

SoTL and Action Research

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What is SoTL?

- **The chief aim of SoTL, through its lens on the processes of teaching and learning within and across courses, is to contribute to practitioners' understanding of these processes. Ultimately, SoTL seeks to improve student learning.**

What is Action Research?

- “Applied research that focuses on finding a solution to a local problem in a local setting” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001)
 - Cycles of continuing improvement
 - Generative – directions arise as research progresses
 - Theory building rather than theory testing

What is action research?

- Action research opens a field of inquiry rather than closing it down
- “Perceive a problem, seek out the most valid research evidence to address that problem, and then apply it to the problem, the results of which can be measured as to their efficacy.” (McIntosh, 2010, p. 6)

What is action research?

- “Action research aims at improvement in three areas: firstly, the improvement of a *practice*; secondly, the improvement of the *understanding* of a practice by its practitioners; and thirdly, the improvement of the *situation* in which the practice takes place. The aim of *involvement* stands shoulder to shoulder with the aim of *improvement*.”

(Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 165)

A case study

- 190 students in a face-to-face science class
- Professor wanted to develop online teaching communities because

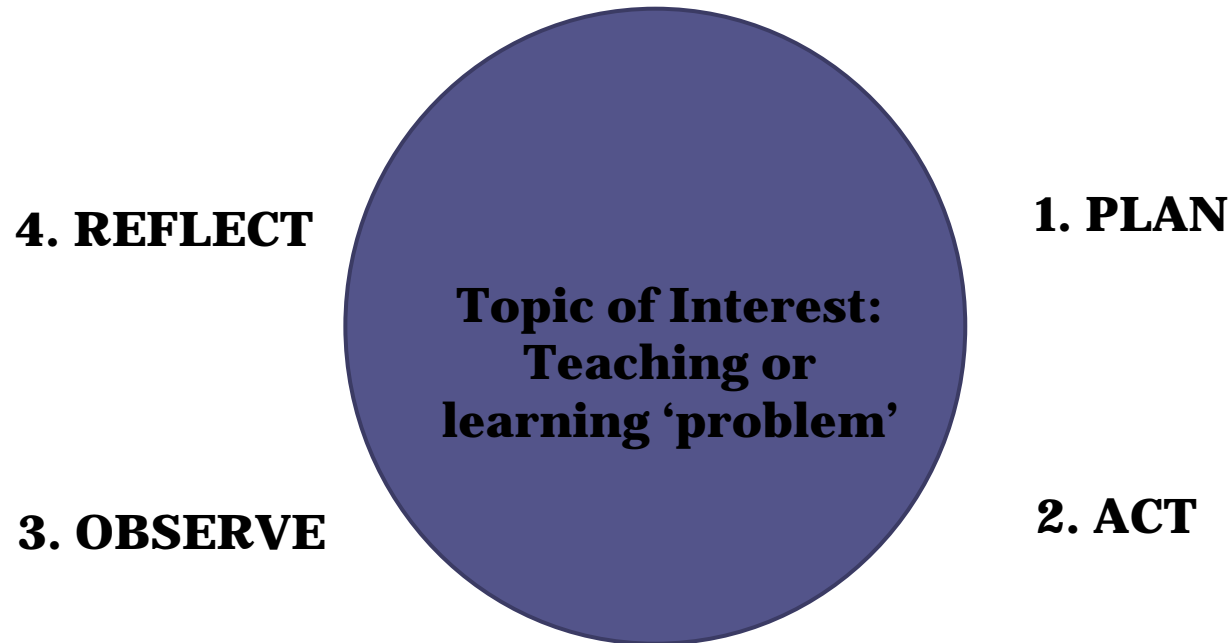
“The process is representative of the way chemists work together and should reinforce the idea that having your colleagues as resources is very valuable.”

Impact

- **Interesting findings re: student grades**
- **Scholarly work for professor**
 - **Action research study**
 - **Presented at national conferences**
 - **Preparation of manuscript**
 - **Professional growth**

4 'moments' of Action Research

(Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982)



Like both Schon's (1982) reflective practice and Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle

Modes of action research

- **Technical**
- **Practical**
- **Emancipatory**
 - (Grundy, 1988)

Aims of action research

- “Two essential aims of all action research activity: to *improve* and to *involve*.”
 - (Grundy & Kemmis, 1981, p. 84)

- “I can think of no action that would do quite as much for the improvement of teaching and learning as to let a thousand classroom laboratories bloom across the nation.”

(Pat Cross, from an address to the AAHE in 1986)

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