



A Guideline on how to Conduct Youth-led Action Research

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<p>Introduction</p>	<p>This document was developed to guide third parties interested in conducting Action Research involving young, marginalized groups in sports. It outlines the principles and steps required to ensure that research is both inclusive and empowering for (young) participants.</p>
<p>What is Action Research?</p>	<p>Action Research is a research method that aims to explore and solve a problem at the same time: it seeks transformative change through a simultaneous process of action and research, linked by critical reflection (see here Hohmann et al. 2021; George 2023).</p> <p>In classical research, there is a researcher actively involved in the research on the one hand and the respondents who do not actively influence the research on the other. Action Research aims to dissolve or at least reduce these power relations by producing collective knowledge.</p> <p>For a brief insight into the Action Research method, watch this video: What is Action Research?</p>
<p>Action Research (AR) cycle</p>	<p>Action Research aims to identify problems and then produce an iterative plan of action with strategies to achieve best practice. There are four basic stages in the cyclical action research process (see appendix): reflect, plan, act, observe and then reflect before continuing the cycle (Dickens and Watkins 1999). The results of one cycle are used as a basis for further exploration of practice in the following cycle. Thus, each cycle potentially leads to new understandings of practice.</p>
<p>SPIN project & Action Research</p>	<p>Despite the positive effects of sport on everyone, certain groups in sport are underrepresented. The EU-funded project “Build-up Youth Participation and Inclusion in Sport Organizations” (SPIN Youth) aims to increase the participation of young people with diverse backgrounds (such as migrants, refugees, ethnic minorities) in sport, both active and in non-playing positions, and contributes to the creation of inclusive, discrimination-free sport environments which pro-actively welcome diversity and equality.</p> <p>The goal is to find methods to increase sport participation of diverse young people, in particular young refugees and migrants.</p> <p>The main idea is that those affected by a situation/a problem come up with a solution for the situation by their own empirical research. Here, young people are experts on their own lives and explore the needs of young people to find their own solutions.</p> <p>Action Research as a methodological strategy of non-white knowledge production has an important impact for societal changes, e.g. empowering knowledge production.</p>

<p>Youth-led Action Research in context of the SPIN project</p>	<p>Effective training empowers young people to actively engage in social change processes while developing their research and organizational skills. Such programs not only strengthen young people's confidence in their abilities, but also enable them to bring their own voice to important social, political, or educational policy discussions.</p> <p>Therefore, 14 Youth Coordinators from the 8 project countries (Austria, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands, Portugal, and Italy) were trained from October 4-7, 2024, in Rome (Italy). During the 3 days, the Youth Coordinators acquired the skills to conduct Action Research (i.e. applied research in the field of sport and social inclusion) and to coordinate a Youth Panel in their respective country of residence (e.g. in their club) to investigate and improve specific social or educational issues in their respective clubs. Based on the Action Research-cycle (see Appendix) two Youth Coordinators are planning Action Research as part of the major topic of participation of diverse youth in sports with a convened youth panel (Phase 1); they implement the research described as an action (Phase 2). Youth coordinators analyze the research results together with the youth panel and present them to their clubs (Phase 3). In the last phase 4, Youth Coordinators draw conclusions from the topic they were investigating.</p> <p>The youth-led Action Research as part of the SPIN Youth project was conceptualized by Camino gGmbH.</p>
<p>Preparation for Youth-led Action Research</p>	<p>Youth-led participatory Action Research is an equity-based approach to scientific inquiry and social change that involves young people in identifying problems relevant to their own lives, conducting research to understand the problems, and advocating for change based on research findings (Ozer 2016).</p> <p>To carry out youth-led Action Research, it is important to ensure that the young people involved have the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively manage and carry out the research process. Here are the important steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Introduction to Action Research (AR): including an understanding of the basic principles of Action Research and the aims of AR (2) Familiarization with research methods (qualitative and quantitative methods, data collection and analysis, ethics in research) (3) Planning and implementation: Provide knowledge on how to plan and conduct a research project, including the development of good research questions (4) Presentation of research results: Provide knowledge on how results are analyzed and prepared for subsequent presentation (5) Action Plans: Provide knowledge on how to develop Action Plans based on the results

Overview of different research methods ¹	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Online survey (quantitative)	A quantitative method of gathering information using relevant questions from a sample of people with the aim of understanding populations .	Relatively easy to administer & cost effective . Capable of collecting data from many respondents . A broad range of data can be collected (e.g., attitudes, opinions, beliefs, etc.).	Problem: inaccurate or dishonest answers Lack of memory on the subject: respondents may not be fully aware of their reasons
Focus group/Group discussion² (qualitative)	Interactive method: A form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked under guidance (moderator) about their attitude/feelings towards a product, idea, etc.	Rich data: Gaining information in the language of the participants. The group dynamic allows participants to build on each other's responses & develop ideas that they might not have thought of in an individual interview. Interaction with the participants, which allows for follow-up questions. Information is provided more quickly (a cost-effective method!)	Requires a trained moderator (quality depends on the skill of the moderator) Data is difficult to analyze (e.g., identifying an individual opinion from the group opinion). The sample may not be representative of the population.
Guided/Semi-structured interviews (qualitative)	Combination of a predetermined set of open-ended questions (questions that stimulate the	Allows to delve deeply into the perspectives of those interviewed . With the necessary guidance it provides to	Openness of the interview can lead in unexpected directions; it is important to keep

¹ See for this Reinders, H., Ditton, H. (2011): Überblick Forschungsmethoden. In: Reinders, H., Ditton, H., Gräsel, C., Gniewosz, B. (eds) Empirische Bildungsforschung. VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-531-93015-2_3

² See for this Przyborski, A., Riegler, J. (2010): Gruppendiskussion und Fokusgruppe. In: Handbuch Qualitative Forschung in der Psychologie.

	<p>conversation) with the opportunity for the interviewer to explore certain topics or responses further.</p>	<p>focus on the most important topics.</p>	<p>the conversation focused on the topic of the study to ensure that the data collected is relevant to the research question.</p>
<p>Participant observation (qualitative)</p>	<p>Researcher in the field: it aims to gain insights into the actions, behavior or behavioral effects of individual people or groups of people by being particularly close to the subject.</p>	<p>Recording the actual & natural behavior Observation of groups and over longer periods of time</p>	<p>Greater effort than with surveys, requires observation training Danger of confusion between external and internal views, observation and interpretation, role conflicts</p>
<p>From research into action:</p> <p>What to do to implement youth-led Action Research?</p>	<p>Step 1: Establishing a Youth Panel Two Youth Coordinators build a diverse (age, gender, ethnicity) Youth Panel consisting of the two Youth coordinator and a group of 4-5 other young people from diverse backgrounds.</p> <p>Step 2: Discussion and Agreement on the topic and the research question When developing the research question, care should be taken to ensure that it is specific (deals with a concrete phenomenon or problem), precise (the choice of words should not be confusing and leave nothing open), complex (the question should not be able to be answered with a yes or no), but at the same time not too difficult to answer (see Reinders et al. 2011). The common goal is to develop ideas to promote access to sport for young people from different backgrounds and to implement them together with the local (sports) clubs, associations, etc. that are addressed.</p> <p>Step 3: Choice of research method (the advantages and disadvantages of different methods are shown in the table above)</p> <p>Step 4: Definition of the target group (e.g. sports member of the club, board members, coaches or people with a certain role in a club)</p>		

	<p>Step 5: Developing data collection instruments (e.g. Survey, guideline for interviews or focus groups; see for this e.g. Taherdoost 2021; Mazhar et al. 2021)</p> <p>Step 6: Application of the chosen research method: Use the chosen research method, e.g. focus group, to carry out the Action Research. Discuss the results with the sports club, association or similar. The feedback is important in order to further develop the ideas and include them in a short final report.</p> <p>Step 7: Developing Youth Action Plans Based on this, Youth coordinators and Youth Panel develop a Youth Action Plan together. The Action Plan contains measures to be implemented in the sports club or in the local area.</p>
<p>Outlook</p>	<p>Young people have the power to become leaders (Rönnerman 2015) with the knowledge to improve their sports club, association or environment through the method of Action Research. Action Research conveys a “democratic impulse” (Noffke 1997) that can expand into the entire sports club (or other). When engaging in action research, young people are given a voice and can empower themselves though learning with and from each other (Nelson 2015).</p>

Appendix

The Action Research cycle



Source: Own illustration.

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