



Action Inquiry & Dialogue

Definitions of these powerful practices
towards greater self-awareness and more
effective communication and learning

Action Inquiry

Action inquiry is an method of learning that involves the subject as well as the object, the self as well as the system or organization investigated. As a method, it increases the rate of learning and effectiveness.

Action inquiry encourages individuals to be continually questioning of their purposes, strategies, and behavior while adjusting these on the basis of feedback about their impact in the world.

At the personal level, action inquiry demands high levels of curiosity, awareness, and willingness to experiment and learn from experience and feedback.

The 4 Aspects of Action Inquiry

Organizing	Social Awareness	Personal Awareness
I. Visioning	Framing	Intending/Attending
II. Strategizing	Advocating	Thinking/Feeling
III. Performing	Illustrating	Acting/Embodying
IV. Assessing	Inquiring	Effecting/Sensing

Framing

Explicitly stating the purpose of the present occasion, the dilemma you are trying to resolve, and/or the assumptions you think are shared or not shared.

Advocacy

Asserting a specific option, perception, feeling or proposal for action in relatively abstract terms. (E. g. “We have got to get shipments out faster. You need to”)

Illustrating

Offering a bit of a concrete, visualizable story, salient background, data, graphs, statistics to support one's point.

Inquiring

Questioning others in order to learn something new from them that may add an important perspective and/or throw one's own sense of the situation into question.

Collaborative Action Inquiry

When groups of people engage together in action inquiry (collaborative inquiry), rapid and deep learning can occur. Ongoing practice supports and reinforces discoveries and habituates and reinforces new behaviors.

Continued, self-guided, collaborative action inquiry is the hallmark of a learning organization.

Dialogue Practice

A form of learning from and with each other that allows for novel, previously unimagined ideas, plans, and solutions to emerge from the process. It requires mutual respect, deep listening, and skillful testing of

- (1) one's own & others' assumptions,
- (2) leaps of inference,
- (3) unwarranted conclusions, biases, and
- (4) unsupported beliefs.

Dialogue helps to reveal our mindsets and preprogrammed patterns of behavior. It attempts to make these more conscious and less automatic.

Practicing new awareness

Thus, dialogue hopes to replace mindless with more open, mindful, and conscious behavior. It does this through patient practice, insightful feedback, as well as mutual support for tolerating the ambiguity and “not-knowing” that the engagement in radical openness inevitably entails.