



Understanding Action Research

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Presentation aims to:



- Clarify what we mean by action research and how it works to support reflective practice
- Describe the evaluation process and links with AR process
- Identify and agree documentation process
- Develop partnership working

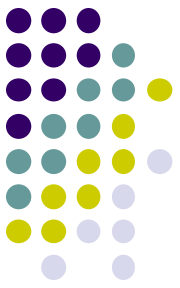
What is action research (AR)?



“We must find a way of bridging the traditional divide between educational theory and professional practice.”

Jack Whitehead in Action Research, Principles and Practice, Jean McNiff, 1988, ix

What is action research (AR)?



- Action research is a research that ANY of us can do on his/her own practice to improve it
- “AR is research carried out by practitioners for the purpose of advancing their own practice” McLeod, 1999
- It is more than trying out new ideas or showing that something works but looks into ‘why’ or ‘how’
- Action Researchers think about underlying questions and explanations which can give a more profound understanding of their work: it supported and requires ‘reflective practice’ (Schon, 1982)

What is action research (AR)?



- A deeper understanding is gained through systematic evidence gathering where the action happens
- AR is grounded in real life situations
- AR uses theories to help reveal the underlying assumptions we have about our work – to discover why we do what we do and what works and what doesn't
- AR is also based on a strong ethical code of action with an awareness of power, values and moral conduct

What is action research (AR)?



- AR is research carried out by people involved in the situation, not outsider observers.
- AR cannot be used by one group of people to get another group of people to do what they think is best for them
- AR is genuinely democratic or non-coercive (by practitioners for practitioners)
- The Action Researcher would know the services they are studying well and have an immediate need and use for the results of their work

In Summary: AR is....



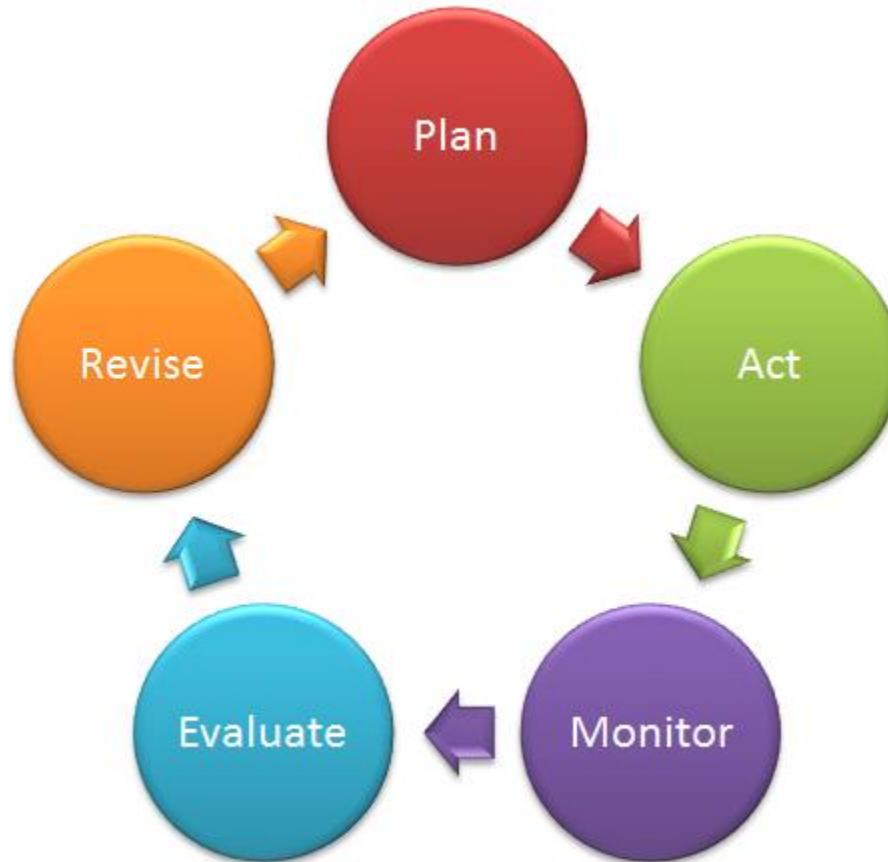
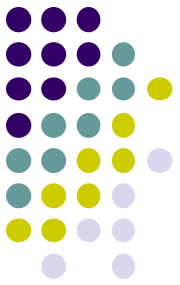
- A process in which participants examine their own educational practice, systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research
- It is typically designed and conducted by practitioners who analyse the data to improve their own practice
- Action research can be done by individuals or by teams of colleagues. The team approach is called *collaborative inquiry*
- Action research has the potential to generate genuine and sustained improvements in schools and settings

Why AR?

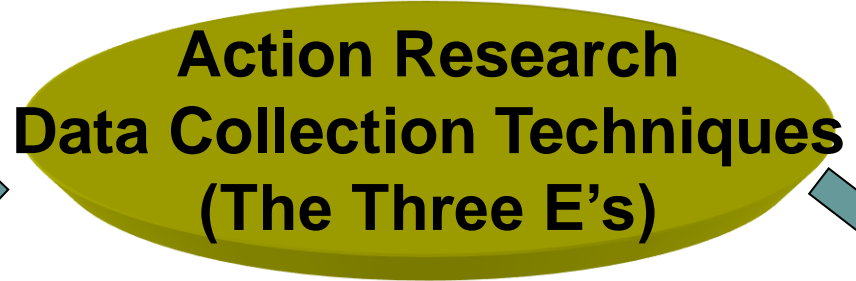


- AR gives educators new opportunities to reflect on and assess their teaching and children's learning
- To explore and test new ideas, methods, and materials
- To assess how effective the new approaches were
- To share feedback with fellow team members
- To make decisions about which new approaches to include in the practice

How does AR work?



AR data collection: (Documentation)



Experiencing

(By observing)

- Participant and non-participant Observation

Enquiring

(By asking)

- Interviews
- Questionnaires

Examining

(By using documentation)

- Archival documents
- Journals
- Maps
- Audio and Videotapes
- Artifacts
- Fieldnotes

Evaluation questions



- How did the action happen? What worked and what didn't?
- Is there evidence that the action contributed to the practitioners' reflection as a professional?
- Have participants been empowering, changed, or provided with new understanding?
- Has the research enhanced the quality of children's learning and development?

Evaluative Evidence



- Journals/Learning logs
- Documentation
- Observations
- Interviews

Getting into Action



- Identify and agree documentation of evidence and project process
- Develop partnerships and working agreements
- Develop a project timetable with clear milestones



“There is no use trying”, said Alice, “one can’t believe impossible things.”

“I dare say you haven’t had much practice,” said the Queen. “When I was your age, I always did it for half an hour a day. Why, sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.”

Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland