



Action Research

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Outline

- What is AR
- Characteristics of AR
- Basis for AR
- Forms of AR
- AR cycle
- Researcher's role
- Lessons on AR

What is AR?

- Refers to a class of research approaches/methods, not one method
- Grounded in practical action aimed at solving a particular problem whilst simultaneously contributing to knowledge

Characteristics of AR

- Focused on a real-world problem
- Action and change orientation
- Collaborative process
- involving systematic and sometimes iterative stages
- theory focus

Why AR?

- Produces highly relevant research results to practice
- enables researcher's participation in action
- the type of learning represents enhanced understanding of a complex socio-organisational problem

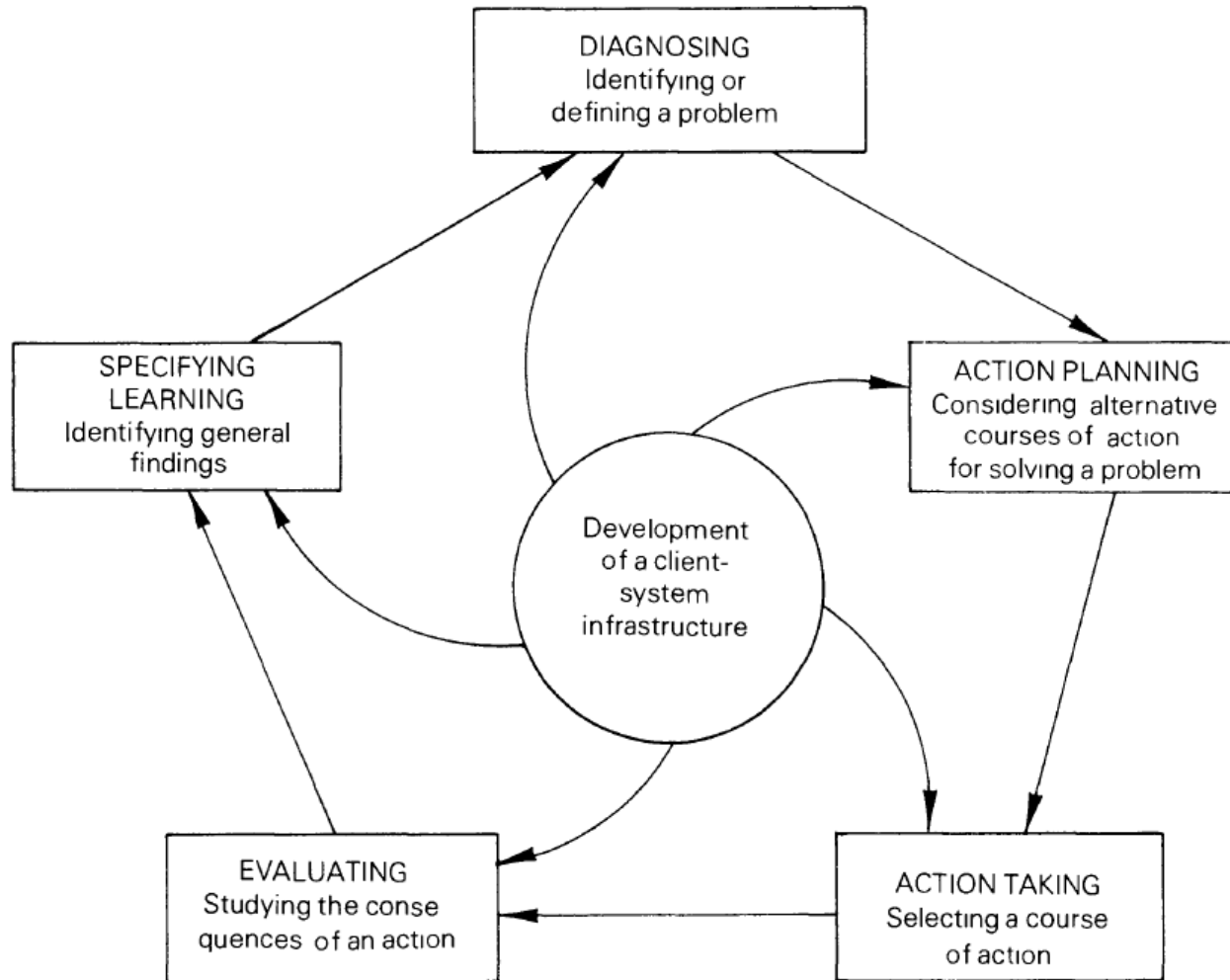
Forms of AR

- Canonical AR
- Participatory Action Research
- IS prototyping
- Soft Systems Methodology
- ETHICS
- Multiview

AR cycle

- Essence of AR is a simple two-stage process:
 1. Diagnostic stage- situation analysis & theory formulation
 2. Therapeutic stage - changes are introduced and the effects are studied

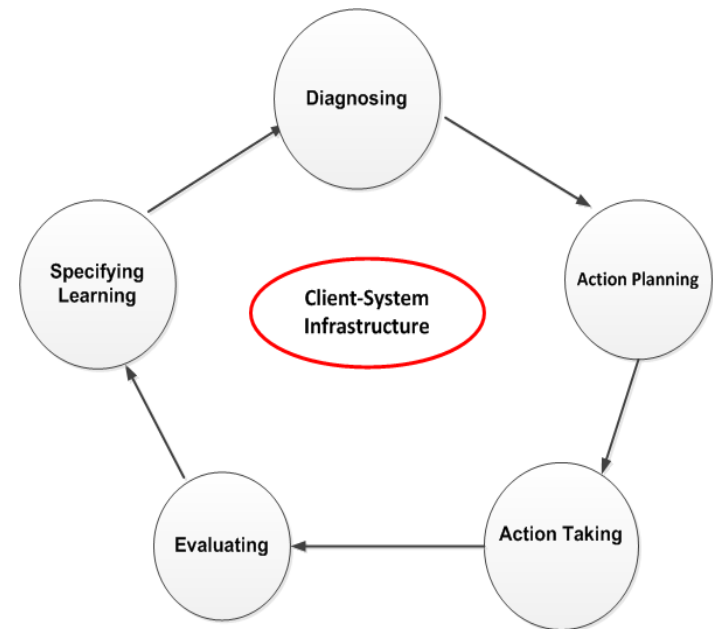
AR cycle



Susman & Evered (1978)

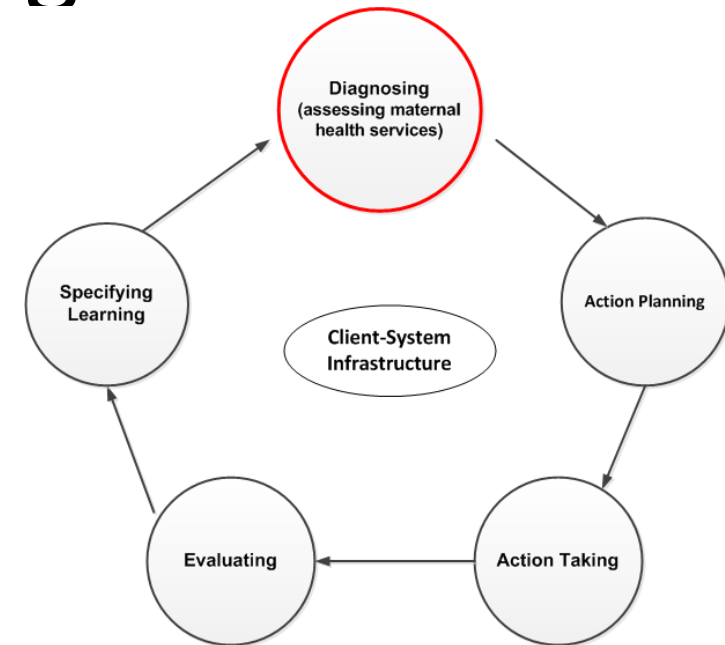
Client- System Infrastructure

- researcher-client agreement
- It maintains and regulates the phases of the AR
- May have several clients or stakeholders involved
 - e.g. vendor, policy makers, intended users



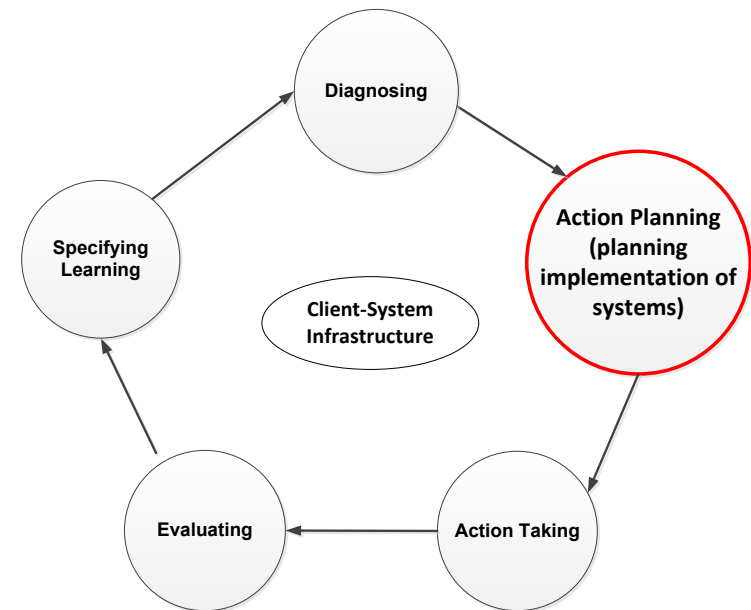
Diagnosing

- identification of situated problems and their underlying causes
 - e.g. using case studies
 - Interviews, document analysis, observations
- Verify the findings



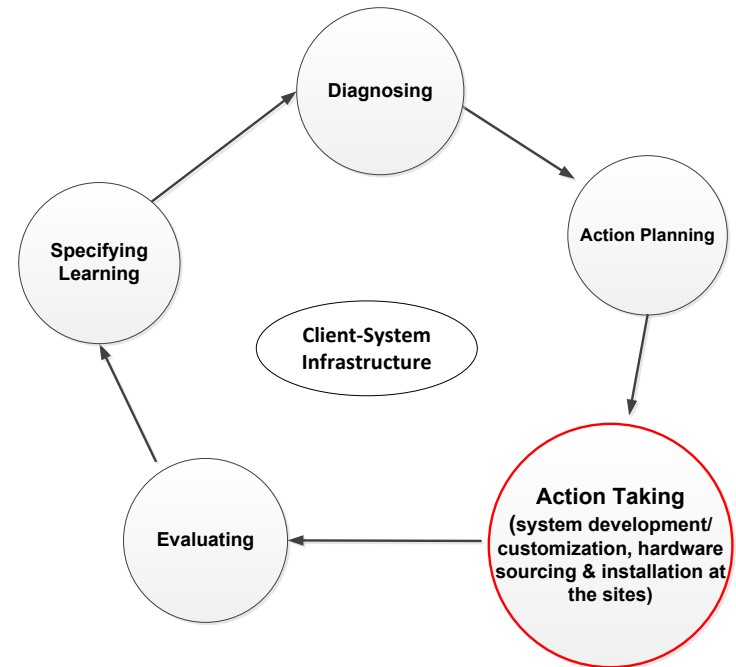
Action Planning

- process of specifying the action/intervention that can improve the problem situation
 - Several factors affect choice of the problem to address and intervention
- Collaboration with practitioners
 - Different groups of practitioners
- Declare themes or hypothesis
- Data collected through participation
- Activities involved
 - Defining overall system requirements
 - Budgeting
 - Developing contract



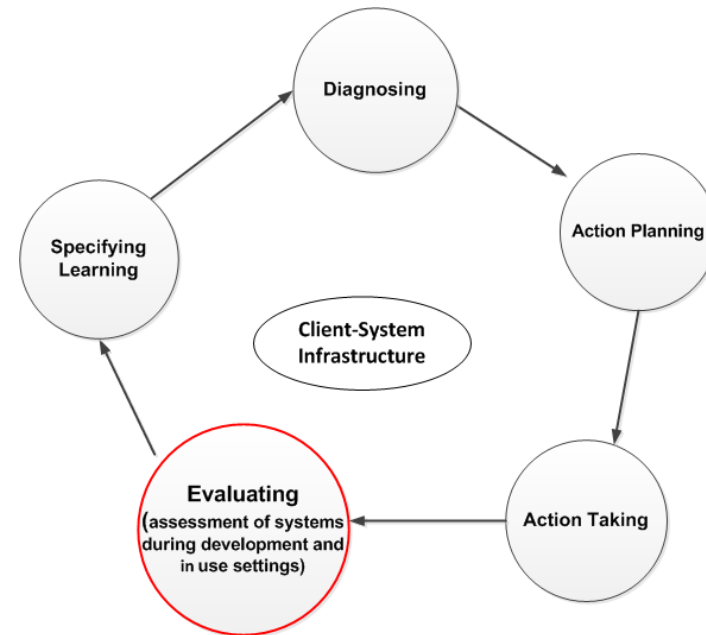
Action taking

- implementation of the intervention specified in the action planning phase
 - e.g. IS deployment, training.
- Data collected through participation



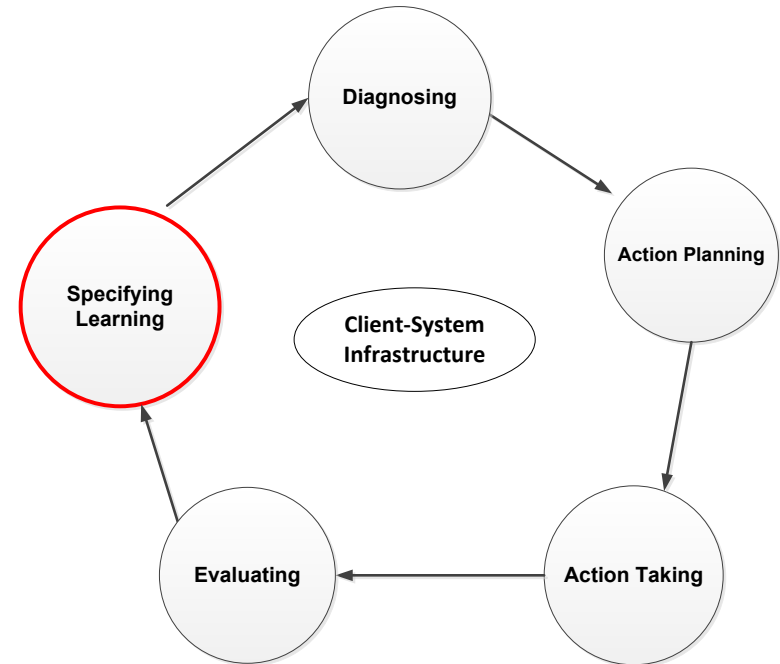
Evaluating

- assessment of the intervention
- determining if the problems were relieved
 - Interviews, observations, document analysis
- Bias in evaluation
- Verify findings



Specifying Learning

- Ongoing process of documenting and summing up the learning outcomes of the action research cycle
- constitute knowledge contributions to both theory and practices
- serve as the starting point for a new cycle of inquiry



Researcher's role

- First- person AR: insider – researcher
 - Organisational insider
 - Researcher's views & actions are brought to the foreground
 - Reflective writing
- Second-person AR: co-researchers
 - Participants as co-researchers
- Third-person AR
 - More focus on action, representing and disseminating knowledge generated by the inquiry



Some lessons on AR

- Documenting the timing and nature of actions
 - Research Diary is very important
- May end up with alot of data
 - sometimes unclear what is (or is not) data
- Phases are not always linear or clear cut
 - deviations or variations from the unidirectional flow
- challenging to define what exactly is ‘action’
 - May involve several sub-processes so how can these be represented within this cyclic process model.

Principles of Canonical AR

- Davison et al (2004)
- a useful framework to guide planning of AR projects
 - Provides more precise guidelines on researcher's responsibilities
- 5 principles
 - Principle of the researcher-client agreement
 - Principle of the Cyclical Process Model
 - Principle of Theory
 - Principle of Change through Action
 - Principle of Learning through Reflection

References

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- Checkland, P. & Holwell, S. (1998). Action Research. Its Nature and Validity. *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, Vol 11, No 1,
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GROUP WORK

- Differences between CS and AR?
- When would you use AR?
- Three key issues about AR