

AFTER ACTION REVIEW


Purpose


The purpose of the activity is to evaluate the process. Therefore, the main components are analyzing what happened after the action plan and what could have been done why differently in the future.


Preparation

 **Material**
flipchart, felt pens

 **Room**
4-8 each group, circle

 **Duration**
about 60-70 minutes

 **Target group**
student teachers, student teachers in internship, students

 **Setting**
S-PLCs in seminar or internship

 **Application**
middle of the S-PLC work

Description of the Activity

An After Action Review (AAR) is a process used by a team to increase awareness of the lessons learned from past successes and failures. The team may reflect on a project, activity, or task with the aim of improving it for future settings and performance. AAR is one of the basic knowledge management processes, but there are ground rules (reference: Knoco stories, view “Learn more”), which need to be applied, if AARs are to deliver value. The 10th rule is the most important.

1. There are no bad ideas, or poor questions.
2. Ask open and honest questions, offer open and honest responses.
3. Leave preconceptions and prejudgments behind you, when you enter the room.
4. Leave hierarchy behind you, when you enter the room – everyone’s knowledge is of equal value.
5. Respect and listen to each other.
6. Disagreement is positive and needs to be explored.
7. Don’t rush to solutions.
8. Focus on real issues and learning, not individual performance evaluation.
9. Keep the meeting brief and focused.
10. Incorporate the learnings into future activity.

The AAR is for strengthening and improving capacity for action, not for assessment. Participants should take forward actions from the AAR, as the 10th rule says.

Implementation

1. The group members sit at a table and assign a rapporteur. They pose the following four questions to the whole group (Note: For each question, the rapporteur collects answers, gets opinions from all students, and takes notes of any emerging trends. They then proceed to the next question):
 - Question 1: What was supposed to happen (in the project or activity under review)? Answers should be a recap of the intended results. This step is crucial in gauging whether all persons involved understood the action(s) to be taken.
 - Question 2: What actually happened? Students will answer through personal accounts. Ask students to refer to facts that support their conclusions about what happened.
 - Question 3: Why was there a difference (between the plan and the actual result)? Identify the factors that contributed to successes or failures. Discuss and agree on the reasons for the differences between the plan and the results.
 - Question 4: What will we do next time (same or different)? Specific ideas for action that can be implemented by the team.
2. Note: If necessary, after the AAR, new responsibilities can be assigned for future actions in order to improve the results. The facilitator closes the session summarizing the progress of the group.

AARs can be very powerful tools for change, especially if they are repeated at major project milestones. It is used to improve team effectiveness and results during a project, action or initiative. The team is learning from experience and it does not require experts from outside the institution.

Additional Information



Alternative

It is possible to organize a quick AAR with these three questions:

- What worked well, and why?
- What did not work well?
- What can be improved, and how?



Learn more

- Arivananthan. Meena (2015). Knowledge Exchange Toolbox. Group Methods for Sharing, Discovery and Co-Creation. Unicef. https://www.unicef.org/knowledge-exchange/files/UNICEF_Knowledge_Exchange_Toolbox.pdf
- Knoco stories: 10 ground rules for After Action review
- World Bank (2015). The Art of Knowledge Exchange: A Results-Focused Planning Guide for Development Practitioners, Second Edition Updated. Washington: World Bank Group. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/17540>