

R9 - Action Research FAQs

You should now have a growing sense of what action research is and what it is not. Here are some FAQs that may help with answering questions you or your colleagues at school may have.

Do I need a control group?

No. That's not to say that you may not want to bear in mind what is going on with comparable groups of learners, if available. But action research draws on the 'triangulation effect' of using two or three types of evaluation methods. At the end of one cycle of research it is as likely to conclude that 'more research is needed' as it is that a 'definitive result has been achieved'.

Do I have to evaluate attainment?

No. But most teachers choose at least to. With a short intervention it is unlikely that significant progress will be noticeable. But using teacher judgment to heed any perceptible changes in progress is normally helpful.

Do I have to use quantitative evaluation methods?

No. It may be that a combination of interview, teacher records and structured evaluation of pupils' work – to take but one example - is what you select as the most appropriate methods. Don't forget that you can use qualitative data quantitatively. For example: 'At the start of the intervention x% of the class reported high levels of confidence for y. By the end of z% of those reported high levels of confidence.'

What is the difference between action research and curriculum development?

When you develop the curriculum you may well do things differently just as you do with interventions in action research. But the significantly different aspect of action research is its commitment to use a number of evaluation methods. Curriculum developers may or may not use such processes!

Can I prove causality?

No. Proving that something happens as a result of something specific that you have done is difficult in any research. What action research can do is show that it is **highly likely** that there is a connection between your action and what changed.