**Towards High Quality in KA1 Mobility Projects for School Education Staff – a Dialogue between National Agencies, Course Providers and Schools**
Conference 18-19 June, Cologne

# WS3: **Action research as a tool for better quality and efficiency in Erasmus projects**

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# Discussion round:
# What is a qualitative project?

- What is Quality? Look at the pictures and think what makes these things qualitative?

- How can you relate this to ErasmusKA1+ project quality?

- Write your recommendations concerning features of a qualitative project under each photo

- Which features are the most important in a qualitative project?

- Which features are not worth our attention?

# What is quality?

- ISO standard defines **quality** as "**the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bears its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs**"
- **Quality** is a degree to which a set of inherent characteristics of an object fulfils requirements
- Requirements are needs or expectations that are stated, generally implied or obligatory

International Organisation of Sandartisation(ISO) 9000:2015 3.6.2

# Why do we need Action Research?

Reflections from the ECML project *Action research communities for language teachers* in Graz, May, 2018

# ECML Programme 2016-2019
## Languages at the heart of learning www.ecml.at



**Action Research** is one of the 8 projects within the long-term initiative "Languages at the heart of Learning"

# Action research communities for language teachers

- **Project webpage:** [www.ecml.at/actionresearch](www.ecml.at/actionresearch)
- Aims of the project: 'To contribute towards **quality enhancement** in the language classroom **through** the application of **action research** approaches by tapping into existing **networks** and **creating new communities** which can be replicated across ECML member states'
- **32 participants** - High school, Secondary and Primary School teachers, inspectors and educationalists from the EU and ECML member states
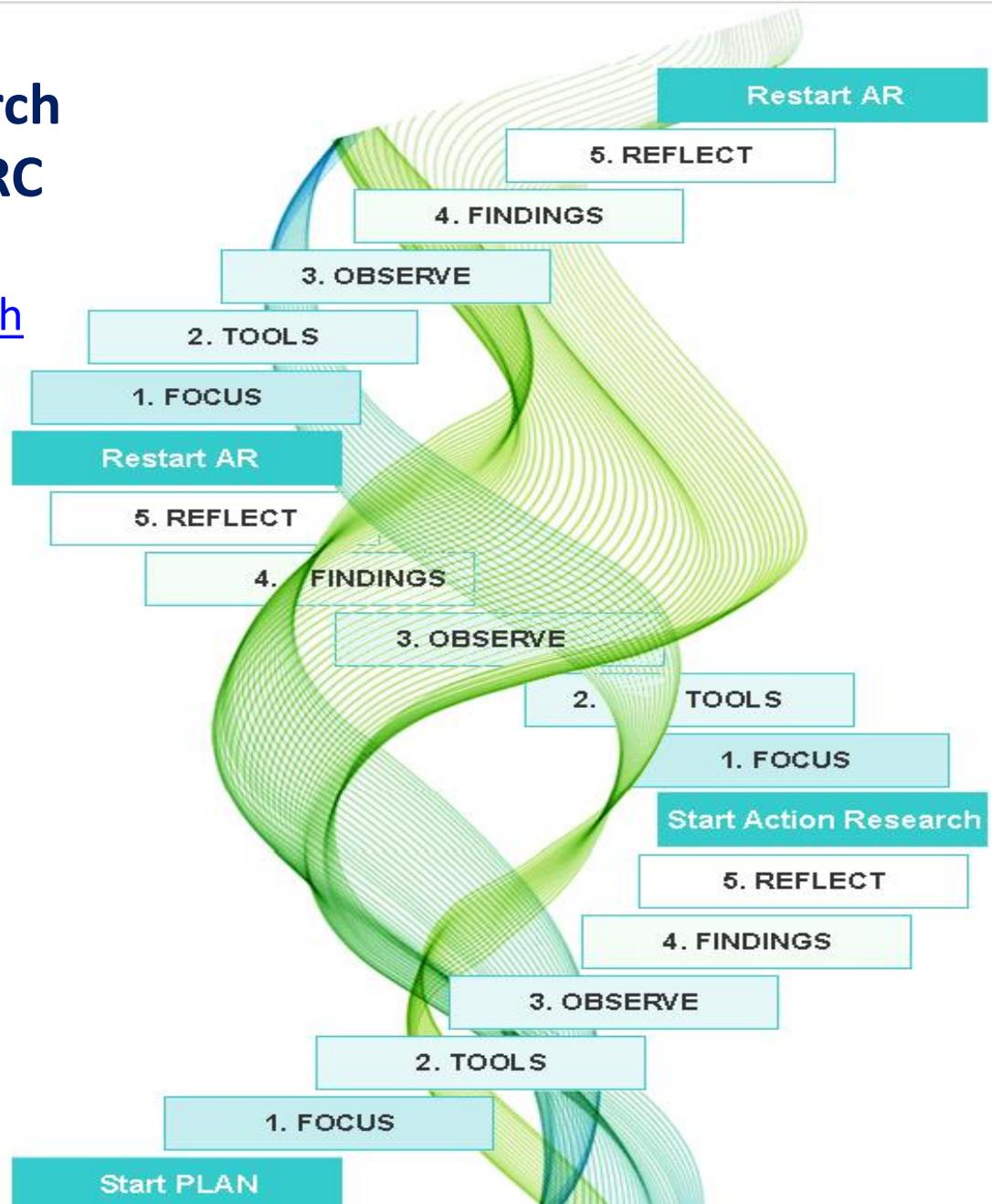
# Stages of Action Research developed by ECML ARC project team:
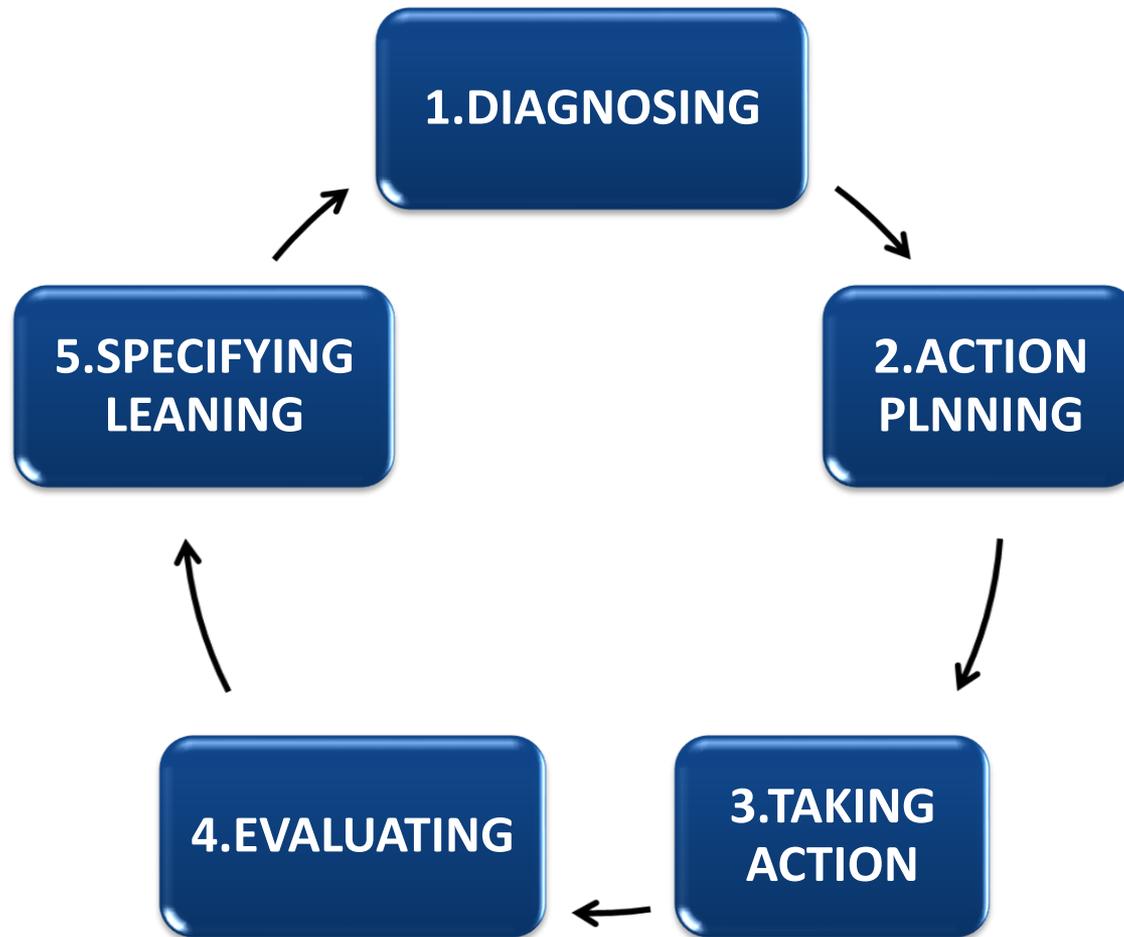www.ecml.at/actionresearch

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**Action research** *is the process by which practitioners attempt to study their problems scientifically in order to guide, correct and evaluate their decisions and actions.*

Stephen Corey (1953)

Restart AR
5. REFLECT
4. FINDINGS
3. OBSERVE
2. TOOLS
1. FOCUS
Restart AR
5. REFLECT
4. FINDINGS
3. OBSERVE
2. TOOLS
1. FOCUS
Start Action Research
5. REFLECT
4. FINDINGS
3. OBSERVE
2. TOOLS
1. FOCUS
Start PLAN

# One more Action Research model
## by Susman, 1983

# Action Research Definitions

- *Action research is a three-step spiral process of planning, taking action and fact-finding about the results of the action*

<div align="right">Kurt Lewin (1947)</div>

- *Action research is the process by which practitioners attempt to study their problems scientifically in order to guide, correct and evaluate their decisions and actions,*

<div align="right">Stephen Corey (1953)</div>

- ***Studying whatever you are doing***

<div align="right">E.Calhoun in Scott Willis</div>

# Benefits of Action Research or Why AR ?

"Action Research encourages change in schools, empowers individuals through collaboration with one another, encourages teacher reflection and examines new methods and ideas"

Gay, L. R., & Airasian (2003) Educational Research:
Competencies for Analysis and Applications

# Action Research examples:

## "What I did as a classroom teacher in London"
### by Angela Gallagher-Brett, SOAS, University of London

- **Identified a problem** with speaking spontaneously & keeping going among beginners in the language classroom
- **Designed a project** in a series of communication strategies was taught to a class of 11-12 year olds learning German
- **Used a questionnaire** at the beginning of the research
- **Taught a programme** of communication strategies over 8 weeks
- **Recorded** oral interactions in pairs at the end
- **Used a questionnaire** at the end of the research

# Benefits of Action Research or Why AR?

- **Erasmus+ KA1 'Implementing CLIL in project work' 2014-2016 – 12 project participants –How to achieve the long term effect in my KA1 project?**

-to ensure the quality and long term effect of Erasmus + and other European projects

- **OECD results and other statistics**

-to know why and what exactly should we do if to do it at all

- **New trands in education policy:** *"Integration of subjects through Big Ideas" or "Competence based approach"*

-to make it happen taking into account not only theoretical but also practical considerations and recommendations from teachers working at schools not theoreticians

- **Good examples from the UK, Finland, Singapur, etc.**

-to understand if we really need to follow all these 'Good practice examples'; possibly only some of them and in a very particular way

-to be able to adapt the good practice examples for our situation

# Barriers to AR in language teaching

• **Action Research is often perceived as additional paperwork that is too complex and time consuming**

-which is not true as AR mostly means more systematic and well-organised **NOT** additional work

•**lack of knowledge concerning research methods**

-teachers need both practical and theoretical guidance and support to start their independent AR

• **lack of support & motivation to do the research**

- "All teachers are researchers" can become a positive moto for many teachers; however, AR cannot and should not be a must and unpleasant obligation for everyone

• **lack of power or inability to influence the situation**

-teachers should be able to influence their teaching and introduce some changes in education at the school level <u>if the research results prove the necessity of such changes;</u> if teachers feel powerless there is no use of any research

# What is necessary for a good <u>collective </u>Action Research project ?

1. Idea of a problem–solution or a research question

2. Theoretical basis (What are the asumptions, hypothesis or  a research question? What are the main approaches and theories ? What is the statistics? What are the steps of stages?)

3. A well-planned step by step structure of the project including the timeline, description of the steps  and project guidelines including important definitions and recommendations how to do it (+possibly an introductory /explanatory course for teachers)

4. Prepared samples of materials for the research (lesson plans; handouts and texts for teachers and students; research questionnaires and tables for results and statistics)

5. Constant or at least sometimes available support from the project coordinators or course providers

# Modern theories supporting Action Research

# Variation Theory

- To see the butterfly one should try to look at it from different angles (or try different variants)
- When we find the right angle and see the "flying butterfly" as the whole – the meaning has been constructed
- To find a solution or improve our teaching practice we need to look at it from different angles, considering different variables

Do you see a musician or a girl's face?

- When you see the girl's face you don't see the musician and when you see the musician you are losing the girl …
- While teaching and learning one thing (e.g. Present Perfect) we forget about or lose the other(s) (e.g. Past Simple) – our aim is to see the whole picture and be able to use all the tenses
- Fragmentary knowledge or fragmentary learning is what modern education is trying to get rid of

# Variation Theory
# （變易理論）

## Ference Marton
the University of Gothenburg

Marton, F., & Booth, S. (1997). *Learning and Awareness*. New Jersey: Lawerence Erlbaum Associates.
Variation Theory and the Improvement of Teaching and Learning (2012)
https://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/2077/29645/5/gupea_2077_29645_5.pdf

# Variation Theory

- According to Marton's Theory of Variation, discernment of critical features occurs under systematic **interaction** between **a learner** and **the thing to be learnt**, and **variation** is the agent that generates such interaction (Marton, Runesson, & Tsui, 2004).

- **Variation, therefore, is a primary factor in encouraging student learning.**

- Marton and Tsui (2004) specify four patterns of variation were proposed: **1) contrast, 2) generalization, 3) separation and 4) fusion.** http://kb.edu.hku.hk/variation_theory.html

# Phenomenography

- is a qualitative research methodology, within the interpretivist paradigm, that investigates the qualitatively different ways in which people experience something or think about something.

- seeks to answer questions such as '**What are the different ways of experiencing a phenomenon**?'

- focuses on "constituting a **structure of meaning**" (Åkerlind, 2005).

https://iiqm.wordpress.com/2014/08/12/experiencing-phenomena/

# Possible Action Research variables which can be modified in your teaching practice :

Students' actions + Teacher's actions+Method+Attitude+ Tools+Type of Assessmen+Place +Time+Materials+ Types of Hometask+ Type of Students' grouping+ N+...=**Result**

# When doing your first AR it is better to select only one particular variable that will be modified in your research:

| students | tasks | tools | time allocation |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Grouping students (individually, in pairs, in groups, etc.)<br>• Motivating students taking into account their interests hobbies, interests, character features, fears, ambitions, problems, etc. | • essay<br>• letter<br>• presentation<br>• monologue<br>• dialogue<br>• text analysis<br>• reading comprehension<br>• grammar task (using Present Perfect and Past Simple)<br>• vocabulary task (multiple choice, word formation, etc.) | • textbook<br>• dictionary<br>• handouts<br>• computer<br>• mobile phone<br>• the internet (particular website e.g. www.ted.com)<br>• blackboard<br>• whiteboard<br>• Notes,<br>• etc. | • 5 min. every lesson<br>• 15 min. every lesson<br>• 30 min. once a week<br>• as a hometask for a month<br>• etc. |

**Task: Look at the Erasmus KA1 courses and think about possible variables for an Action Research**

Students+ Teacher+Method+Tools + Tasks+ Assessment+Place+Time+N+ …=Result

- Nature as a fantastic classroom for learning
- Theatre and English
- Assessing your students' thinking skills
- CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning)
- ICT for teaching
- Developing creativity, motivation and curiosity
- Individualised learning in Swedish schools
- Requirements and practice of Advancement in Finnish schools

# Cooperation offer !

- If you are interested in Action Research you are very welcome to visit the ECML project webpage: www.ecml.at/actionresearch

- And if you teach English to 12- 19 year olds (7$^{th}$ -12$^{th}$ forms) and would like to get involved in an Action Research project "**Vocabulary learning using critical thinking strategies  and techniques**" please contact me: polianovic[at]yahoo.com

# References

- Elliott, J. (1991) *Action Research for Educational Change*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.
- Kemmis, S. (1997) 'Action Research'. In: Keeves, J. (Ed.) *Educational Research Methodology and Measurement: An International Handbook.* Oxford: Elsevier Science Ltd. 173-9
- Kemmis, S. & McTaggart, R. (1992) *The Action Research Planner.* Geelong, Victoria: Deakin University Press.
- McNiff, J. (2002) *Action Research: Principles and Practice*. London: MacMillan.

# Key influencers on action research in the UK

- **John Elliott** [http://www.actionresearch.gr/AR/ActionResearch_Vol1/Issue01_01_p01-03.pdf](http://www.actionresearch.gr/AR/ActionResearch_Vol1/Issue01_01_p01-03.pdf)

**Kemmis & McTaggart**

- **Jean McNiff** Action Research for Professional Development McNiff [http://www.jeanmcniff.com/ar-booklet.asp](http://www.jeanmcniff.com/ar-booklet.asp)

# Thank you !