

Pepperdine University
Graduate School for Education and Psychology
Action Research Plan

EUC 638 ACTION RESEARCH
Professor Margaret Riel

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THE PLAN

PURPOSE:

To encourage individuals to commit themselves to be responsible for their spiritual growth

PROBLEM:

The more people who know how much God loves them personally, the more changes one may expect. The situation that I want to improve is to create this e-group spiritual direction experience to increase the spiritual engagement of the believers. By a well-blended model with a 60% percent online and 40% face-to-face setting, believers will be encouraged to explore God's unconditional love and nurture their own spiritual growth.

RESEARCH QUESTION:

Can group interaction using the combined tools of spiritual direction and the Internet provide an effective process for adults to grow in the spiritual life both personally and communally?

Would the quality and quantity of personal Internet responses provide criteria for measuring growth in spirituality and community?

Would questionnaires at the beginning and the end of the year provide information to judge both personal growth and a sense of community?

BACKGROUND RESEARCH:

Webb, (2005), Campbell, 2005, and Wyche, Harvel & Grinter, 2006. These resources affirmed the fact that virtual communities will continue to grow and flourish online. They linked technology and small group learning, and this persuaded me to believe that internet-based communities can be valuable for encouraging commitment to spiritual growth. The above-mentioned resources provided the most practical insights from different studies and evaluations. By presenting a variety of pros and cons regarding the use of electronic tools to connect a small group of people for spiritual direction, they enabled me to make wise decisions for my action research.

What I have learned about this endeavor from these resources includes:

- Technology has been successfully used in the area of religion and spirituality.
- In contradistinction to the criticism that religion and spirituality are better communicated directly face-to-face, research has shown that certain spiritual experiences occurring online have created more intimacy and have been of greater value to certain individuals.
- Online spiritual connection can be as authentic as interactions taking place elsewhere.
- There needs to be something other than typical religious services for alienated contemporary spiritual seekers.

MY ACTIONS (Cycle 1): The research question

- If I set up a digital context for interaction around spiritual direction will this encourage the growth of spirituality in the participants?
- Would setting up a face-to-face small group spiritual direction experience for participants be a good starting point for establishing a year-long online spiritual journey?
- Would providing the cyber space for each individual at Grou.ps increase adults' commitment to their own spirituality by making it easier for them to reflect their daily faith journey?
- Can the use of the internet combined with face-to-face group interaction enhance the effectiveness of Group Spiritual Direction?

The first actions that I have already taken include: creating a basic format for our first Face-to-Face Session and building the website –

<http://web.me.com/mlaicsj/Tagalonggang/Welcome.html>.

I chose an on-line tool for participants to blog. In class, I learned many new possible tools for the purpose of e-group spiritual direction. Since I am not an experienced IT person, I first tried out various tools, such as: Google site, Grou.ps, Voicethread, Skype, Facebook, and email before I created the website for participants. With high recommendation from two friends from my study circle, I decided to try Grou.ps for the participants to make entries / to blog. As a result, I established two on-line sites –

http://grou.ps/tagalonggang/private_groups, and

http://grou.ps/tagalonggang2010/private_groups -- the first on September 8th and the second on September 17th because two members could not get

into the initial site. At the present time, the sites are not functioning because grou.ps is emerging with another big company. Our Spiritual Direction Group decided to use email for their temporary needs.

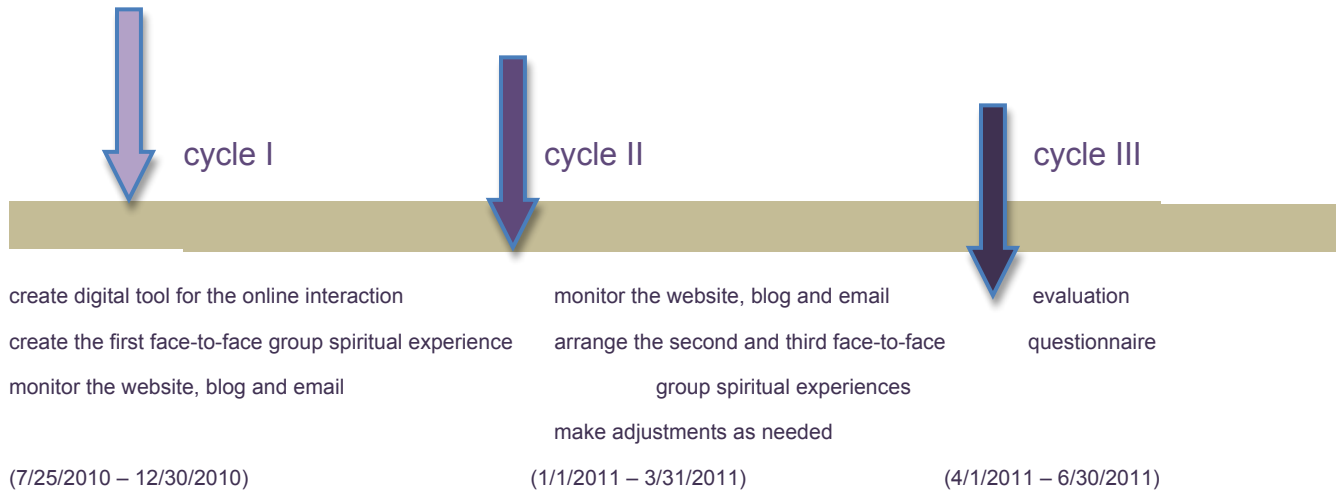
During Cycle One, I have been consistently monitoring the on-line activities. I took some photos of the sites showing that the same entries were repeated seven and eight times. Participants have been excited to post their entries; however, there are two participants who have not made any entries so far.

Finally, the last action that I took in Cycle One was to build another site, this time with Google, to replace grou.ps to see if that would make any significant improvement.

(Cycle 2): While the results and my reflections on them may modify my plans significantly, my current thoughts on my cycles of action are described below:

This assignment has been very helpful for me to look at the cycles. It has assisted me to organize my thoughts for my Action Research. From this exercise, I have been able to clarify my steps regarding where I want to place my focus in each cycle. In Cycle One, my action has been focused on creating the format of E-group Spiritual Direction. It has been in the process of creating and implementing the tools that I have been able to have a better understanding regarding how to evaluate the project more effectively. In Cycle Two, my effort will be to concentrate on evaluating the effectiveness of the format and the tools being used for E-group Spiritual Direction with an aim to make specific changes according to input from classes, readings, and the experiences of the participants. Cycle Three will contain the evaluation regarding the effect on the spiritual growth of the individuals involved in the project – whether or not E-group Spiritual Direction has made a difference in these five people's journey of faith. It will be a time to bring E-group Spiritual Direction to a more refined stage for finalization of the research.

Timeline of events:



Format of the FACE-TO-FACE Spiritual Direction Session
Ocean Ave, Seal Beach, California
July 27-28, 2010

First Night

- 4pm – 5pm Welcome and settling in
- 5pm – 7pm Dinner preparation, Dinner and clean up
- 7:15pm Warm up activity
- The Association Exercise
 - Introduction on the Tag Along Spirituality
 - Sharing of the Tagging Along experiences in your own lives
 - Homework – one Bible story that includes a personal experience
 - Prayer
- 10 pm Social hours
- 11:30 pm Adjourn

Second Day

- 8:30 am Breakfast
- 9:30 am Personal time
- 9:45 am Introduction of Small Group Spiritual Direction
Introduction on Confidentiality
Small Group Spiritual Direction Experience I

11:00 am	Break
11:15 am	Small group Spiritual Direction experience II
12:15 pm	Lunch
1:15 pm	Silent personal prayer
2:30 pm	Sharing
	Introduction on E-Group Spiritual Direction The idea of Website for E-Group Commitment for a year Choosing symbol for the website
4:15 pm	Closing prayer
5:30 pm	Dinner
7:00 pm	Social hours
9:30 pm	Clean up and adjourn