

How to Conduct Action Research Based on Teaching Practices

(Practitioner Research; Practice-led Research; Practice-based research)

January 16, 2020

Amal BouZeineddine, Ed. D.

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Today's work

Date: January 16, 2020	Title: <i>How to Conduct Action Research Based on Teaching Practices</i>
Time	Topic
9:00 –9:45a.m. (Discussion)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is action research? 2. What are the purposes of action research? 3. What is the process for implementing action research?
9:45 – 11:00 a.m. (Hands-on)	How do we do action research? Steps to implement action research + Qualitative/Quantitative research + Action research sample topics
11:00 – 11:15 BREAK	
11:15: am – 12:30 p.m. (Hands-on)	How do we do action research? Steps to implement action research + Qualitative/Quantitative research + Action research sample topics
12:30 – 1:00 (Hands-on + Discussion)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do we share our action research knowledge? 2. How do we use our action research knowledge? 3. How do we judge impact and quality of our action research?

Follow up Workshop – Wednesday, May 21, 2020

Date: May 21, 2020	Title: <i>How to Conduct Action Research Based on Teaching Practices</i>
Time	Topic
9:00 – 11:00 a.m. (Discussion)	<p>Discussion on Participants' Action Research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action research implementation: reflections on action research implementations → pre poster session discussion and presentations
11:00 – 11:15 BREAK	
11:15: am –1:00 p.m. (Interactive Q & A)	<p>Poster session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants answering guests' questions on their action research piece Rubric to assess participants' action research

Workshop Learning Outcomes



By the end of this workshop, we will

1. explain action research, its purpose and why we use it
2. apply the steps for conducting action research
3. discuss how we share, use and judge our action research
4. evaluate a piece of action research
5. evaluate work completed in action research up to the follow-up meetings

Two Personal Anecdotes

1. My Written Feedback on Students' Writing
2. Group Work in My Courses

Introductory Discussion



1. Let's sit in groups of 5 or 6.
2. In your group, answer the following questions.
 - a. What is action research?
 - b. What are the purposes of action research?
 - c. What areas/problems interest you in *teaching and learning in higher education*?
3. Each group should come up with one answer for each question.
4. Each group will have a list of topics for question c.
5. Be prepared to share your answers with all.



What is action research? (Definition)

Generally,

- Action research is a form of **disciplined inquiry** utilized by teachers, instructors, and supervisors to better understand **student learning** and **teacher effectiveness**.
- Action research has to do with **improving learning, personal and professional growth** sharing the process of learning with others **using real-life experiences**.

What is action research? (Definition)



Action research is a type of inquiry that is:

- **practical** as it involves making change to practice;
- **theoretical** as it is informed by theory and can generate new insights;
- **collaborative** as it encourages engagement with others in the process;
- **reflexive** as it requires practitioner researchers to keep their own knowledge, values, and professional activities under review;
- **contextual** as it acknowledges institutional, national and societal influences.

What is action research? (Definition)

In higher education, action research has been

- associated with studies related to a range of **issues and challenges** in higher education, institutional development, curriculum development, and innovative and critical pedagogies.
- Identified to typically **include stages** that encourage practitioners to:
 1. Look at their practice and assess where **change may be valuable**
 2. Explore the **context** in which they are operating
 3. Identify possible actions to **enhance practice**
 - 4. Implement** an action
 5. Systematically **evaluate the action**
 6. Articulate **learning** from the process
 7. Re-assess practice and consider opportunities for a **further cycle of research**

Action Research Principles

Action research →

- ❖ is a particular way to look at your practice and **check whether it is as you feel it should be.**
- ❖ is **critical reflection** on your practice.
- ❖ Explains and improves your teaching practices with **evidence from data on how it improved**; how you have **learned to improve** your practice.

What are Action Research Purposes? (Answers from groups)

Enhance Faculty Motivation and Efficacy Professionalize Teaching

→ Researching While Teaching (RWT) can help you to

- ✓ think deeply about issues and learn more about a practice-based topic (e.g. interactive teaching methods or assessment rubrics, or teaching through technology).
- ✓ Conduct collaborative work to the common welfare of the program and student learning
- ✓ Continually review beliefs, values and assumptions. This is to account for new knowledge emerging through research. (Building the reflective practitioner)

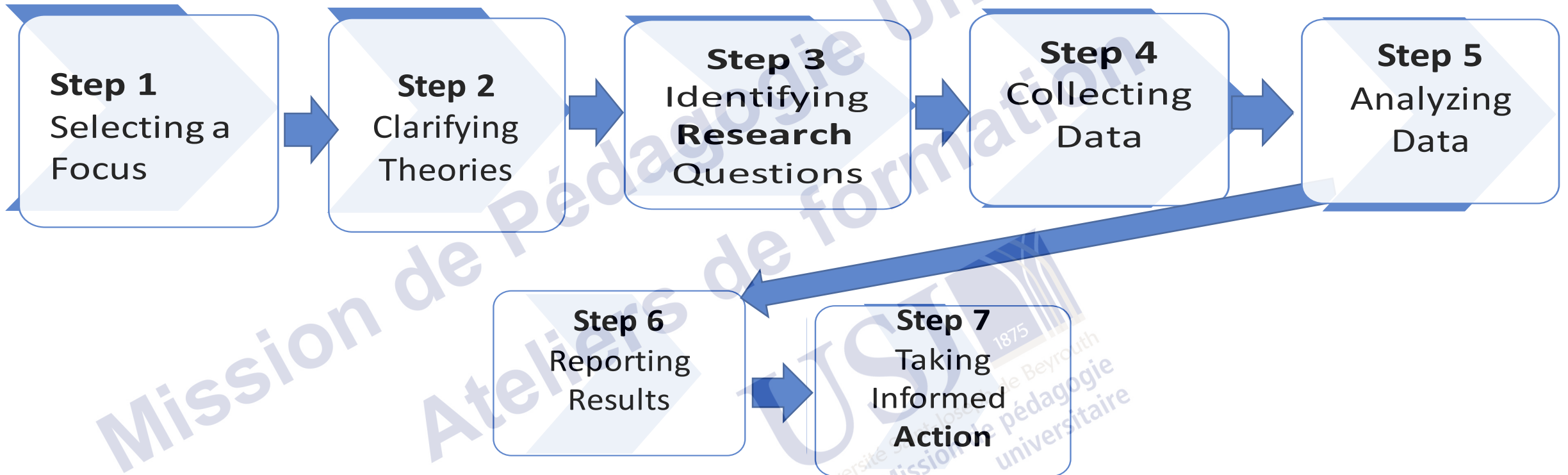
Sessions 2 & 3



How do we do action research? Steps to implement action research + Qualitative / Quantitative research + Action research sample topics

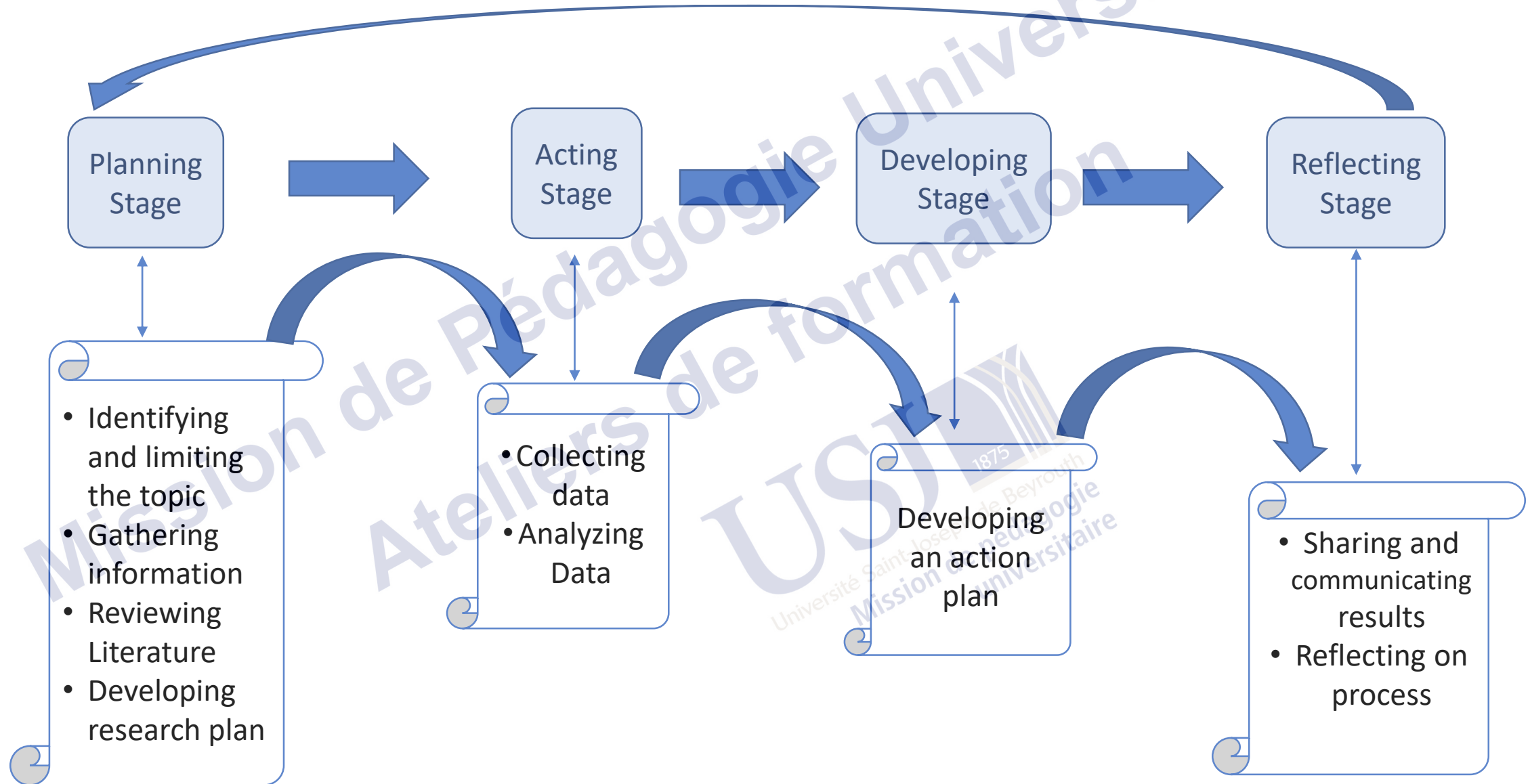
Which Model would you use?

Action Research Process - Model 1

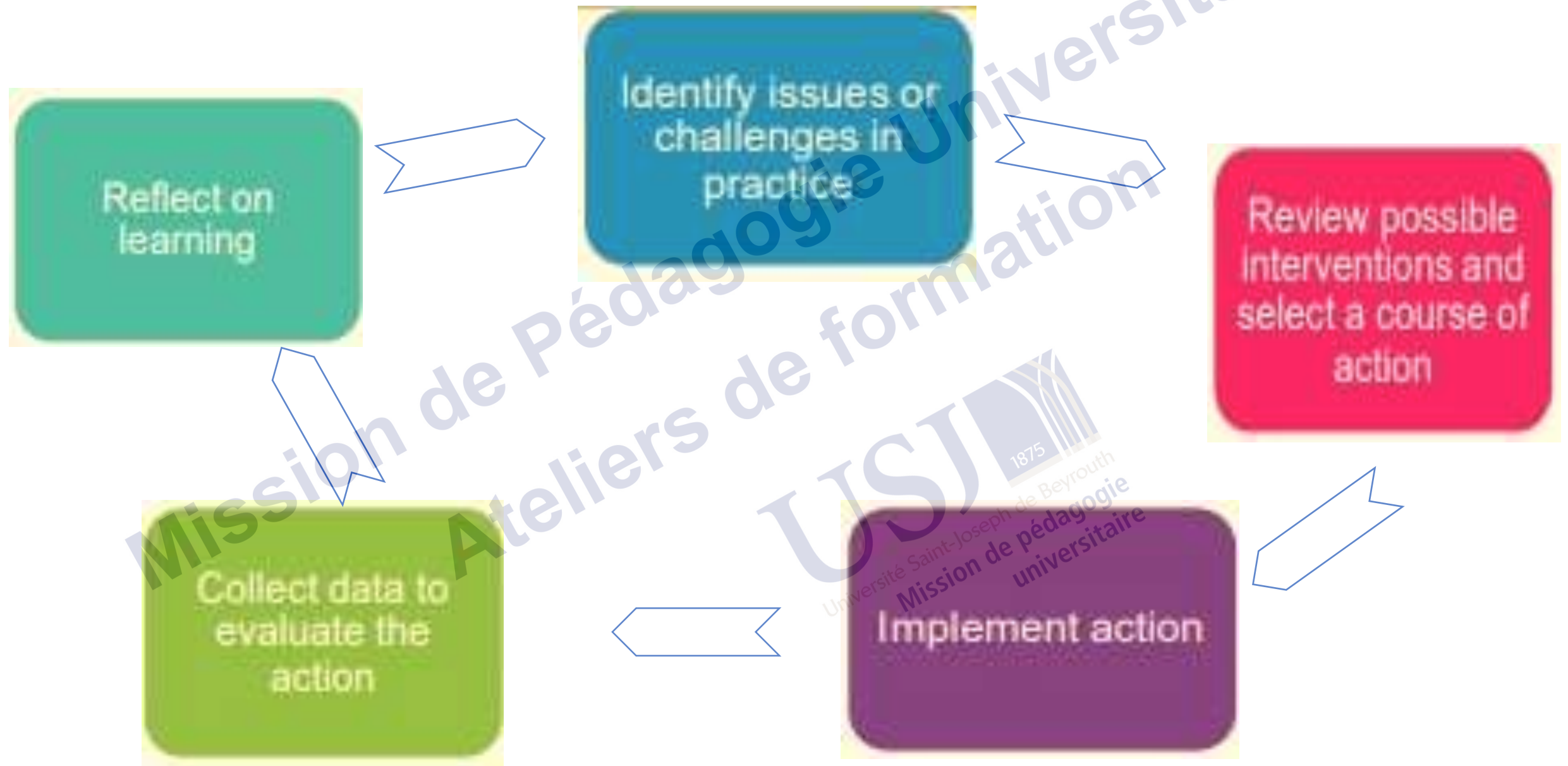


→ Building the Reflective Practitioner

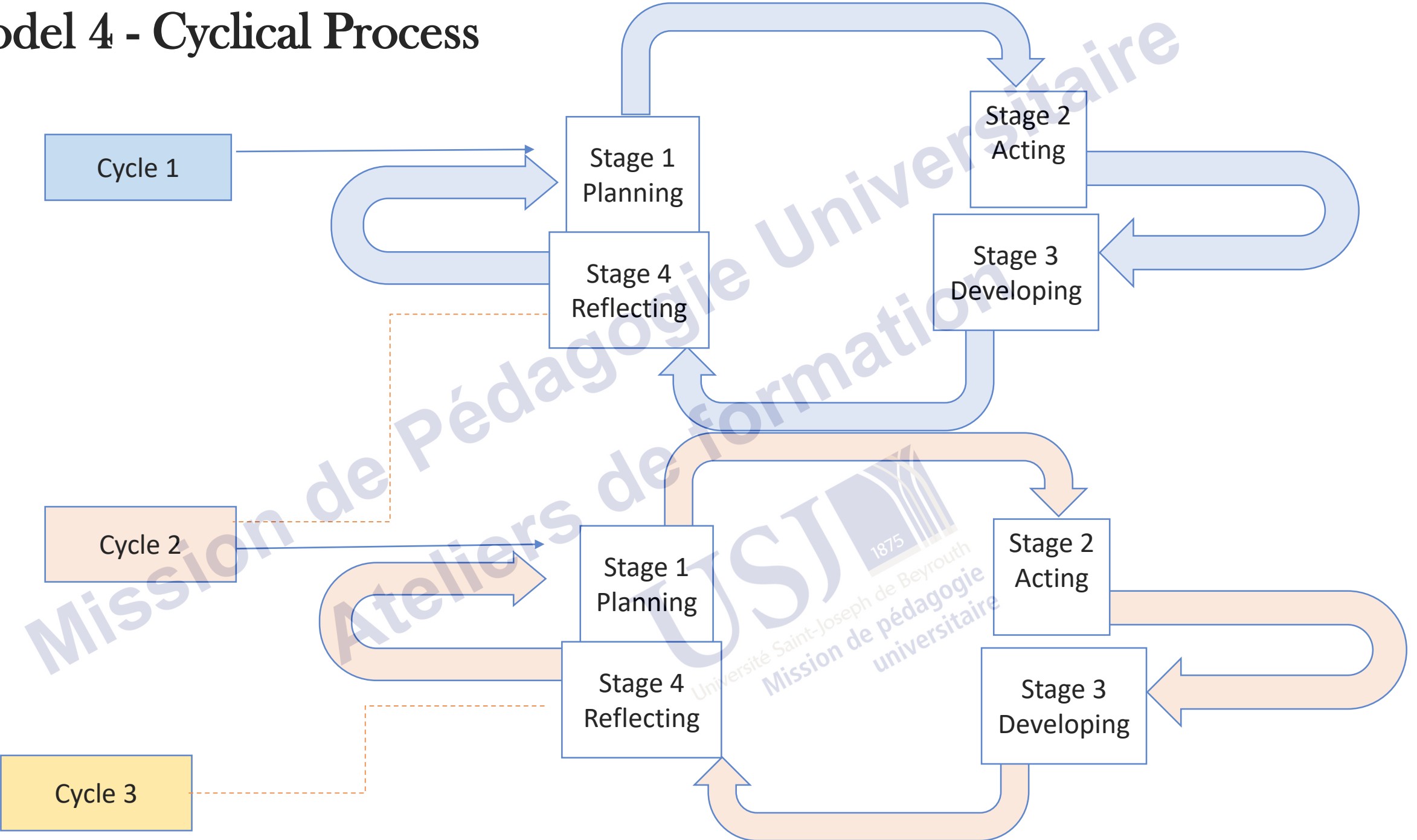
Action Research Process - Model 2



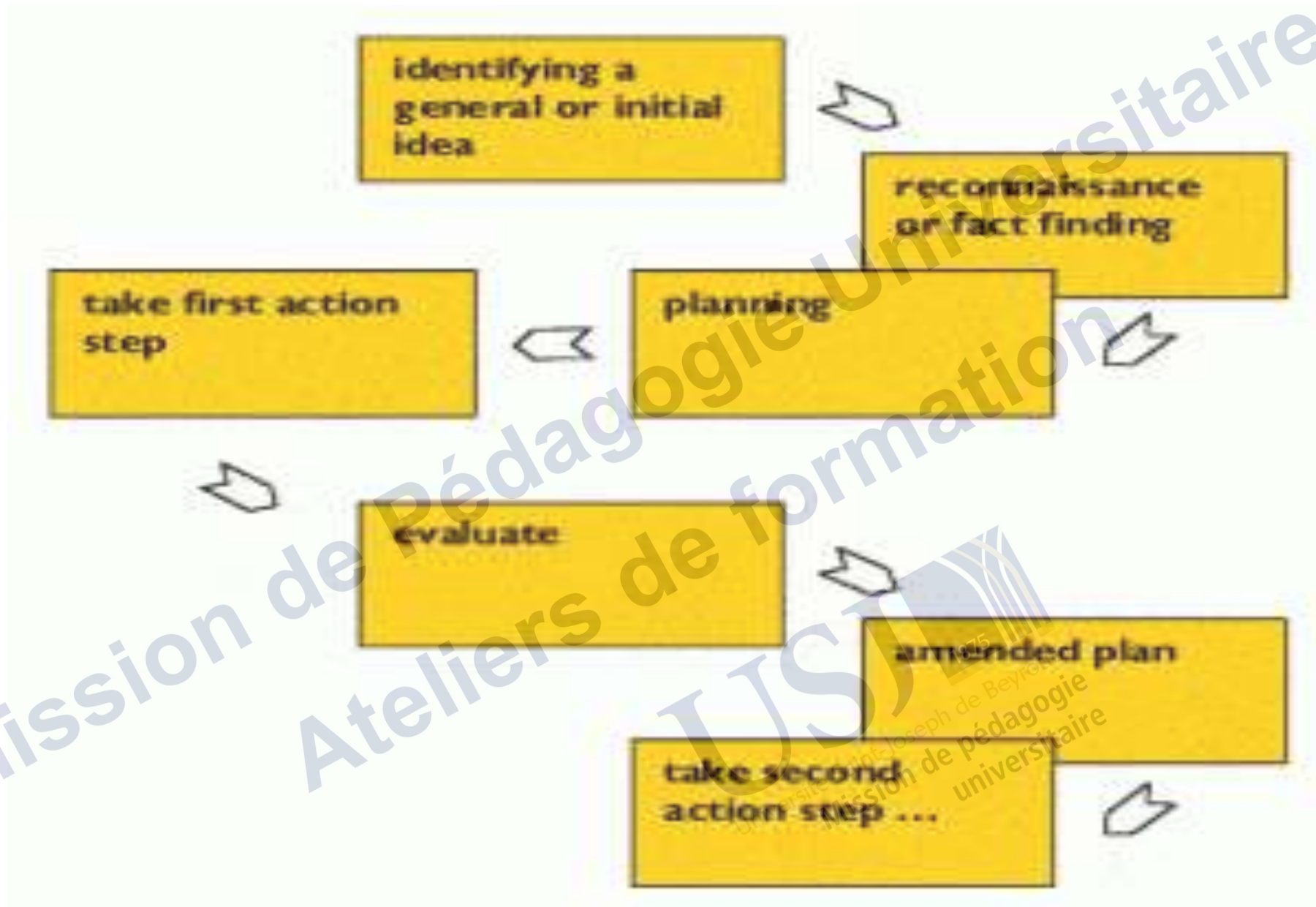
Action Research Process - Model 3 Adapted from Arnold 2016



Model 4 - Cyclical Process



Kurt Lewin's model of action research - Model 5

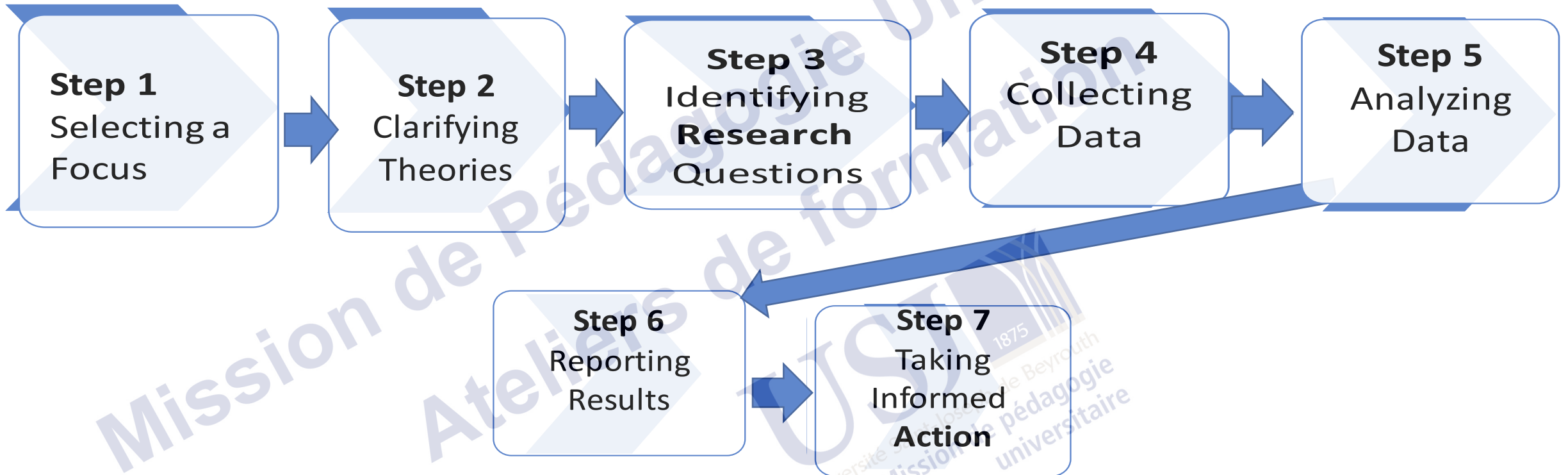


Kurt Lewin's is very clear with distinct steps. It usefully includes a reconnaissance (exploration) stage which can be undertaken before a plan is created. This can include gathering information about a student group's marks or other data, reading literature on what the wider sector is doing in your area of interest and discussing and engaging with colleagues and peers.

Our focus is Model 1



Action Research Process - Model 1



→ Building the Reflective Practitioner

Model 1: Action Research Process

- Educational action research can be engaged in **by a single teacher, by a group of colleagues** who share an interest in a common problem, or **by the entire faculty or a school**.
- Action research always involves the same **seven-step process** which become an endless cycle for the inquiring teacher:
 1. Selecting a focus
 2. Clarifying theories
 3. Identifying research questions
 4. Collecting data
 5. Analyzing data
 6. Reporting results
 7. Taking informed action

Step 1—Selecting a Focus

- The action research process begins with serious reflection directed toward identifying a topic or topics worthy of a busy teacher's time.
- Considering the incredible demands on today's classroom teachers, no activity is worth doing unless it promises to make the central part of a teacher's work more successful and satisfying.
- Selecting a focus begins with the teacher researcher or the team of action researchers asking:

What element(s) of our practice or what aspect of student learning do we wish to investigate?

How do we select the best research topic/Focus? (Group Answer)

The Field of Your Interest

You will not be able to write a good insightful research paper if you are not **interested in the subject** overall, or in the topic in general.

Passion and interest in a topic will make it easier to explore the theme and write about it. If you enjoy science, you should be able to talk non-stop about it. The same goes for writing about it.

Clear Topic

You need to be sure to **understand everything clearly** when you choose a topic. Do not hesitate to ask questions if there are some unclear points.

The more you understand, the simpler it is for you to write a successful research paper. You need to show the readers that you're **a master of the topic**.

Precise and Specific

A research paper is an accurate and thorough work, which is **based on facts**.

Your statement should be **supported with examples or references** to other reputable research and academic work.

Innovative

A topic should address a matter from a **different perspective**. With a deep investigation, you may find the little known facts that capture readers' minds.

This approach will **intrigue your readers** and make your research paper stand out.

Sample Research Topics/Focus (Interest – Clarity - Specificity - Innovation)

1. My students are uninterested. I want to motivate them to actually learn what I teach them in my lectures.
2. Group work is problematic for me and my students. How can I get my students to collaborate in group work? How can I control for free riders?
3. My students learn from my power point presentations only. How can I get my students to work more independently?
4. In the medical practicum, I often experience insecurity, fear, chaos and aggression among students. What can I do to improve that situation?
5. I seek to become more creative in teaching and assessing students. How do I develop myself towards more co-operation and creativity in my teaching?
6. In search of reflective practice "What I'd like to know now is where I am with my own teaching. Can I say that I teach in a student-oriented, or in a traditional way? Or am I maybe somewhere in the middle? How can I find out more about my teaching?"

Your Turn → Gallery Walk

1. In your group, brain storm one area of focus the whole group is interested in investigating:

What element(s) of your practice or what aspect of students' learning does your group wish to investigate? → **Selecting a Focus**

2. Record the area of focus on a flip chart
3. Put up your area of focus in the room
4. Go around and check others' areas of focus
5. Did you get more ideas from other colleagues?



Step 2—Clarifying Theories

- The second step involves identifying the *beliefs and theoretical perspectives/framework* the researchers hold relating to their focus.
- What is a theoretical framework?
- For example, if teachers are concerned about increasing responsible classroom behavior, it will be helpful for them to begin by *clarifying which approach—using punishments and rewards, allowing students to experience the natural consequences of their behaviors, or some other strategy—they feel will work best* in helping students acquire responsible classroom behavior habits.

Your Turn

1. In your group, brainstorm the beliefs and theoretical perspective/ framework related to your area of focus:

What beliefs and theoretical perspectives / framework do researchers hold relating to your focus? → Clarifying Theories

2. Present your theoretical perspective/ framework to other groups

3. Did you get more ideas from other colleagues?

4. Record the theoretical framework on the flip chart



Step 3—Identifying Research Questions



- Once a focus area has been selected and the researcher's perspectives and beliefs about that focus have been clarified, the next step is **to generate a set of personally meaningful research questions** to guide the inquiry.
- **In your groups, list the qualities of good research questions.**

11 Qualities of a Good Research Question

(Not necessarily in order of importance)

1. It is grounded in a **theoretical framework**.
2. It builds on, but also offers something **new** to, previous research.
3. It has the potential to suggest directions for **future research**.
4. It is a purpose or question that the researcher is **sincerely interested** and/or invested in.
5. It addresses directly or indirectly some **real problem** in the world.
6. It takes **ethical** issues into consideration.
7. It clearly states the **variables or constructs** to be examined.
8. It is **not biased** in terminology or position.
9. It has **multiple possible answers**.
10. It is simple, or at least **manageable**.
11. It should **drive the study design**.

Some Examples Action Research Questions

1. Lecture capture: Do they really want to see it again? An action research study assessing the student perspective of lecture capture technology
2. How can I promote critical thinking amongst my final year students?
3. Does the use of peer review promote good academic writing?
4. To what extent does using quizzes after each lecture consolidate student understanding?
5. Does my approach to student assessment feedback develop student efficiencies?
6. What teaching methods would lead my students to implement proper summarizing techniques in academic writing?
7. Making my teaching more inclusive: how can teaching in a veterinary context be made more inclusive?
9. Do interactive electronic workbooks enhance student reflective practice in a professional veterinary program?
10. How do I evaluate a flipped classroom pedagogy in the context of a first year business module?
11. What are the benefits of having students as teachers in laboratory scenarios?
12. How can I support students to engage critically with academic sources?
13. To what extent does my written feedback improve my students' performance in writing classes?
14. How do questioning techniques promote critical thinking in my history classes?
15. To what extent does the Moodle discussion forum promote a deeper understanding of Lebanese medical law?
16. Does using music to initiate discussion in an agricultural program increase motivation in the discussion or distract students from focusing on content?

Your Turn

1. Using the group focus area, theoretical perspective/framework, in your group, brainstorm a meaningful research question to guide your inquiry:

Generate research question(s) to for your research topic. → **Identifying Research Questions**



2. Record the research question(s) on a flip chart

3. Put up your research question(s) in the room

4. Go around and check others' research question(s) using the 10 characteristics of good questions

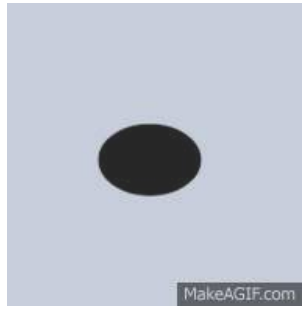
5. Did you get more ideas from other colleagues?

Step 4—Collecting Data



- Action researchers can accomplish best possible data by making sure that the data used are **valid** and **reliable**. Teachers must be confident that the lessons drawn from the data align with any unique characteristics of their classroom.
- To ensure reasonable validity and reliability of their findings, action researchers should use a process called **triangulation**. Triangulation means using **multiple independent sources of data** to answer one's questions. Triangulation is like studying an object located inside a box by viewing it through various windows cut into the sides of the box. Observing a phenomenon through multiple “windows” can help a single researcher compare and contrast what is being seen through a variety of lenses.
- Triangulation is **similar to a doctor's concern** that the specific medicine being prescribed be the correct one for the individual patient. Because the data being collected come from the very students and teachers who are engaged with the treatment, the relevance of the findings is assured.

Triangulation



- For the overworked teacher, “data collection” can appear to be the most intimidating aspect of the entire seven-step action research process.
- The question repeatedly asked, “Where will I find the time and expertise to develop valid and reliable instruments for data collection?” gives voice to a realistic fear regarding time management. Fortunately, classrooms and schools are, by their nature, data-rich environments.
- The key to managing triangulated data collection is first, to be effective and efficient in collecting the material that is already swirling around the classroom, and second, to identify other sources of data that might be effectively surfaced with tests, classroom discussions, or questionnaires.

Selecting Data Collection Methods: **Triangulate**

Direct Measures look at the actual student work (assignments or exams) that can be used to directly measure students' knowledge and skills

Examples:

- ✓ Pre-test, post-test,
- ✓ comprehensive subject matter exam,
- ✓ licensure exam, standardized tests
- ✓ portfolio,
- ✓ thesis,
- ✓ Embedded assignments,
- ✓ Exit Exam,
- ✓ Capstone Assignment,
- ✓ Performance Demonstration (recital, art exhibit, or science project)
- ✓ Case Studies

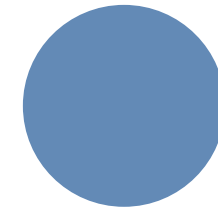
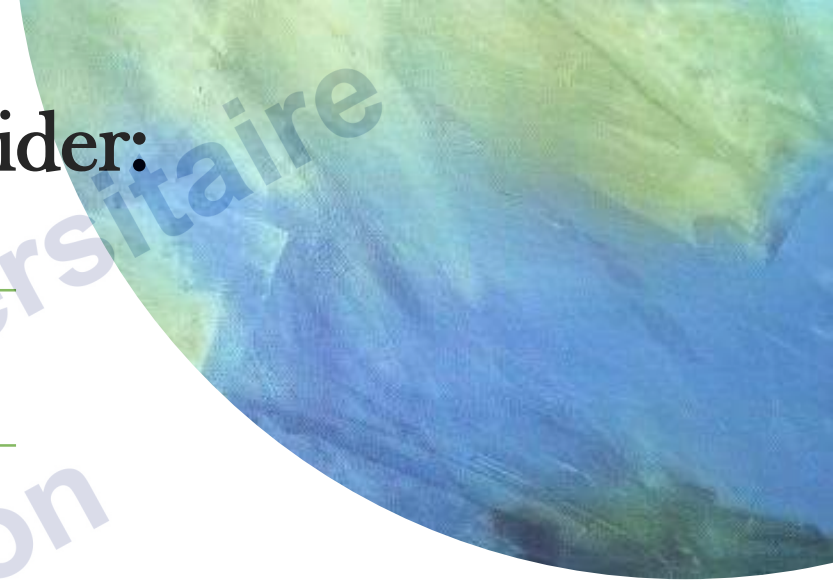
Indirect Measures refer to the type of data that can be used to infer students' knowledge and skills

Examples:

- ✓ Surveys (Exit, alumni, employer, graduates of program etc.)
- ✓ Interviews,
- ✓ Focus Group Studies,
- ✓ Instructor Course Evaluation,
- ✓ Students' Self-Reports/reflections
- ✓ Observations
- ✓ Transcript Analysis

Data Collection Procedures – Questions to Consider:

1. What data are collected?
2. How are the data collected?
3. When are the data collected?
4. Who is responsible for collecting and recording data?
5. Where are the data stored?
6. How do you insure the data are collected?



Qualitative – Quantitative Research

- ✓ **Qualitative** research is empirical research where the data are not in the form of numbers.
- ✓ Qualitative research is *multimethod*, involving an *interpretive* and *naturalistic approach*. This means that qualitative researchers *study phenomena in their natural settings* attempting to make sense *in terms of the meanings people bring to them*. Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p. 2)
- ✓ The *aim of qualitative research* is to understand the social reality of individuals, groups and cultures *as nearly as possible as its participants feel it or live it*. Thus, people and groups, are studied in their natural setting.
- ✓ Research following a qualitative approach is *exploratory and seeks to explain “how” and “why”* a particular phenomenon, or behavior, operates as it does in a particular context.

Quantitative Research

- ✓ **Quantitative** research gathers **data in a numerical form** which can be put into categories, or in rank order, or measured in units of measurement. This type of data can be used to **construct graphs and tables of raw data**.
- ✓ Quantitative researchers aim to **establish general laws of behavior and phenomenon** across different settings/contexts. Research is used to test a theory and ultimately **support or reject it**.
- ✓ **Experiments** typically yield quantitative data, as they are concerned with measuring data.
- ✓ **Statistics** help us turn quantitative data into useful information to help with decision making. We can use statistics to summarize our data, describing patterns, relationships, and connections.

Your Turn

- *In your group, brainstorm what data collection procedures will guide your inquiry:*
- What data will be collected? How? When? Who? Where?
Verifying data is collected. → **Data Collection**
- *Record your data collection procedures on the flip chart.*
- *Present your data collection procedures to other groups.*



Step 5—Analyzing Data

- ❖ Although data analysis often brings to mind the use of **complex statistical calculations**, this is **rarely the case for the action researcher**. A number of relatively user-friendly procedures can help a practitioner identify the trends and patterns in action research data.
- ❖ During this portion of the seven-step process, teacher researchers will **methodically sort, sift, rank, and examine their data** to answer two generic questions:
 - ✓ *What is the story told by these data?*
 - ✓ *Why did the story play itself out this way? (What evidence do I have?)*
- ❖ By answering these two questions, the teacher researcher can acquire a **better understanding of the phenomenon under investigation** and as a result can end up producing grounded theory regarding what might be done **to improve the situation**.

Your Turn

For next time we meet



Step 6 – Reporting Results

- ❖ When dealing with complex problems the wisdom of several minds is inevitably better than one. **We should not be left alone.**
- ❖ The **reporting of action research** most often occurs in **informal settings** that are far less intimidating than the venues where scholarly research has traditionally been shared.
- ❖ Faculty **meetings, brown bag lunch seminars, and teacher conferences** are among the most common venues for sharing action research with peers.
- ❖ However, each year more and more teacher researchers are writing up their work for **publication** or to help fulfill **requirements in graduate programs**.
- ❖ Regardless of which venue or technique educators select for reporting on research, they are **making a contribution** to a collective knowledge base regarding teaching and learning frequently proves to be among the most rewarding aspects of this work.

Action Research Refereed Journals

- *Action Research (Action Res)* Publisher: SAGE Publications
https://www.researchgate.net/journal/1476-7503_Action_Research
- *International Journal of Action Research (IJAR)*
<https://www.questia.com/library/p62405/international-journal-of-action-research>
- *Systemic Practice and Action Research* <https://link.springer.com/journal/11213>
- *Research in Higher Education Journal* <https://www.aabri.com/rhej.html>
- *International Journal of Research in Education and Science* (on-line)
<https://www.ijres.net/index.php/ijres>
- *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (IJTLHE)*
<http://www.isetl.org/ijtlhe/index.cfm>

Your Turn

For next time we meet



Step 7—Taking Informed Action

- What makes action planning particularly satisfying for the teacher researcher is that with each piece of **data uncovered** (about teaching or student learning), the educator will feel greater confidence in the **wisdom of the next steps**.
- Although all teaching can be classified as trial and error, action researchers find that the research process liberates them from continuously repeating their past mistakes.
- With each refinement of practice, action researchers **gain valid and reliable data on their developing skills**.

Your Turn

For next time we meet



Table of Contents for Action Research

Page

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

LIST OF TABLES

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION (purpose, significance, definitions, research question(s))

II. REVIEW of LITERATURE

III. METHODOLOGY (subjects, setting, instrument(s), data collection procedures)

IV. RESULTS (graphs, tables, patterns)

V. DISCUSSION (interpreting results based on literature review)

VI. CONCLUSION (implications, limitations, recommendations for future research)

VII. APPENDICES

VIII. REFERENCES

How do we judge action research: Terminology



In your groups, come up with a description for:

- ☐ Quality Research
- ☐ Research Standards
- ☐ Research Criteria
- ☐ Research Impact

1. **Quality Research** → making judgement based on our values
2. **Research Standards** → how we judge quality based on benchmarking quality and excellence
3. **Research Criteria** → what we expect to see; turn into standards
4. **Research Impact** → criterion in judging quality by evidence of change

Session 4 World Café



1. How do we judge **impact and quality** of our action research?
2. Based on the answer, develop a **checklist** for reviewing action research.

World Café Method

Focus on what matters.

Contribute your thinking.

Speak your mind and heart.

Listen to understand.

Link and connect ideas.

Listen together for insights and deeper questions.

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Managing the World Café

When you see me raise my hand,



→ please raise your hands and stop the discussion

Round 1 (15 minutes)

Answer the following question in your group:

1. How do we judge **impact and quality** of our action research?
2. Based on your answer, develop a **checklist** for reviewing action research

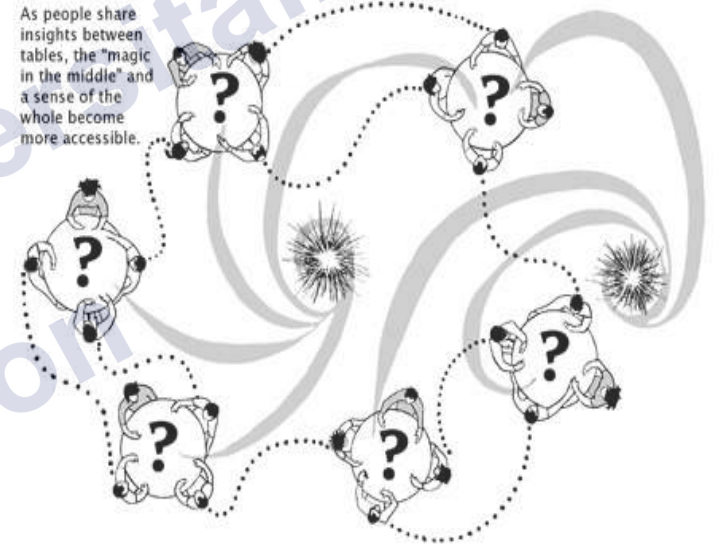


PresenterMedia

Procedures of Round 2

- Move to other groups as directed by the presenter.
- The new table should include individuals from different tables.

As people share insights between tables, the "magic in the middle" and a sense of the whole become more accessible.



Guidelines for working in Round 2



- The **host** presents results of his/her table's discussions
- The new members of the group share the ideas they got from **Round 1**.
The new group needs to reach consensus on answers to the questions.

Round 2 (15 minutes)

1. How do we judge **impact** and **quality** of our action research?
2. Based on the answer, develop a **checklist** for reviewing action research.



Share Your Answers: Harvesting (15 minutes)



Share your answers with the whole group in a **Gallery Walk**

Answer the following question in your group:

1. How do we judge **impact and quality** of our action research?
2. Based on the answer, develop a **checklist** for reviewing action research.
3. Put up your checklist in the room.
4. Move around and check out other groups' checklists.
5. Did you get new ideas?

Criteria for Judging Action Research

Criteria	Done	Not Yet
1. 'Knowledgeable' outsider (<i>who has sufficient information to judge whether the research is relevant to their situation</i>) did first review.		
2. Outcomes of the action research carefully scrutinized by professional peers (<i>to validate the outcomes authenticity so that wider applications by 'non-knowledgeable' outsiders can be made with confidence = the trust put in the competence of statistical expertise in verifying traditional social science research</i>).		
3. The transparency of the research process is verified.		

The Seven Choice points for Quality in Action Research used in ARJ

Criteria	4	3	2	1	Comments and Evidence
1. Partnership and participation (collaborative)					
2. Contribution to Action Research theory/practice (contextual, theoretical, practical)					
3. Methods and process (validity, reliability, triangulation)					
4. Actionability & manageability (practical)					
5. Reflexivity (reflexive)					
6. Significance (contextual)					
7. Invitation to ARJ stakeholders					
4=Accept 3=Accept with minor changes 2= Accept with major changes 1= reject					Total Score: /4

Criteria	4	3	2	1	Comments and Evidence
1. Makes original contribution to knowledge in the field					
2. Demonstrates critical engagement					
3. Contains material worthy of publication					
4. Engages with appropriate literatures					
5. Is of appropriate technical merit					
6. Document is error free (content & language)					
<i>4=Accept ; 3=Accept with minor changes ; 2= Accept with major changes ; 1= reject</i>					Total Score: /4

Judging an Action Research: a case study



Let's select one of the reported checklists.

In your groups, we will judge/review the action research case study below.

Case study: Bente Norbye, Norway

Decentralised nursing education – prepared for the future?

In Norway, Tromsø University promotes the development of flexible learning methods to reach out to students in the region. The system of decentralised nursing education admits students from rural areas of North Norway, using a blended learning approach that combines ordinary teaching methods with a variety of distance learning tools, such as videoconferencing and streamed lectures.

The research focus is to study the students' experiences from participating in an online module with a subject focus on the nutrition of the fragile elderly. This has a national focus in nursing. The research investigates whether it is possible to improve the quality of nursing students' learning through the use of online module delivery.

Focus group interviews were conducted with two groups one month after the students completed the module. The interviews were transcribed and analysed by two researchers using qualitative content analysis.

The provisional findings were as follows. The students found the online module motivating. Variety in teaching methods was important even if the discussions online were initially intimidating. The compulsory module challenged the students in group discussions online: the discussions went further and deeper than the students initially thought was possible and allowed time for them to reflect on the group's contribution; this was especially valuable for the more withdrawn ones. The subject was important for the students in their preparation for clinical practice. The flexibility of the module gave the students time to study as and when it suited their schedule, and links to research articles, national guidelines, online discussions and written work were clear. Taking the students' voices into account became a key criterion in assessing the quality of the research.

Summary Discussion – Poster session

- ❖ What is action research?
- ❖ What is the process for carrying out a piece of action research?
- ❖ What area of focus interests you in teaching and learning in Higher education?

READINGS

McNiff, J. (2013). *Action Research Principles and Practice*. Routledge:
NY,US

Lydia Arnold, Harper Adams University Lin Norton, Liverpool Hope University HEA *Action Research: Practice Guide*

https://s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets.creode.advancehe-document-manager/documents/hea/private/hub/download/AR%20Guide_1568037589.pdf

Pamela Lomax (1994) *Standards, criteria and the problematic of action research within an award bearing course*[1], Educational Action Research, 2:1, 113-126, DOI:
10.1080/09650799400200006

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09650799400200006>

List of 40 Hot Topics in Education

1. [The development of critical thinking as the primary goal of the educational process](#)
2. [The evolution of approaches to education throughout history](#)
3. [Education and modern technologies, their positive and negative impact](#)
4. [Virtual reality worlds and education. Virtual classes and research rooms](#)
5. [The overview of the main modern approaches to education](#)
6. [Sex education: pros and cons](#)
7. [Education and gender: same-sex school and their comparison to the mixed-sex ones](#)
8. [Theoretical education vs practical education](#)
9. [The phenomenon of apprenticeship and its role in developing systems of education](#)
10. [What is considered basic education in different countries and why?](#)
11. [Preschool education: knowledge or social skills?](#)
12. [Shall the development of emotional intelligence be one of the goals of modern education?](#)
13. [Educational discrimination and its impact on the future of the pupils](#)
14. [Education and socialization of mentally challenged people. Similarities and differences.](#)
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