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AER
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THE ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION, AND RESEARCH
KNOWLEDGE COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER.

*The following is a letter from the chairs of the Assessment, Evaluation
and Research Knowledge Community. You can find contact information
for Nathan and Darby on page 6. Enjoy!*

Dear NASPA Colleagues,

Season's greetings to all of you! We hope that as the semester winds down, you'll have a little more time to work on those assessment reports that have been on your to-do list!

During this fall season, we have been delighted by the assessment discussions and presentations that occurred at the regional conferences, and we are grateful to those who have initiated our listserv discussions. We also want to thank everyone who participated in our KC's webinars this fall: Assessment 101, Creative Assessment Methods, and Assessment 2.0. The attendance for these webinars was terrific. We will be sending out the information for the Spring semester webinars in January, and we hope that you can join us for these.

As noted elsewhere in this newsletter, the planning is moving forward on the

NASPA Assessment & Persistence Conference, which will be held June 19-21 in San Antonio, TX. We encourage you to submit program proposals (http://www.naspa.org/events/2014APC), which are due on January 24th. Please reach out to your colleagues, both within and outside your institution, as you consider possible program proposals.

We are excited to see many of you at the Annual Conference in Baltimore, perhaps at the KC fair on Monday night or at our KC meeting on Tuesday morning. We have some excellent sponsored AER KC programs on the integration of

learning, development of learning outcomes, and demonstrating the impact of assessment. It should be a great conference!

Please contact either of us if we can be helpful in your assessment efforts.

Best regards,

Darby and Nathan

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ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION AND RESEARCH

NASPA Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Newsletter: Action Research Introductory Piece

By Erika Eckert, Kent State University and Jermaine Williams, Northeastern Illinois University

Imagine you are a full-time residence life administrator at a large institution. You notice first-year students residing in university housing seem to be spending a lot of time answering to your student conduct personnel—perhaps not more than students at other institutions, but more than you think is acceptable. You decide that you want to investigate this phenomenon.

You could:
1) Conduct a full-blown research study with a team of highly-trained researchers to explore the problem through qualitative and/or quantitative approaches, where you are seeking to create and/or further develop a theory or social behavior; or,

2) Approach this as a practitioner and start collecting data to better understand and address the specific phenomenon, with the intent of ameliorating the situation.

How are these two research approaches different? The first approach (which one might call the "traditional" approach) seeks to make assertions related to whether a phenomenon is or is not occurring, and possibly, why it is occurring. In this instance, "describing or developing social theory" (Culp & Dungy, 2012, p. 93) is of primary importance, rather than local application. The second approach is what would be called Action Research. Action research is focused entirely on understanding a phenomenon in order to produce positive outcomes and many argue, create social change and equity (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Lewin, 1946; Slavin, 2007).

Action research is rooted in both the qualitative tradition and Muckraking journalism, prevalent in the 1930s (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). It is, some might say, an inherently biased approach—although it is important to note in order to truly affect change, one must understand the real reason a phenomenon occurs, rather than supplanting a preconceived (or biased)

reason (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Bias, while possible, due to the researcher's personal interest, would likely malign the purpose of the study.

Action research is conceived differently, depending on the author (Klein, 2012). Bogdan and Biklen (1998) define this research approach as either participatory or political in nature—the latter named for its intent to shake up the social structure. An example of political action research cited by both Bogdan and Biklen (1998) and Slavin (2007) was the advocacy efforts by a Buffalo, NY woman who noticed area children were falling ill at a school built over the Love Canal toxic waste site. Her efforts, in direct opposition to authority and power-holders, resulted in damage awards being given to affected families.

Slavin (2007) adds a third category, practical action research, which he states is the most common form. Slavin distinguishes practical action research from participatory by noting practical action research seeks to solve a problem, while stating participatory action research is a collaborative effort by multiple interested parties to solve a problem. The distinctions are not nearly as important as the concept of research by interested parties to execute change, using whatever means necessary (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Slavin, 2007). Participatory or practical action research focuses on exploring an issue, such as the one cited at the beginning of this piece—student conduct offenses by freshmen living on-campus, with the intention of changing the pattern.

To conduct an action research study, Slavin (2007) suggests a series of steps: "Choose a manageable problem or issue to address" (p. 167). The researcher must pick a problem that is small enough to effectively study.


Action Research Series:

This is the first piece in a series on action research. Each series piece will delve into a more complex part of action research. We look forward to this series sparking conversations on your campus and within our KC. If you have feedback on this series or ideas for additional series topics e-mail Melissa Kisubika at *kisubika@illinois.edu*

DO YOU HAVE KNOWLEDGE TO SHARE?
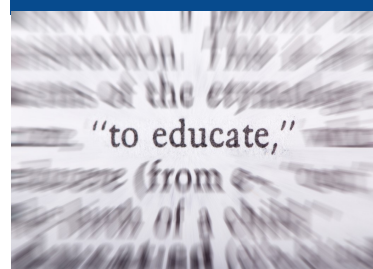
If you would like to share assessment knowledge with the rest of the AER KC send your submissions to the AER Newsletter.

Please send an email to : Melissa Kisubika (kisubika@illinois.edu)

If you have questions about this article please contact Erika Eckert directly at *eeckert@kent.edu* or Jermaine Williams directly at *j-williams26@neiu.edu*

NASPA Annual Conference:
Registration and Housing
Registration is now OPEN

Online Registration is the fastest option that allows you to register and get housing at the exact same time.

The headquarter hotel and the closest hotel in proximity to the convention center is the Hilton Baltimore. In addition, NASPA has secured hotel room blocks at a number of hotels near the Baltimore Convention Center.

The NASPA Housing Bureau opened for reservations on October 1, 2013 Housing fills up fast. In order to do utilize the Housing Bureau you must be registered to attend the conference.

LEAD INNOVATE TRANSFORM
NASPA Annual Conference
March 15-19 2014
Baltimore, Maryland

Connect with
#NASPA14

Your connection to all Annual Conference information

AER Knowledge Community: Social Media

The AER KC has launched the first stages of our social media initiative. A Facebook page has been developed as a way to communicate relevant research, best practices, and conference information to our extended community.

To "like" the NASPA AER KC page, click on the following link or paste into your browser:
http://www.facebook.com/NASPAAERKC

We also launched AER into the twitters-sphere, so that we can communicate with KC members throughout the day and week in regards to all NASPA and assessment related topics

Follow us **@NASPA_AERKC**

We will kick off our endeavors starting the first of the year. If you are interested in contributing information or assisting in the management of social media for AER please contact Melissa Kisubika at *kisubika@illinois.edu*

Follow us on Twitter

Become our fan on Facebook

NASPA Assessment, Evaluation and Research Knowledge Community Mission Statement

The NASPA Assessment , Evaluation and Research Knowledge Community encourages and supports student affairs professionals, faculty and graduate students at institutions across the county and throughout the world as they systematically assess learning, evaluate programs, and research theory and practice as it relates to our profession. By providing quality education and networking opportunities for those that engage in assessment, evaluation and research in student affairs, the Knowledge Community strives to serve as a driving force in the movement towards improved student learning.

Region V and Region IV: Poster Session

Region V and Region VI co-sponsored an assessment poster session at the Western Regional Conference held in Salt Lake City during November, 2013. The session provided an opportunity for more in-depth conversations for those interested in assessment as well as information about the AER KC. A variety of institutions (e.g. large public, large private and community colleges) were represented through posters on topics such as electronic portfolios, engaging faculty in NASPA, parental perceptions of college, graduating students and job offers, building inclusivity, and helping women in STEM majors succeed. A special thanks to Colton Griffith, a M.Ed. student at the University of Utah who was instrumental in coordinating this inaugural event as well as to all of those who participated!

*From Left to Right: Sandy Mahoney (Region VI),
Stacy Ackerlind (Region V), and Colton Griffiths (Region V)*

*Assessment, Evaluation and Research Knowledge Community Poster Session at the
Western Regional Conference*

"Determine the design of the study and what kind of data to collect" (p. 168). This will be discussed further in subsequent articles.

"Collect the data" (p. 168). If no treatment or new program is being implemented, skip to step six.

"Implement the new program or intervention over a set period of time" (p. 168). If the researcher(s) is/are implementing a new program or treatment to effect change, it must be implemented so more data can be collected.

"Collect further data during the new program or intervention" (p. 169). The second round of data collection if a treatment has been implemented; this step will allow researchers to assess change.

"All stakeholders work together to analyze the data" (p. 169). Slavin asserts statistics often can't be used simply due to the sample size in many cases, but a group can be assembled to formulate conclusions. The authors of this piece would suggest non-parametric statistical tests are an option, depending on the study's goals.

"Determine an action plan based on the findings" (p. 169). The study should result in a document summarizing its approach, findings, and intended changes.

This has been a brief introduction to action research. The next installment will delve deeper into the supposition that "action research has become a viable way for educators to not only examine what is, but to imagine what might be possible" (Klein, 2012, p. 3) and further illustrate how this research approach is a natural fit for educational organizations and student affairs professionals (Culp & Dungy, 2012).

References

Bogdan, R. C. & Biklen, S. K. (1998). Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods (3rd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Culp, M. M. & Dungy, G. J. (Eds.). 2012. Building a culture of evidence in student affairs: A guide for leaders and practitioners. Washington, DC. NASPA – Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education.

Lewin, K. (1946). Action research and minority problems. Retrieved from http://bscw.wineme.fb5.uni-siegen.de/pub/nj_bscw.cgi/d759359/5_1_ActionResearchandMinortyProblems.pdf

Klein, Sheri R. (2012). Action Research Methods: Plain and Simple. Retrieved from http://www.eblib.com

Slavin, R. E. (2007). Educational research in an age of accountability. Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.

AER Knowledge Community Leadership Team and Committee Leadership

Below you will find the names, institutions and
e-mail contacts for members of the Leadership Team and Committee Leadership.

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