**Call for papers for special edition of the International Educational Action Research Journal**

**The conceptualisation and articulation of impact: hopes, expectations and challenges for the participatory paradigm.**

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This special issue aims to explore notions of impact in relation to the principles and practices of different traditions in action research in health and wellbeing. Such approaches include Participatory Action Research, Community Based Participatory Research, Design Based Methodology and other forms of research that have participatory endeavor at their core.

The co-construction of knowledge through action research advances a body of community research that is aligned with the needs and interests of community members, grounded both in established methods and new and innovative approaches to data generation in social research. It is often posited that this approach promotes research that is more action-oriented, and potentially impactful. These ideas coincide well with emerging calls by governments, funders and research councils that applied research will (or should) go beyond being predominantly a tool for knowledge collection and for it to be more directly connected to a change process; to make a difference to communities; to have an impact.

Given this emerging focus on impact it would seem, as Pat Thomson says in a forthcoming editorial of EARJ, “Action researchers might be forgiven for thinking that, in this context, their moment in the sun had finally arrived” (Thomson 2015). The call for research that can also demonstrate the difference it has made to practice, is however, accompanied by the continued elevation of a dominant framework that preferences certain ways of capturing and documenting that difference. In particular, ways of conceptualising impact that favour measurement and normative practices have come to form an accepted/expected standard. There are, however, broader definitions of impact that move on from a reductionist framework towards a more comprehensive and inclusive approach for capturing both the intended (and unintended) consequences of research. These broader definitions are more able to reflect the core values for, and nature of, participatory action research, situating the discussion within the values and principles of the approach and recognising the different forms of impact such approaches foster. Research that has participatory practices at its centre is likely to have different types of impact from research that starts from a position of distanced objectivity but there is considerable argument over whether these are always readily recognised, articulated and accepted as ways of demonstrating change in the wider academic sphere (Cargo & Mercer; 2008; Jagosh et al: 2012).

For this Special Issue of EARJ we are looking for contributions (methodological, theoretical and examples from practice) from those whose participatory approach to action research has involved them in wrestling with the challenges of evidencing impact; the challenges that arise when working within a core set of values that sit outside the predominant positivist research paradigm. As Thomson (2015) suggest, the impact agenda can provide us with an opportunity to argue for a different understanding of change/impact and to place this more securely it the wider arena.

We particularly value contributions from non academic partners working with academic partners in participatory research and contributions from geographical areas that are generally under-represented in this journal.

**Deadlines:**

**Abstracts of 500 words to be submitted by 31st October 2015**

**Invitations will be sent to selected authors by 30th November, requesting full manuscript to be submitted no later than 1st April 2016**

**References**

Cargo M and Mercer, S (2008) The Value and Challenges of Participatory Research: Strengthening Its Practice. Annual Review of Public Health 29 (24) 1-26.

Jagosh J, Macaulay AC, Pluye P, Salsberg J, Bush PL, Henderson J, Sirett E, Wong G, Cargo M, Herbert CP, Seifer SD  Green LW and Greenhalgh T. (2012) Uncovering the Benefits of Participatory Research: Implications of a Realist Review for Health Research and Practice. [Milbank Quarterly](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22709390); 90(2): 311-346.

Thomson P (2015) Action research with/against impact . Educational Action Research 23(3) (forthcoming)