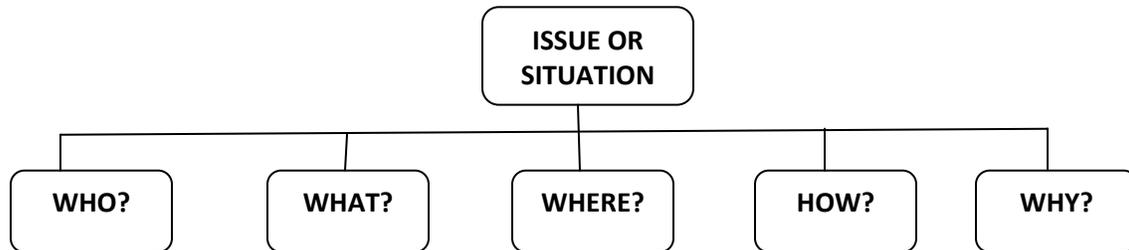


## Figure 4.1 Asking the Right Question

1. Think about a situation in your school that you would like to understand better and analyze it using the questions below:



*Example:*

A group of third graders is having discipline problems. As their teacher you decide to analyze the situations by asking the following questions:

- Who tends to misbehave most frequently?
- What does this misbehavior look or sound like?
- Is there any special place (cafeteria, classroom, playground) where students tend to misbehave the most?
- How do students misbehave? What do they do that you consider misbehavior? You may want to ask a couple of colleagues whether they would agree.
- Is there any apparent reason for the misbehavior? Can you think of any other reasons?

2. Come up with a question that you believe captures the heart of the problem at hand, and share it with your colleagues.
3. Synthesize you're and your colleagues' questions into one all-encompassing query.
4. Using the following checklist, assess the suitability of the synthesis question. If the question does not meet all of the criteria listed, return to Step 1 above.

Is the question related to the issue at hand?	YES	NO
Is the issue a real concern for everyone in the group?	YES	NO
Are there sufficient data to develop an inquiry on the issue?	YES	NO
Can data be gathered in the context of your daily duties?	YES	NO
Can data be interpreted without access to sophisticated technology?	YES	NO
Are potential answers to the question easy to communicate?	YES	NO

Figure taken out of pp66-67:

Gabriel Diaz-Maggioli (2004). *Teacher-Centered Professional Development*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. Alexandria, Virginia, USA

# Handout

## Steps for Doing Action Research in Your Classroom

To the teacher:

1. Audio- or videotape a lesson and then review the recording to identify an area you wish to improve. Examples may include how turns are allocated, how to reduce teacher talk and increase student talk, what types of questions are asked, and so on.
2. Transcribe a segment of the lesson, about 15 minutes, that illustrates the area you have identified. Reflect on the causes of the problem.
3. Design strategies for improvement.
4. Write a proposal for action research: What am I going to study? What strategies have I designed to help in this area? How long will I test the strategies? What is my schedule for implementation of the strategies?
5. Try out the strategies and keep a diary of what happens in the classroom.
6. At the end of the try-out period, audio- or videotape another lesson of the same class. Review the recording and see if there are any changes.
7. Transcribe another 15 minutes of the lesson, which illustrate the changes that have been made, and reflect on the reasons for the change—whether it is positive or negative.

## Caveats and options

1. When introducing action research, it is very important to make sure that teachers do not have unrealistic expectations about what they can achieve in a short period of time. When asked to identify an area to work on, teachers tend to come up with long lists of things. It is essential to help the teacher focus on one thing at a time.
2. It is also very important that the focus of action research be feasible, that strategies be devised, and that the changes to be made can actually be observed and measured. For example, a teacher says that his lessons are very boring and he wants to make them more interesting. But unless he has spelled out indicators for what makes his lesson interesting or boring, it will be very difficult for him to judge whether changes have been made.
3. Asking teachers to develop a proposal together with the transcription, and then discussing the proposal with them, can help to make sure that the proposal is viable and not too ambitious. Teachers will get easily discouraged if they find that they cannot determine whether any change has taken place at the end of the try-out period.

[Handout and Caveats and Options taken out of pp173-175:](#)

[Tsui, A. B. M. \(1993\). Helping teachers to conduct action research in their classrooms. In .D. Freeman, with S. Cornwell \(Eds.\), New ways in teacher education. Alexandria, VA: TESOL](#)