personal, involved, and self-critical stance on their role, their inquiry and their power/empowerment throughout the action research process, addressing the context of their research, their own identities and biases and how they might be received by participants, and what led to their involvement in this research. We invite authors to reflect on what they've learned and acknowledge the role of participants, relationships, and experiences in contributing to their own knowledge and transformation. The subjectivity of personal reflexivity is not for its own sake; we ask how it clarifies interpersonal (intersubjective) processes and impersonal/objective claims that the work allows.

### *Quality of writing*

This choicepoint refers to the extent to which the language used in the article engages the interested practitioner. In particular we expect voices of participants in the research to be included. We invite illustrations that “show” and not just “tell.” Note we welcome inclusion of non-traditional and unconventional formats such as art, poetry, practitioner reflections, dialogues, etc.

## **We welcome diverse approaches and labels**

*Action Research Journal* (ARJ) embraces many approaches that meet our quality choicepoints. Our associate editors are engaged in debates about the limits of a ‘disinterested’ social science; we are committed to developing the perspectives of diverse schools. We invite a big tent attitude to quality action research when selecting and developing papers and special issues. Our 20+ years of publications point to the breadth of

work we have developed to publication. Simultaneously we seek to provide a model of social science for the 21st Century as more scholars and practitioners are encouraged to actively respond to planetary crisis as we work toward and create a just and sustainable world.

We are aware that action research is difficult work. We do not look for individual papers to be perfect in all seven choicepoints. We invite clarity on choices made as authors navigate a middle path between responding to problems within living communities and contributing to research-based theory while needing to engage the interest of stakeholders or the larger society in grappling with greatest human concerns.

*Ambition is welcome!*

### **Author notes**

This document has developed from previous iterations of the quality choicepoints, from [Bradbury and Reason \(2001\)](#) to [Bradbury et al. \(2019\)](#). It is intended to refresh previous articulations.

### **References**

- Bradbury, H., Glenzer, K., Ku, B., Columbia, D., Kjellström, S., Aragón, A. O., Warwick, R., Traeger, J., Apgar, M., Friedman, V., Hsia, H. C., Lifvergren, S., & Gray, P. (2019). What is good action research: Quality choice points with a refreshed urgency. *Action Research*, 17(1), 14–18. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476750319835607>
- Bradbury, H., & Reason, P. (2001). Conclusion: Broadening the bandwidth of validity: Issues and choice-points for improving the quality of action research. In P. Reason, & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *The handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice*. Sage.
- Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (2001). Editors, *The Handbook of Action Research: Participative inquiry and practice*. Sage Publications.

### **Hilary Bradbury**

*Editor in Chief, Action Research Foundation, International*

### **Simon Divecha**

*Benevolution, International*

### **Koen Bartels**

*University of Birmingham, UK*

### **Victor Friedman**

*The Max Stern Yezreel Valley College, Israel*

### **Marina Apgar**

*Institute of Development Studies, UK*

### **Joanna Wheeler**

*University of the Western Cape, South Africa*

**Felix Bivens**

*The Regenerative School, USA*

**Tetsu Hirasawa**

*Chuo Daigaku, Japan*

**Denny Ho**

*The Hong Kong Polytechnic University Department of Applied Social Sciences, Hong Kong*

**Julia Wittmeyer**

*Erasmus University Rotterdam Erasmus School of Social and Behavioural Sciences, Netherlands*

**Micol Pizzolati**

*Universita Degli Studi di Bergamo, Italy*