



Action Research


in Adult Education 

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Reference: McMillan, J. (2008). Educational Research: Fundamentals for the Consumer.
Pearson Education: Boston, MA.



Becoming an agent for change



**“The call to action is to ensure that institutional researchers see statistical analysis as only one step in their role of decision support. Initiation, building support for, implementing, and institutionalizing change are all natural extensions of the work already assigned to the institutional research office”
(Swing, 2009, p. 14-15)**



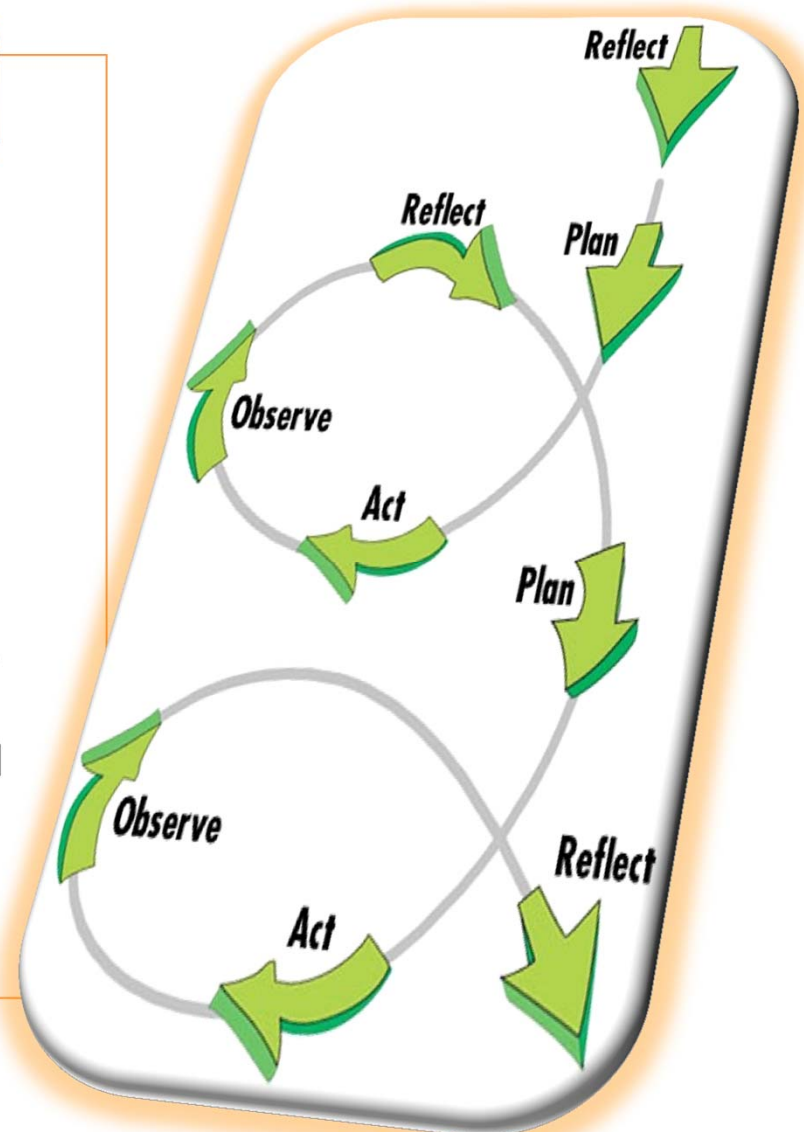
Action Research

Introduction

- **Definition:** Systemic investigation conducted by a practitioners to provide information **to immediately improve** teaching & learning.

Let's compare Action Research to Traditional Research

Do you think they're similar or different?



Action Research

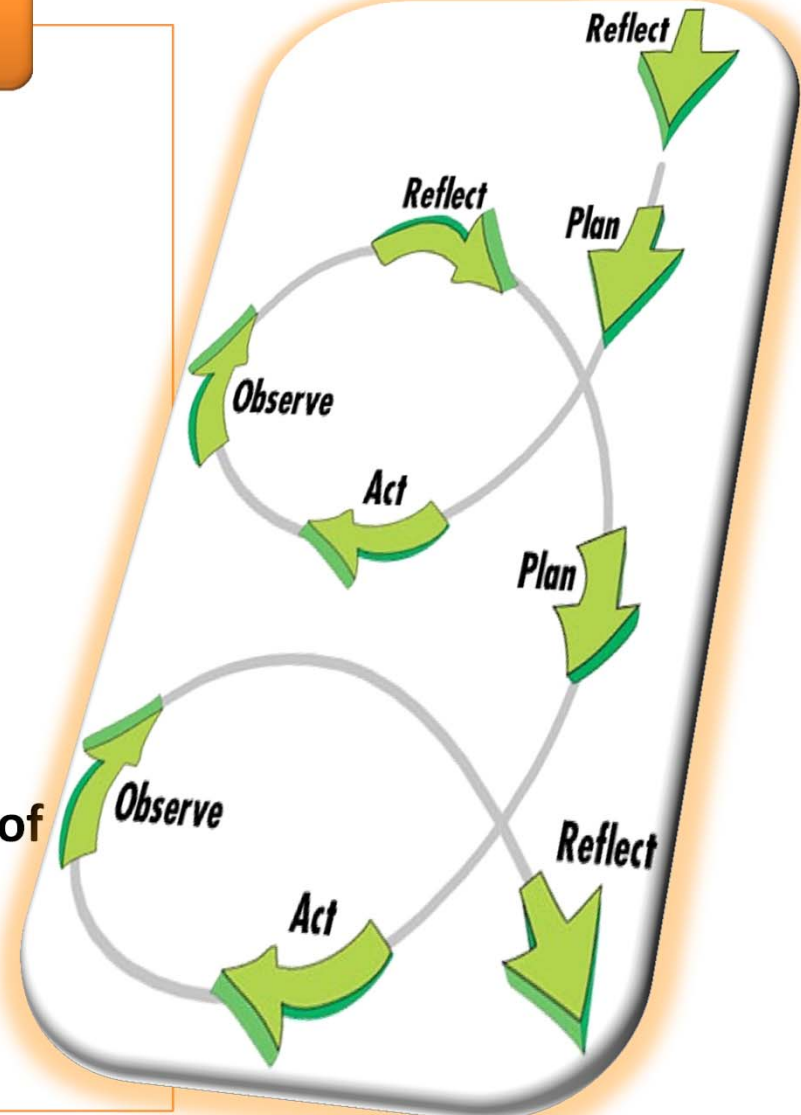
Action Research vs. Traditional Research

Characteristics	Action Research	Traditional Research
Goal	New knowledge relevancy	New knowledge contributions
Researcher, (?)	Practitioner, teachers, principles, counselors	Trained researcher, professors, scholars, & graduates
Setting	Educational settings	Controlled setting
Literature Review	Brief and secondary source focused	Extensive & primary source focused
Instrumentation	Locally developed, convenient, & easily administrable	Off the shelf, based on technical accuracy
Sampling	Convenience and purposeful sampling	Random or representative
Design	Non-experimental or Quasi-experimental	Whatever design is needed
Data Collection	Descriptive	Descriptive and inferential
Results	Limited to specific programs/schools	Valid with field & study scope

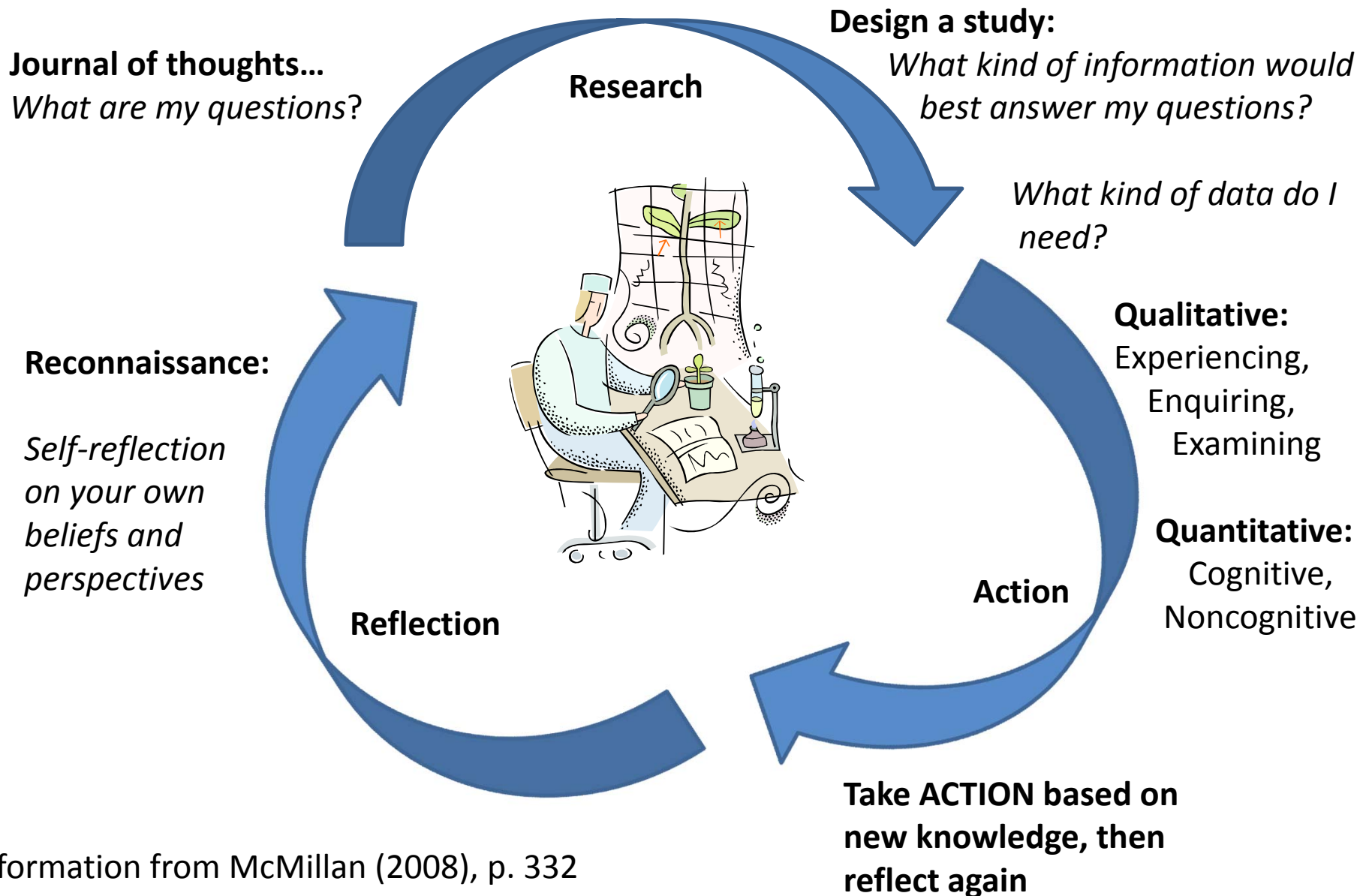
Action Research

Benefits

- Creates system-wide set of school/program improvement.
- Enhances decision making
- Promotes reflection and self-assessment
- **Instills commitment to continuous improvement**
- Positive environment conducive to productive learning & teaching
- **Impacts directly on practice**
- **Empowers all involved participants of the system**
- **Practical training for practitioners.**



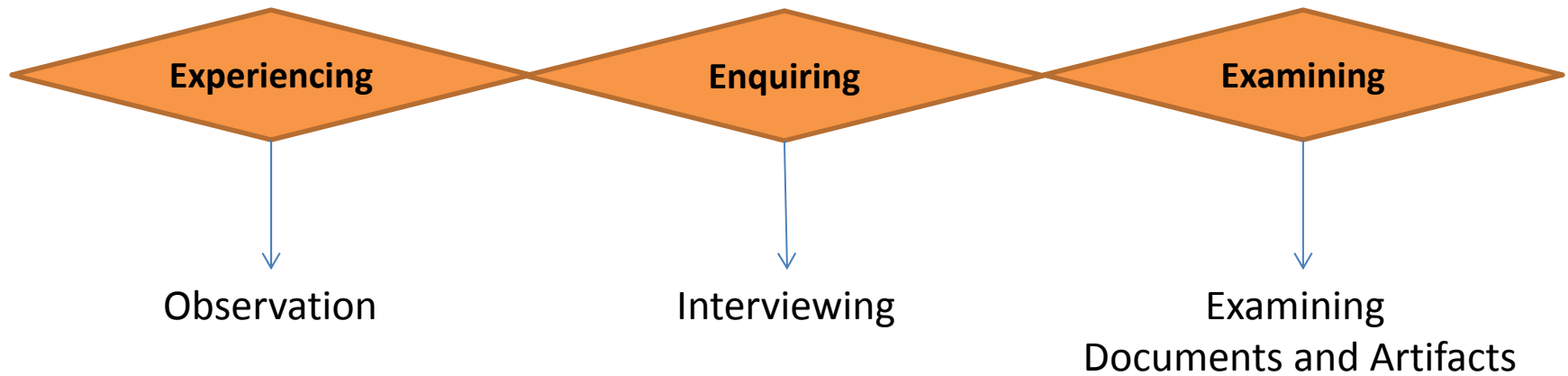
Conducting Action Research



Information from McMillan (2008), p. 332

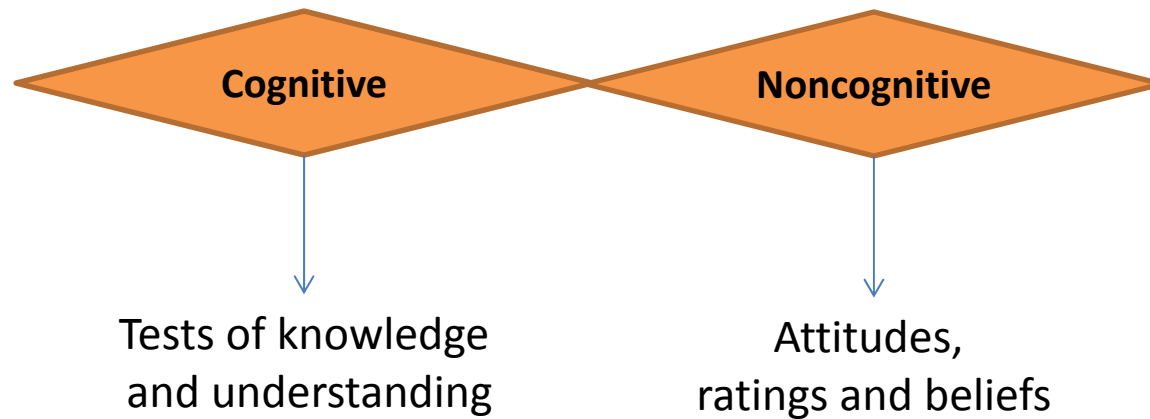
Qualitative Action Research

Qualitative



Quantitative Action Research

Quantitative



Criteria for Evaluating *Good* Action Research

1. Determine motivation and involvement of researcher.
2. Decide if research question matches the chosen research methodology.
3. Look for whether or not multiple methods for data collection have been utilized (triangulation).
4. Look for “emergent” research process that includes reflection, research and action.
5. Is there any external monitoring or feedback?





Dress for Success Twin Cities- CASE STUDY

- Dress for Success is an international non-profit organization started in 1997
- 110 cities- Dress for Success programs can be found in the United States, Australia, Canada, Ireland, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, the United Kingdom and the West Indies.
- A non-profit Dress for Success Twin Cities affiliate opened in the Minneapolis, Minnesota area in January 2010.
- Participants referred to Dress for Success by local agencies including: Como Community, Merrick Community Services, the American Indian Opportunities Industrialization Center, Hennepin County Employment Program, HIRED, the Jeremiah Program, Minneapolis Community & Technical College, People Serving People and Twin Cities RISE!

University of Minnesota Extension Programs- Vignette

Current Practice= 1) Evidence-based Research + 2) Program Creation + 3) Program Evaluation (Effectiveness)

What if we turn this on its head...

Action Research Practice might look like this...

- 1) See a problem in the real world
- 2) Create an action research team of interested parties (Researchers, Practitioners, Teachers, Parents, Evaluators, Program audience)
- 3) Create a solution and try it out in the real world as a solution
- 4) Continuously meet, ask did it work? Did it solve the problem? What needs to happen to solve them problem?
- 5) Keep going until you feel that you have learned and created a solution
- 6) KEY: Get knowledge into the hands of other researchers, practitioners etc... to build the scholarship.