

## Organisation of Action Learning Programme 1998-1999

Session	Date	Format	Content
<b>Session 1</b>	16/11/98	Input	<b>Principles and practice of action research:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emphasis on concern / problem solving / keeping a journal</li> </ul>
		Workshop	Concern / formation of problem
		Weeks work	Finalising concern/problem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using journal, writing progress report</li> </ul>
<b>Session 2</b>	30/11/98	Input	<b>Data gathering 1</b> - Kevin MC Dermott
		Workshop	What types of data would suit your concern/problem?
		Weeks work	Gathering data 1 around concern. Writing progress report.
<b>Session 3</b>	14/12/98	Input	<b>Analysing Data 1 - Jean McNiff</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of critical friend in imaging action</li> </ul>
		Workshop	Analysis of your collected data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imagining the action</li> </ul>
		Weeks work	Imagining and implementing action with the aid of a critical friend.
<b>Session 4</b>	18/01/99	Input	<b>Action and Observation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of field notes</li> </ul>
		Workshop	Discussion of your Action and form of observation, use of field notes.
		Weeks work	Monitoring action, Writing progress report.
<b>Session 5</b>	01/02/99	Input	<b>Research Data 2</b>
		Workshop	Comparing Evidence 1 and Evidence 2
		Weeks work	Writing progress report on your comparison between evidence 1 and Evidence 2
<b>Session 6</b>	15/02/99	Input	<b>Evaluating the outcomes of Action</b>
		Workshop	Evaluation of your action in the light of your comparison of Evidence 1 and Evidence 2
		Weeks Work	Writing progress report of your evaluation
<b>Session 7</b>	01/03/99	Input	<b>Modifying the Action</b>
		Workshop	Discussion on how you individually might modify your actions and why.
		Weeks work	Writing progress report on your modified action
<b>Session 8</b>	15/03/99	Input	<b>Writing the final report</b>
		Workshop	Discussion on Final Report and preparing format for presentation
			Writing up final report

## Written report for Next Action Learning Meeting

**Name...**

**Theme Question:**

"How can I improve...?"

**My values in professional practice are...**

**The situation in my practice is...**

**Evidence to support my account of this situation...**

**My reflections on my situation and my evidence are...**

**My journal has**

- accounts (dated) of the above...
- reflections (dated) on all of the above

**Validation is provided by...**

# Session 1

## Principles and Practice of Action Research

### Action - reflection steps

#### *The values base*

What is my concern?  
Why am I concerned?

#### *Proposed solutions*

What can I do?

#### *Action*

#### *Evaluation*

#### *Modification*

### What is my concern?

Our concerns are often based around conflicts between our values and our practice. In other word a difference between what we believe in and what is happening.

Read Peter Senge - pp209-210.

### Why am I concerned?

### Keeping records (journal)

#### What is Journaling?

I recently read a study on the effects of journaling -- that is, the effects of regularly recording your thoughts in a notebook or diary. The study showed that people who confided on paper got fewer colds. (<http://www.electra.com/awisd007.html>)

### So WHAT is Journaling?

Journaling is a conversation.... between you, and your best friend. (<http://marriagetools.com/journal.html>)

Factual accounts

Reflections

### Critical friend

The Role of Critical Friends

"A Critical Friend, as the name suggests, is a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides a different perspective on data to be examined, and offers a critique as a friend to the person's work. A Critical Friend is prepared to take the time to fully understand the context of the work and the outcomes that a colleague is working toward. A Critical Friend is also an advocate for the success of that work.

(*Assessment in the Learning Organization: Shifting the Paradigm*" Edited by Arthur L. Costa & Bena Kallick, 1995, isbn# 0-87120-250-6 pp. 154 & 155)

### Ethics

Characteristics of action research - open, participatory, collaborative, emancipatory.

See ethics statement

## Triangulation McNiff pp83-84

[Triangulation is] cross checking the existence of certain phenomena and the veracity of individual accounts by gathering data from a number of informants and a number of sources and subsequently comparing and contrasting one account with another in order to produce as full and balanced a study as possible. (OU course E811, Study Guide 1988:54 cited in Judith Bell *Doing Your Research Project* 1993:64)

## Validation

1. Does the information contradict or confirm the information from other [sources](#)?
2. Can you detect any evidence of [bias](#) from reading the page?

## Ethics Statement

### Research into the Administration of the System of Certification

I am conducting a research project into aspects of my work as information technology consultant. In particular I am examining aspects of the examinations system with a view to improving my work and therefore improving the system of administering the examinations system.

- This project will be carried out in a completely open way, there will be no attempt to collect data without the participant's knowledge or to mislead the participants in any way.
- Participants have the right to withdraw at any time.
- If participants withdraw they may do so retrospectively and their own data will be destroyed.
- Subject to the Data Protection Act, information obtained about a participant is confidential and if published will not be identifiable as theirs.
- Where participants are interviewed or answer questionnaires they have the right to read a transcript, and may withdraw or change any part of their contribution that they wish.
- Because this is a national organisation, I believe the organisation may be identifiable. Because of this I am requesting the permission of the relevant authorities to give their consent to the use of the name of the organisation.
- I retain the right to report my work provided those involved were satisfied with the fairness and accuracy of it and it is within the law.

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Researcher

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Participant

## A Process for Critical Friends

We have found that once trust is established, the following process facilitates useful conversation with a Critical Friend:

1. The learner describes a practice for which she desires feedback. For example, a teacher might describe a new problem-solving technique she used with her students, or a student might describe a project he is considering.
2. The Critical Friend asks any questions that help her understand the practice described. This is an opportunity to clarify the context in which the practice takes place. For example, the Critical Friend may ask, 'How much time did you allow for the students to do the problem solving?' or 'When you do the project, what do you hope other people will learn from it?'
3. The learner sets desired outcomes from this conference. This is an opportunity for the learner to be in control of the feedback.
4. After observation, the Critical Friend offers interpretations about what she sees as significant about the practice. This is an opportunity to provide another perspective for elevating the work, not cursory praise. For example, the Critical Friend might say, 'I think it's significant that you are asking students to do problems solving because it will help them become more self-directed.' Or a student's Critical Friend might say, 'I think your project will be significant because you are trying to bring a new insight into the way people have understood the changing role of women in the United States.'
5. The Critical Friend raises questions and offers critique about the work, an opportunity to guide the learner to see through a different perspective. A typical query might be, 'What does the evidence from your students' work indicate to you about their capacity to do problem solving?' or 'When you do this project, how will you help others follow your presentation?'
6. Both participants reflect and write. The learner writes notes to herself, an opportunity to think about what has been raised by the conference. For example, will changes make this work better or worse? What have I learned from this refocusing process? The Critical Friend writes to the learner with suggestions or advice that seems appropriate the desired outcome. This part of the process is distinguished from typical feedback situations in that the learner does not have to respond or make any decisions on the basis of the feedback. It allows the learner to reflect on and process the feedback without defending his work to the critic.
7. "Time for this conference is flexible, though we have found it useful to limit the meeting to about 20 minutes. Once Critical Friends are accustomed to the structure, the time may be shortened."

## Written report for Next Action Learning Meeting AL-02

Name...

Which of my values do I feel are being denied in terms of the concern I have identified? Why?

What kinds of **evidence / data** can I produce that would show an outside observer the present situation which is of concern to me?

In the light of Questions 1 and 2 above, I would like to reformulate my concern as follows:

My journal (reflective diary) contains the facts of my situation and my reflections on these facts. Dated from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

The name of my critical friend, who has validated my findings is \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Conducting Your Data Collection

### Conducting Data Collection

- Keep the scale of data collection manageable.
- Reflect on the purposes and the methods
- Talk about them with a critical friend.
- Write about them in order to clarify your understanding of the enquiry.

### Collecting data around a concern

#### Example of a concern.

"I think I do not handle enquiries well. I want to improve the way I deal with our customers"

Design a reconnaissance strategy and discuss with your critical friend. Justify to him/her your choice of data collection methods.

Some questions to ask:

Why are you bothered about the way you handle enquiries?

What is your *value* that is being denied?

## Written report for Next Action Learning Meeting AL-03

Name...

What method of collecting data could you use?

Could you justify your choice of data collection methods?

What are your findings? (include the words of others co-workers, critical friends etc in your account)

How do you interpret your findings?

What criteria do you apply to your findings?:

Are you now in a position to move into action? Describe the actions

My journal (reflective diary) contains the facts of my situation and my reflections on these facts. Dated from

\_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

The name of my critical friend, who has validated my findings is \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ date: \_\_\_\_\_



## **Analysing Data Collection**

You have data, what is it telling you? Reflect.

How do you interpret these findings?

What criteria do you apply?

What implicit theories are embedded in your practice?

For example if 80% have no difficulty with the entry form, is that enough?

In your reflection you relate the findings to your educational values.

You also need to interpret what is going on e.g. what do some people have problems filling in entry forms?

To take effective action you need to know why what is happening is happening.

If you are unsure about causes, you need to investigate further.

When you are able to interpret the situation, then you are in a position to devise an action plan.