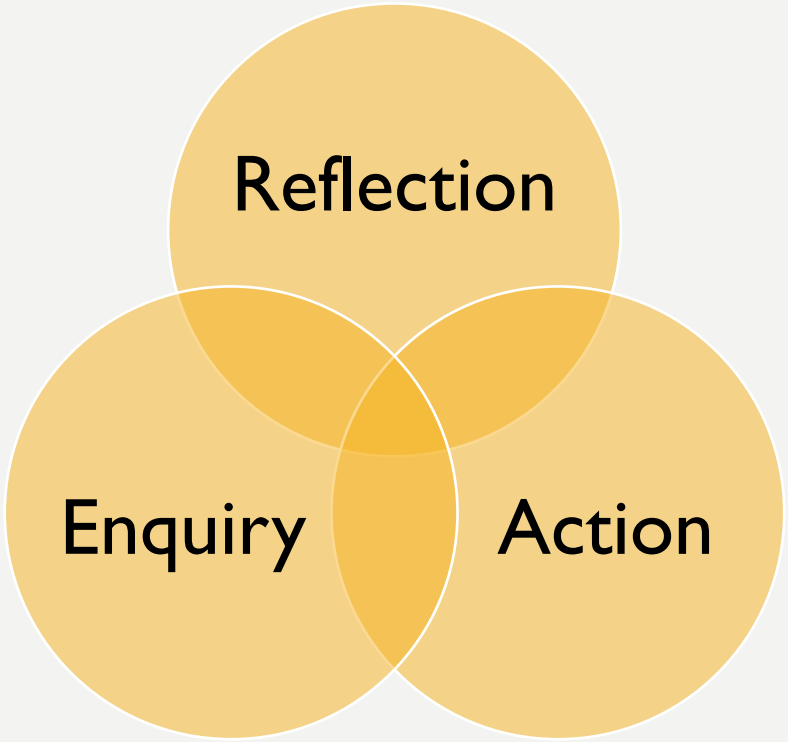
ACTION ENQUIRY: GETTING STARTED

UNDERSTANDING ACTION RESEARCH



SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES:

- About review and developments in practice
- The individual practitioner identifies the area of inquiry and development: It is about what matters to them, in their everyday practice
- Benefits of collaborative Action Research to build evidence bases and deeper understanding
- A practical research approach
- A ‘messy’ approach
- Captures thoughts, feeling and opinions.
- It is about **ACTION**

ACTION RESEARCH IS…..

- "*undertaken by teachers to enhance their own or a colleague's teaching, to test the assumptions of educational theory in practice, or as a means of evaluating and implementing whole school priorities*." (Hopkins, 2008: 1)
- "*support[s] practitioner researchers in coping with the challenges and problems of practice and carrying through innovations in a reflective way*." (Altrichter et al, 2008: 6)
- Undertaken by 'normal' teachers (Altrichter et al, 2008) wanting to explore and investigate aspects of their own practice
- "*carried out by people directly concerned with the social situation that is being researched*." (Altrichter et al, 2008: 13)

ACTION RESEARCH- SO WHAT IS IT NOT?

- Scientific
- Controlled trials
- Only based on quantitative data
- Solely the evaluation of an intervention based on pupil progress data

NARROWING DOWN THE PROBLEM:

- A really important part of the process

START with:

Broad area identified

Research question

Sub research questions

IDENTIFYING THE BROAD AREA:

- Discussions about what issues have come through as a result of the increased focus on SEND over the past year.
- What key areas relating to SEN for development/ enquiry have been identified through that process?
- What key questions have been raised?
- How could these be answered?

COMMON TRAPS TO AVOID:

- ***Choosing a research area that is not appropriate***: choose something that fits with school priorities and issues
- ***Choosing a research question that is too broad***: make sure that it is achievable
- ***Expecting the research to 'solve' large educational issues***: avoid defining 'hypotheses'- this is an exploratory research approach; avoid sweeping statements generalising your research findings- they are specific to your setting

TIPS TO CONSIDER:

- How can you answer your research question?
- What 'data'/ information do you need?
- Move beyond simplistic analysis of pupil progress data
- Action Research/ qualitative research is about moving beyond surface 'data' into understanding the issue through the thoughts, opinions and feelings of others
- How are you going to capture those?

TIPS TO CONSIDER:

- How long will your research last?
- Remember, Action Research is a cyclical process- how long will each 'cycle' take? How will you move between the different cycles?
- Who needs to be involved/ informed about your research in your setting?
- How are you going to do this?
- How will you secure their positive engagement?

NARROWING THE FOCUS:

- Group discussions:

- Start to articulate some initial starting points
- identify the issue that you are investigating
- Consider the research approach that you plan to Anne

EXPLORING THE EVIDENCE BASE

- It is essential to link your small scale research into wider educational discussions about the issue. You therefore need to identify and critically review existing 'evidence bases'.

- Where/ what are the evidence bases that already exist for the area that you are looking at?

- Small group brainstorm and feedback

DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE RESEARCH TOOLS:

- Interviews
- Observations
- Questionnaires

- Group activity to identify benefits and limitations for each research tool

- Whole group feedback

- Would any other research tools be useful?

MEASURING IMPACT AND PROGRESS

- What are the ‘outcomes’?
- How can they be ‘captured’ and ‘measured’?
- What data will you have available?
- What will that data tell you?

DATA ANALYSIS: SOME KEY PRINCIPLES

- Continuous cycles of data analysis
- 'Grounded' data analysis (Grounded Theory)
- Thematic analysis
- Find and retain key quotes

- Action research is a cyclical research approach, therefore your ongoing data analysis should then inform the next CYCLE of research and enquiry in your school setting

- How is this happening?

ETHICAL ISSUES:

- Ethical considerations MUST underpin all educational research, no matter how small scale.
- What are the ethical issues which may impact upon your research?
- Whole group feedback

ETHICAL ISSUES

- How will you address those ethical issues in your planning and implementation of your research?
- Whole group feedback
- NB- BERA (British Educational Research Association) Ethical Guidance.

FRAMING YOUR RESEARCH PROJECT

Stage 1

- Identifying a research focus
- Developing research tools
- Piloting research tools/ redevelopment of research tools
- Gaining informed consent

Stage 2

- Gathering data/ continuous review of research tools
- Initial/ ongoing data analysis
- Review of ethical issues
- Relating findings to literature in the field

FRAMING YOUR RESEARCH PROJECT

Stage 3

- Planning next cycle of enquiry: what questions did the original research pose?
- How will you answer those?
- Development of Stage 3 Research Plan

Stage 4

- ACTION
- Review and evaluation of the research process
- What worked well/ implications for practice
- Implications for dissemination of the research findings

ACTION PLANNING:

- Group and individual time for the development of individual research plans