

Unit 9: Action Research

AIM

The aim of this unit is to enable newly recruited inspectors to understand the principles of action research and acquire the necessary skills that will help them carry out school based research.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this unit, inspectors will be able to:

- define the term 'action research'
- give reasons why action research is useful
- identify researchable problems
- formulate hypotheses and/or research questions
- identify methods used in data collection
- describe how data will be collected
- analyse data
- interpret data
- write a research report
- make the necessary recommendations based on findings
- take appropriate action.

CONTENT SUMMARY

- 9.1 The Meaning of Action Research
- 9.2 The Purpose of Action Research
- 9.3 The Main Stages in Carrying out Action Research
- 9.4 Methods of Action Research
- 9.5 Conducting Action Research

INSPECTORS' KEY SKILLS

The following skills will be developed:

- problem identification
- formulation of research questions / hypotheses
- planning
- data collection
- data analysis
- interpreting data
- making recommendations based on research findings
- report writing

9.1 THE MEANING OF ACTION RESEARCH

Activity 9a

- What is action research?
- Who does it?.

Brainstorm in groups and report back your findings to the whole group.

Key Information

- Action research can be defined as applied research aimed at solving particular problems.
- The main feature of action research is that participants conduct research in their own institution(s) i.e. practitioner based (i.e. teacher or inspector).
- Action research is usually small scale and confined to one classroom, one school or a small cluster of schools.
- Action research is ongoing and on the job.

9.2 THE PURPOSE OF ACTION RESEARCH

Activity 9b

In groups, list and discuss reasons for conducting action research.

Report back to the whole group.

Key Information

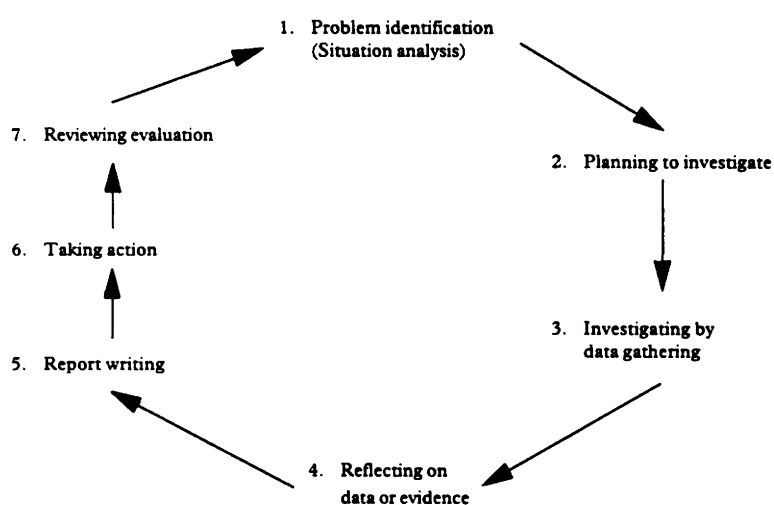
Action research is aimed at:

- identifying problems related to teaching and learning
- solving identified problems within the classroom or school
- changing policy
- improving pupil achievement
- improving teacher performance.

9.3 THE STAGES IN CARRYING OUT ACTION RESEARCH

Key Information

The stages of action research are shown in the diagram below:



NB: For each stage there is need to consider a time frame and the necessary resources.

Activity 9c

Some examples of action research projects are:

- Types of questioning used in mathematics lessons.
- Underachievement of boys in literacy skills.
- Effective beginnings and endings of lessons.

In groups generate two action research topics to add to the list and discuss one of them, following the various stages of action research as shown in the diagram on page 52.

Record on the flip chart and report to the whole group.

The trainer should make the diagram available to the trainees.

Key Information

Problem identification (situation analysis)

- definition of the topic (identification of an existing problem)

Planning to investigate

- hypotheses formulation
- finding out background information to the problem (reading about the problem) talking to pupils, teachers, etc.
- choosing the methods of investigation
- choosing the sample group (keep the sample groups small)

- Data collection through:

- observations
- questionnaires
- case studies
- interviews
- surveys

- Recording data accurately

- tabulating the data

- Analysing and interpreting data

- data analysis (looking for patterns/similarities and differences)
- drawing conclusions, recommendations/course of action.

- Taking action

- implementation of suggested recommendations

- Reviewing the course of action

- follow up
- monitoring
- evaluating

9.4 METHODS OF CARRYING OUT ACTION RESEARCH

Activity 9d

Discuss with your trainer the different methods of carrying out action research.

Key Information

Methods of carrying out action research include:

- observations
- questionnaires
- diaries
- interviews
- case studies
- surveys

9.5 CONDUCTING ACTION RESEARCH

Activity 9e

Suppose the identified problem in a given school is poor pupil performance. In groups find out how, using the action research diagram you can conduct your research on this problem. Make a plan for the research and then report back to the group for discussion.

Trainer's Note

For more information on this unit, refer to Module Two.

PERSONAL ACTION PLAN

Please reflect on your own knowledge and skills in action research and note any actions you feel you should take as a result of studying this unit.

REFERENCES

Bell, J. (1987) *Doing Your Research Project*, OUP, Buckingham

National Extension College (1993) *Techniques of Investigation*, National Extension College Trust Ltd