

The Sixth Form College
Farnborough

Action research in a research-engaged culture



The sixth form college with
the university feel





Workshop objectives:

- A research-engaged college
- The college's action research programme
 - The benefits of the scheme
 - Submitting a proposal
- Sharing ideas and further questions



What is a 'research-engaged' school?

*“In a research-engaged school, teachers seek answers to everyday questions, using the principles and methods of systematic enquiry. The results of the research are then **‘made public’ by sharing with other practitioners and members of relevant communities.**”*



Research-Engaged School and College Award

Assessment criteria:

Taken from the OFSTED Inspection report, May 2007:

“Teachers are encouraged to engage in research on particular aspects of teaching and learning of interest to them and their findings are shared throughout the college.

There is an on-going and active debate and discussion around teaching and learning in the college, which fosters an atmosphere where teachers feel able to experiment and innovate, without fear of failure.”

1. Values, leadership and culture
2. Support systems
3. Research activity
4. Impact
5. Sustainability



What kind of research-engagement?

- Using research by academics to inform practice
- Being the subject of research
- Practitioners (usually teachers) doing their own research



Context-based research

“..there can be no such thing as ‘best practice’ which can be universally applied in all classrooms and in all contexts”. (Coffield 2008).

“In practice, there seems to be a growing consensus that small-scale, practitioner-led action research projects often have more impact than more rigorously controlled studies.” (Claxton, 2006)



Teacher researchers

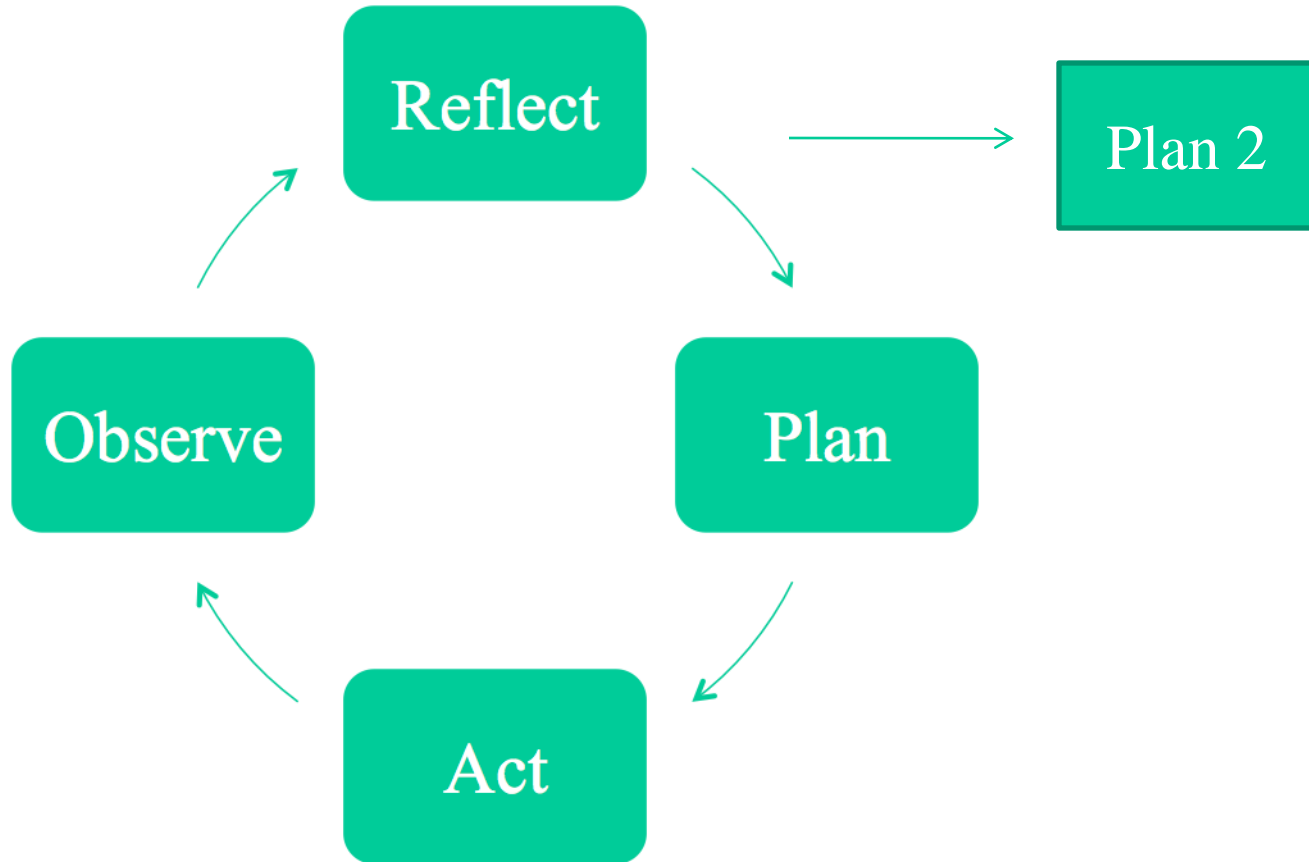
".. Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice" (Kurt Lewin 1946)

Educational research:

"any inquiry teachers undertake to understand and improve their own practice" (McCutcheon & Jung 1990).

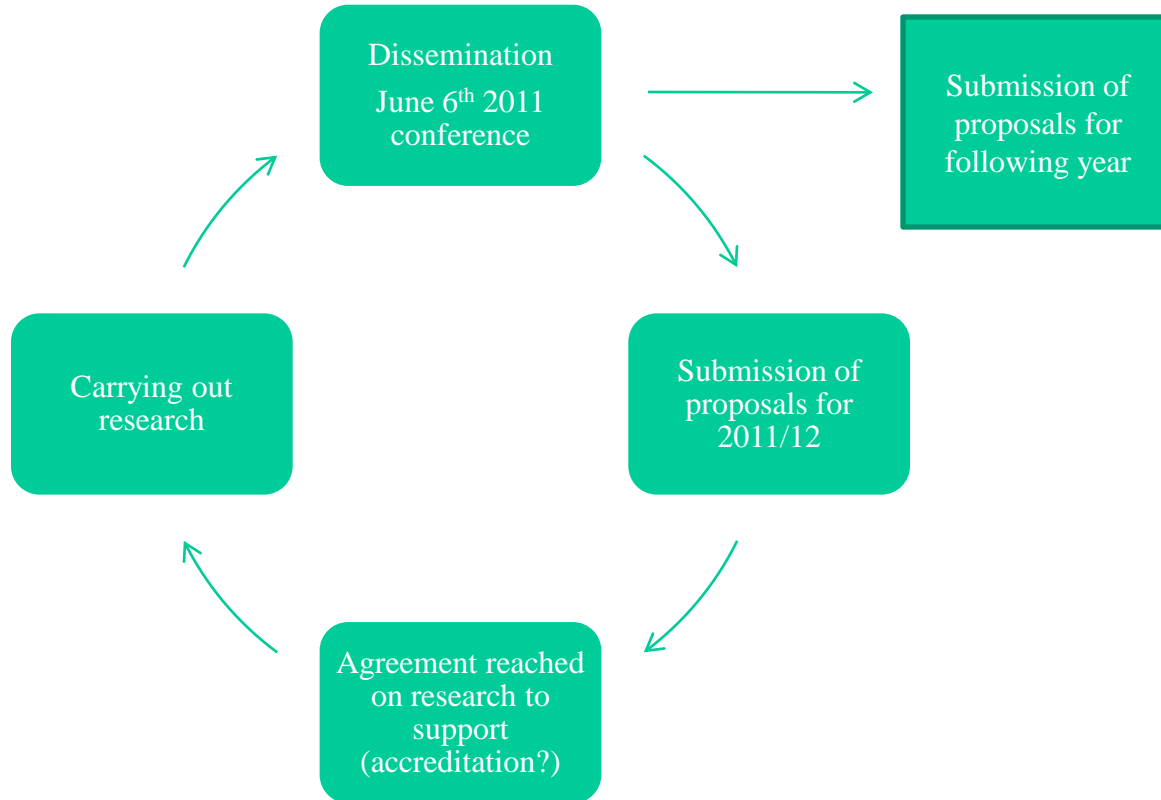


The Action Research cycle:





The Farnborough annual action research cycle:





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Discussion points:

1. What idea(s) do you have for action research/what experience do you have of conducting this type of research?
2. What might be the benefits to you and the college (or your school) of engagement with research?
3. What are the obstacles you will need to overcome?

Some key features of Action Research

- Informed, deliberate action with the intention of improving practice
- Being a 'reflective practitioner', putting the 'I' at the centre of the research
- Systematic monitoring to generate valid data
- Authentic descriptions
- Explaining / interpreting the action
- Validating your research
- Making your research public (presenting/writing up)

Issues to consider:

- Ethics
- Triangulation
- When and how will data be collected?
- Having a 'critical friend'
- Collaboration/opening research to scrutiny

Possible data to collect

- Focus group
- Questionnaires
- Observations
- Written work from students
- Reflective journal
- Course reviews
- Video diaries?
- Digital photos
- Stories/narratives/vignettes

Tangible outcomes from Action Research at Farnborough

- Final written report (3000-4000 words) for in-house journal and website
- Credits on MA Education through Roehampton University (optional)
- June 2012 workshop
- Publish (e.g. 'Inside Evidence')



What are the benefits to students?

“ a growing research base on the influences on student learning... Shows that teacher quality trumps virtually all other influences on student achievement ”.

Source: Thompson and Wiliam (2007)



Encouraging professionalism

“ For over 20 years, the fashion in the educational world has been to ‘downplay’ the significance of teaching (and so, by implication, teachers) and to praise learning”

Source: Frank Coffield, 'Just suppose teaching and learning became the first priority'



Thank you for your contributions
today

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Action research planner:

Briefly outline the proposed project and its aims.

Which participants will be involved?

Which data would I collect? (at least three kinds of data)

When and how will data be collected? (brief outline is sufficient)

What impact do you hope this project to have on teaching and learning?