

# ACTION RESEARCH

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# ACTION RESEARCH

- Definition and key features
- History
- Process
- Limitations

## DEFINITION OF ACTION RESEARCH

“...simply a form of collective self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own situations, their understandings of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out”.

Kemmis and McTaggart (1988:5)

# CHARACTERISTICS OF ACTION RESEARCH

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Collective

Participative

Enquiry

Reflective

Understand

Rationality

Improve

Social Situations

Practice

Justice

# DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

## ACTION RESEARCH

- Cyclic process of action research which involves some kind of action intervention
- The research partnership, in which the degree of participation of the researched may vary from co-operation to direct collective action

	<b>Quantitative</b>	<b>Action research</b>
<b>Epistemology</b>		Critical theory
<b>Research problem</b>		Understanding and change
<b>Methods</b>		Evolving Qualitative Cyclical
<b>Research participants</b>		Active Object of own study
<b>Researcher roles</b>		Involved Effective
<b>Analysis</b>		Contextualised Tensions Complexities

	<b>Quantitative</b>	<b>Action research</b>
<b>Epistemology</b>	Positivism	Critical theory
<b>Research problem</b>	Causal relationships	Understanding and change
<b>Methods</b>	Standardised Measurement Predetermined	Evolving Qualitative Cyclical
<b>Research participants</b>	Passive Observed/measured	Active Object of own study
<b>Researcher roles</b>	Neutral Distant	Involved Effective
<b>Analysis</b>	Statistical Objectivity Generalizations	Contextualised Tensions Complexities



# HISTORY OF ACTION RESEARCH

- 1940's: Kurt Lewin (1890-1947) popularised action research and coined its name
- 1950-60's: Decline in action research as quantitative research including 'new' statistical techniques took prominence
- 1970's: Lawrence Stenhouse 'Teacher as researcher' movement and the rise of educational action research
- 1980's+: Growing interest in the application of action research in health, social care and police

# RISE OF ACTION RESEARCH IN EDUCATION

- Inappropriateness of traditional research for the study of human organisations and for problem solving
- Dissatisfaction with top-down approaches
- Shrinkage of research funds
- Institutionalised separation of theory and practice of traditional approaches
- Lack of relevance of academic research

# TYPES OF IMPROVEMENT

- *Technical*  
For example, questionnaires on the quality of general practices
  - *Educational*  
For example, for glaucoma patients
  - *Professional*  
For example, developing professionals who care for home based care for patients living with HIV/AIDS
  - *Service delivery*  
For example, in the care of patients with hyperemesis gravidarum
- Adapted from Waterman H. (2007) Action Research In Saks M. Allsopp J. (Eds) Researching Health. Sage London

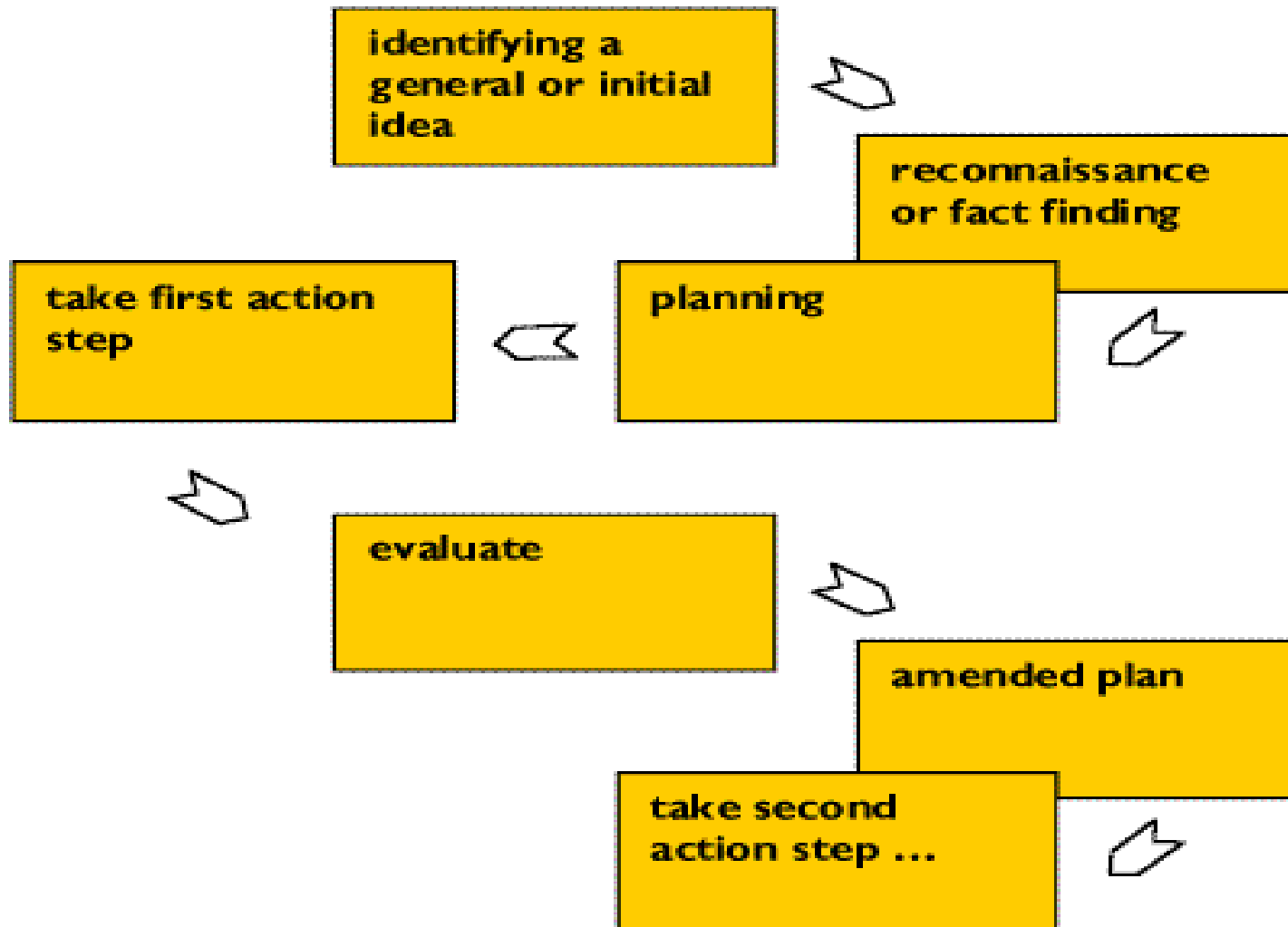
# RESOURCES – HUMAN & TECHNICAL

- People need to be released to participate
- Costs need to be covered for the improvement
- The scale and speed of the project can be negatively effected if no funding
- SDO, NIHR and charities fund action research

❖ Adapted from Waterman H. (2007) Action Research In Saks M. Allsopp J. (Eds) Researching Health. Sage London

# PROCESS OF AR

<http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-lewin.htm>



# KEY ROLES OF ACTION RESEARCH

- Improvements in Practice
- User and staff involvement
- Knowledge and understanding

# LIMITATIONS OF ACTION RESEARCH

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i. Empowerment

ii. Management of change

iii. Data collection versus change

iv. Ethical issues

v.

iv. Writing up and publication

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# CONCLUSION

- Reflects critically on what 'might or ought to be'
- Political as it seeks to challenge the 'status quo'
- Improves practice and evaluates the results
- Produces knowledge for action that empowers
- Carried out by researchers and participants
- Utilises qualitative or quantitative research depending on what needs to be known.
- Adapted from Waterman H. (2007) Action Research In Saks M. Allsopp J. (Eds) Researching Health. Sage London

# CONCLUSION

Research that produces nothing  
but books will not suffice.

- Lewin K. 1946 reproduced in Lewin K. Resolving social conflicts selected papers on group dynamics G.W. Lewin (ed) New York Harper