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Action Research as Professional Development

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Presenter Information

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- Ph.D. in Research, Evaluation, Statistics and Assessment. Graduate certificate in institutional research.
- Research Associate, College of Education and Professional Studies, University of West Florida
- Previous experience in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at UWF; as an F/S advisor at four institutions
About The Program

• This program will explore the value of action research as a form of professional development.

• Participants will explore the conceptual differences between action research and experimental research.

• The new AFA research priorities will be shared and possible topics for action (or experimental) research will be identified.
LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Delineate between action research and experimental research

2. Consider opportunities to conduct action research as a part of their general work

3. Identify sources of evidence/data that would be valuable for an action research project

4. Consider the new AFA research priorities as possible research topics
SESSION OUTLINE

1. What is action research, and how is it different than experimental research?

2. Where can I find data?

3. What might I study?

4. Questions?
WHAT IS ACTION RESEARCH

• Began in the 1940s based on the work of Kurt Lewin

• Stephen Corey (1955) at Teacher’s College at Columbia University

• Encourages practitioners to be in control of their own lives and contexts

• Sometimes called “practitioner-based research”

• Involves thinking about and reflecting on your work
EXPERIMENTAL & QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL

• We usually research “others”

• Random assignment to conditions (experimental)

• Matching because random assignment
HOW IS IT DIFFERENT?

• In action research, we research ourselves and our work.

• No requirement for random assignment, experimental vs. control groups, or matching

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• In action research, we research ourselves and our work.

• No requirement for random assignment, experimental vs. control groups, or matching

• Encourages practitioners to be in control of their own lives and contexts

• Begins with “how do I improve my work?”
  – Underlying intent: Improvement!

• Synthesis of two types of information
  – Assessment information (numeric and/or thematic)
  – Appraisal

• Focus could be on processes/procedures or values into practice

BASIC METHODOLOGY (McNiff)

- Review current practice
- Identify an area for improvement (why are you interested)
- Imagine a way forward (what can you do?)
- Try it out
- Take stock of what happened
- Modify or continue (depending on results)
- Monitor
- Review & evaluate

BASIC METHODOLOGY

- Review current practice
- Identify an area for improvement (why are you interested?)
- Imagine a way forward (what can you do?)
- Try it out
- Take stock of what happened (how can you explain your influence?)
- Modify or continue depending on results (what changes might lead to improvement?)
- Monitor
- Review & evaluate

ACTION RESEARCH AS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

• Improving your practice

• Does your work meet your own expectations?

• If you claim to hold certain values, are they reflected in your practice?

• You identify the evaluation criteria.

• You select the critical colleagues (validation group of 4-10 people) who assist you in this evaluation.

ACTION RESEARCH HELPS OTHERS DEVELOP

• You decide to investigate your work with an eye toward improvement

• You then can understand a situation more completely and holistically

• Your increased understanding improves evaluation and design changes as necessary

• Your way of working might influence others. How can you show this?

ACTION RESEARCH HELPS OTHERS DEVELOP

- Check your perceptions against others?
- Change your practice in light of their perceptions – negotiate
- Collective agreement → better understanding
- Mutual learning → They try something for themselves
- You become their critical colleague
- Collectively, you become a community of enquirers. (I → WE)

SESSION OUTLINE

1. What is action research, and how is it different than experimental research?

2. Where can I find data?

3. What might I study?

4. Questions?
SOURCES OF DATA

• The “you” element
  – Journaling & Reflection
  – Reports you’ve created
  – Time on task
  – Feedback from collaborative colleagues

• The “practice” element
  – Program evaluations
  – Process flow charting
  – Best practices from AFA and professional standards
  – Research, Perspectives, and conf. presentations
SOURCES OF DATA

• The “impact” element
  – Pre/post testing
  – Institutional data
  – High level org. data
  – Focus groups, interviews,
  – Direct observation

• Data are everywhere! Work smarter, not harder.
• Use what you have and identify what you need.
1. What is action research, and how is it different than experimental research?

2. Where can I find data?

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TOPICS TO STUDY

• Matters of effectiveness
  – Are you being effective?
  – Are activities, programs effective?
  – Is your office effective?
  – Are you utilizing resources effectively?
  – How are you/ your program contributing to institutional (or org.) effectiveness & mission

• Matters of personal interest
  – Relevant or emerging constructs
  – Priorities from senior administration
1. An examination of the chapter transformation process

Guiding Considerations:
• Explanatory studies, case studies, causal modeling
• Tipping point for change
• Precursors, predictors, and leading indicators for change.
2. Preparing F/S members for the post-graduate world

Guiding Consideration:

- An identification and assessment of key experiences in F/S and demonstrated impact in these areas.
3. The benefits of culturally-based fraternities and sororities, particularly at PWIs.

Guiding Considerations:

• The impact on retention, graduation, and student success for students of color.
• How membership helps students of color cope with experienced micro-aggressions
4. How the F/S influences ones beliefs and actions

Guiding Consideration:

• The interaction of one’s personal ethics, morals, values, and beliefs with those of the fraternity/sorority
AFA STRATEGIC RESEARCH PRIORITIES (2017-)

5. Programming and leadership development initiatives focused on the “long standing issues” (e.g., hazing, alcohol and drug abuse, sexual misconduct, diversity and inclusion)

Guiding Consideration:
- Best and promising practices and the effectiveness of these efforts
- Identifiable outcomes and assessment methods to demonstrate success
- An accurate depiction of the extent to which these issues are reflective of our communities
6. The impact of the transgender conversation

Guiding Consideration:

• Specifically, with respect to policy, practice, member experiences, and future directions
7. The profession of FSL

Guiding Considerations:

• Qualities, skills, and characteristics of effective professionals
• Areas for continued learning and professional development
• Organizational behavior research or studies conducted on students that can be reimagined for the F/S professional
• Ideal or optimal ratio of professional to students
• Departure from the field
• Long term retention to the field
8. FSL within the larger academy

Guiding Considerations:

• How are we contributing to institutional goals/missions
• Faculty attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions
• The high-impact nature of FSL
• The extent to which FSL may hinder or support involvement in other experiences or orgs.
• The role FSL plays in student learning from traditional perspectives
AFA STRATEGIC RESEARCH PRIORITIES (2017-)

9. Corollaries and consequences of student engagement in FSL

Guiding Considerations:

• To include, but not be limited to, extra-role behaviors, institutional or organizational commitment, attachment, and organizational citizenship behaviors.
Questions & Answers
Thank you for Participating