

# Action Research: An Approach to Professional Learning

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# What is Action Research

- ▶ Termed coined by Kurt Lewin (1944)
- ▶ Widely used in a variety of forms including “participatory action research”<sup>1</sup> (Friere), and “appreciative enquiry”<sup>2</sup> (Stowell & West)
- ▶ Described as using  
“a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact-finding about the result of the action” (Lewin, 1946).

1. See for example: <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/41575/2/41575.pdf>

2. See for example:

<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/intro/classics.cfm>

# What is Action Research

- ▶ In a nutshell in education, AR specifically refers to:
  - “...a disciplined inquiry done by a teacher (*or teachers*) with the intent that the research will inform and change his or her practices in the future” (FERENCE, 2000, p.1)
- ▶ The studies that form part of AR, focus on educational questions that arise from the practice of teaching

# Characteristics of Action Research

## ▶ Emergent

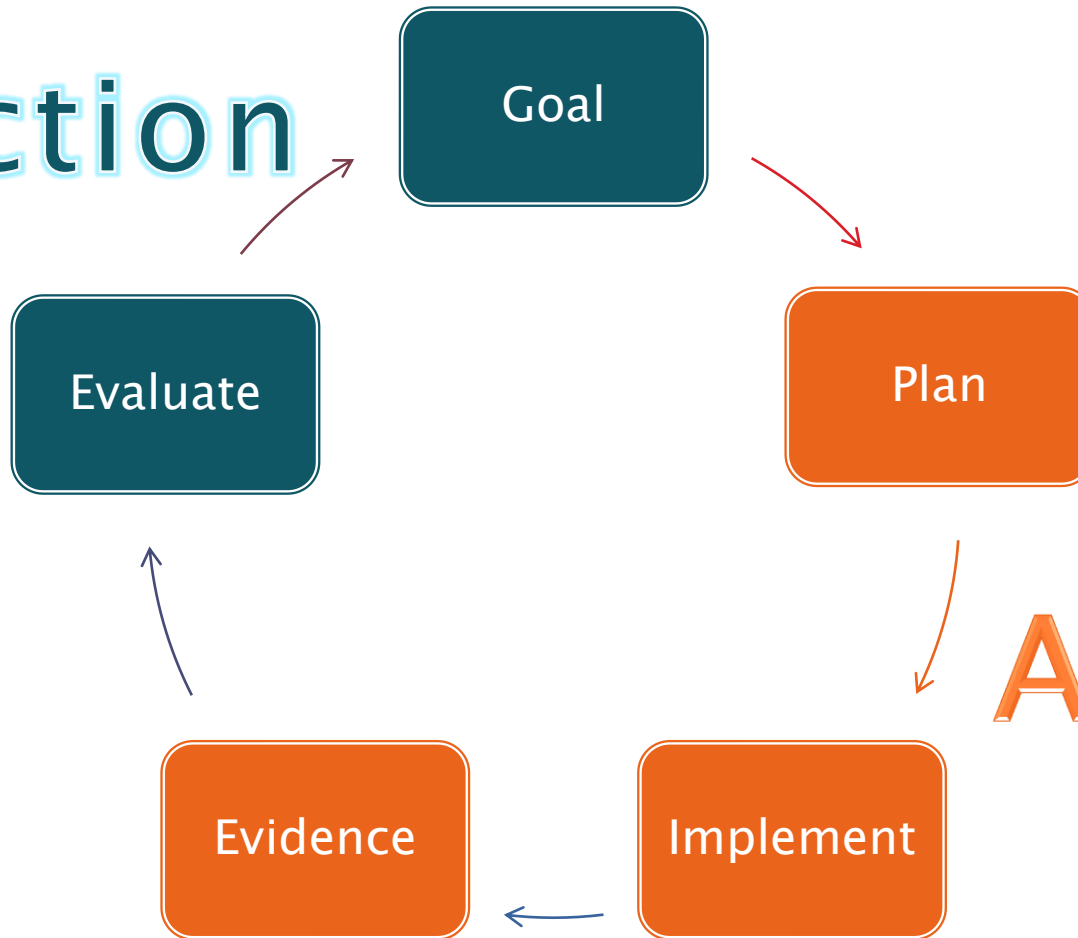
- Develops as the issue or problem unfolds
- Emerges from the ground up in response to the needs of practitioners

## ▶ Iterative

- May go through a number of cycles of action and reflection

# Cycle of improvement

Reflection



Action

1. Identification of problem area
2. Collection and organization of data
3. Interpretation of data
4. Action based on data
5. Reflection

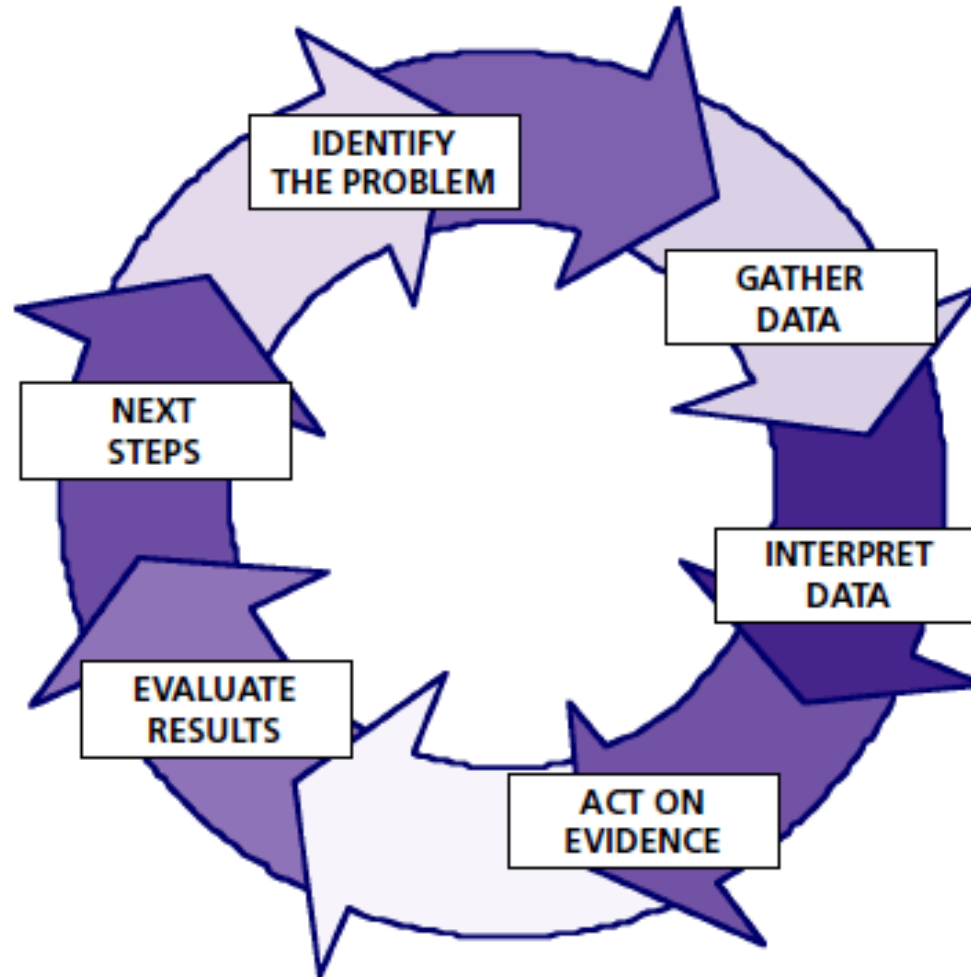
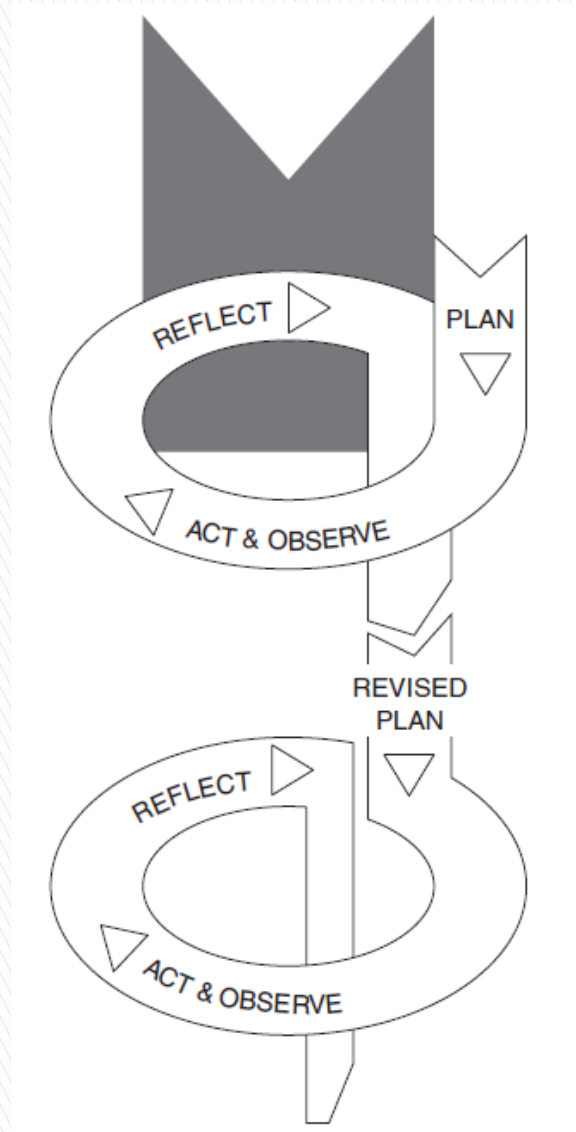


Figure 2. Action Research Cycle

# The Action Research Spiral (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000)



# What is evidence?

## It is

- ▶ what you are currently doing but more focussed
- ▶ planned for
- ▶ Systematic
- ▶ See Ferrance (2000. p.11) for data generation

## It is not

- ▶ a huge extra burden
- ▶ elaborate data collection that requires a lot of analysis
- ▶ opinion unsubstantiated by any facts



# Over to you

- ▶ Identify the issue or problem you want to address
  - Don't make this too big (see Ferrance, 2000, p.10)
- ▶ List all the things about that issue that you currently do / know
  - Be honest – include everything even if you don't think you do it very well
- ▶ Identify one thing to work on now
  - Don't avoid things because you think it is too small or trivial

# Action

- ▶ **Plan** your first step
- ▶ Decide how you will **implement** this step and who needs to be involved
- ▶ Identify what **evidence** you will collect to know you are getting there