



**University of Santo Tomas, Manila**  
*The Graduate School*

# **ACTION RESEARCH**

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October 29, 2015

# Topic Objectives

- Become acquainted with the processes that are involved in action research;
- Identify problems or issues in our own workplaces that needs to be addressed by action research, and
- Reflect or rethink on our own teaching philosophies in order to eventually bring a lasting, positive impact in our own classrooms.

**ACTION RESEARCH?**



There's no escaping action research as educators.



- From *Haikyuu!* Season 2, Episode 1

# Action Research

- Is it true that the end-goal of research is to:
  - Solve problems?
  - Verify the veracity of previous studies?
  - Gather relevant information to enlighten individual practices?
- If you answered “yes” to both, then how different is “action research” from those approaches that we have discussed before?

“Action research is any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counselors, or other stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment to gather information about **how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn**. This information is gathered with **the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes** in the school environment (and on educational practices in general), and **improving student outcomes** and the lives of those involved.”

-- Mills, 2007

# Action Research

- ❖ Kemmins and McTaggart (2000) believe that classroom action research is:
  - A participatory research
  - Involves self-reflective spirals of:
    - Planning a change;
    - Acting and observing the process and consequences of the change;
    - Reflecting on these processes and consequences, and then re-planning;
    - Acting and observing...



# Formal Research v. Action Research

BASIC QUESTIONS (Who? Where? How? Why?)

In terms of SAMPLING

In terms of INTERNAL VALIDITY

In terms of EXTERNAL VALIDITY

# Characteristics of AR



AR is NOT backwash per se; it is more than moments of reflections and realizations.



AR does NOT only answer problems; it is another way of finding new problems (sadly).



AR does NOT involve researching other people; it is about examining your OWN teaching practices



AR is does NOT mean using the scientific method in pedagogy



AR is NOT impossible!

-- (Nunan & Bailey, 2009)

# Characteristics of Action Research

- Is it a research type that is **guided by the situation or context?**
- Is it research approach that is **done mainly by professionals, for professionals?**
- Is it research approach **that involves a series of reflections, analyses, and evaluations?**
- Is it a research approach that **facilitates change by means of inquiry?**
- Is it a research approach that involves **a group of individuals driven by a common purpose?**

# **The Benefits of Action Research**

**It can be used by anyone to examine any problem or issue.**

**It can improve educational practice.**

**It allows professionals to come up with effective strategies.**

**It has a systematic process in assessing contextual issues.**

**It fosters involvement among community members by becoming driven to do research.**



**You are most likely going to  
have difficulties.**

Type 1: Practical Action Research

Type 2: Participatory Action Research

# **TYPES OF ACTION RESEARCH**

# Practical Action Research

- ✓ Addresses “local” issues that may be found in *localities* – the classroom, a department, or even an entire institution;
- ✓ May be done individually or collaboratively;
- ✓ Goals of Practical Action Research:
  - Further develop practice (short term goal)
  - Enlighten macro, broader issues (long term goal)
- ✓ **OUTPUT:**            **An action plan**

# Participatory Action Research

- Also examines a contextual issue in order to arrive at a feasible solution using research findings;
- **Unique objectives:**
  - ✓ To instill and reinforce community empowerment and development, and
  - ✓ To create significant social changes in the community
- **How do we achieve these objectives?**
  - ✓ **STAKEHOLDERS**, who all come from diverse backgrounds (e.g. gender, ethnicities, socio-economic statuses), must work together in pursuit of these goals.



# Participatory Action Research

- So, participatory action research = collaborative?
- **Questions:**
  - If it is so, how much “collaboration” is there?
  - Does it mean that stakeholders must be involved from the start to finish?
  - When does collaboration take place?
- **More questions:**
  - What kinds of questions must be addressed in action research?
  - If the questions need to be stakeholder-centered, how can we ensure that THIS is the case?
  - Is it safe to say, “Everyone is (or ‘can be’) an expert”?

# Participatory Action Research

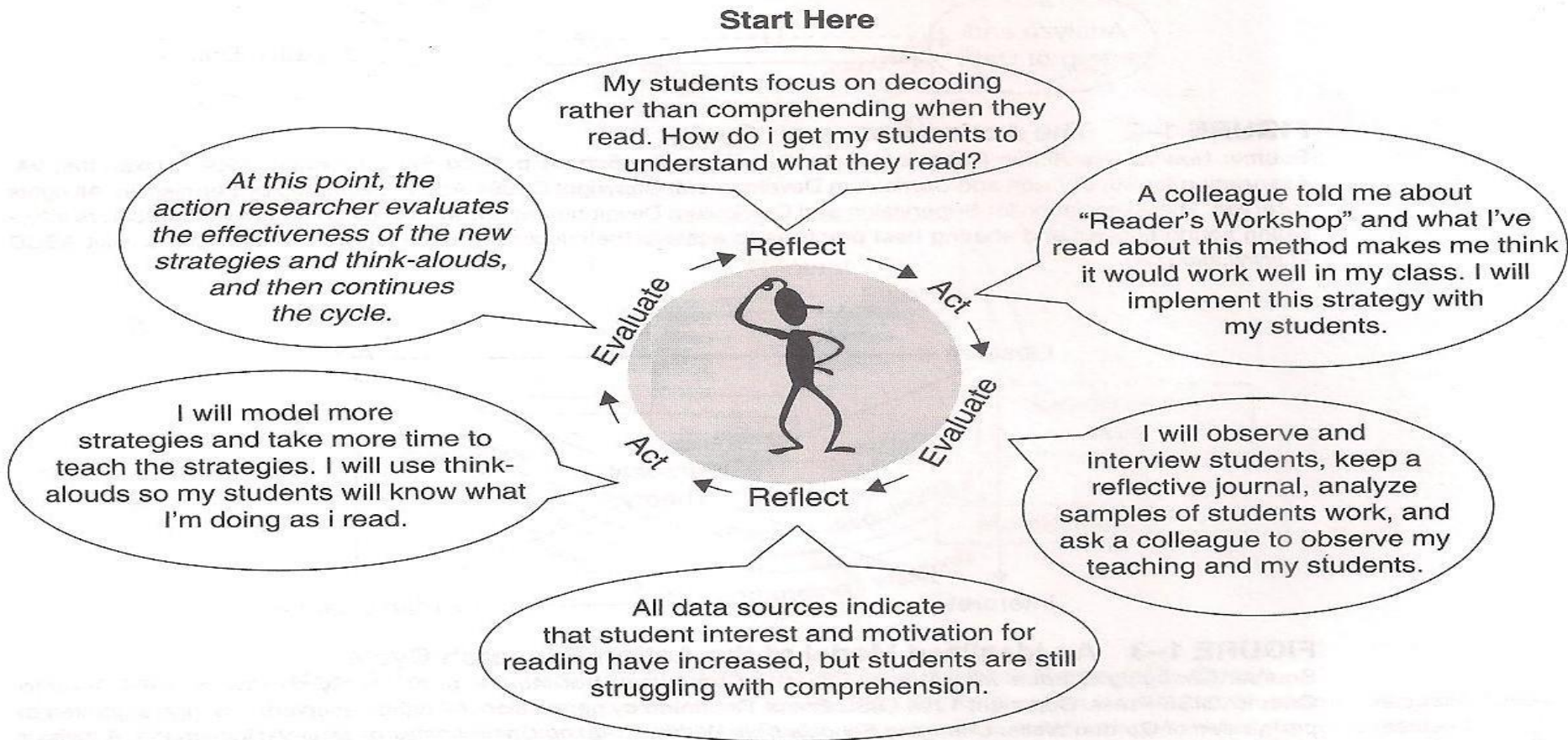
- Since participatory action research is collaborative per se, we can expect **levels of participation**:
  - Every stakeholder will take on various (and sometimes, multiple) roles.
  - The extent of their participation “varies with participant interest and background” (Fraenkel, Hyun, & Wallen, 2015, p. 590).
    - For instance, A kindergarten student cannot review research findings, which is often done by both faculty and parents.

Identifying research objectives  
Gathering relevant data  
Analyzing and interpreting data  
Developing an action plan

But why is it a cycle?

# **CYCLES OF ACTION RESEARCH**

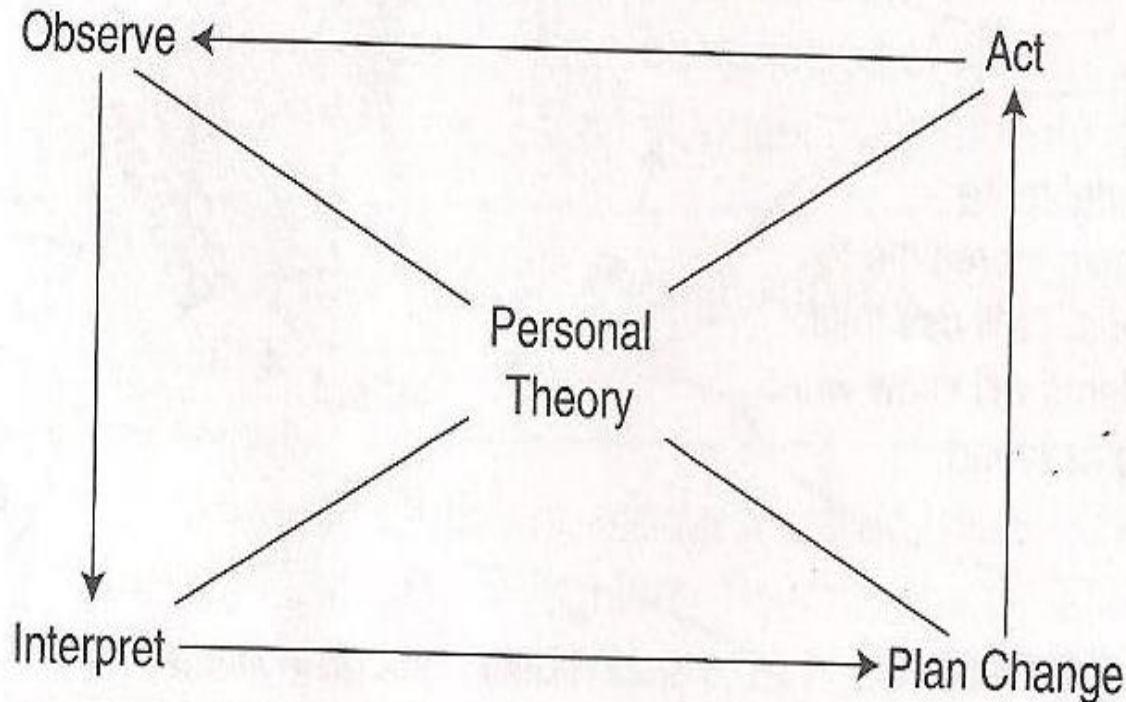
# Processes in Action Research



**FIGURE 1-5 The Action Research Process**

Source: *Improving Schools through Action Research: A Comprehensive Guide for Educators* (p. 9), by Cher Hendricks, 2006, Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

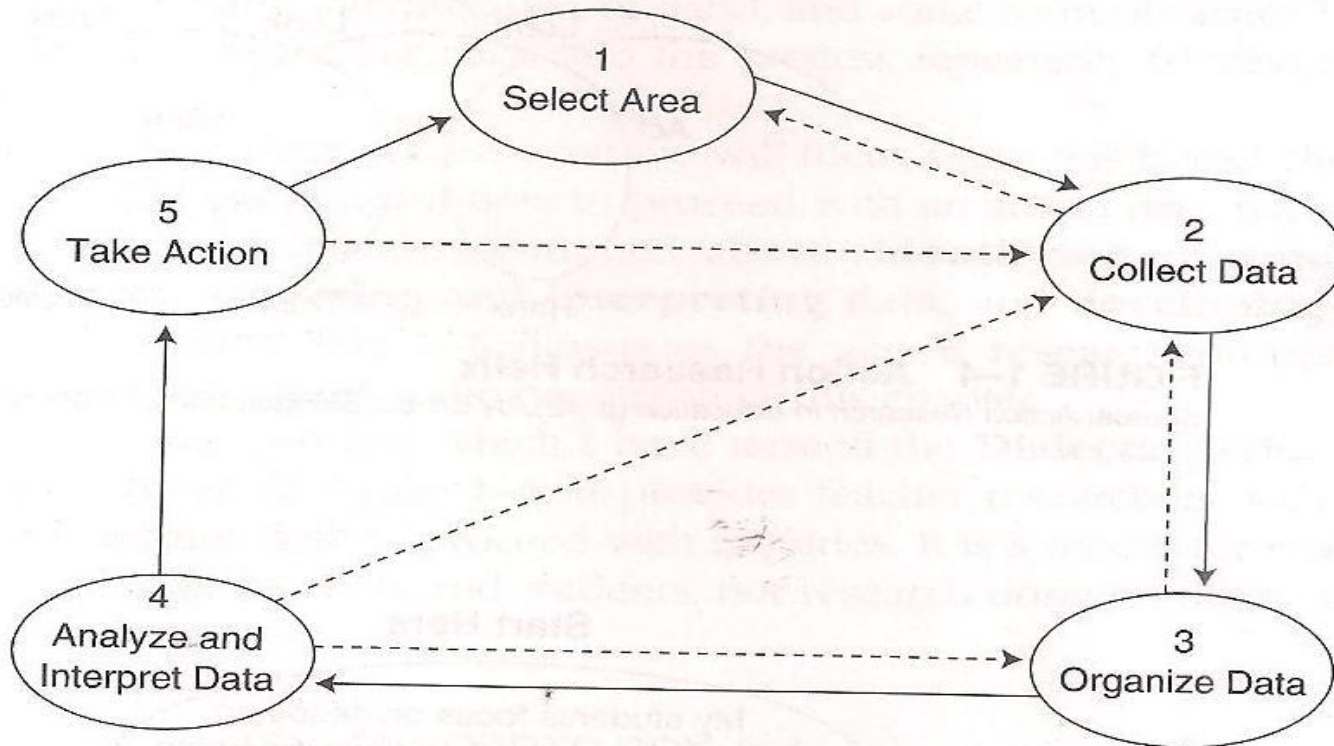
# Processes in Action Research



**FIGURE 1-3 An Idealized Model of the Action Research Cycle**

Source: *Changing Schools from Within: Creating Communities of Inquiry*, p. 27, by Gordon Wells, 1994, Toronto, Ontario: OISE Press. Copyright 1994 OISE Press. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. U.S. rights granted by permission of Gordon Wells: *Changing Schools from Within: Creating Communities of Inquiry* (Heinemann, A division of Read Elsevier, Inc., Portsmouth, NH, 1994).

# Processes in Action Research



**FIGURE 1-2 The Action Research Cycle**

Source: *How to Use Action Research in the Self-Renewing School*, p. 2, by Emily Calhoun, 1994, Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Copyright ©1994 ASCD. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development is a worldwide community of educators advocating sound policies and sharing best practices to achieve the success of each learner. To learn more, visit ASCD at [www.ascd.org](http://www.ascd.org).

# Identifying Research Objectives

- Research objectives must be clearly established.
- These objectives are rooted from issues that are observed in a locality (e.g. classroom).
- Additional requirement: **MANAGEABILITY**
  - Action research topics are often narrow and specific.
  - It is possible to collaborate with stakeholders for a long term project, but the question must be feasible for action research.
- **Question:**

What kind of research approach is feasible for this question?  
**“Is inquiry teaching more appropriate than traditional teaching?”**

# Gathering Pertinent Data

## ➤ Questions:

- What kinds of data can be gathered?
- How can these data be collected?
- What kinds of instruments would we need?

## ➤ Some useful methods:

- 1) Observation:** Taking field notes is important, whether you are a participant-observer or non-participant-observer.
- 2) Interviews and Surveys:** This ensures the validity of our observations, despite tending to be less formal and unstructured.
- 3) Analysis of documents:** Examples include lesson plans, student outputs, minutes of meetings, and other documents.



# Analyzing and Interpreting Data

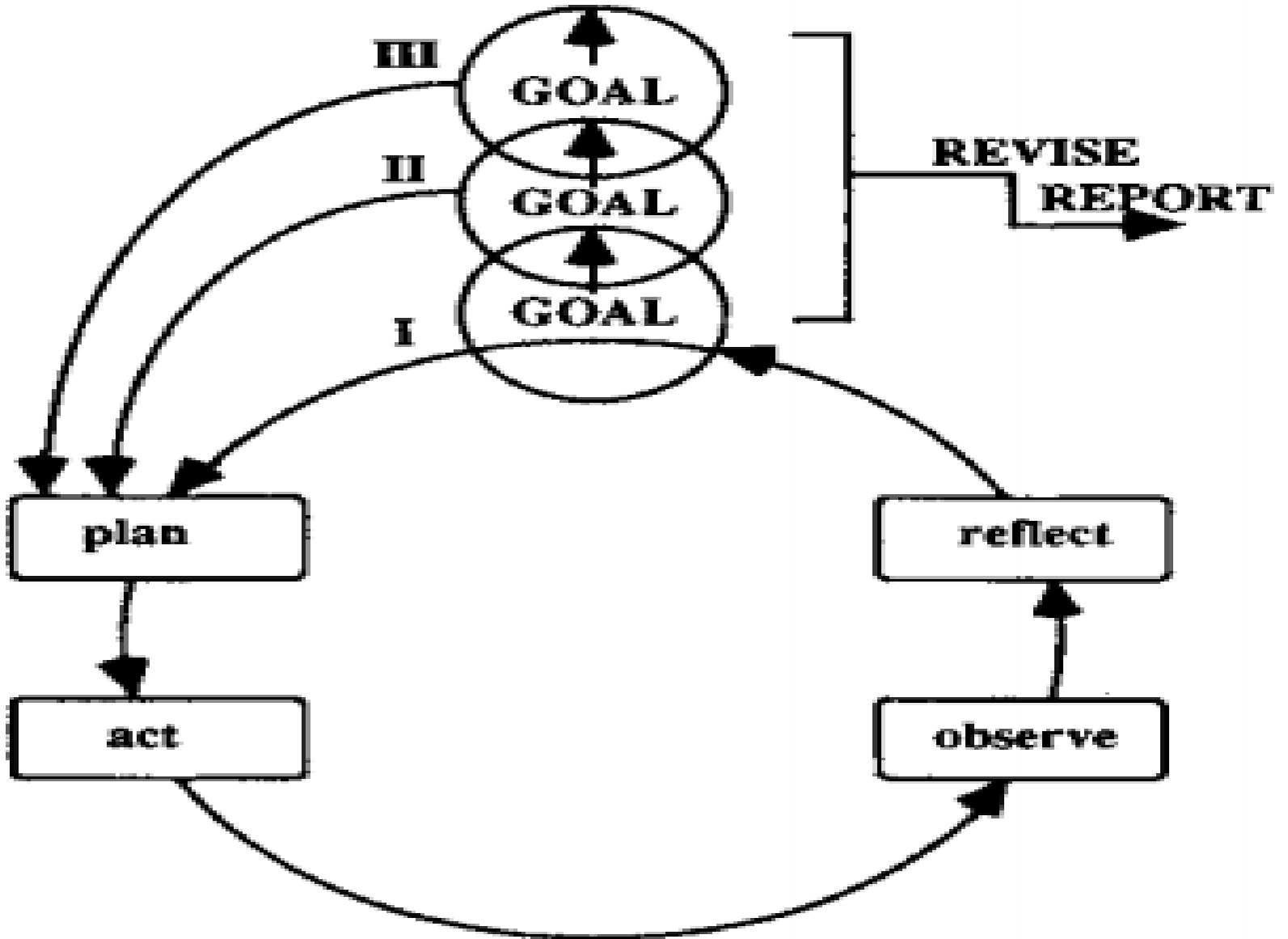
- Data analysis in action research is deemed not as complicated as other forms (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2015).
- **Considerations in data analysis:**
  1. Every participating stakeholder must be aware of any development in the process.
  2. Every stakeholder's views must be reflected in the discussion, thus requiring **collaboration**.
- Stringer (1999, in Fraenkel et al., 2015) provides us with some guide questions.  
[See page 592 of Fraenkel, Wallen, and Hyun.]

# Developing an Action Plan

- This plan is expected to be implemented after the action research study.
  - Differentiate: “action plan” and “action research plan”
  - Is there a difference?
  - Which comes first?
- Fraenkel et al. (2015) states that:

“While it is desirable that a formal document be prepared, it is not essential; what is essential is that the study, at the very least, indicate clear directions for further work on the original problem or concern.” (p. 593)

# Cycle of Action Research (van Lier, 1994, p. 4)



# Formal Research v. Action Research

BASIC QUESTIONS (Who? Where? How? Why?)

In terms of SAMPLING

In terms of INTERNAL VALIDITY

In terms of EXTERNAL VALIDITY

# Pair Activity

- ❖ Discuss with a partner any issue that you may have encountered in your own classroom. This issue could be something that you both have in common.
  - Give one research question that can address the problem.
  - Identify what methods may be appropriate to address your research question.
  - Identify the instruments that you will use.
  - Who will be involved?

# Overall Considerations

Experience and interest

The research question

Scope and resources

Planning

Working collaboratively

Consider dissemination

# Questions (from p. 610-611)

- Are there any kinds of questions that could not be investigated by means of an action research study? If you think so, give an example.
- Do you think the assumptions that underlie action research are true. Explain your reasoning. Are any of them questionable?
- Which of the four stages of action research would be the hardest to carry out? Why?
- “The important thing in action research is *not* to rely on collecting merely anecdotal data.” Would you agree? Why would this be insufficient (if it would be)?

# Questions (from p. 610-611)

- All of the participants – the stakeholders – in an action research study must be involved in the entire research process. Why not also require this in formal qualitative and quantitative studies?
- What do you think is the major advantage of action research? The major disadvantage?
- Which methodologies, other than the ones discussed, might be used in each of the hypothetical examples in this chapter?
- What other methods might have been used in the DeMaria study? Which, if any, would you recommend? Why?



**~Your questions~**

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