

Understanding the Shift from Ameliorative to Transformative Change in Education

The Case of Midlands State University, Zimbabwe

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*Environment, Sustainability and Health
Education*

UNESCO Global Action Programme on
Education for Sustainable Development



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Sustainable
Development
Goals



From
the People
of Japan



SWEDES

SUSTAINABILITY STARTS WITH TEACHERS

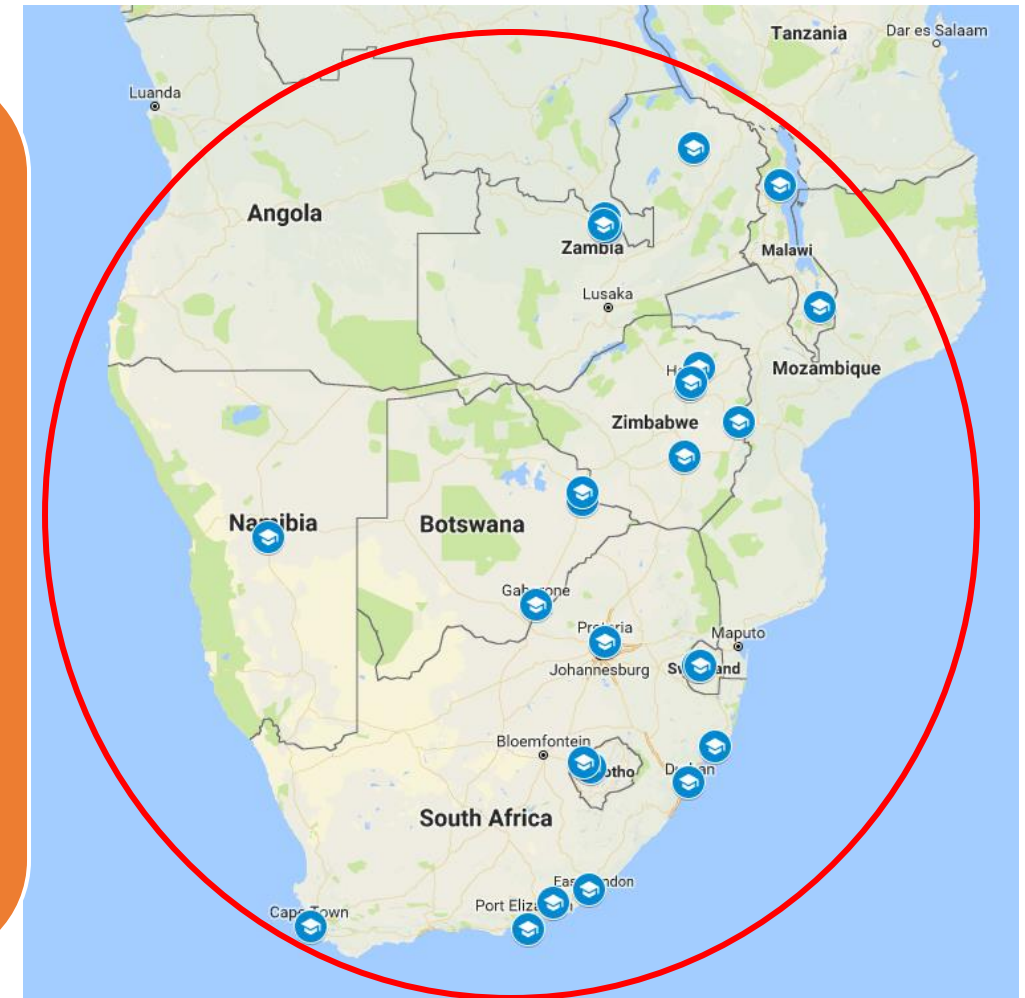
Central Asia: 4 country Projects



Teaching and
Learning for
Social
Transformation

Transformative
Transgressive
Transdisciplinary

Southern Africa: 9 country Projects

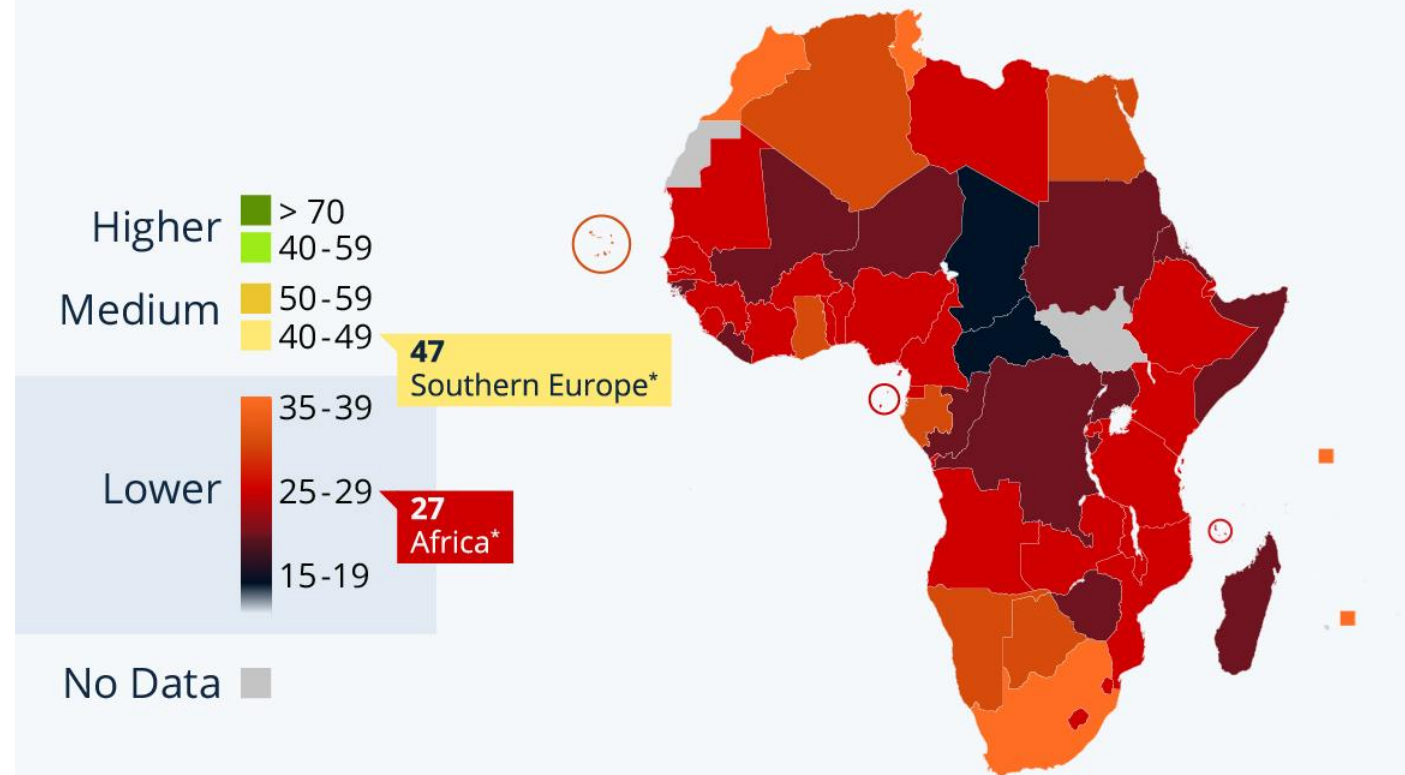


Southern Africa is
considered one of the
most vulnerable
regions

Harsh climatic
conditions and Limited
Adaptive Capacity

Africa Is on the Frontline of Climate Change

Index scores for climate resilience of African countries in 2022



Based on assessment of 180 countries for readiness, vulnerability and GDP.

* Averages based on 10 countries in Southern Europe, 53 in Africa.

Sources: Henley & Partners, Statista calculations



Environment and Sustainability Education

A teaching and learning response

University Professors
Teacher Educators

Change Project Approach

Participatory Action Research



CHANGE PROJECT APPROACH

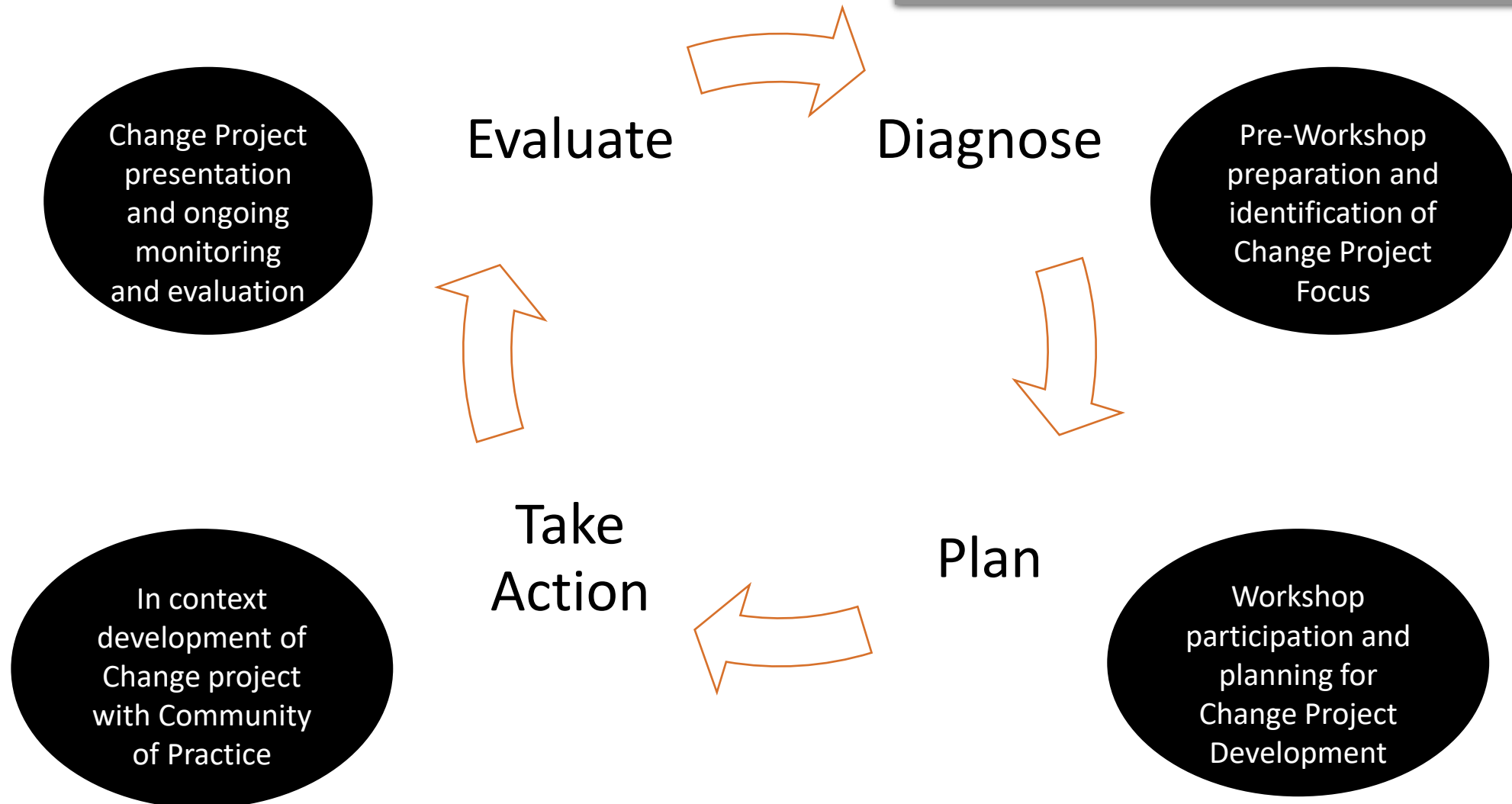
PARTICIPATORY ACTION CYCLES

1. It's a sustainable change process – **empowerment and ownership**
2. Has a **transformative effect** on the university teachers while they are doing it
3. It has the potential to make immediate change as suggested by the **research and practice findings**
4. It is a **continuous professional development** inquiry that university teachers choose, design and run
5. It blends competences of **experienced teachers** with those of **expert teachers**

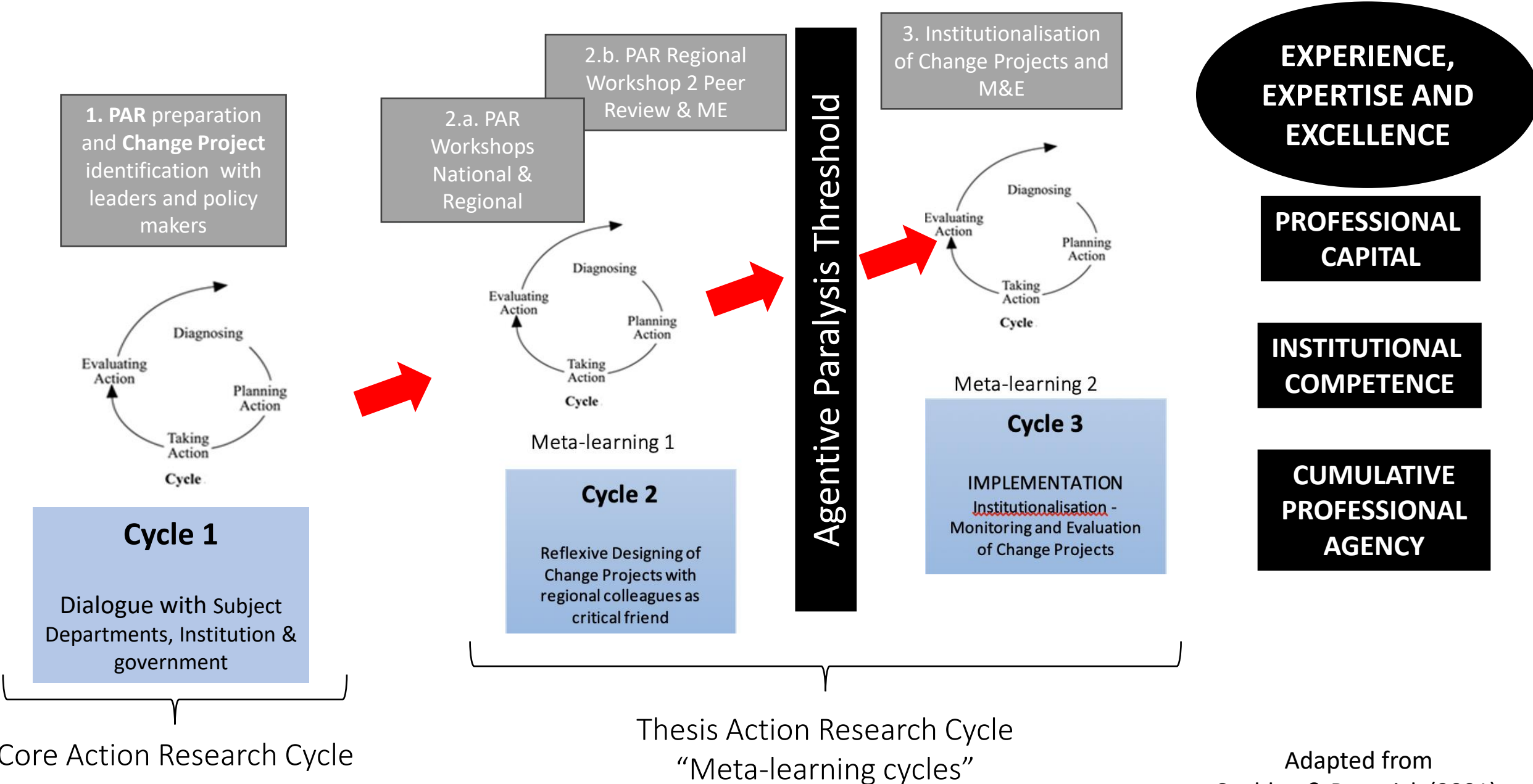
Participatory Action Research

“How can teaching and learning respond
to demands of the 21st century and
beyond?”

Learning for a future we do not know



Participatory Action Research (PAR) Core and Meta Learning cycles (Urenje & Rumjaun 2017)



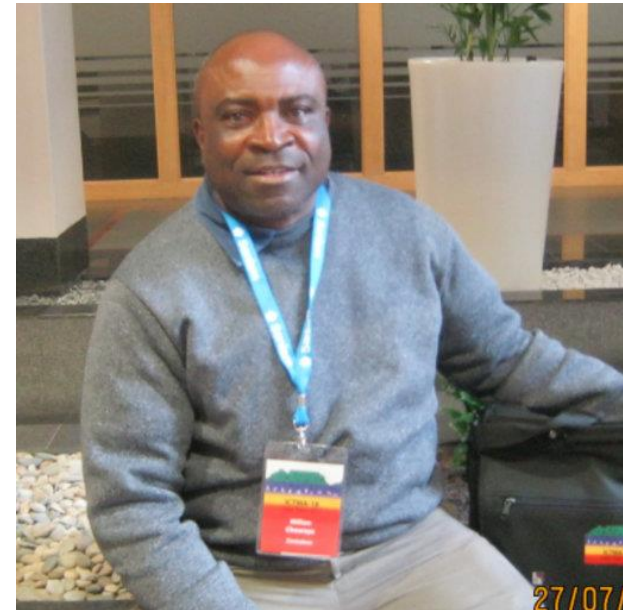
Adapted from
Coghlan & Brannick (2001).

Ameliorative vs. Transformative Change

- **Ameliorative Change (First-Order Change):**
 - Examples: Revising syllabus content, adopting new technologies, and minor pedagogical shifts.
 - **Goal:** Improve the functioning of existing systems without fundamentally altering their structure or values.
- **Transformative Change (Second-Order Change):**
 - Deep, systemic changes that challenge and reshape core ideologies and values of the system.
 - **Goal:** Create a paradigm shift, leading to a profound reimagining of education practices, structures, and objectives.

Example 1

Midlands State University: Curriculum Change Project



The Role of First-Order Change at MSU

- **First-Order Changes at MSU:**

- **Revised modules** and **course outlines** to integrate 21st-century competencies.
- **Pedagogical shifts** towards active learning, moving away from traditional lecturing.
- **Assessments** focused on real-life problems, life-long competencies, and attitudes.

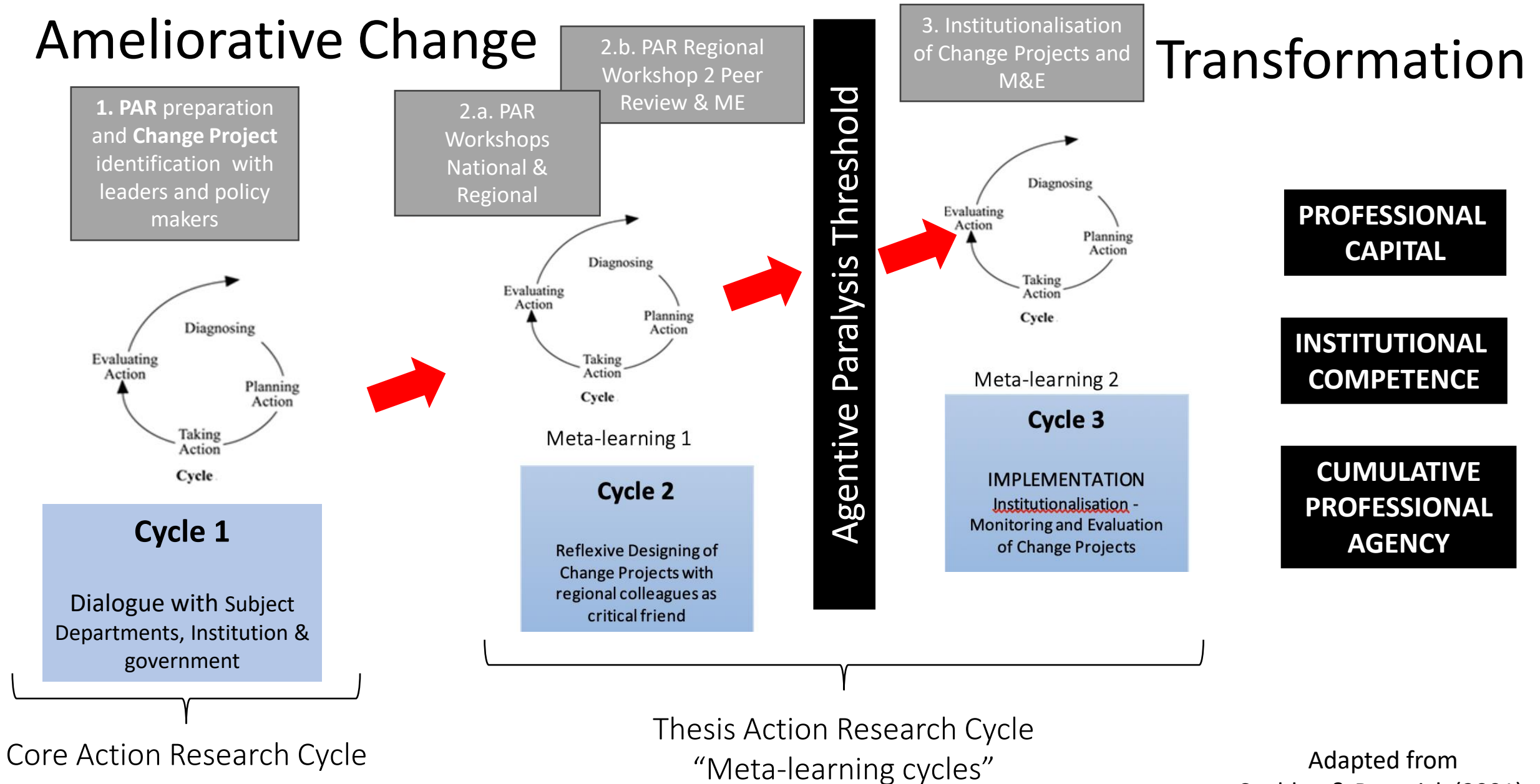
- **Examples:**

- Updated **module aims** to emphasize **critical thinking, problem-solving, and sustainability competencies**.
- Introduction of **active learning strategies** (e.g., project-based learning, collaborative learning) instead of passive delivery.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) Core and Meta Learning cycles (Urenje & Rumjaun 2017)

Ameliorative Change

Transformation



The problem with First-Order Change

- Can indeed perpetuate the status quo if not paired with transformative strategies
- Addressing symptoms rather than the root causes of issues
- Does not challenge the underlying structures and systems that perpetuate inequality or inefficiency
- Suspicious of creative destruction of the old system

Transformative Change at MSU: Vision and Challenges (in the future)

- **Long-Term Vision for MSU:**

- Transform teacher education to prepare students for the complex demands of the **21st century** and **sustainability**.
- Aim for a **paradigm shift** in how **teacher education** is approached, integrating **Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)** principles.

- **Challenges in Achieving Transformative Change:**

- Moving beyond incremental improvements to address deeper structural issues.
- Overcoming resistance to change within traditional educational frameworks.

Conclusion and Key Takeaways

- **Key Takeaways:**

- **Ameliorative changes** are necessary but not sufficient for achieving **transformative change** in education.
- MSU is working to **rebrand** teacher education by integrating **sustainability** and **active learning pedagogies**.
- True **transformative change** requires not just surface-level adjustments but **systemic shifts** in teaching, assessment, and educational values.

- **Looking Ahead:**

- MSU's efforts represent an important step towards **reforming teacher education** to meet the demands of the 21st century and sustainability goals.
- The journey from ameliorative to transformative change is ongoing, and **continuous reflection** and **adaptation** are key to success.

Thank You