

Quick guide to Theological Action Research (TAR)

☞ Like Practical Theology, TAR uses a reflective method, drawing on interdisciplinary insights and qualitative methodology, and exploring particular contexts and the weight of various theological sources.

☞ As a type of Action Research methodology, TAR employs collaborative social research in particular contexts, with the expectation of new meanings and actions that improve a situation.

Distinctives of Theological Action Research:

☞ TAR is a collaborative process where outsider expertise operates alongside insider experience, each equipping and informing the other.

☞ TAR is both academically rigorous and also open to encountering and incorporating the unexpected through being relationship-orientated, flexible, and confessional.

☞ TAR's goal is transformation and renewal, including through enhancing the 'theological fluency' of the participants in relation to their context.

DEFINITION

Theological Action Research is a **partnership** between an **insider and an outsider team** to undertake **research** and **conversations** answering **theological** questions about **faithful practice** in order to **renew** both theology and practice in the **service of God's mission**.

Cameron *et al* (2010: 63)

☞ All facets of the practices that are examined and the practice of research itself are theological, and can be transformative aspects of the research process.

☞ TAR employs a conversation-led process that seeks to disclose (i.e. reveal) theology.

☞ TAR explores 'four voices' to disclose theology through conversation.

- Normative theology - e.g. Bible, creeds, tradition
- Formal theology - the theology of theologians, of the 'academy'
- Operant theology - the theology that is actually practiced
- Espoused theology - the group's articulation of beliefs

The key text for both a theoretical and practical introduction to TAR (which informs this quick guide) is: Cameron, Bhatti, Duce, Sweeney and Watkins, (2010), *Talking about God in Practice: Theological Action Research and Practical Theology* (SCM: London)

