

Instruments for Collecting Data in Action Research

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Six W's

- Who?
- Why?
- What?
- hoW?
- When?
- Where?

Who: Participants

- “The primary data in action research are derived from interviews with primary and key stakeholders” (Stringer, 2007, p. 68).
 - **Primary and key stakeholders:** Those who are directly involved with the problem
 - Carefully consider those who have the most direct knowledge of the problem
- **Traditional Research** requires strict sampling techniques.
 - **Action research** uses participants where the problem occurs

Why and What

- Two reasons (Why) for collecting data
 - Create an Action Plan to solve the problem
 - What: A) Causes of the Problem and B) Ideas for Solution
 - Determine the effectiveness of the Action Plan
 - What: Level of the problem before and after the intervention

How: Instruments

- **Traditional Research** requires standardized instruments.
 - **Action Research** uses instruments that are convenient and relevant to the context
- The best instrument in Action Research is one that is meaningful to the situation in which the problem occurs

Types of Instruments

- **Participant Observation:** Researcher gathers information as they participate in the activities in which they observe
- **Documents, Records, and Reports:** Records (performance, attendance), plans (e.g., lesson plans), memos, minutes, reports, etc.
- **Interviews:** Researcher asks participants questions one-on-one from an interview schedule and records their responses
- **Focus groups:** Researcher develops an interview schedule, assembles a small group of people who can answer the questions, and records their responses
- **Questionnaires:** Researcher measures attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of all individuals affected by the problem

Application of Instruments in Action Research

- **Participant Observation:** Identify the problem
- **Documents, Records, and Reports:** Gather baseline data about the problem
- **Interviews:** Gather information about causes of the problem and potential solutions
- **Focus groups:** Brainstorm solutions to the problem
- **Questionnaires:** Gather baseline data about the problem
- **Examinations:** Gather baseline data about problems related to performance

Participant Observation

- **Participant Observation:** Actively participate in the daily lives of people and situations under study
 - The researcher can also engage in conversations/interviews to gather more insight into the problem and potential solutions to the problem
- Record observations in field notes

Field Notes

- Carefully record the details of observations
 - **Places:** Note locations and physical layout of events
 - **People:** Note people involved
 - **Objects:** Buildings, equipment, materials, etc.
 - **Activities:** Actions of individuals or groups of individuals
 - **Purposes:** What people are trying to accomplish
 - **Time:** Time, frequency, duration, and sequencing of activities
 - **Feelings:** Emotional responses to people, events, and activities

Interview Protocol

- **In the context of Action Research**, interviews should be viewed as an informal conversation to help gather participants' viewpoints and ideas
- **Interview Protocol:** Form created by the researcher with instructions on the interview process and questions to be asked
- **Part 1: Introduction** → A script to be read
 - Introduce yourself
 - Purpose of the study
 - Description of key concepts (if necessary)
 - Confidentiality statement
 - Voluntary Participation statement (both for the interview and individual items)
 - Procedures for the interview (how long, how it will be recorded, etc.)
 - Explicitly ask if the interview can be audio recorded

Part 1: Introduction

- **Introduction of researcher:** Name and Affiliation
 - *My name is Dr. Katrina Korb, an Associate Professor at the University of Jos.*
- **General purpose of the interview.**
 - *The purpose of this interview is to have a better understanding of young children's ability to read.*
- **Description of key concepts** (if necessary)
 - *There are five skills we are interested in when talking about children's ability to read. 1) Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear individual sounds in words. 2) Phonics is the ability to connect sounds to letters. 3) Vocabulary is knowledge of the meaning of words. 4) Reading fluency is the ability to read a text quickly, accurately, and with proper expression. 5) Comprehension is the ability to understand what is read.*

Part 1: Introduction

- **Confidentiality Statement.**
 - No name needed: *Your name will never be recorded, so your responses to the interview will be confidential.*
 - Name necessary: *Only the researchers involved in this study will see your responses. Be specific about who those researchers are, if possible.*
- **Voluntary Participation.**
 - *Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you do not want to participate, please let me know. You also do not have to answer any item that makes you uncomfortable.*
- **Procedures for the Interview.**
 - *The interview will last for about 20 minutes. I will ask you ten questions about children's reading ability in your class and how you teach reading. I would like to audio record the interview if that is acceptable to you.*

Interview Protocol

- **Part 2: Personal Information** → Ask questions about relevant background information
 - Gender, Age, Grade, Teaching Experience, Etc.
- **Part 3: Interview Questions**
 - What is causing the problem
 - Suggestions for how the problem can be resolved

Part 2: Personal Information

1. *How long have you been teaching?*
2. *What levels have you taught?*
3. *How long have you taught Nursery 3?*
4. *What is the highest level of education that you have completed?*
5. *Do you have qualifications in education or other fields or both?*
 - 5b. *What are your qualifications in the field of education?*

Part 3: Interview Questions

1. *What skills do young children need to learn in order to learn how to read?*
2. *[For each skill mentioned]: How do you teach that skill to the pupils in your classroom?*
3. *How well do you think the children in your classroom can read?*
4. *What do you think can be done to improve the reading level of the pupils in your classroom?*

Interviews and Focus Groups

- “A major problem with the interview process is that questions are easily tainted by the researcher’s perceptions, perspectives, interests, and agendas” (Stringer, 2007, p. 70).
 - The researcher should avoid putting words in the mouth of the participant
 - INCORRECT: You seem to be coming late to class every day. Could it be because your parents are giving you too much work at home?
 - CORRECT: You seem to be coming late to class every day. Why were you late to class today?
 - Start with a general question, then move to more specific questions
 - 1) What has caused you to be late to class this week?
 - 2) Do your parents influence you to be late to class? How?
 - 3) Do your teachers influence you to be late to class? How?
 - 4) Do your peers influence you to be late to class? How?

Beginning of Focus Group

- Arrange the participants in a circle with the audio recorder clearly placed in the middle
- Follow interview protocol
 - Introduce yourself
 - Allow participants to introduce themselves to the group
 - Introduce the research study
 - Set ground rules to ensure every participant's free participation
 - Each person should have the opportunity to express their opinions and perspectives
 - Participants should be respectful and open-minded with each other
 - Get informed consent from all participants
 - Follow the interview protocol
 - Perhaps display focus questions for participants' convenience

Focus Groups

- Optional Focus Group Protocol
 - Ask participants to think about an issue for a few minutes and write down their responses
 - Ask each participant to read and elaborate on their response
 - These responses can then be discussed
- At the end of an Interview/Focus Group, conduct a **Member Check** by summarizing your major understanding of the key points of the interview and asking if this is an accurate understanding

Questionnaires

- Unlike traditional research, questionnaires do NOT have to be standardized
 - Validity and reliability information is not necessary
- Instead, questionnaires should be short and directly linked to the problem under study

When (Time) and Where (Location)

- Thoughtfully consider when and where to conduct interviews/focus groups/questionnaires to ensure accurate information is provided by participants