https://www.osi-ngo.org/agir-vous-memes/centre-de-ressources/communautes-de-pratiques/article/distinguer-une-recherche-reellement-participative-d-une-recherche-qui-implique

Objectif Sciences International
Participatory Research: The key to effective Education and achieving the SDGs
Since 1992 - Special Consultative Status to United Nations (ECOSOC)

Distinguishing truly Participatory Research from Research that involves non-scientists without genuine participation

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rself - Resources Center - Communities of Practice -

It is essential to distinguish between, on one hand, scientific research that involves non-scientists merely as sources of information, and, on the other hand, truly participatory research in which these individuals are integrated into every stage of the process as researchers.

This distinction is based on fundamental differences in goals, approaches, responsibilities, power dynamics, values, and impact, leading to an entirely different practical application.

Here is a more detailed explanation of these two types of research and their importance.

Also check out the training on the design and facilitation of a Participatory Science project [https://training-for-development.com/-Sciences-Participatives-Step-1-?lang=en]

Sommaire

[!glossary]
[!summary]

It is possible to distinguish several concrete forms of implementing Science with and for Society.

<-		Scientific Outreach (CCSTI)	-Â»						
-		<-	Science Education	-Â»					
-		-		<-		Citizen Science	-Â»		
-		-			-		<-	Participatory Science	-Â»
-		-			-	-	**Participatory Research**		

However, if we focus solely on conducting research that is genuinely participatory (last row of the table), not only must the Research be real and address a genuine scientific question (otherwise, the project may be participatory but not

considered Research), but it is equally problematic if the project's organization is not truly **participatory**.

This article addresses this latter point and presents a series of criteria to distinguish, on the one hand, genuine research that involves non-scientists but is **NOT** Participatory Research and, on the other hand, genuine research that involves non-scientists through sufficient roles and methods to qualify as truly Participatory Research.

(You can also refer to the article What milestones help structure a Participatory Research project?, which will help you organize your project to make it viable in these terms.)

The following distinctions thus start from the case of genuine scientific research and focus solely on participation levels.

Objectives

In scientific research involving non-scientists as sources of information or feedback and solutions testing, the primary objective is usually to collect data or information from these individuals to feed into a scientific study. Although non-scientists appear throughout the research project description, they play a passive role by providing data without being involved in study design, data analysis, hypothesis testing, or significant decision-making.

In contrast, the objective in participatory research is to create an equitable partnership between researchers and non-scientists, allowing the latter to actively participate in defining research questions, collecting and analyzing data, and communicating results. The goal is to empower non-scientists and build their capacity to engage in a collaborative research process.

Approaches

In traditional scientific research, researchers typically define the research framework, methods, and objectives, while non-scientists are asked to provide information or data as needed. This approach is often referred to as â€œresearcher-led science.â€•

Participatory research, on the other hand, relies on a â€œcommunity-ledâ€• or â€œparticipant-ledâ€• approach. Non-scientists are actively involved in research design, data collection and interpretation, and decision-making. Researchers act as facilitators rather than directors.

Responsibilities

In traditional research, researchers bear most of the responsibility for the quality and validity of results. Non-scientists are considered more as informants or testers.

In participatory research, responsibility is shared between researchers and non-scientists. Non-scientists are co-responsible for the design, implementation, and interpretation of the research. This approach promotes greater transparency and mutual accountability.

Power

In traditional research, researchers hold decision-making power regarding the selection of research questions, methods, and result dissemination. Non-scientists play a subordinate role.

Participatory research seeks to redistribute power by recognizing that non-scientists have valuable expertise and a deep understanding of their own reality. Decisions are made jointly, creating a more equitable process.

Values and Ethics

Traditional scientific research is sometimes criticized for lacking sensitivity to the needs and concerns of the communities studied, raising ethical questions.

Participatory research is founded on principles of equity, respect, justice, and partnership. It acknowledges the intrinsic value of local knowledge and non-scientists' expertise. However, this approach alone does not automatically render Research participatory, as a traditional research approach that respects the research subjects would still not be participatory. For this, one must refer to the previously outlined criteria.

Impact

Traditional research can sometimes be perceived as imposed from the outside, with potentially limited impact on beneficiaries.

Participatory research has the potential to make a more significant impact on the communities involved, as it aims to address their needs and strengthen their capacity to engage in the research process, with solutions originating from them. Additionally, it offers substantial potential for learning and education, as this type of research allows non-scientists to engage in Community-Based Learning [https://www.osi-ngo.org/nos-actions/article/recherche-participative].

Conclusion

In summary, it is essential not to confuse traditional scientific research that involves non-scientists as sources of information with truly participatory research where these individuals are active partners.

Participatory research aims to create equitable partnerships, redistribute power, value local expertise, and positively impact the communities involved. It is based on values of equity, respect, and justice, and offers significant potential for enhancing research and its outcomes.

To further pursue this direction, one could, for example, participate in the Citizen Committees and Strategic Committees of Participatory Research or Citizen Science Projects led by the NGO Objectif Sciences International or other pioneering organizations. Always make sure to seek information as far in advance as possible to be able to attend these conferences or meetings. In practice, as this logic advances, committee meetings in certain sectors

naturally aim to involve non-scientists as well as scientists from other fields, allowing anyone in any role (researcher, local official, NGO facilitator, UN body employee, government member...) to access other practice models to test and ultimately to innovate on these themselves.

A Training on the Design and Facilitation of Participatory Science Projects

In collaboration between Objectif Sciences International and Step and Go, this training is specifically dedicated to the techniques for creating and designing a Participatory Science project for Sustainable Development, as well as the techniques for leading and facilitating a Participatory Science project using a Project-Based Learning approach:

https://training-for-development.com/-Sciences-Participatives-Step-1-?lang=en
[https://training-for-development.com/-Sciences-Participatives-Step-1-?lang=fr]

Choose the 3-day residential version or the 4-day non-residential option, in the Alps, Paris, Nice, New York... or request a date specifically dedicated for your team.