Week 4 Assignment: Background – Developing Consensus and Addressing Challenges in your Action Research Plan

Overview
The first three weeks of this course have focused on exploring topics or questions for action research, examining background information on the topics and questions, and designing an action research plan to address the questions or topics you have identified. This week and the next will provide you an opportunity to review your draft action research plan, confer with your site supervisor and reach consensus on your question(s) or topic(s) and design of your action research plan.

You will also have an opportunity to study some additional strategies to sustain and support your action research. Remember, your action research plan, process, progress and project may take several weeks or several months to complete. One of the key goals of this course is providing an effective blueprint, a how to conduct an effective action research project in collaboration with your site supervisor(s), peers, Instructional Associates, and university faculty.

Learning Outcomes:
1) Examine research strategies designed to sustain action research.
2) Learn the process of reaching consensus with the site supervisor and university professor in the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the research design and implementation. (It should be noted that monitoring is designed to assist and support the student and site supervisor throughout the duration of the research project. The larger project or multiple smaller research projects will be completed during the 18-month internship for those students who have just completed EDLD 5311).

Performance Outcomes:
1) Describe research strategies to support and sustain ongoing action research.
2) Reach consensus with the site supervisor on the overall internship plan, including the action research plan to be implemented. (Note: The site supervisor must sign or use email verification of approval. The approved overall plan will be uploaded to the Electronic Portfolio).
**Rubric**

Use the following Rubric to guide your work on the Week 4 Assignment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Accomplished</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Needs Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The evidence suggests that this work is a “Habit of Mind.” The educator is ready to mentor others in this area.</td>
<td>The evidence suggests that performance on this work matches that of a strong educator.</td>
<td>The evidence does not yet make the case for the educator being proficient at this task.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Action Research – Identifying strategies to support and sustain action research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student provides a clear description of the following strategies:</th>
<th>Student briefly describes at least two of the strategies, but does not discuss how the strategies may improve his or her action research plan.</th>
<th>Student only describes one strategy and does not discuss how the strategies may improve his or her action research plan.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Force field analysis</td>
<td>(2 Points)</td>
<td>(1 Point)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Delphi method</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Nominal group techniques</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student also discusses how he or she can use these strategies to improve their action research plan.</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CARE Model and your Action Research Plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student clearly addresses all areas of the CARE Model and provides at least two points under each of the following topics:</th>
<th>Student addresses each of the areas of the CARE Model but provides less than two points under each of the key topics:</th>
<th>Student fails to address each of the areas of the CARE Model and provides no follow up points under each area:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Concerns</td>
<td>- Concerns</td>
<td>- Concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Affirmations</td>
<td>- Affirmations</td>
<td>- Affirmations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Recommendations</td>
<td>- Recommendations</td>
<td>- Recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Evaluations</td>
<td>- Evaluations</td>
<td>- Evaluations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8 – 10 Points)</td>
<td>(5 – 7 Points)</td>
<td>(1 – 4 Points)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Responses to Peer Comments and Recommendations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student describes comments from at least two peers (i.e., other students) regarding their Action Research Plan of Action, and identifies any revisions or changes made to their Action Research</th>
<th>Student describes comments from one student regarding their Action Research Plan and identifies any changes made to their plan as a result of the comments and suggestions.</th>
<th>Student describes one comment about their Action Research Plan but fails to identify what impact or changes resulting from the comments and suggestions.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Site Supervisor(s) Conference and Consensus</strong></td>
<td><strong>EDLD 5301 Research</strong></td>
<td><strong>Assignment Mechanics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students provide a description of their conference with their site supervisor(s) to discuss and attempt to agree on the Action Research Plan. The description includes:</td>
<td>Plan based on the comments and suggestions. (3 Points)</td>
<td>Responses are relevant to course content; no errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Students demonstrate proper APA style. (3 Points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What happened during the conference (who, when, where, what happened)?</td>
<td>(2 Points)</td>
<td>Responses are relevant to course content; few errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. (2 Points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Identify highlights or key insights from the conference</td>
<td></td>
<td>Responses do not reflect knowledge of course content, lack clarity and depth, and/or include multiple errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. (1 Point)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Describe any changes or revisions made to the Action Research Plan as a result of the conference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3 Points)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(1 Point)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Week Four Assignment, Part 1 – Strategies to support and sustain action research

You now have your draft Action Research Plan, but this plan is a guide, a blueprint, and like most blueprints, it may need to be reviewed, revised and improved. This activity should provide you with some strategies to address this ongoing review process. Please read Chapter 8, Sustaining Improvement, in the Harris et al. text, pp. 91 – 103, and specifically focus on Strategies for Sustaining Improvement, pp. 94 – 97, and briefly describe:

- Force Field Analysis
- Delphi Method
- Nominal Group Technique

Write a brief reflection on what you learned from examining these three strategies – describe any ways you might be able to use these strategies.
Rubric

Complete Part 1 of the assignment below. The box will expand as you type.

**Force Field Analysis** is a method used to determine the feasibility of a project. A person or group of people take on the task of identifying all the factors that will play a positive role in implementing the project; and all the factors that will play a negative role. Strategies are then developed to address these factors, and a decision is made to move forward or cease the project. This method grew from a theory of Kurt Lewin “that in order for change to occur, the driving forces for the change must exceed the resisting forces against the change” (Examining what we do to improve our schools: 8 steps from analysis to action, Harris, Edmonson, Combs, p.94).

**Delphi Method** is another way to determine if a project should be carried out or not. It is done by the use of anonymous surveys which end up producing a “discussion” without participants in the group knowing who is saying what. Each time a survey is completed, the results are disseminated along with justification for answers, giving others a chance to rethink their first responses. After several rounds of surveys, a consensus is usually reached by all.

**Nominal Group Technique** is very methodical and organized. It divides a large group into smaller groups, with each of these first listing issues, then discussing issues, then rating issues to reach consensus.

I have used force field analysis and the nominal group technique in the past. I simply didn’t know the processes had a name. The Delphi method is not one I have heard of. I believe the level of possible disagreement would indicate this would be the appropriate method to use, just to keep down heated discussions.

All methods seem feasible and workable to me. I believe that the situation and project scope would determine which one to use. In the case of my study, Using Starfish Retention Solutions to Assist in Retaining College Preparatory Students, that the force field analysis method would be the most appropriate. In fact, I would think this is the most common of the three in most situations.
Week Four Assignment, Part 2
The Harris et al. text provides an excellent model to help leaders sustain what is working well, while supporting or building strategies for future improvement.

Review Tool 8.1 CARE Model: Planning Tool and complete the form explaining how your Action Research Plan corresponds to each of the tools of the CARE Model: (e.g., identifying what future focused concerns will be addressed by your Action Research Plan; describe at least three positive aspects of your current campus that need to be sustained to support the Action Research Plan; describe how your Action Research Plan has SMART recommendations or goals; and identify how you will evaluate your Action Research Plan).

The CARE Model review will provide you with a strong rationale and framework to enrich your Action Research Plan conference with your site supervisor.

Examining What We Do to Improve Our Schools Sandra Harris, Stacey Edmonson, Julie Combs
Tool 8.1 CARE Model: Planning Tool

Identify Concerns that must change (look to the future)
(Assign points to concerns from 1 to 3 in the order of the most important issues to consider.)
1. Instructors, counselors, and retention specialists must be made aware of students facing diverse difficulties in college preparatory classes in order to address their needs and assist them; and to encourage them to remain in their classes.
2. A greater number of students must be successful in their completion of college preparatory classes in order to be more prepared to be more successful in subsequent courses.
3. A greater number of students must complete College Preparatory classes in order to be more prepared to be more successful in subsequent courses.

Identify Affirmations that must be sustained (look to the present)
(Assign points to affirmations from 1 to 3 in the order of the most important issues to consider.)
1. Contact must be made with students by instructors, counselors, and retention specialists in order to assure the student there is concern for their educational experience.
2. College preparatory classes must be continued and improved to assure the right material is being covered for the students.
3. Instructors, counselors and retention specialists must be available to students in order to have someone to mentor them in times of need.

SMART Recommendations that must be implemented:
(Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Timely)
(Assign points to recommendations from 1 to 3 in the order of the most important recommendations to implement.)
1. Track the number of students which have had concerns flagged by instructors.
2. Track the number of students which have been contacted throughout the semester.
3. Track the number of students which have successfully completed college preparatory classes, and those who left, and why.
EDLD 5301 Research

EVALUATE – Specifically and Often

(Identify the best ways to evaluate the implemented recommendations.)

1. Compare results of tracking to previous semesters in quantitative numbers.
2. Survey students of tracking to determine their decision factors in qualitative measures.
3. Survey instructors, counselors, and retention specialists to gather information concerning the results.
Week Four Assignment, Part 3 – Peer suggestions and revisions

We ask that you develop your blog and participate in the Discussion Boards to try to provide you some opportunities to learn from your peers. We strongly recommend that you continue to share your action research plan, process and progress throughout the completion of your project. You will learn from this sharing. As you progress with your research, your professors hope to assist you by linking you to similar action research projects. For example, if you have decided to research the question, “How can block scheduling improve classroom instruction?,” we will make every effort to connect you to all of the other action research projects examining block scheduling.

At this point, we ask you to review at least two comments about your Action Research Plan from your blog and identify or describe any changes or revisions you might make in your plan based on the feedback.

In writing your reflections on these comments, be sure to identify the comments that caught your attention and describe how these comments contributed to any revisions of your action research plan. If comments indicated that you should keep the plan as is, please describe what was shared that led you to not change your plan.
Rubric

Complete Part 3 of the assignment below. The box will expand as you type.

Others seem to share the same concern that I have raised in my plan – that of contacting former students. One suggestion has been to use networking of those students – i.e. some students knowing the whereabouts of others that were in the classes with them. I think this is an excellent idea. Because of this suggestion, I will develop a “script” to be used by my team when contacting the students. This script will include questions about the possibility of them having contact information on their former classmates, and if they would be willing to contact them for us to have them call us. As it would be easier for us to request the information, I would not want to violate any FERPA regulations in conducting the survey. I would be concerned that asking for the information would do just that. Therefore we will ask the contacted student to relay the request to their classmate, and hope they will be willing to cooperate.

Another concern is that other factors, such as additional attempts at improving retention might influence my research study. I don’t believe this will be the case, as we will be using former strategies along with the Starfish product. This product will simply enhance the previous methods, not replace them entirely.
Week Four Assignment, Part 4 – Site Supervisor Conference and Consensus on your Action Research Plan

Throughout this course, we have asked you to collaborate with your site supervisor(s) in designing and implementing your action research plan. During Week Four, we hope you will be able to schedule an appointment with your site supervisor(s) to review your action research plan. Try to reach consensus on the action research topic and plan.

Describe the conference, review your draft Action Research Plan using your Tool 7.1 template or your SIP/PIP template. Be sure to identify any recommended changes or revisions, and then submit the agreed upon Action Research Plan and your Intern Plan into your E-Portfolio. The submission to the Electronic Portfolio should be completed by Week Five.

For Part 4 of this week’s assignment, write a description of your conference with your site supervisor(s), include insights into what was discussed, and identify any revisions to your Action Research Plan and template.
EDLD 5301 Research

Rubric

Complete Part 4 of the assignment below. The box will expand as you type.

My supervisor and I are in constant discussion concerning this action plan, as it is part of my Individual Performance Plan for the upcoming year. During our bi-weekly meetings at her office, we have discussed the timetable, methodology, and expectations; and are in agreement this is the best way to approach the issue. We have a meeting scheduled for this Tuesday to discuss strategies to introduce the plan to faculty that will be involved this fall. We will then schedule training for them to have them ready to introduce the procedure to their students and explain how this will help them to stay on track. Our pilot group at our North campus has had great success with this product, and our hopes are positive that we will now have ample numbers with which to track and record actual results to provide data to support its use for additional departments. If, however, we are proven to be mistaken, we will immediately cease its use and research other solutions.

Blog – Also post your agreed upon Action Research Plan and encourage others to post comments as you continue to describe the process and progress implementing the plan.

My plan has been posted to my blog at http://marthasellsactionresearch.blogspot.com/. I received comments on the blog and in the discussion board of the course.