# Action Research

## Program Transcript

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## Section 1: Introduction to Action Research

Slide 1

Welcome to the Action Research tutorial. The purpose of this tutorial is to define, describe, and provide examples of application in action research. Participants will learn about action research design and methods for using data to inform program development and practice. In addition, this tutorial provides key resources, as well as examples of approaches to data collection and analysis.

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Upon successful completion of this tutorial, you will be able to:

- Explain the basic theory, principles, and structural design components of action research
- Determine the appropriateness of action research for a research purpose and research questions
- Describe how any form of data collection and analysis procedures can be included to enhance action research
- Summarize the applications, strengths, and limitations of action research
- Outline next steps to take regarding action research

Slide 3

This tutorial is organized into 7 sections that each include tips and strategies associated with a topic:

- Introduction
- Action Research Alignment and Design
- Background: what is action research?
- Process: How to Do Action Research
Section 2: Background: What Is Action Research?


This section of the tutorial provides background information on action research, including definitions of the approach and an explanation of its origins. This section also presents details about the benefits of using action research and provides examples of its use in various disciplines.

In this section of the tutorial, focus on the following objectives:

- Describe the characteristics of action research
- Identify the benefits of using action research
- Compare action research to other approaches and methods
- Explain how action research is used by various disciplines
Definitions: What Is Action Research?

Action research involves action and research:

Action research is action and research in the same process . . . It is not action for research (doing in order to increase understanding), nor research for action (increasing knowledge in order to be applied at a later time), but a coming together of two purposes in a single project or process. Action research is not a research method, as many methods of data collection may be used in action research projects. It is, rather, a way of doing research and acting to change situations at the same time (Hughes, Action Research Electronic Reader, 1997).

Slide 4

Definitions: What Is Action Research?

Action research involves reflection:

Action research is “systematic self-reflective scientific inquiry by practitioners to improve practice” (McKernan, 1996, p. 5).

Action research involves problem solving and change:

“Action research is . . . oriented to some action or cycle of actions that organizational or community members have taken, are taking, or wish to take to address a particular problematic situation. The idea is that changes occur either within the setting and/or within the researchers themselves” (Anderson & Herr, 2005, p. 4).

Slide 5

Definitions: What Is Action Research?
Many definitions of action research emphasize collaboration:

Action research is “systematic inquiry that is collective, collaborative, self-reflective, critical, and undertaken by the participants of the inquiry” (McCutcheon & Jurg, 1990, p. 148).

Action research is “a form of collective, self-reflective enquiry . . . Groups of participants can be teachers, students, principals, parents, and other community members—any group with a shared concern. The approach is only action research when it is collaborative . . .” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, p. 5).

Slide 6

Defining Characteristics of Action Research
Action research is not . . .

- An “easy way out"
- A qualitative methodology
- “Business as usual”
- A way to describe something you did that was not planned
- Research that is done in order to apply it to action at some later date
- A single, clearly defined approach

You are not doing action research unless you are . . .

- Taking action in the study
- Changing a situation
- Reflecting on the actions taken
- Engaging in systematic inquiry

Examples of Action Research

Some contemporary examples of action research projects include:

- An inquiry into whether a pragmatic-oriented action research methodology may enhance the value of human capital of a business in France (Cappelletti & Baker, 2010)

- An exploration of how a high school teacher used a new way to engage his students in the required reading of classical texts in Greece (Tsafos, 2009)

- An investigation of the relationships between action research and General Systems Theory using the case study of environmental education activities in a rural community in Brazil (Berlinck & Saito, 2010)

- An analysis of the factors contributing to the longevity and achievements of an action group formed to improve the dignity and respect at a hospital in the United Kingdom (Crow, Smith, & Keenan, 2009)

- A collaborative study exploring how teachers implemented a Spanish for Heritage Speakers course in Utah, an English-only state (Coles-Ritchie & Lugo, 2010)

Benefits of Using Phenomenology
As a research method, phenomenology can help you:

- **Understand the human factors involved in an experience.** It answers the question of how people perceive a phenomenon in order to place it within a context.

- **Clearly understand human perceptions.** Whereas other methods only give you a partial view (filtered through your own interpretation of information), phenomenology focuses directly on people’s experiences with perceptions of a phenomenon.

- **Understand why people react a specific way to an event or experience,** as people respond to situations based on their perceptions.

Slide 9

**Action Research and the Continuum of Inquiry**

In the continuum of inquiry graphic on the next slide, the long arrow represents the state of current knowledge within a problem area. At one end of the continuum, much is known about a situation. At the other end, very little or nothing is known about it.

Action research is an approach that spans the entire continuum of inquiry. It is not a single methodology and is not limited in the data used to advance knowledge and improve practice. Action research begins with a practical application of available methods and measures—as well as the present skill levels of the researcher(s)—and builds upon results with continuous cycles of inquiry, expansion, and refinement. Action research is about problem solving.

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**Action Research and the Continuum of Inquiry**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Continuum of Inquiry description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Continuum of Inquiry depicts how the state of current knowledge aligns with both types of inquiry and research approaches.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A horizontal line with an arrow on the right represents the state of current knowledge within a paradigm or problem area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The far left side of this axis represents a state where very little or nothing is known. This idea is depicted in a box above the horizontal line representing the state of current knowledge. The far right side represents a state where much is</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
known, and this idea is depicted in a box above the horizontal line representing the state of current knowledge. Each of these boxes contains an arrow pointing down to the horizontal axis.

A specific method of inquiry can be placed at a point either at or between the boxes to represent that a particular method of inquiry applies when very little or nothing is known or when much is known.

The method of inquiry would then align with a number of horizontal rectangles arranged below the state of current knowledge, as follows.

Below the line representing the state of current knowledge are three rectangles of equal length. The left rectangle represents descriptive studies. The middle rectangle represents correlational studies. The right rectangle represents cause-and-effect studies.

Below these three rectangles of equal length are the following three rectangles of varying length, stacked one atop the other.

The top rectangle represents qualitative approaches and it extends the length of the rectangles above that represent descriptive studies and correlational studies. This line ends one-quarter of the way through cause-effect studies.

Below qualitative approaches, the middle rectangle represents quantitative approaches. This rectangle begins in alignment with the final quarter of descriptive studies. It then extends the length of correlational studies and through the end of cause-effect studies.

The bottom and final rectangle represents mixed methods utility. This rectangle begins in alignment with the final quarter of descriptive studies. It then extends the length of correlational studies and ends at the first quarter of cause-effect studies.

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Slide 11

Benefits of Using Action Research

Using action research has many possible benefits. For example, action research:

- Develops a culture of collaboration and research-based practice
- Improves the skill level of all participants
- Provides practical answers to real-world problems
- Allows for the application of many tools used in research and evaluation
- Is intentional and promotes positive social change in your local setting
- Can be used in a multi-disciplinary environment in which participants have varied levels of research or evaluation training

- Is context-specific and context-dependent, focused on local problems and resources rather than the generalization of results

Slide 12

Origins of Action Research: Kurt Lewin

Kurt Lewin coined the term action-research over 60 years ago. He said, as follows:

The research needed for social practice can best be characterized as research for social management or social engineering. It is a type of action-research, a comparative research on the conditions and the effects of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action. Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice (Lewin 1946, reproduced in Lewin 1948, pp. 202–203).

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Origins of Action Research: Jane Addams

Jane Addams, the first female Nobel Prize winner and a dedicated social reformer, is best known for working toward women’s suffrage and founding the Chicago settlement house, Hull House, at the turn of the 20th century; however, Addams may be less recognized as an early action researcher. Her data collection in the field, which predates Lewin, was used to persuade the government to intervene on matters of sanitation, child nutrition, infant care, and a wide variety of social conditions. Furthermore, an examination of her writings reveals terminology, philosophy, and practice that are a true reflection of action research. Many consider Jane Addams the mother of American social work.

Countries throughout the world, including the United States, Australia, and England, practice action research in a variety of settings and through numerous government and NGO projects in developing nations.

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Philosophical Underpinnings of Action Research

In more than any other approach to research, the philosophy and values that form the foundation of action research are essential to the development of processes and procedures—and the interpretation of success. Action research is pragmatic. Collaboration and empowerment are essential components of any group action research effort. And without these vital principles, true action
research does not exist. In action research, the project outcome is only one measure: Investigation into the creation of the outcome is equally if not more important.

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Philosophical Underpinnings: An Example

To understand the difference between the philosophical foundation of action research and other approaches, it is useful to compare the goals and the outcome associated with the construction of two types of houses—one built by a nonprofit such as Habitat for Humanity, and the other built by a typical contractor. Both the nonprofit and the contractor could build identical houses, so the outcome would be the same. But the primary goals would be different. For the contractor, the main goal is to make money and earn a profit. For the nonprofit, the main goal is not profit. Instead, the goals of the nonprofit might include providing a needy family with a place to live, instilling personal pride of ownership through sweat equity, empowering communities, developing skills, changing the culture of the neighborhood, and providing an opportunity for volunteerism. Through a more stable environment, these families’ health and sense of security grows, leading to long-term changes such as improved education and job opportunities.

Slide 16

Values Expressed Through Action Research

Action research is typically a value-laden endeavor. Some of the values that can be expressed through action research include:

- Empowerment
- Responsiveness to a changing environment
- Collaboration
- Democracy
- Reflection
- Sound decision making based on accurate data and timely information from a variety of sources
- High regard for the environment, culture, and empowerment where all participants benefit
- Personal, community, and corporate social responsibility

Slide 17

Cycles of Action Research

Unlike other approaches, action research is not the implementation of a design with a specific outcome. It is a series of steps that include inquiry, cycles of
planning, observation, action, and reflection, with each step building on the last. For action researchers, research is an integral part of practice that involves a continuous improvement model. You generally begin a cycle at a planning or diagnosing phase, although action research can be implemented at any point in time in a program, personal practice, or stage of development in an inquiry. Action research is intentional—it is a planned intervention that is data-informed and includes a process that is examined and reflected on.

Slide 18

Cycles of Action Research: An Example

From the four-step cycle of Lewin (Plan-Act-Observe-Reflect) to the many different conceptualizations of the action research cycle that exist today, common elements of an action research cycle include stages of observing, planning, taking action, and evaluating the process that is taking place through reflection. Action research has been described in three-, four-, and seven-step cycles, as well as in even more complicated models that describe cycles within cycles.

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To understand what action research is—and is not—it may be useful to compare it to empirical/experimental research.

- Empirical laboratory/controlled studies try to control most elements and “extraneous variables” in order to demonstrate cause and effect. Researchers cannot control such conditions in the field when conducting action research.

- Action research applies the same principles examined by empirical research methods, but in the field. It welcomes all variables as sources of information and takes them into account rather than ignoring or “controlling” for them.

- Researchers conducting empirical studies tend to believe that they leave the environment unchanged while examining and manipulating only the independent variable(s).

- Action researchers conduct their work with the intent of making positive changes.

Slide 20

Action Research Compared to Empirical Research (Continued)
To understand what action research is—and is not—it may be useful to compare it to empirical/experimental research.

- Empirical research has the experimenter separate from the process to avoid bias and influence.

- In action research, the researcher is often also a participant whose influence is necessary for the project to succeed.

- Both empirical and action research approaches are rigorous and acceptable methods of inquiry with professional, journal, and academic support from many sources.

Slide 21

**Action Research Compared to Other Methodologies**

Because action research is more of an approach than a methodology, it almost always incorporates other, more clearly defined research methodologies. In action research, the goal or focus is to take action that results in change. Action research can use any research method. Here are two examples:

In a case study, the goal is to examine an issue in a specific location over a period of time. A regular case study might examine one principal at one school for a specific period of time. An action research study that incorporates the case study methodology might examine the success or failure of a new training program for one principal at one school for a specific period of time.

In a correlational study, the goal is to examine a correlation between two variables. A regular correlational study might examine the correlation between education degree and tenure of principals. An action research project that incorporates the correlational study methodology might examine the effectiveness of a mandatory continuing education program on the tenure of principals.

Slide 22

**What Disciplines Use Action Research?**

Action research is represented in several disciplines, including business, education, sociology, psychology, organizational development, and leadership. It has deep roots in the politics of the oppressed, feminism, anti-racism, and community transformation. Individuals and organizations in the fields of medicine, education, business, marketing, government programs, and international development actively practice action research today.
For example:

- In business, managers use action research to improve productivity.
- In medicine, researchers use action research to implement immunization programs among indigenous people.
- In education, teachers use action research to improve the quality of their instruction.
- In government, people use action research to support the development of potable water sources in rural areas.

Self-Assessment

Next, you will take a short self-assessment to check your comprehension of the information presented in this section. There is no time limit or record of your score.

Self-Assessment Tips

- You may go back and review the information in this section before starting the self-assessment.
- You may navigate back and forth between questions during the self-assessment, but you can not change your answer once you have clicked the Submit button.
- If you exit the self-assessment after starting it, you will lose your submitted answers and then need to restart the self-assessment.
- You must complete the self-assessment to see your results.

Click on the Next Slide button below when you are ready to begin.

Multiple Choice

Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.

1. Action research involves all of the following except __________.

Fill in the circle of the correct answer:

☑ a) changing a situation
Action Research

- b) research done so it can be applied later
- c) systematic inquiry
- d) reflecting on actions taken

Slide 25

**Multiple Choice**

Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.

2. Which of the following could be an action research project?

Fill in the circle of the correct answer:

- a) An inquiry into whether a new teaching method will improve student performance
- b) An analysis of how a corporate policy developed in collaboration with employees helped workplace morale
- c) An exploration of factors contributing to the success of a community-based crime-prevention program
- d) A description of what caused an accidental mix-up in medical records at a hospital

Slide 26

**Multiple Choice**

Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.

3. Which of the following is a value expressed through action research?

Fill in the circle of the correct answer:

- a) Empowerment
- b) Pragmatism
- c) Collaboration
- d) All of the above

Slide 27

**Matching**

Match the items based on the question below. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.
4. Does the phrase most likely describe action research or experimental/empirical research?

Connect the matching items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>researcher participates in the process</td>
<td>a) Action Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>controlled elements</td>
<td>b) Experimental/ Empirical Research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empirical</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>performed in the field</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Multiple Choice

Read the statement below and then choose whether it is true or false. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.

5. Action research is a strict methodology that adheres to a four-step cycle of research involving planning, observing, taking action, and reflecting.

Fill in the circle of the correct answer:

● a) True
● b) False

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Self-Assessment Results

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You have completed this section of the tutorial. At this time you may:

- click the Next Section button at the top of the page to continue (if this is the last section of the tutorial, clicking the Next Section button will allow you to print a certificate of completion);

- click the Table of Contents button and select another tutorial section; or

- exit the tutorial.

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Answer Key
Slide 24: From the multiple choice options listed below, please select the phrase to complete the sentence. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.
1. Action research involves all of the following except __________.
   : b) research done so it can be applied later

Slide 25: From the multiple choice options listed below, please select the correct answer to the question. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.
2. Which of the following could be an action research project?
   : d) A description of what caused an accidental mix-up in medical records at a hospital

Slide 26: From the multiple choice options listed below, please select the correct answer to the question. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.
3. Which of the following is a value expressed through action research?
   : d) All of the above

Slide 27: Match the items based on the question below. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.
4. Does the phrase most likely describe action research or experimental/empirical research?
   
   researcher participates in the process   a) Action Research
   controlled elements   b) Experimental/ Empirical Research
   performed in the field

Slide 28: Read the statement below and then choose whether it is true or false. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.
5. Action research is a strict methodology that adheres to a four-step cycle of research involving planning, observing, taking action, and reflecting.
   : b) False
Welcome to the **Action Research Alignment and Design** section.

This section of the tutorial provides information on the types of research topics and questions explored with action research, along with examples illustrating the use of action research with other methodologies. In addition, this section discusses the role of the researcher, as well as sample size and ethical considerations in doing action research.

Slide 2

**Action Research**  
**Section 3: Action Research Alignment and Design**

In this section of the tutorial, focus on the following objectives:

- Identify appropriate types of research topics and questions explored with action research
- Examine the continuum of roles of the researcher in doing action research
- Explain important theoretical and conceptual framework considerations
- Understand ethical considerations in doing action research

Slide 3

**Research Topics for Action Research**

A person's interest in change is the only limit on the kinds of topics he or she can explore with action research. For example, the action research projects introduced in Section 2 cover a wide range of topics including:

- The value of human capital in the corporate setting (Cappelletti & Baker, 2010)
- Teacher efficacy at a high school (Tsafos, 2009)
- Environmental efforts in a rural area (Berlinck & Saito, 2010)
- The work of a hospital action group (Crow, Smith, & Keenan, 2009)
- Spanish-language instruction in English-only environments (Coles-Ritchie & Lugo, 2010)

Slide 4

**A Continuum of Roles for the Action Researcher**

Topics explored with action research vary, so the roles of the researcher also vary. The list below and on the next slide presents a range of possible roles that the action researcher can take, in terms of being an insider or an outsider. Simply put, an insider is a member of the organization or community under study; an outsider is not.
- **Insider Self-Study**: Researcher works alone or with other insiders to study his/her/their own practice.

- **Insider Collaborates With Insider**: Researchers work together to raise consciousness within an organization or community or to form inquiry/study groups with the goal of engaging other members and influencing organizational change.

- **Insider in Collaboration With Outsiders**: Researchers who are members of an organization or community invite outsiders, such as consultants, to collaborate on research.
  
  (Anderson & Herr, 2005, pp. 32–33)

**A Continuum of Roles for the Action Researcher (Continued)**

- **Reciprocal Collaborations**: Teams of insiders and outsiders work together in collaborative forms of participatory action research; power relationships are equitable, with insiders and outsiders respecting and learning from each other.

- **Outsider(s) in Collaboration With Insiders**: Researchers are outsiders who initiate research projects with members of an organization or community with the goal of community empowerment or organizational learning.

- **Outsiders Study Insiders**: Researchers are outsiders who conduct academic research on action research methods or projects; researchers are not participants in the action itself.
  
  (Anderson & Herr, 2005, pp. 32–33)

**Roles for the Action Researcher: Examples**

Tsafos (2009) had the role of an insider studying his own teaching practice through an action research project.

In the project by Crow, Smith, and Keenan (2009), Keenan was an insider in collaboration with outsiders. As a nurse responsible for practice development at a local hospital, Keenan collaborated with outsiders Crow and Smith, who were local university researchers.

The action research project conducted by Coles-Ritchie and Lugo (2010) included reciprocal collaborations, in which the researchers formed an insider-outside team to help one of the researchers implement a Spanish for Heritage Speakers course at the high school where she teaches.
Roles for the Action Researcher: Examples (Continued)

Cappelletti and Baker (2010) acted as outsiders in collaboration with insiders. As researchers based at universities in Lyon, France, and New York, they collaborated with a French company’s management and staff to help the organization learn how to improve its human resources practices.

Berlinck and Saito (2010) also served as outsiders in collaboration with insiders. Invited by a planning committee on water resources in Brazil, the team of researchers planned and facilitated discussions involving local administration and community members.

Stakeholders in Action Research Projects

In collaborative action research, stakeholders have an interest in, can affect, or can be impacted by the change that is being addressed. Dick (2002) makes the distinction between direct and indirect stakeholders:

Direct stakeholders. These people are directly affected by what is happening or by what is going to happen. For example, suppose you are doing community consultation for the purpose of traffic design. Direct stakeholders include residents in the area where the roads and transport are to be changed.

Indirect stakeholders. These people have a stake in the project as well; however, their stakes may not be as obvious or may be harder to identify. In traffic design, indirect stakeholders include the motorists or others who travel through the area where consultation is to take place. Less obviously, the residents of other suburbs who will experience increased or reduced traffic if there are changes in this suburb, are also stakeholders. It is sometimes difficult to identify all of the indirect stakeholders. (They may identify themselves later when they react to the decisions made.)

Stakeholder Participation

Stakeholders may participate in an action research project at any phase, or they may simply be the recipients of reports and information that result from the project. Stakeholders may provide information, collect data, propose changes, provide input for planning, or engage in any of a variety of tasks and responsibilities that encompass an action research study or project. The
collaborative interactions with stakeholders are an essential element of action research.

Slide 10

**Research Questions for Action Research**

Action research is not appropriate for questions that you want to generalize. In an action research project, the research context determines the research question(s). A general research question might be "How can we make effective change that can be beneficial?" The research question or purpose should somehow reflect this notion of change.

Slide 11

**Research Questions for Action Research: Examples**

Here are some examples of research questions:

First, is the quality of the human resource function a determining factor in the sustainable development of the value of human capital? . . . Second, is the value of human capital an essential element in the competitiveness of a company, and how can this be revealed using an AR methodology? (Cappelletti & Baker, 2010, p. 212)

In what ways do pedagogical decisions in SHS [Spanish for Heritage Speakers] classrooms necessitate a shift in one’s discursive alignment? (Coles-Ritchie & Lugo, 2010, p. 200)

How and in what ways were a teacher-educator and Spanish language teacher able to navigate the secondary school structure to implement an SHS course by applying CTAR [critical teacher action research]? (Coles-Ritchie & Lugo, 2010, p. 200)

Slide 12

**Research Questions Stated as Goals**

Here are some examples of research purposes stated not as questions, but as goals or aims:

“I aimed to develop pedagogic strategies that would nurture student involvement in the learning process . . . My ultimate goal was to transform students from passive recipients to active readers” (Tsafos, 2009, pp. 198–199).
“The goal of this study is to present a reflection on the relation between action research spiral and the General Systems Theory (Bertalanffy 1976), specifically with regard to the hierarchy of systems” (Berlinck & Saito, 2010, p. 144).

Slide 13

**Research Questions Can Evolve**

Keep in mind that research questions, goals, or purposes can evolve during the process of action research.

For example, Crow, Smith, and Keenan’s (2009) research project began as a short-term endeavor in which the researchers delivered three modules of an education program instructing hospital staff about ways in which to foster dignity and respect in the health care setting. The education program led to the formation of a Dignity and Respect Action Group, whose membership has grown beyond hospital staff to include volunteers, patients, and anyone in the community using the hospital’s services.

In the final incarnation of their study, the researchers acknowledged this evolution of their project: “In retrospect, we can see that our own project began as a ‘professionalising’ type [aiming to improve practice] and developed further into an ‘empowering’ one as we sought to empower the ‘grass-roots’ staff and service users of the hospital” (p. 56). The aim of the resulting study then became to discuss the factors that the researchers believed helped them to “sustain a longer-term project than originally envisaged” (Crow, Smith, & Keenan, 2009, p. 57).

Slide 14

**Action Research Used With Other Approaches**

As previously stated, action research is more of an approach than a methodology, so it often incorporates other, more clearly defined research methodologies or approaches.

For example, Cappelletti and Baker’s (2010) action research project examining the value of human capital in a corporate setting used a case study approach. In the action research project of Coles-Ritchie and Lugo (2010), the data presented was part of a larger and longer ethnographic study.

Slide 15

**Action Research Cycle as Methodology**

Some researchers find the methodology for their studies in the steps of an action research cycle:
Crow, Smith, and Keenan (2009) view action research as a “methodological approach” that has “a cyclical nature involving identification of a problem, action planning, action taking, evaluating and specifying learning and understanding” (p. 56).

Tsafos (2009) organized his research around the “standard multi-cycle action research design: plan-act-observe-reflect" (p. 199).

Slide 16

**Action Research: Methodology Not Required?**

But some researchers object to the notion that action research requires a strict methodology:

Berlinck and Saito (2010) viewed action research more as a research “conception” than as a method. To give structure to their project, they used the steps of the action research spiral not as a “set of methodological stages to be followed, but rather as a general directive,” with each step corresponding to “different stages of approach.” To view action research as a method represents a “reductionism . . . whose ghost must be repelled” (p.148).

Slide 17

**Theory in Action Research**

Theory is important in action research, but there is not a unified opinion among leading writers and practitioners as to the source of the theory or how, when, or for what reason it is applied. Just as there are different approaches (individual vs. collaborative groups), settings (your individual practice vs. inside your workplace with others vs. working with “outsiders”), and methodologies (quantitative vs. qualitative vs. mixed-methods vs. evaluation) that share space under the action research umbrella, the situation, orientation of the researchers, knowledge and resources of the local participants, and object of the research can determine theory’s role, form, and importance.

Action research is primarily a framework for exploration and problem solving that theories inform. Researchers often identify theories as the iterations of the action research process take place. Researchers can include traditional theories as participants seek ways of understanding what they are experiencing in their continuous effort to improve. More often than not, theory or frameworks for understanding are unique to the situation and participants.

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**Theory in Action Research: Examples**
Like other types of researchers, action researchers usually attempt to clearly outline the theoretical context or framework that informed their project.

For example, in their French corporate case study, Cappelletti and Baker (2010) explained why they chose a pragmatic action research framework, as opposed to a critical one (p. 215), as well as how this choice drove their decision to use socio-economic approach to management (SEAM), which they believe is a French example of a pragmatic approach.

In his project to engage students in classical Greek readings, Tsafos (2009) identified a framework of “praxiology” rather than educational theory. In this way, theory would not drive practice, allowing the process of the action research to remain dynamic (p. 198).

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**Theory Is Important to the Action Research Process**

At this time there is no single, clear, accepted definition of the role of theory in action research, in part because action research is not a monolithic concept or methodology; however, researchers generally accept that theory—whether generated by the participants as an emerging understanding or supplied as a framework by outside collaborators—is an important part of the process.

See Section 6 of this tutorial for additional resources on the topic of theory in action research.

Slide 20

**Sample Size Considerations for Action Research**

In action research, the sample size depends on the context of the project. Sample size is dependent upon the methodologies selected for inclusion in the action research process or cycles. An action research teacher working without a team may consider focusing on improvement with an individual child or the entire classroom. If you are using a traditional quantitative or qualitative method within action research, then you should follow the rules for sample size for that methodology. For example, the Berlinck and Saito (2010) case study on water resource management had a sample size of one, as it focused on a single rural community in central Brazil.

Keep in mind that sample size is different than the number of stakeholders. In action research, all participants in the action research project are not necessarily members of a sample.

Slide 21
Ethical Considerations for the Action Researcher

In doing action research, certain ethical issues may pertain in unique or particular ways. These include:

- The insider/outsider distinction. Insiders may be in a position of authority or have multiple roles. They may affect issues with participants.

- Trust, honesty, and pressure to give positive results. These are interrelated.

- Researcher bias. In action research, the researcher is also a participant, so establishing objectivity and guarding against bias will be different than in other research approaches.

- Recognizing that in participatory action research, in dealing with groups, you often have people with different knowledge levels about confidentiality and other ethical issues.

Slide 22

Ethical Considerations: An Example

The action research study on the development of a group fostering dignity and respect at a U.K. hospital cited several ethical challenges. For example, a small team of people founded the action group and the researchers were aware of the “danger of over-reliance on a few individuals,” particularly when it came to who should chair the group meetings. To empower group members, the founding members adopted a “revolving chair” system in which hospital staff members shared the roles of chair and vice-chair (Crow, Smith, & Keenan, 2009, p. 60).

Another concern was that, over time, hospital staff who are part of, or perceived to be part of, senior levels of management would replace the people who fill key roles in the group. If this happens, others may perceive the action group as “just another ‘committee’ with a ‘top-down’ agenda” (p. 60). To prevent this, the group makes continual efforts to maintain the group as a “‘bottom-up’ democratic and participative entity” (p. 62).

In this way, the values that provide the foundation for action research are the same values that can help researchers and participants negotiate any ethical concerns that arise.

Slide 23

Self-Assessment
Next, you will take a short self-assessment to check your comprehension of the information presented in this section. There is no time limit or record of your score.

Self-Assessment Tips

- You may go back and review the information in this section before starting the self-assessment.

- You may navigate back and forth between questions during the self-assessment, but you can not change your answer once you have clicked the Submit button.

- If you exit the self-assessment after starting it, you will lose your submitted answers and then need to restart the self-assessment.

- You must complete the self-assessment to see your results.

Slide 24

Matching

1. Match the items based on the direction below. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.

Choose the role of the researcher that matches the action research project described.

Connect the matching items:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Column 1</th>
<th>Column 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researcher works alone to study own practice.</td>
<td>a) Insiders in collaboration with outsiders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researchers in an organization invite consultants to collaborate on a research project.</td>
<td>b) Outsiders in collaboration with insiders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent researchers initiate a research project with members of a community.</td>
<td>c) Insider self-study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Slide 25

Multiple Choice

Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.
2. In collaborative action research, people who are immediately and obviously affected by the action taken are called __________.

Fill in the circle of the correct answer:

- a) indirect stakeholders
- b) direct stakeholders
- c) tangential participants
- d) primary participants

Slide 26

**Multiple Choice**

Read the statement below and then choose whether it is true or false. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.

3. The research questions in an action research project should somehow result in a generalization.

Fill in the circle of the correct answer:

- a) True
- b) False

Slide 27

**Multiple Choice**

Read the statement below and then choose whether it is true or false. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.

4. Because action research is more of an approach than a methodology, it often incorporates more clearly defined approaches.

Fill in the circle of the correct answer:

- a) True
- b) False

Slide 28

**Multiple Choice**
Read the statement below and then choose whether it is true or false. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.

5. For action researchers, establishing objectivity will be the same as other research approaches.

Fill in the circle of the correct answer:

○ a) True
○ b) False

Slide 29

Self-Assessment
If for any reason you would like to re-examine the content related to this self-assessment, click the button directly below.
To re-examine content, click here.

Slide 30

You have completed this section of the tutorial. At this time you may:

- click the Next Section button at the top of the page to continue (if this is the last section of the tutorial, clicking the Next Section button will allow you to print a certificate of completion);

- click the Table of Contents button and select another tutorial section; or

- exit the tutorial.
Answer Key

Slide 24: 1. Match the items based on the direction below. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.
Choose the role of the researcher that matches the action research project described.
Researcher works alone to study own practice. c) Insider self-study
Researchers in an organization invite consultants to collaborate on a research project. a) Insiders in collaboration with outsiders
Independent researchers initiate a research project with members of a community. b) Outsiders in collaboration with insiders

Slide 25: From the multiple choice options listed below, please select the correct phrase to fill in the blank. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.
2. In collaborative action research, people who are immediately and obviously affected by the action taken are called _________.
   b) direct stakeholders

Slide 26: Read the statement below and then choose whether it is true or false. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.
3. The research questions in an action research project should somehow result in a generalization.
   b) False

Slide 27: Read the statement below and then choose whether it is true or false. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.
4. Because action research is more of an approach than a methodology, it often incorporates more clearly defined approaches.
   a) True

Slide 28: Read the statement below and then choose whether it is true or false. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.
5. For action researchers, establishing objectivity will be the same as other research approaches.
   b) False

Slide 1

Action Research
Section 4: Process: How to Do Action Research
Welcome to the Process: How to Do Action Research section.

This section of the tutorial presents information on data collection and analysis in action research. In addition, this section explains how to ensure quality and the importance of rigor in an action research project.
– Please use the buttons located at the bottom of this screen to navigate through this self-paced tutorial.

Slide 2

Action Research
Section 4: Process: How to Do Action Research

In this section of the tutorial, focus on the following objectives:

- Examine one model of the action research cycle
- Describe data collection and analysis used in action research
- Explain how to ensure quality and the importance of rigor in an action research project

Slide 3

Action Research
Section 4: Process: How to Do Action Research

The Action Research Cycle

As noted earlier, the process of action research involves cycles. Several different models exist for conceptualizing the cycles. One model that is prescriptive and easy to follow is the cycle presented in Action Research in Human Services (Stringer & Dwyer, 2005). The four steps described by Stringer & Dwyer are "Diagnosing," "Planning Action," "Taking Action," and "Evaluating Action." The following screens will describe these steps in detail.

Slide 4

The Action Research Cycle: Diagnosing

The first step in this model of the action research cycle is diagnosing. You begin a project with broad questions or issues that you think are important to you or your organization. Most of these issues will be complex and require a systematic diagnosis.

Diagnosing involves:

- Outlining broad questions, issues, or problems
- Understanding the context of the project
- Identifying the people who can help solve the problem and make changes
- Establishing collaborative relationships with the stakeholders
- Evaluating whether the goal is worth the effort
- Determining whether resources are available to pursue the change

Diagnosis is a structured and comprehensive process. It is also fluid, holistic, and dynamic. The goal is to create an accurate picture as a starting point—not to make a final decision about what the problem is.

Slide 5

**The Action Research Cycle: Planning Action**
The second step in action research is planning action. People tend to rush this process. Your planning must reflect with whim you work, where you are implementing the project, and what kinds of resources are available. This includes the political environment, as well as many other considerations.

Planning action involves:

- **Setting the Stage.** This means developing the research questions and analyzing and prioritizing issues. You must also decide on data collection techniques, review the feasibility of the project, develop implementation strategies, and prepare a research schedule.

- **Planning for Reflection.** You should engage in narrative reflection with the research team, stakeholders, outside experts, and others. You must contemplate the information and critically analyze it to transform the problem or issue. Reflection is not a one-time step. After the completion of an activity, the research team must review the activity again. Critical reflective inquiry is a key component of action research.

Slide 6

**The Action Research Cycle: Planning Action**
Planning action also involves:

- **Planning for Politics.** When you begin an action research project, you are likely to encounter political conflicts. Some people in your organization may be rigid and against any type of change. There also may be people in your organization who try to block, stop, or take credit for your project. Researchers must be prepared to manage the various political forces and ethical situations that may occur.

- **Planning for Ethics.** You must plan and design the study carefully and ethically. You must not select instruments or methods that could produce misleading conclusions. You must also strive to use sound, ethical
practices in the project, such as appropriately dealing with people and accurately reporting results.

Slide 7

The Action Research Cycle: Taking Action
Taking action is, of course, a key component of action research. Taking action involves:

- **Gathering Data.** There is no single, clear-cut methodology to use in action research, nor is there one research design that is best for all situations. You should use more than one strategy and more than one source to answer the research questions. Match the research questions to the data collection methods. Most action researchers will use multiple data collection methods and sources so they can compare the results through triangulation.

- **Implementation.** This is your biggest challenge. In an action research project, cycles of the process occur simultaneously. Participants are constantly observing, reflecting, and taking action. You need to maintain the team’s energy and provide support so implementation will be successful. Stakeholders need to assist in implementing the action plans. The success of the action research project is in the hands of the people involved in the project.

Slide 8

The Action Research Cycle: Taking Action
Taking action may also involve:

- **Organizational Change.** Action research can be very effective in implementing organizational change because a group of people are working to resolve an issue or problem; there is not just one person proposing a solution. You do not have top management telling you how to solve a problem and making you do it their way. Instead, in action research, you have a team of motivated stakeholders who have a clear vision and strategy. They are not afraid of change, as they are the ones identifying both the need and the force that will take action to effect change. Numerous theories about change management exist, so it is therefore important to focus upon one that the team can share.

Slide 9

The Action Research Cycle: Evaluating Action
Most of the evaluations that occur in action research will not have a set criterion to measure against. Stakeholders will evaluate outcomes mainly on what they identify as acceptable standards.
Evaluating action involves:

- **Evaluating the Program.** The question to ask is, “Did the project achieve the desired results?” To determine achievement, review all of the processes and outcomes by assessing and describing their effectiveness. This process may provide reinforcement for the changes implemented, cause you to either take the project in a new direction or abandon it, create and spiral into new research cycles, or determine that the project is complete. The goal is to examine the changes to determine if those changes are the desired outcomes of the stakeholders.

Slide 10

**The Action Research Cycle: Evaluating Action**

Evaluating action also involves:

- **Process Orientations.** Action research is not just about accomplishing tasks; it is also about improving systems and people. Feelings of empowerment, improved communications, teamwork, lessened negative political forces, and future productivity are all “intended outcomes” of action research. This approach can result in changes larger than the immediate objectives, which is what sets action research apart from traditional empirical methods of research. As Kurt Lewin said, we are not doing research for the sole purpose of writing papers.

- **The Big Picture.** Action research is not a linear process; it is a spiral of congruent cycles. In action research, you examine where you have been, make decisions about your future direction, develop a plan, review the progress, and make decisions about future research cycles. You should examine the big picture by asking questions such as, “How has the organization changed? What greater social good has evolved? What have we learned about ourselves in the process? What other resources will help in future research cycles?” The “big picture” will help you evaluate the impact the actions in the project have made overall. Examination of the “big picture” is critical to producing meaningful research.

Slide 11

**The Action Research Cycle: Summary**

“Knowledge is never static or complete; it is in a constant process of development as new understandings emerge.”

—McNiff & Whitehead, 2002, p.18
The action research cycle will continue to spiral into various concurrent revolutions, producing multiple research cycles. Each cycle will go through the processes of diagnosing, planning, taking action, and evaluating. Action research focuses on processes—not just outcomes. It can range from a very informal to a formal study, and it can vary in duration. Action research does not have to be complicated to be effective.

You can start with a smaller project, and as you grow as a researcher, you can move to more complicated projects. Do not have a goal of making the project an extensive study. A concise study can be as beneficial as—or even more beneficial than—a complex study. Think of action research as a way to be creative in solving problems or issues and in making positive changes. It is a process in which you can pursue change and understanding at the same time.

Slide 12

**Data Types for Action Research**

Action research is not restricted in the types of data it uses to provide needs assessment, program evaluations, or research other than the ability of the participants to correctly and ethically collect, administer, and interpret the results. Typically, action research uses archival data, surveys, interviews, focus groups, and other common social science instruments that are both standardized and locally prepared; however, physical artifacts and measurements can also be included, as well as performance measures related to the topic under study.

Based on the research questions, goals and objectives, and sophistication of the participants, you identify what kind of data needs to be collected and what processes you will use. Sources of data for action research include all the participants.

Keep in mind that there are two streams of data collection: one is the data used to answer the research question, and the other relates to the collaborative process. One form of data always collected is the success or failure of the process intended to promote collaboration and empowerment.

Slide 13

**Data Types: An Example**

The purpose of the Tsafos (2009) study was to explore ways of engaging Tsafos’ students more in their study of classical texts. He collected data from three sources: himself as teacher and researcher, his students, and a critical friend, who was also a teacher of the same grade. The researcher’s data consisted of a journal, field notes, and audio recordings. From the students, he collected questionnaires and conducted semi-structured interviews. The critical friend contributed observations and field notes. The data included opportunities for all
three data sources to evaluate whether the new learning process enacted in the project had positive results.

Slide 14

**Data Collection: Maintain Standards**

Doing action research does not mean you can ignore standard levels of practice. Instruments should be reliable and valid. You should maintain integrity in your research. Use only those instruments that you are qualified to administer and interpret. If you lack the expertise, engage an expert or consultant. When preparing local instruments such as surveys, follow recognized guidelines to encourage proper construction, analysis, and safeguards against bias. Make sure to properly protect and reasonably inform participants about the use of surveys and other instruments. Notify participants about whether and how you will protect their identities. Also make sure participants know they can ask questions. Although practitioners often conduct action research in the field, most places of employment, educational institutions, governmental agencies, and locations for studies have guidelines for conducting research that researchers must follow.

Slide 15

**Data Collection: An Example**

The Cappelletti and Baker (2010) study used the SEAM approach. The researchers outlined a data collection protocol based on the HORIVERT method, which is a tri-axial methodology used by more than a thousand organizations around the world. The HORIVERT method is a way of organizing those involved in the process of change along three axes—policy, tools, and participative change. For each axis, the researchers identified appropriate groups of people within the company under study from whom to collect data. Data collection underwent several phases over a year and a half and consisted of focus groups, as well as 175 qualitative, quantitative, and financial interviews. The initial interviews revealed areas of company dysfunction, after which task groups formed to propose solutions. A piloting group comprised of the CEO and human resources management then supervised which solutions to implement.

Slide 16

**Data Analysis Techniques**

Data analysis techniques will vary depending on the purpose and specific methodology used for the action research project. The researcher must take care to analyze data correctly and ethically. This is particularly true when the researcher organizes his research using the steps of the action research cycle or takes a broad approach, such as a case study or an ethnography:
Tsafos (2009), who organized his research around a four-step action research cycle, analyzed his data by delimiting the point of view of each data source; he then conducted reflection meetings with his critical teacher/friend to discuss the action. Tsafos next held a meeting to share the student questionnaires with all staff members and to obtain a wider point of view. Then Tsafos hosted a discussion with both students and teachers. The final analysis drew upon the researcher’s journal, the critical friend’s final report, and the student interviews.

Slide 17

**Data Analysis Techniques (Continued)**

The data for the Coles-Ritchie and Lugo (2010) project, which was part of a larger ethnographic study, consisted of field notes of classroom observations, school board notes, student records, and e-mail messages. The researchers analyzed the data together to develop emerging themes. Lugo had written reflections and journal entries, and the research team organized these reflections and entries to represent the different phases of planning and implementing the Spanish for Heritage Speakers course. The reflections explain Lugo’s journey as a teacher trying to enact change.

Slide 18

**Rigor in Action Research**

Rigor is an attribute of any good research project regardless of the approach used. Rigor means thoroughness and adherence to the rules representing the best practice in the methodology under examination.

Consider these definitions:

Rigor: n. the quality of being extremely thorough, exhaustive, or accurate

Rigorous: adj. strictly applied or adhered to


Slide 19

**Rigor in Action Research (Continued)**

Some people have criticized action research as lacking sufficient rigor to be a serious academic research approach. This criticism may be correct for some individual action research efforts, but people can apply the same criticism to poorly planned and executed empirical research.
Researchers determine rigor by strictly applying standards that are suitable for a specific methodology; the expectations are not identical for every approach. When assessing the rigor of an action research project, researchers focus attention on the application of the best methodologies for the situation and the questions the research answers.

**Slide 20**

**Rigor as Thoroughness**

Because action research can range from the exploration or testing of a theory to applied problem solving, rigor defined as precision (as in empirical research) needs supplementation by rigor defined as thoroughness.

Thorough research has:

- extensive problem analysis;
- an extensive literature review;
- a careful evaluation of assumptions;
- alternative (inclusive) methods for problem solving; and/or
- multiple methods of measurement.

**Slide 21**

**How to Ensure Rigor When Using Action Research**

Action research is not more or less rigorous than empirical “scientific” research. Action researchers just describe rigor in different terms. In many ways, good action research often combines the rigor associated with empirical quantitative designs with that of qualitative methodologies.

For example, dependability, a criteria used by qualitative approaches, corresponds to the term reliability in quantitative approaches. The corresponding term that an action researcher might use to describe the same criterion is consistency (Krefting, 1991).

**Slide 22**

**How to Ensure Trustworthiness In Action Research**

Stringer (1996) agreed with Lincoln and Guba (1985) that action research is “identified as trustworthy” by establishing 6 conditions, the attainment of which is gained through a combination of 12 procedures.

Six Conditions of Trustworthiness

- Credibility
- Transferability
- Dependability
- Confirmability
- Degrees of Participation
- Utility

12 Procedures to Attain Trustworthiness:

- Prolonged Engagement
- Persistent Observation
- Triangulation
- Participant Debriefing
- Negative Case Analysis
- Referential Adequacy
- Member Checks
- Transferability
- Dependability
- Confirmability
- Participation

Slide 23

Self-Assessment

Next, you will take a short self-assessment to check your comprehension of the information presented in this section. There is no time limit or record of your score.

Self-Assessment Tips

- You may go back and review the information in this section before starting the self-assessment.

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- If you exit the self-assessment after starting it, you will lose your submitted answers and then need to restart the self-assessment.

- You must complete the self-assessment to see your results.

Click on the Next Slide button below when you are ready to begin.

Slide 24
Matching

Match the items based on the direction below. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.

1. Choose the role of the researcher that matches the action research project described.

Connect the matching items:

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diagnosing</td>
<td>a) Implementing the action plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>b) Reviewing and assessing the process and outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking Action</td>
<td>c) Outlining the problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluating</td>
<td>d) Deciding on data collection techniques</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Slide 23

Multiple Choice

Read the statement below and then choose whether it is true or false. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.

2. Because action research is not a clear-cut methodology, doing action research means that you can ignore standard levels of practice.

Fill in the circle of the correct answer:

☐ a) True
☐ b) False

Slide 24

Multiple Choice

Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.

3. A good action research project must be rigourous, meaning __________.

Fill in the circle of the correct answer:

☐ a) it is thorough and adheres to rules representing best practices
☐ b) it does not take a serious academic approach
☐ c) it uses the same data collection techniques as quantitative experiments
☐ d) it results in a dissertation or peer-reviewed article
Slide 25

**Multiple Choice**

Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.

4. A thorough action research project should include __________.

Fill in the circle of the correct answer:

- a) no alternative methods for problem solving
- b) cursory literature review
- c) extensive problem analysis
- d) a single method of measurement

Slide 26

**Multiple Choice**

Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.

5. Trustworthy action research establishes the following conditions except __________.

Fill in the circle of the correct answer:

- a) transferability
- b) credibility
- c) replicability
- d) dependability

Slide 27

If for any reason you would like to re-examine the content related to this self-assessment, click the button directly below.
To re-examine content, click here.

Slide 28

You have completed this section of the tutorial. At this time you may:

- click the Next Section button at the top of the page to continue (if this is the last section of the tutorial, clicking the Next Section button will allow you to print a certificate of completion);

- click the Table of Contents button and select another tutorial section; or
- exit the tutorial.
Answer Key

Slide 24: Match the items based on the direction below. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.
1. Choose the role of the researcher that matches the action research project described.

Diagnosing c) Outlining the problem
Planning d) Deciding on data collection techniques
Taking Action a) Implementing the action plan
Evaluating b) Reviewing and assessing the process and outcome

Slide 25: Read the statement below and then choose whether it is true or false. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.
2. Because action research is not a clear-cut methodology, doing action research means that you can ignore standard levels of practice.
: b) False

Slide 26: From the multiple choice options listed below, please select the correct phrase to fill in the blank. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.
3. A good action research project must be rigorous, meaning __________.
: a) it is thorough and adheres to rules representing best practices

Slide 27: From the multiple choice options listed below, please select the correct noun to fill in the blank. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.
4. A thorough action research project should include __________.
: c) extensive problem analysis

Slide 28: From the multiple choice options listed below, please select the correct noun to fill in the blank. Click the Submit button when you are satisfied with your answer.
5. Trustworthy action research establishes the following conditions except __________.
: a) transferability
Welcome to the Next Steps: Is Action Research Right for You? section.

This section of the tutorial provides guidance on determining whether action research is suitable for your research topic. In addition, this section presents information on what to do before proceeding with action research.

– Please use the buttons located at the bottom of this screen to navigate through this self-paced tutorial.

In this section of the tutorial, focus on the following objectives:

- Determine whether action research may be appropriate for your research topic
- Identify next steps to take before beginning action research

In determining whether action research is right for you, start by thinking about the essential characteristics of action research.

Ask yourself:

- What are your core values? Is the philosophy and approach of action research consistent with how you view yourself?
- Do you have the time to involve stakeholders?
- Do you have the resources to accomplish the scope of the project?
- What are the ramifications of entering in a certain place in the action research cycle?

Consider how you feel about the validity of an action research project:
- Think about what it would take to convince you of the trustworthiness or validity of a study or dissertation.

- It appears that the less you can control (account for through empirical methods) in the environment, the more you have to describe in order for the research community to accept your results as valid.

- It also appears that many or all of the validity concerns in empirical studies are identical to those of action research studies.

- Do you only trust laboratory controlled studies or real-life explanations when you make decisions?

Slide 5

Questions to Keep in Mind: Acceptability
Consider how you feel about the “acceptability” of action research:

- Acceptability is a different concept than validity, more closely related to traditions, political forces, and contexts that tend to favor one type of “legitimate” inquiry over another.

- Differentiate educational inquiry acceptability from in-the-field implementation acceptability.

- Reflect upon your own thoughts about using an action research approach in a dissertation.

- Reflect upon your own thoughts about using an action research approach in your own work setting.

Slide 6

What Else Can You Do on Your Own?

If you are a student working on a dissertation . . .

- search the library for articles and dissertations using action research. See Section 6 of this tutorial for terms related to action research.
- contact the IRB.
- refer to the IRB website for research in your own setting.
- go to the next section of this tutorial for additional resources.
- before initiating anything, you may want to talk to a methodologist to understand the iterative process of action research, issues related to
research in your own setting, and the process of cycles. You will also want to find out if the methodologist is familiar with the action research process. It may be difficult to find someone to talk to specifically about action research.

If you are faculty wanting to get more involved in action research . . .

- go to the next section of this tutorial for additional resources.

Slide 7

You have completed this section of the tutorial. At this time you may:

- click the Next Section button at the top of the page to continue (if this is the last section of the tutorial, clicking the Next Section button will allow you to print a certificate of completion);

- click the Table of Contents button and select another tutorial section; or

- exit the tutorial.

Action Research
Section 6: Additional Resources

Welcome to the Additional Resources section.

This section of the tutorial presents a summary of the tutorial content, a list of resources for more information on action research, and a glossary of action research terms.

Please use the buttons located at the bottom of this screen to navigate through this self-paced tutorial.

Summary

Action research involves action and research, reflection, problem solving, and change. It is a way of engaging in systematic inquiry while taking action to change a situation. Action research is not a single, clearly defined approach. It is a pragmatic approach in which collaboration and empowerment are essential components. Investigation of the process of the action is as important as the
outcome. Individuals and organizations in a wide range of fields, from education to business to international development, actively practice action research today.

Slide 3

Summary

Doing action research involves cycles of planning, observing, acting, and reflecting. Many different models of the action research cycle exist, and a study often consists of cycles within cycles. Because action research is more of an approach than a methodology, it almost always incorporates other, more clearly defined research methodologies. Topics explored with action research vary, so the roles of the researcher also vary. Researcher roles can range from insiders studying their own practice, to insiders working in collaboration with outsiders, to outsiders conducting academic research on insiders engaged in an action research project.

Slide 4

Summary

Theory is important in action research, but there is not a unified opinion among leading writers and practitioners as to theory’s role, form, and importance; however, it is generally accepted that theory, whether generated by the participants as an emerging understanding or supplied as a framework by outside collaborators, is an important part of the process. Some ethical issues to consider when doing action research include the insider/outsider distinction, pressure to give positive results, and researcher bias, especially as the action researcher is also often a participant.

Data collection and analysis techniques will vary depending on the purpose and specific methodology used for the action research project. The researcher must take care to analyze data correctly and ethically. Doing action research does not mean you can ignore standard levels of practice—good action research must be rigorous, thorough, and trustworthy.

Slide 5

Resources: Books


Slide 6

**Resources: Books**


Slide 7

**Resources: Books**

Books


Slide 8

**Resources: Articles**

Articles
On how action research is taught:


On comparing action research to case study:


On action research literature:


Slide 9

Resources: Articles

On action research theory:


On rigor:


Slide 10

Resources: Articles Used as Examples

Articles used as examples:


Slide 11

**Resources: Articles Used as Examples**
Articles used as examples:


Slide 12

**Resources: Other Articles**
Other articles:


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**Resources: Other Articles**
Other articles:


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Resources: Other Articles
Other articles:


Slide 15

Resources: Websites
Websites


Slide 16

Terms You May Encounter Related to Action Research
Here is a list of terms you may encounter related to action research (Anderson & Herr, 2005, p. 2):

- participatory action research (PAR)
- practitioner research; action science
- collaborative action research
- cooperative inquiry
- educative research
- appreciative inquiry
- emancipator Praxis
- community-based participatory research
- teacher research
- participatory rural appraisal
- feminist action research
- antiracist participatory action research
- advocacy activist
- militant research

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Resources List
For printable versions of the Resources for this tutorial, please click on the Resources link below.

Resources

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You have completed this section of the tutorial. At this time you may:

- click the Next Section button at the top of the page to continue (if this is the last section of the tutorial, clicking the Next Section button will allow you to print a certificate of completion);

- click the Table of Contents button and select another tutorial section;

- or exit the tutorial.

Slide 1

Section 7

Congratulations!

You have completed the tutorial. Please take a moment to complete a brief evaluation of your experience by clicking on the Action Research Survey link below.

Action Research Survey
Action Research
Section 7: Evaluation
– Please use the buttons located at the bottom of this screen to navigate through this self-paced tutorial.

You have completed this section of the tutorial. At this time you may:
- click the Next Section button at the top of the page to continue (if this is the last section of the tutorial, clicking the Next Section button will allow you to print a certificate of completion);
- click the Table of Contents button and select another tutorial section;
- or exit the tutorial.