

End-of-Chapter Exercises

Enacting the action research cycles

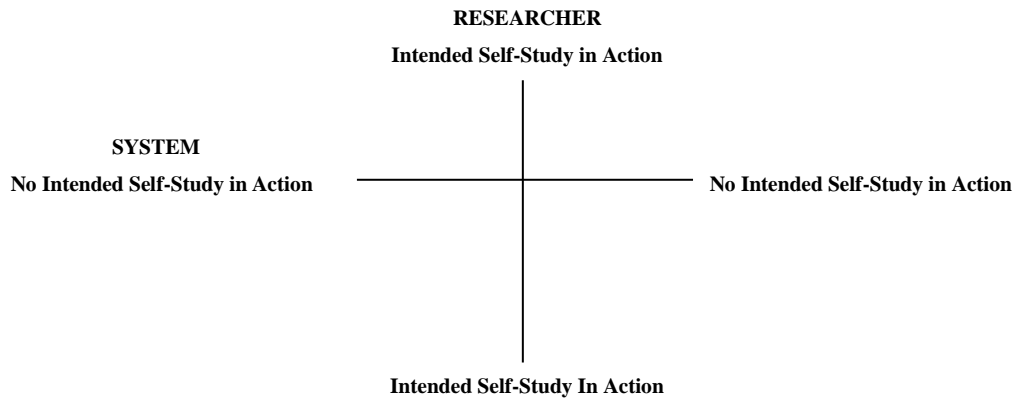
The following questions are aimed at enabling you to articulate an overall view of your insider action project. This is an exercise you can do many times over the duration and can be a way of checking how the project itself may be changing or how your thinking may be changing.

Issue <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the issue?	
Context <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the context?	
Purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why are we doing this?• What do we hope to achieve?	
Initial constructing of issue <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What does the issue mean more specifically?• What might it involve?	
Planning <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What will we do first?• Who will do it?	
Taking action <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who will do what? By when? How?	
Evaluating action <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the outcomes of our actions – intended, unintended	
Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What have learned from this first cycle?	

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Now where are we? What do we do next?	
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Which quadrant am I in?

This key exercise from chapter 2 is focusing on your position as an insider action researcher within in your organization and challenges you to understand what the organization's position on your project.



Applying the general empirical method

This exercise is at the heart of your project and is aimed at enabling you to catch the steps of human knowing and be able to distinguish between them, thereby you can come to know how you know.

Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What happened/is happening	
Understanding <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What sense do I make of what happened?	
Judgement <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Does this understanding fit the evidence? Am I jumping to conclusions? What do I think is important	
Decision <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What options are open? How do I choose what is best to do?	
Action <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What might I do?	

Developing inquiry skills

This is an exercise to enable you to enable you to engage in co-inquiry with others – how to find what happened, how they think about it and how you might converse together.

	<i>Intervention</i>	
Uncovering experience <i>Pure inquiry</i>	What is going on? What happened? Tell me the story. What did you do?	
Probing for insight <i>Exploratory-diagnostic inquiry</i>	Why do you think that happened? What do you think is going on? How do you feel about that? What are you going to do?	
Aiming for judgment and decision/action <i>Confrontive</i>	Have you considered...? If you read... you might find an explanation.	

Individual learning window

This framework is aimed at enabling you to distinguish between what you know from what you suspect and what you don't know and need to find out.

What do I know?	What do I think that I know?
What do I know that I don't know?	

Group learning window

This framework is aimed at enabling you to converse with your co-researchers about between what you as a group know from what you suspect and what you don't know and need to find out.

What do we know?	What do we think that we know?
What do we know that we don't know?	

Judging quality

The quality dimensions of action research are that the inquiry is rigorous, reflective and relevant. The boxes below provide questions for you to come to some judgment about the quality of your insider action research.

	<i>The essence</i>	<i>Rigor</i>	<i>Reflective</i>	<i>Relevant</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose and Rationale for Action and Inquiry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Case for why action and research are necessary or desirable? *What contribution is intended 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Does it provide a clear rationale for inquiry and action? *To what extent the focus addresses a gap in the scientific literature? *Does it display the data to justify the purpose and rationale for the study? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Is it linked to past research and scientific literature? *Is it linked to contemporary business and organizational issues? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does it describe why action is necessary or desirable? (to achieve what for whom)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding the business, organizational and academic context 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the contextual data captured in a scientific, systematic and holistic way? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Does it build on past and present scientific research that is central to the focus of the study? *Does it build on past and present organizational 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent relevant analytical frameworks applied to understand the context?

			experience that is central to the issue studied?	
Methodology and Method of Inquiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *The role of the action researcher *Ethical issues *Contracting *Establish learning mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *To what extent is the process of contracting, selection of methods of action and inquiry collaborative? *To what extent are the methods and inquiry process described with sufficient details? *To what extent are alternative LMs tapestries explored? *Are appropriate modes of AR selected and justified? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *To what extent are the action and research cycles described? *To what extent is the LMs tapestry involved in the development of the methodology and inquiry method? 	To what extent are the methods of action and inquiry driven by the organization's needs and scholarly criteria?
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Data collection and generation *Cycles of action research 	*To what extent is the project designed and implemented to ensure rigor?	*To what extent is the project designed and implemented collaboratively?	To what extent is the research design directed to meet the organization's

	*Building relationships	*To what extent the data is collaboratively and rigorously generated, collected and explored?	*To what extent attention is paid to the development of the quality of the relationship?	needs, as well as those of academic rigor?
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Ethical issues

The following questions challenge you to think about the ethical issues in your project.

1. What roles are you playing and how does this inform your action?
2. Who is involved? What relationships do they have with one another? Where is the power?
3. Is there immediate risk involved?
4. Whose responsibility is it to respond?
5. What obligations or commitments do you have to the participants?
6. What is likely to happen later?
7. What are the larger impacts of potential actions? What would happen if you do not act?
8. If there are competing values or interests, which are the most important?

The below questions are aimed at you considering the political dynamics of your project

	<i>Task</i>	<i>Process</i>
	What are your specific political and ethical tasks in your project?	How are you to achieve your goals ethically and politically?
	Who are the political stakeholders of your action research project? What interests do they have that need to be served?	How do you work with the different stakeholders to achieve the purpose of the project?
	What knowledge are you generating from this project that informs your understanding of the political dynamics of organizations?	How do you build this actionable knowledge about the political dynamics of organizations from your first- and second-person inquiry and practice?

Structured ethical reflection

This exercise is a group exercise and enables you to draw out and discuss the underlying values in your research group.

- Step 1. Consider your research question and then choose 7–10 values that represent the ethical stance you would like to assume in your research
- Step 2. Write each of your selected values on a Post-It and post them around the room
- Step 3. Group posted values around common themes.
- Step 4. Discuss what the values mean, especially as you may mean different things with the same word and the same thing with different words
- Step 5. Plot how you want to enact each value at each stage of your planned research process and discuss with others.

Force field analysis

Force field analysis is a long established tool for assessing the power of political forces on a desired action and how to develop a strategy for reducing undesirable ones.

- Step 1. Describe the change issue and the desired direction of the change.
- Step 2. List the political forces driving change and those restraining change in a diagram which has the forces in opposition to one another.
- Step 3. Give a weighting to the forces – those that are stronger and more powerful than others.
- Step 4. Focus on the restraining forces, and assess which are the significant ones that need to be worked on, and identify those that can be worked on.
- Step 5. Develop plans for reducing these forces.

Constructing and selecting an action research project

These questions help you choose and construct your action research project. It is an exercise worth doing several times over the duration as the project may change.

What questions arise out of your experience which you would like to search for answers?	
What might be the answers to these questions?	
What do you think might be the underlying causes of the situation?	
What alternative answers might exist?	
Where do you fit into the situation as defined by the question?	
What would other members of the organization think of you working on this issue?	
What support will you have? What opposition might you encounter?	
Where are the sensitive issues?	
What are the constraints?	
Who needs to be involved?	
Whose support do you enlist?	
Where would be a good place to begin?	
How will you engage in uncovering the data?	

Writing an action research proposal

In writing a thesis proposal for your course supervisors this is a useful structure to follow.

<p>Context</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the broad external and internal context of the environment in which your organization is located?• What is the local organizational or discipline context?• How is your organization situated in relation to the broader context?• Where does your particular topic issue that fit into the above two contexts?• What will your work contribute in these contexts?	
<p>Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is the action?• What is the rationale for this action?• Why is it worth doing?• What is the desired future?• What is the present situation?• What is the plan to move from here to there?• What is the time schedule?• Where do you, as the researcher, fit into the action?• What are the ethical challenges, both within the project itself and in seeking approval from an ethics review board	

Research

- What is the rationale for researching this action?
- What is the contribution to knowledge that this research intends to make?
- Why should anyone not directly involved be interested in this?
- How do you intend to inquire into the action?
- How will you ensure quality and rigour in your action research?

Implementing action research

These questions provide the foundations for your plan of action.

<p>Determining the need for change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the external forces driving change?• What are the internal forces driving change? How powerful are these forces?• What choices do we have?	
<p>Defining the future</p> <p>If things keep going the way that they are without significant intervention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What will be the predicted outcome?• What is our alternative desired outcome?	
<p>Assessing the present</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is it in the present that we need to change in order to get to our desired future – what is done, how work is done, structures, attitudes, culture?	
<p>Managing the transition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the main avenues that will get us from here to there?• What are the particular projects within those avenues? Long, medium, short-term?• How do we involve the organization in this project? Where do we begin?	

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What actions do we take to effect maximum effect, medium or minimum effect?• How will we manage the transition?• How do we build commitment? Who is or is not ready for, or capable of, change? How will we manage resistance? Who will let it happen, help it happen, make it happen?• Do we need additional help – consultants, facilitators?	
<p>Reviewing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What review procedures do we need to establish?• How do we articulate and share what we are learning• What learning mechanisms can we set up?	

Using systems thinking

Systems thinking provides an essential method in trying to map how your organization actually works

1. Describe the issue or problem as you see it.
2. Tell the story.
3. Draw a map of the story. When A said/did [X], what did B do? What did A do next? What were the outcomes for C, and for D and E?
4. Connect the process of the story with arrows.
5. Include where you are in the story, and what your interests are.
6. Consider any number of explanations of the patterns.
7. Consider any number of interventions which might change the structure of the system, and see how each intervention has different outcomes across the system.

Interlevel change issues

Mapping how your project engages with individuals, with teams and across teams provide focus of different interventions and engagements

	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Team</i>	<i>Interdepartmental group</i>	<i>Organization</i>
Individual				
Team				
Interdepartmental group				
Organization				

1. Name a change issue with regard to an individual.
2. Now work diagonally along the shaded boxes. How does one level have an impact on the others?
3. Where would you put your energies to advance the progress of the change and heal dysfunctions?
4. Name a change issue which applies to the whole organization.
5. Now work diagonally along the shaded boxes. How does one level have an impact on the others?
6. Develop strategies to implement change at each level.