

Action Research—Summary Sheet with Recommended Steps

Action Research- working definition : It is a type of study in which informal, qualitative, formative, subjective, interpretive, reflective and experiential model of inquiry in which all individuals involved in the study are knowing and contributing participants (Hopkins, 1993). It provides a framework for teacher inquiry into classroom practice and other educational questions. The action research projects are qualitative investigations such as problem solving, verification and discovery, by teachers and researchers in complex working classroom situations. The focus of MSP Action Research is the cooperation and collaboration of teachers in groups that will investigate a defined problem in the form of a question using the action research process explained below.

Each action research group should keep a log/journal of what they discussed at each meeting (include with each entry a list of attendees.) The log should have the summary of discussion points from each meeting and when applicable, a copy of the data, the analysis, and references (if a book was used, cite name, author and ISBN number). Groups can include questions and their own journal responses which is in keeping with the reflective nature of action research.

Part of your log for the Action Research meetings should include these items:

1. Problem definition- what is the question- it should be something that catches your attention- identify the initial idea. It should not be a Yes/No question. The problem should be meaningful to you and should make you want to commit to it for the school year.
2. Fact finding- familiarizes the group with terms and information about the problem. The gathering of data may influence the problem focus. Problem should not be too broad or too narrow. State a hypothesis.
3. A plan to answer or resolve the problem: What data will you collect? You should collect 3 different points of data. How does the data that you collect relate to the research problem? How will you collect it? How long will you collect it? How will you analyze it?
4. Collect data- It should be collected from more than one source and at different times. Triangulate your data, objective data is needed. The data can be from previous points in time such as attendance records, tests, report cards as well as the data you collect presently. You can:
 - Collect student work finished or in progress.
 - Conduct interviews and distribute self-assessments.
 - Use classroom observations from diaries, classroom maps, shadowing and anecdotal records.
5. Take your first action step and collect the data.
6. Evaluate your data –Notice or reflect on the outcomes or changes
7. Amended plans- changes in plan
8. Second action step- monitoring and collecting more data
9. Evaluate your data- reflect on outcomes –YOUR GROUP MAY GO THROUGH MORE THAN TWO CYCLES- each cycle should take you closer to your goal.
10. Verbalize and theorize the outcomes of your research
11. Document the research- present at a conference

At the end of the research, groups should be ready to present to peers in the MSP Hub schools as well as to a larger audience at a conference.

MSPinNYC Action Research Overview:

Action Research teams will submit the following in writing:

Their Proposal:

A) The research question formally stated- which can be amended as they get insights.

B) A rationale for why they are investigating the question. What was it about their class, course, a certain student, a trend, etc that got them wondering passionately about it. Why did they care? What did they find out about it? They should have defined the working terms of the study. Research on the topic should include literature from books, professional journals, trainings that led them to say if we do this or plan like this then.... we expect to see or students will ... This should be really spelled out.

C) The actual "game plan" - What they will do to collect at least 3 pieces of data? What are they collecting? How many classes, how often, dates and any collecting tool needs to be fleshed out. They can use something from other sources but they need to give credit to the source.

On-going record of their work:

Participants will keep a journal/log of meeting with date, time and members as well as a clear write-up of what took place. Their compensation is based on the work that they produce and it needs to be documented (student work, reading an article or writing lesson plans or labs) so that we can analyze the AR and its effect.

Each team should maintain a file of student work/ journals, surveys, etc. that they are collecting, in addition to lesson plans, readings, etc. to bring to the meeting that should be part of the (log/minutes). Each team should make a copy of what they collect and analyze and to keep as part of the log of the meetings.

Some helpful sources:

http://ilp.anu.edu.au/useful_links/ANZIIL_7_July_03.pdf

Smith, M. K. (1996; 2001) 'Action research', *the encyclopedia of informal education*, www.infed.org/research/b-actres.htm .

Hopkins, D. (1993). *A teacher's guide to classroom research (2nd edn.)*. Buckingham: Open University.

Below is a flow chart that summarizes the nature of action research as reflective, evolving and collaborative.

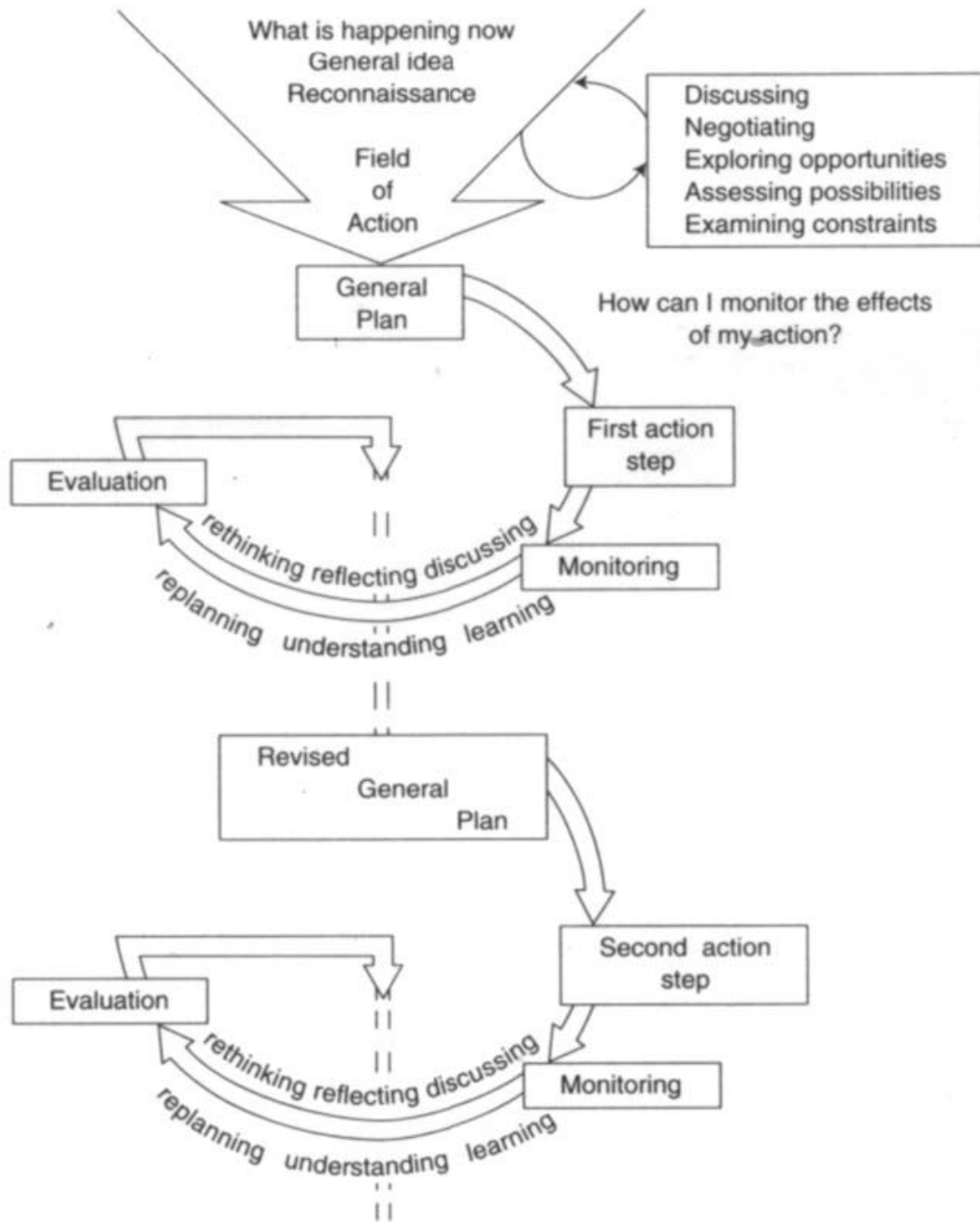


FIGURE 1-1 A Representation of Lewin's Action Research Cycle

From *Action Research in Retrospect and Prospect*, p. 29, by Stephen Kemmis, 1990. Victoria, Australia: Deakin University Press. Copyright ©1990 Deakin University Press.