



ARNA 2018 – CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

The Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) will convene its 6th Annual Conference from June 28 to 30, 2018, on the campus of the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) in the U.S.A. The theme for this year's conference is *Knowledge Mobilization for Equitable & Peaceful Social Progress*. The call for proposals to present at the conference is found at: <http://arnawebsite.org/conferences/>. Proposals will be received beginning October 30 and ending March 30.

On the Theme

Knowledge mobilization (KMb) is often defined as the meaningful use of evidence and expertise to align research, policy and practice in an effort to improve outcomes for the education and wellness of children, youth, and families and communities. At its core, KMb involves knowledge sharing between research producers (e.g., university researchers, participatory action researchers, community-based activist groups, and individual action researchers) and research users (e.g., professionals/practitioners) whose work can benefit from research findings.

The concept has grown out of the assertion that verified empirical knowledge should be the basis for policies and practices in a variety of social sectors, including education, healthcare and social services.

KMb thus reflects the long-standing concern in the social sciences with bridging the gap between research and practice. Examples of traditional knowledge mobilization efforts include:

- Publications such as journal articles, books and reports
- Events such as workshops and conferences
- Publications of teaching curricula development or improvement

- Knowledge transfer, synthesis, exchange, and co-creation

However, not all “evidence” is treated as equal, and action researchers have expressed persistent concern over the lack of respect and consideration of evidence gathered through action research and participatory research in relation to critical issues of injustice and social change. Although traditional research has been viewed as valuable, the bias towards it often slows social progress on critical issues such as peacebuilding and grassroots community development by marginalizing non-university based findings and blunting the critical edge of change efforts.

Theories and actions are needed to better position action researchers in relation to the use of evidence and expertise in shaping social policies, in particular in relation to issues of social justice and social equality.

A strategy is needed for alternative knowledge mobilization in support of equitable and peaceful social progress.

The ARNA 2018 conference will address this need through presentations on the following key items.

1. Initiatives in support of civic education, critical literacy, and strengthening cultures of questioning
2. Practitioner research and practice-based research evidence in support of revitalizing public education in the U.S. and more broadly, the Americas
3. Peacebuilding initiatives that incorporate participatory action research
4. Addressing pressing social problems in varied social domains such as neighborhoods, schools, communities, and civic organizations
5. Strengthening university engagements with compelling questions of social justice and ecological sustainability/climate change
6. Initiatives for reclaiming hope through social practices that address public memory and experiences of oppression and marginalization while linking such memories with action for social improvement and change
7. Initiatives that draw on participatory research to hold authority accountable and promote social transformation
8. Supporting and sustaining alternative epistemologies and knowledge producing practices

Tension between those clinging to a knowledge monopoly perspective and those drawn to participatory approaches to knowledge production is clearly evident today. In pockets of participatory research found throughout the Americas, the call for recognition that the Western perspective on scientific knowledge (produced by research institutions and universities) is one kind of knowledge and should not be granted “absolute priority” can be heard.

In this view, the priority for mobilizing knowledge should proceed based on a clear recognition of the diversity of “knowledges,” including popular knowledge, urban knowledge, indigenous knowledge, and youth knowledge among others.

ARNA’s 2018 conference will examine these tensions through symposiums/panels, workshops, keynote addresses, roundtables, and poster presentations.

To help action researchers, practitioner researchers, and participatory action researchers have an impact on public policies and professional and community practices at levels that can “stand up to” a hegemonic perspective on knowledge and its production, we need to articulate the balance point between conventional uses of the term knowledge mobilization and sustained challenges to the notion posed by the emergence of knowledge democracy as an alternative to the underlying foundation of the knowledge enterprise. In the Americas, these efforts to articulate a new position are found at the intersections of participatory research traditions, which are very deeply rooted throughout South America and continue to draw on the work and spirit of Paulo Freire and Orlando Fals Borda, and the emergence of action research and practitioner research in North America. The ARNA conference provides an environment for examining these intersections of traditional knowledge production and mobilization and alternative perspectives on mobilizing people for community-based social change and grassroots knowledge dissemination.

Overall, the 2018 conference will address consideration of the three commonly recognized components of knowledge mobilization: (a) raising awareness and prompting change, (b) bringing people together to share knowledge, and (c) putting knowledge into action while taking a broader and more critical view that addresses questions associated with a democratizing orientation towards knowledge and its uses. Just a few examples include: (i) Raising awareness of what? Prompting changes to benefit whom?; (ii)

Bringing which people together and for what?; (iii) Putting knowledge into action for whose benefit and in what context?

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