

**Types and Approaches to M&E**

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Similarities with Social Science Research Projects

# Methodologies, methods, and approaches

*A methodology is a coherent and logical framework for research based on views, beliefs, and values. This framework guides the choices made by researchers.*

*Methods are the tools that researchers use to collect and analyse data, write and present their findings. Researchers may use the same tools with very different methodologies.*

*There are also some ways to approach research which are not methodologies, because they are not coherent and logical frameworks, but they are widely used and understood. Evaluation is one example.*

*source: Research and Evaluation for Busy Students and Practitioners. A Time-Saving Guide. Kara Helen, 2017*



# Ontological and Epistemological positions

Ontology (literally 'the study of being') refers to how the world is known, while epistemology (literally 'the study of knowledge') refers to how that knowledge of the world is learned (Ormston et al 2014: 6).

An example of an epistemological position is someone's view of illness. For example, illness could be seen as:

- caused by independent entities such as viruses and bacteria (positivist);
- due to a complex range of factors in a specific context (realist);
- created through people's actions and decisions (constructionist);
- different for different people (interpretivist);
- a combination of the above, and also affected by wider social structures such as poverty and ethnicity (transformative).

<b>Methodology type:</b>	<b>Positivist</b>	<b>Realist</b>	<b>Constructionist</b>	<b>Interpretivist</b>	<b>Transformative</b>
Sub-divisions include:	Post-positivist	Critical realist	Postmodernist Grounded theory	Phenomenologist Symbolic interactionist Hermeneutic	Participatory Feminist Emancipatory/activist User-led Decolonising
Ontology (how the world is known):	Facts and phenomena exist independently of people	Facts and phenomena are entwined in complex contexts	People construct facts and phenomena	People interpret facts and phenomena	People, facts, and phenomena can combine to create change
Epistemology (how that knowledge of the world is learned):	Through observation and measurement	Through assessment of complexity in context	By creating meaning from experience	By identifying and interpreting multiple realities	Through relationships with people and the environment
Methods likely to be used:	Randomised controlled trials, surveys, technology-based methods	Mixed methods	Interviews, arts-based methods, discourse analysis	Interviews, focus groups, participant observation	Arts-based methods, interviews, community-based research

# RESEARCH APPROACHES (1)

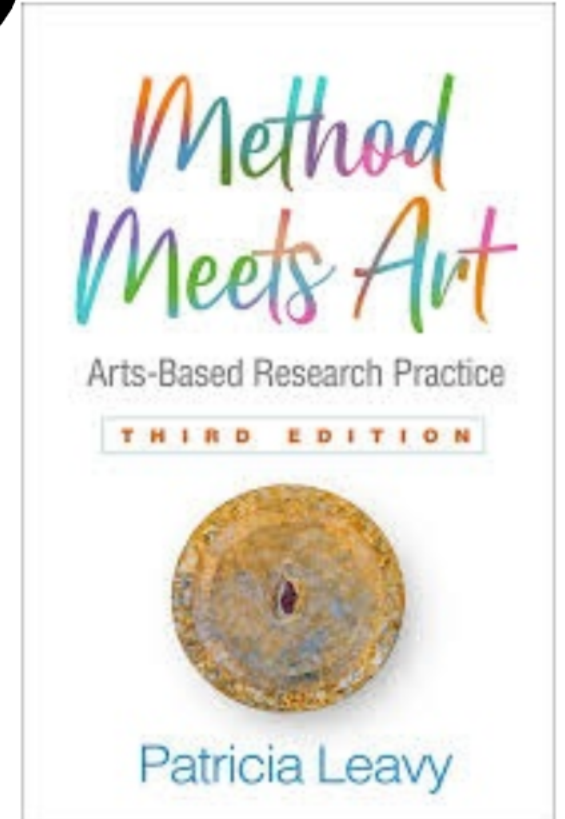
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## ACTION RESEARCH

The term 'action research' was coined in the 1940s by the German-American social psychologist Kurt Lewin. Action research is an approach that enables groups of people to investigate their own situation or practices, either on their own or with help from professional researchers, to find out how they can make positive changes. It is an iterative process of reflection and problem solving in groups or communities. Problems addressed through action research are those which affect members of the group or community carrying out the research. The process of action research involves identifying a problem, collecting information about the problem, deciding how to solve the problem, trying out the solution, seeing if the solution works, and so on.

## Participatory Action Research (PAR)

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## ART-BASED RESEARCH

Arts-based research The arts and research have a closer relationship than many people realise. They have some facets in common, such as paying close attention to a phenomenon and theories representing it for an audience. Artists of all kinds use research in their work, and for some their artistic practice is a form of research (Barone and Eisner 2012: 24)

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# RESEARCH APPROACHES (2)

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## MIX-METHOD RESEARCH

Research began as a quantitative, positivist discipline, with qualitative research developing much later (Ormston et al 2014: 11). The initial idea of mixing methods involved combining quantitative and qualitative methods of collecting data.

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## EVALUATION RESEARCH

Evaluation is an approach to assessing the value of a service, intervention, or policy.

There are a number of types of evaluation, chief among them being process evaluation (how?), outcome evaluation (what changes?), and impact evaluation (what is the effect?).

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# CASE STUDY

Please go to the IS -> Week 4 -> practical task WEEK 4  
Read the Case.

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WORKING PAPER

## School Meals Case Study: United States of America

Prepared by the Research Consortium for School Health and  
Nutrition, an initiative of the School Meals Coalition

**Submitted by:**

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June 2023

Disclaimer: The findings and conclusions in this publication are those of the author(s) and should not be construed to represent any official USDA or U.S. Government determination or policy.



# 1. Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation (RBM&E)

RBM&E focuses on achieving specific results by setting performance indicators and tracking progress toward desired outcomes. In this case, you would measure key indicators like attendance rates, academic performance, and nutritional status. The approach follows a structured framework, typically involving a logical framework (LogFrame), which outlines inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impacts.

- Kusek and Rist (2004) describe RBM&E as a process where "monitoring is used as a management tool to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of projects" (p. 5). They advocate using performance indicators to measure success against predefined target

<https://www.rbmtraining.com/practical-rbm.html>

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"I think I see why we're not getting anywhere."



## 2. Theory-Based Evaluation Approach

Theory-Based Evaluation is particularly useful when you need to understand how and why a program works (or doesn't work). It involves constructing a Theory of Change (ToC) that maps out the steps from activities to outcomes, with assumptions clearly stated. For this school feeding program, the ToC might assume that providing meals improves concentration, leading to better attendance and academic outcomes.

Reference and Quotation:

• Weiss (1995) argues that Theory-Based Evaluation provides "a framework for understanding the causal links between program activities and outcomes" and emphasizes testing assumptions to explain how change happens.

<https://thetoolkit.me/approaches-tools/theory-based/>



### **3. Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E)**

Participatory M&E emphasizes the involvement of key stakeholders—particularly the program’s beneficiaries—in all stages of the evaluation. This approach is rooted in the idea that local knowledge and perspectives are crucial for an accurate understanding of the program's impact.



**Participatory Monitoring & Evaluation in Tanzania's Health and Social Service Programmes**

Field Manual

January 2017

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## 4. Quasi-Experimental Design

Quasi-experimental designs are used when randomized control trials (RCTs) are not feasible. In the class case, a comparison could be made between schools that receive the feeding program (intervention group) and similar schools that do not (comparison group). The goal is to establish causality between the intervention and observed outcomes by comparing changes over time in both groups.



# 5. Mixed Methods Approach

A mixed methods approach integrates both quantitative and qualitative data to provide a more comprehensive evaluation. For the school feeding program, this could involve combining surveys and statistical data (quantitative) with focus group discussions and interviews (qualitative) to understand not only what has changed but also why and how these changes occurred

Mixed-method research design:  
Ensuring fully-informed decision-making



Combining qualitative and quantitative data

Integration of methods and analysis



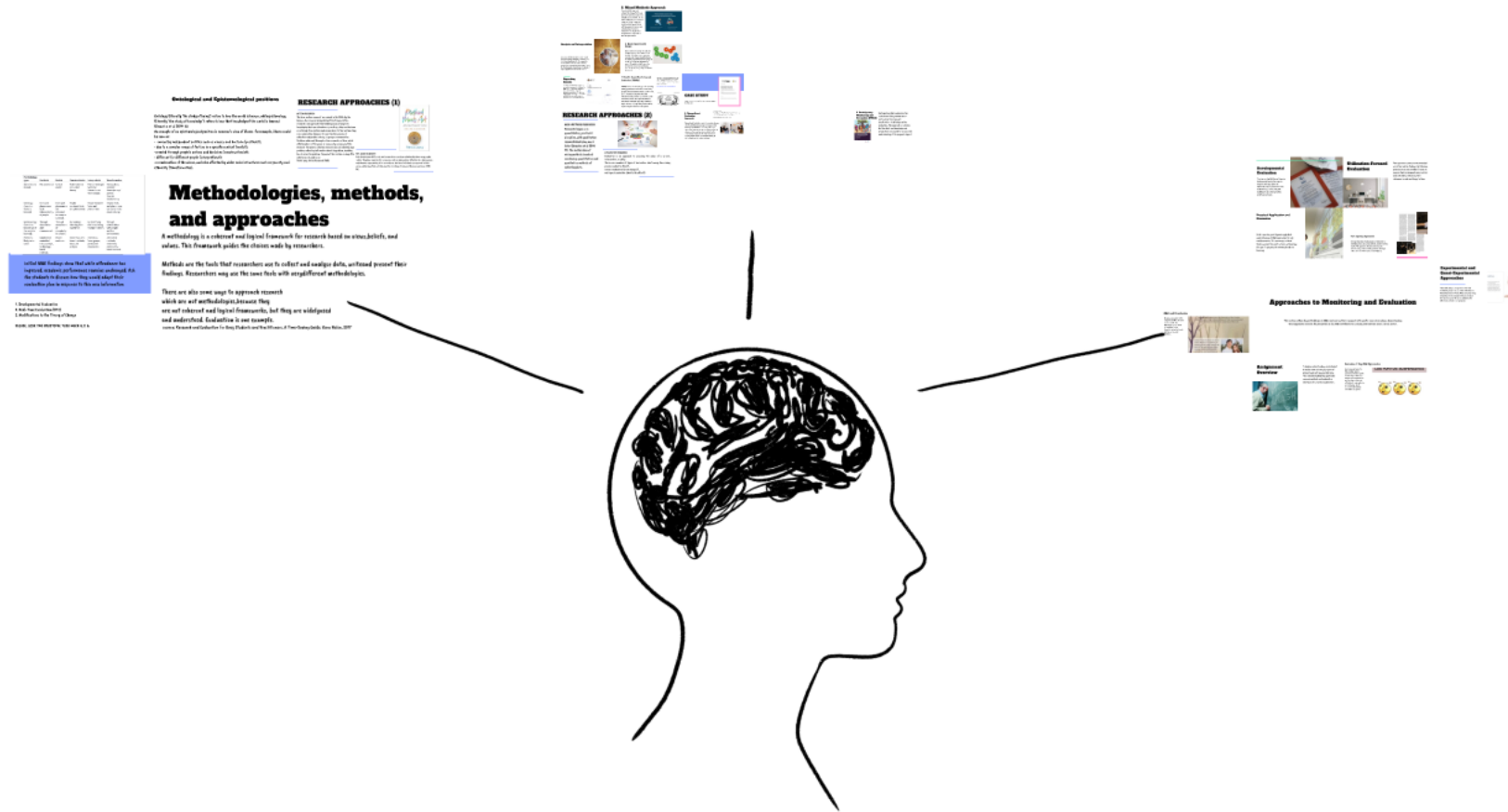
Enhanced validity and knowledge

Flexibility in research design

initial M&E findings show that while attendance has improved, academic performance remains unchanged. Ask the students to discuss how they would adapt their evaluation plan in response to this new information

1. Developmental Evaluation
2. Real-Time Evaluation (RTE)
3. Modifications to the Theory of Change

PLEASE, LOOK THE PRACTICAL TASK WEEK 4, P. 6.



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