

WE ARE THE WORK FORCE COUNCIL

ENERGISING HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SINCE 1992

Working Together

Sustainability in Action - Learnings from an Outback Action Research project



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What is Action Research

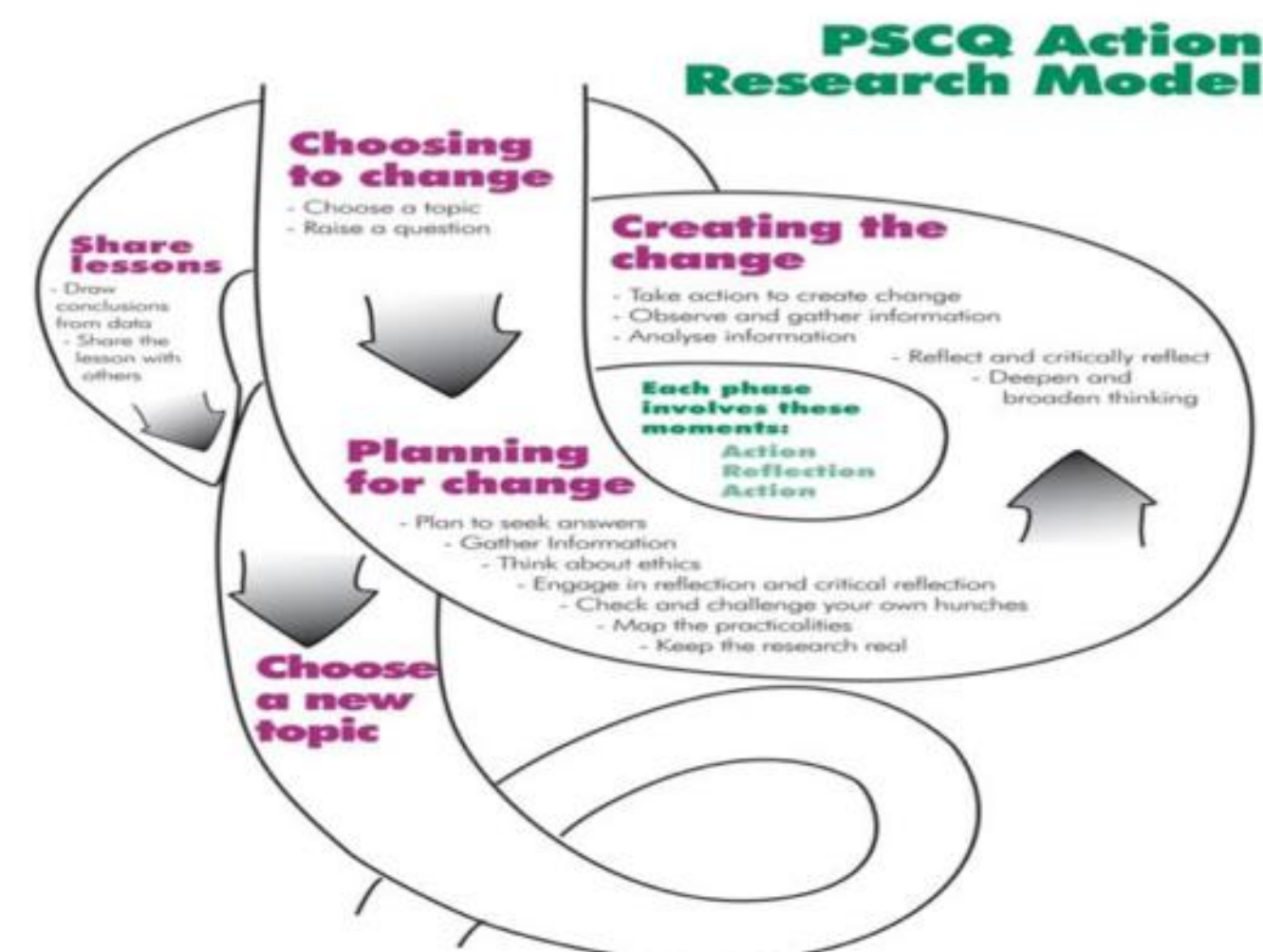
- Action Research is a process that can be used to explore, understand and solve problems.
- Action Research is the pursuit of change and understanding at the same time (Bob Dick, 1997)
- Action Research involves engaging in a “cyclical process of think - do -think” with the end goal of creating change (McNaughton & Hughes)

Action Research begins with hopes, dreams and desires: the hope that we can change the world for the better, the dream of a better world and the desire to make a difference.

Glenda McNaughton

PSC for QLD Action Research Model

- Adapted from Glenda McNaughton's *Action Research in Childrens Services Model*
- 2 individuals from a service, 1 able to enact change
- Facilitator and Mentor
- 6 Group Learning Days
- 3 Core Learning Days
- 1 Showcasing Day



Action Research Projects delivered in QLD

- Promoting a Culture of Ownership & Professionalism within your Service
- Continuing the journey towards developing a culture of linking and learning - enhancing the communication
- How do we develop a sense of belonging for all people?
- Resiliency Through Change
- Continuing the journey towards developing a culture of linking and learning - enhancing the communication
- Building knowledge, skills & confidence to successfully implement the EYLF
- Learning Through Play
- How do we develop a sense of belonging for all people?
- A Sense of Belonging: Exploring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Inclusion:
- Standing up for a Natural Childhood
- Exploring Sustainability through Action Research

Outback Queensland





Challenges

- **Isolation**
 - Geographical
 - Professional
 - **Environment**
 - Weather
 - Wildlife
- **Community**
 - Access to services
 - Transient workers



Hopes, Dreams and Desires

Support :-

- teams to come together
- a shared vision
- increased collaboration
- reflective practices
- ownership of the work and vision
- shared knowledge and skills
- Sustainable practices
- Sustainable workforce

The North West Journey

- 12 services across the region
- 9 Long Day Care Services
- 1 Family Day Care Service
- 1 Outside School Hours Care Service
- 1 Multifunctional Children's service (FDC, OSHC, In home Care)

Sustainability – What does this mean to you?

Is it environments, Practices, Workforce, Relationships or something else?

- **What processes and systems do we introduce to build team camaraderie and a sense of team identity and unity?**
- **How can we create sustainable materials and environments that engage and stimulate children, parents and educators?**
- **How can we engage new educators in the program in fast effective ways which motivate them?**
- **How can we empower educators to take pride in providing inviting, stimulating environments?**
- **How can reflective conversations support us to use our natural outdoor environment?**
- **How can we effectively share and communicate the value of children's learning to families?**
- **How can we incorporate sustainable practices into our program?**
- **What does sustainability look like in our setting?**

Challenges

- Competing discourses around pedagogy in ECEC (McArdle)
- Image of the child is productive of pedagogy (Dahlberg, Walkerdine)
- Applying theory to practice fails to transgress habitual understandings and dominant discourses (Dahlberg, Lenz Taguchi)

Professional development as cross-cultural dialogue?

- Working from practice to theory - contextualised and particular rather than general and abstract
- hold and work with contradictions and uncertainties (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, McArdle)
- Pedagogical documentation as tool for meaning making (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence)
- Social inquiry 'with' rather than 'on' (Schwandt)
- Respectful, reciprocal, responsive dialogue (Barrera & Corso)

CURRY KIDS CLONCURRY

Question

- How can reflective conversations support us to use our natural outdoor environment?

What we discovered

- Educators had strong memories of natural play in their own childhoods and valued this for children
- the nature of the outdoor space limited opportunities for natural play
- children and educators tended to focus on artificial materials and resources at the expense of natural materials

Curry Kids Cloncurry

Action :-

- redesign the outdoor environment with focus on nature
- trial 'plastic-free' day weekly in outdoor environment
- design provocations and provisions to support children's play and exploration in outdoor spaces

Curry Kids, Cloncurry - Outcomes

- **New outdoor spaces with emphasis on natural materials**
- **Sustained establishment of vegetable gardens incorporated into curriculum**
- **35% of documented planned experiences now from outdoors**
- **Range of 30-75% of documented experiences across age groups involve nature or natural materials**

CURRY KIDS CLONCURRY



CURRY KIDS CLONCURRY



CURRY KIDS CLONCURRY



CURRY KIDS CLONCURRY



CURRY KIDS CLONCURRY



CURRY KIDS CLONCURRY



CURRY KIDS CLONCURRY







Little Swaggies Child Care Winton

Question:

"How can we effectively share and communicate the value of the children's learning and our program to parents and the community"

What we discovered:

- **Surveying families to identify what they know and what is important to their families needs**
- **Its important to make contact with families coming in and out of the service and talk to them about what was happening in our rooms and at the centre.**
- **Our educators were not confident in communicating children's learning to families.**
- **Some of the programming documents that we did each day at our service families were not aware of their purpose or value.**

What we decided to do (Action)

- Survey families to find out what they know and what is important to them and their families.
- Do training and research in communication skills
- Engage parents in general conversations about the children and their learning.
- Use a range of different strategies to communicate what is happening at the Centre and in each of the rooms, eg monthly newsletter, informal conversations, closed Facebook page, display in the foyer of the Centre.
- Chose different areas of the centre and explain what is happening and why, eg introduction of the play cycle into our service, the positives for the children, and their play learning and relationships with each other.



Where to from here?

- How can they maintain the momentum?
- Is it self sustaining?
- What is needed to support the ongoing journeys?

- The need to **Connect** with others
- The value of **Conversations**
- The importance of **Acknowledgement**



Julia Creek Early Childhood Centre

Further questions...

- How do we create contexts in which remote services engage in professional dialogue and development as equal partners?
- How do we provoke reciprocity and power sharing?

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The Workforce Council
acknowledges Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander peoples as the
original inhabitants of Australia and
recognises these unique cultures as part
of the cultural heritage of all Australians.
We pay our respect to the Elders
of this land; past, present
and future.



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