

Action Research – our reflections

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Overview of Presentation

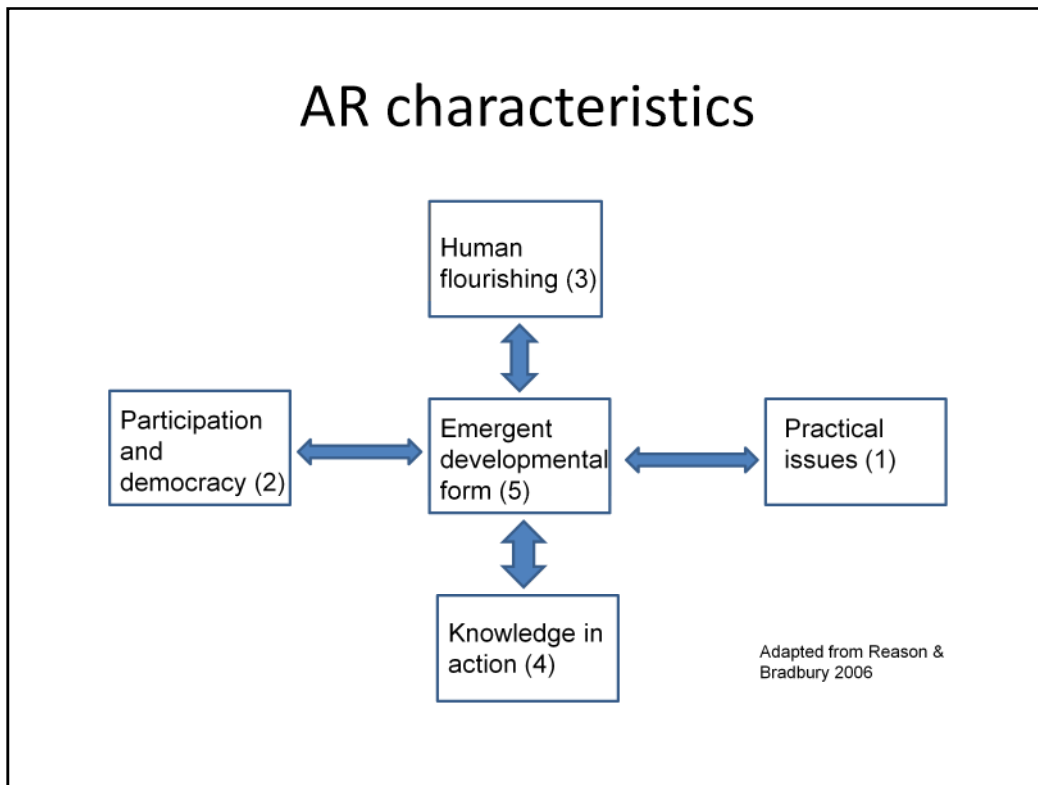
- Action Research (AR) definition
- AR characteristics
- AR cycle(s)
- Our AR Study

AR definition

Action research is:

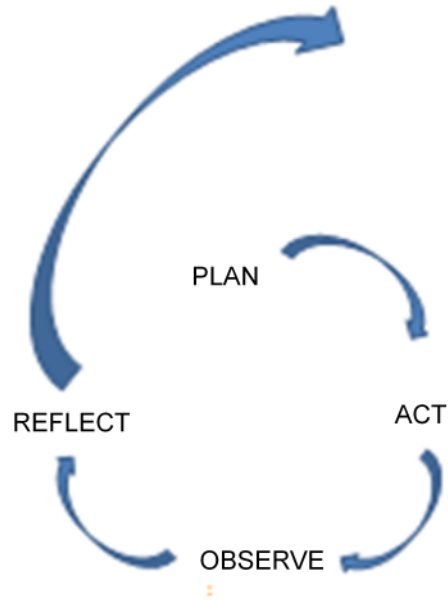
a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes...It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people...

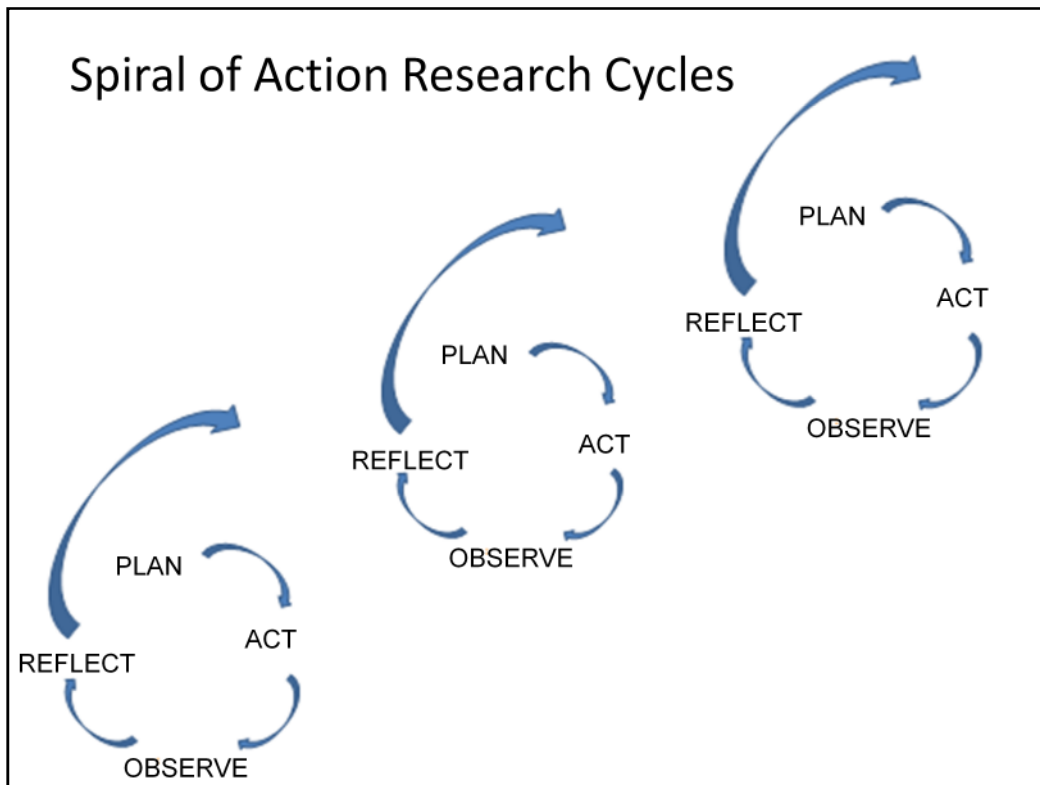
Reason & Bradbury 2001



1. A primary purpose of AR is to produce **practical knowledge**
2. ...in the search for practicable knowledge ..working with people in their everyday lives..we can see that AR is **participative research**
 the importance of the nature of the **collaboration as equals** - it is recognised by Tajino *et al* (2005) that collaboration is not easy to achieve. We have adopted Zuber-Skerrit's (2001) symmetrical communication approach, that everyone in the project team is treated as an **equal**
3. AR is about working towards practical outcomes...creating new forms of understandings, theories which contribute to **the flourishing of community**
4. AR is emancipatory, it leads not just to new practical knowledge, but to new abilities to create knowledge. In AR knowledge is a living , evolving process..
5. Good **AR emerges over time** in an evolutionary & developmental process..

An Action Research Cycle





This illustrates the continuous nature of the AR cycles

Problems identified

- EAP perspective
 - How to:
 - Understand module / student needs?
 - Raise the ASk profile?
 - Develop a good working relationship?
 - Engage students?
 - Contextualise at the same time as teaching transferable skills?
- Subject perspective
 - a breakdown in communication at times
 - a lack of engagement in workshop activities
 - little evidence of learner autonomy
 - poor research skills
 - poor academic literacy skills
 - Need to understand students' prior learning

EAP perspective

Subject perspective

A huge obstacle in explaining to international students the relationship between theory and practice

A bit of a culture shock being exposed to a different student mix where the minority are domestic students

Achieving "successful student status": an evaluation of ASk support on the ground



Establishing entry behaviour and directing students to ASk workshops for gaining study skills are the equivalent of the pre journey check and regular servicing of a car



Ask workshops in tandem with subject sessions enable students to acquire a "successful student toolkit":



A high degree of awareness
Good at critical questioning
Adult approach/relationship with staff
Clear and logical thought
Positive attitude
Self confident
Develop own framework on studies
Willing and able to teach themselves
Intelligence



References:

- Durkin K & Main A, (2002) Discipline-based study skills support for first-year undergraduate students *Active learning in Higher Education* 3, 24
Elander J, (2003) A discipline-based undergraduate skills module, *Psychology Learning and Teaching* 3(1)
Peelo M & Luxon T, (2007) Designing embedded courses to support international students' cultural and academic adjustment in the UK, *Journal of Further and Higher Education* Vol 31, No 1
Sowden C, (2003) Understanding academic competence in overseas students in the UK, *ELT Journal* Volume 57/4 October Oxford University Press.
Wingate U, (2006) Doing away with 'study skills', *Teaching in Higher Education* Vol 11, No 4

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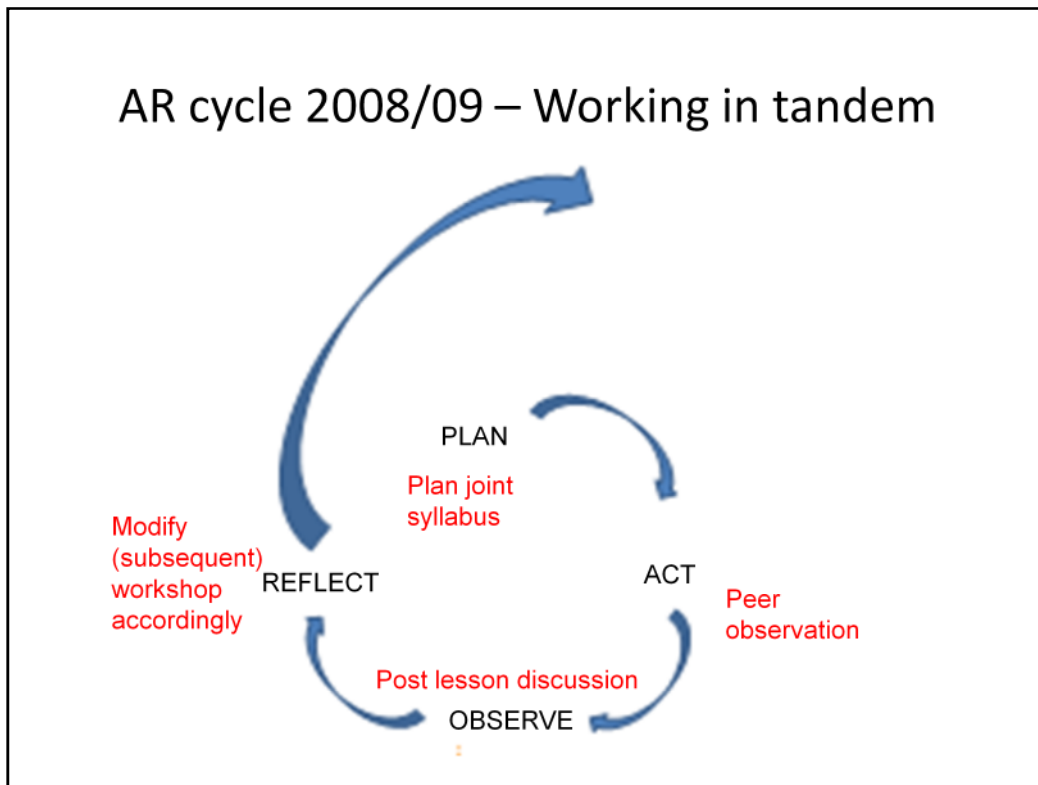


A pictorial presentation of our thinking back in 2008/09

Working in tandem towards constructive alignment, equipping the students with skills(correct tools during workshops) for success

Our AR practice

- 2008/09 Finding our feet : Working in tandem
- 2009/10 Our embedded model: evaluation *and* link to Global Citizenship
- 2010/11 Formative Feedback First Intervention
- 2011/12 Formative Feedback First Evaluation *and* further exploration



Plan – investigate each other’s role

Act – peer observation of each other’s classes

Observe – evaluation of student learning in respective classes

Reflect – what have we learnt from peer observation in this AR cycle

Plan – to establish our students abilities, and their perceptions of each of our modules

Act – design & implement questionnaire

Observe – evaluation of responses

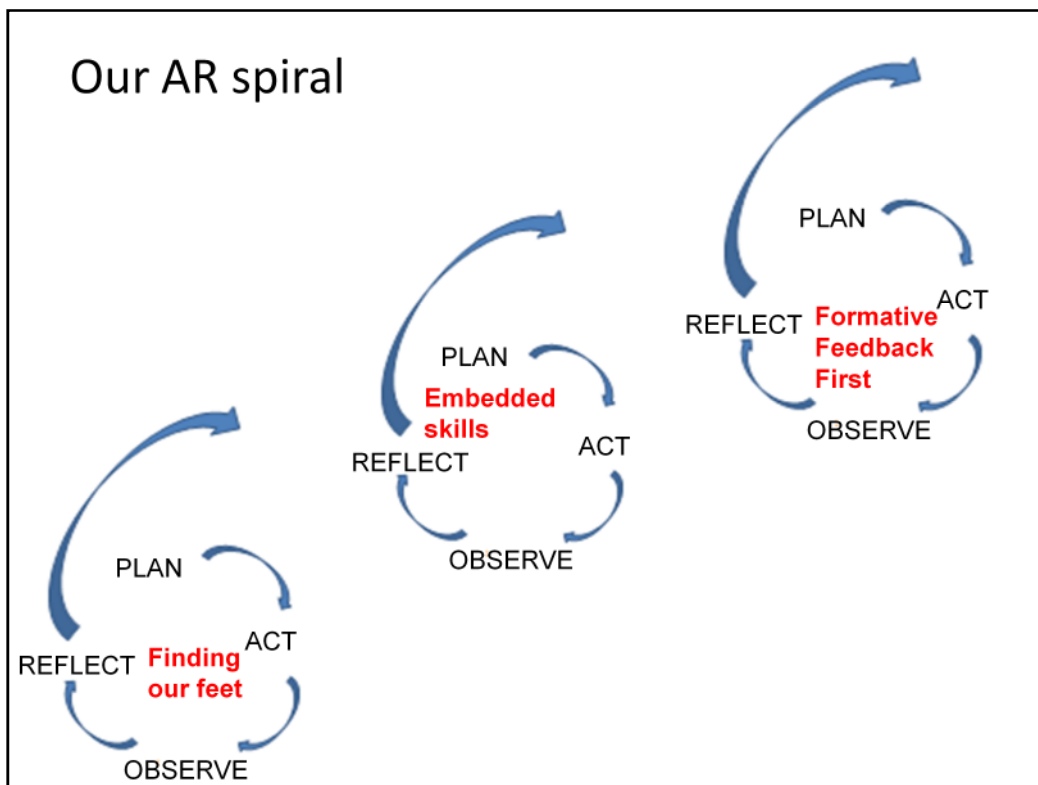
Reflect – what have we learnt about our students in this AR cycle

Plan– to jointly outline academic support

Act – jointly prepare lessons

Observe – evaluation of student learning in academic support and module classes

Reflect – what have we learnt from the embedded approach (working in tandem) in this AR cycle



1. During the 2008/09 academic year initial diagnosis of the PDP module was jointly undertaken, to facilitate the joint planning of the academic support sessions, alongside peer observation and some team teaching, an exploratory survey of the students prior learning and self assessment of language skills was also undertaken to explore whether the ASk sessions had had an impact.
2. During the 2009/10 academic year the embedded approach to academic skills support was adopted and students were surveyed again to obtain their *attitudinal* responses to the usefulness of the collaborative approach, an attempt was also made to involve students in more group work as a response to previous year's feedback. Coincidentally a special edition of Emerge was being proposed and we thought our study and way of working was appropriate for submission
3. During the 2010/11 academic year the Formative Feedback First intervention was adopted and students were surveyed regarding their reflections on its usefulness via Gibb's Reflective Cycle.

As just explained within one overall AR cycles there may be a number of smaller AR cycles operating concurrently, these may be represented by the minute hand within a watch mechanism, driving the hour hand Coghlan and Brannick (2010)

What AR has done for us

- Has helped to develop a better learning experience for international students via positive engagement *with* our students
- Has helped us achieved a more egalitarian relationship within our schools
- Has helped to raise the profile of ASk *and* the ASk teacher (!)
- Has contributed to the development of research and practice of the EAP community through dissemination

Engage with literature

Given us a voice

Engage with the academic community

Questions for you

1. Can you identify a problem in your area in which action research may be applied?
2. What might be the benefits of collaborating with others?
3. How would you persuade them to participate?