



**Teaching heritage language in Mexican kindergarten:  
Is it possible to develop innovative methods  
and succeed within the current system?**

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# Teaching second language in kindergarten

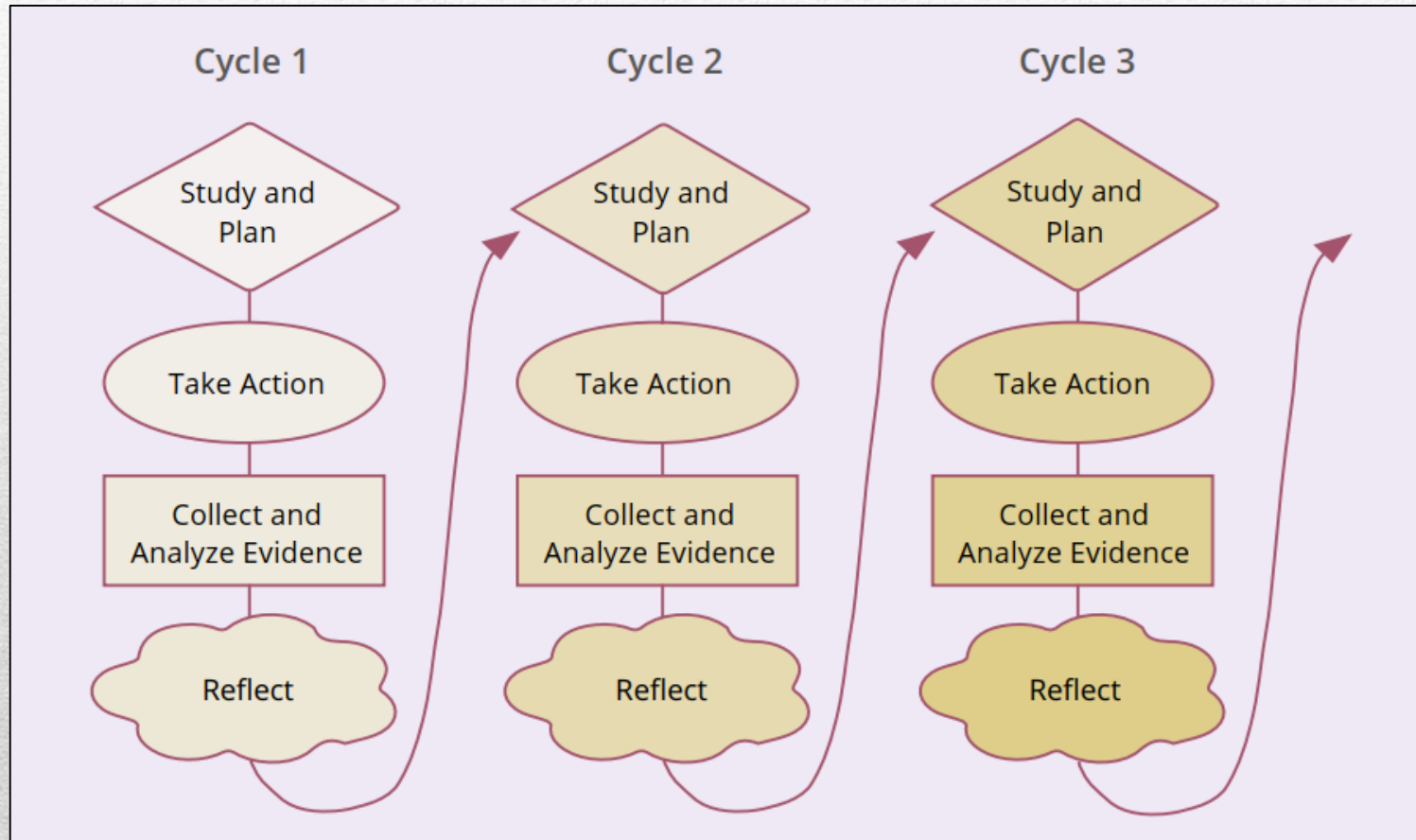
- Highest learning ability during the first years of our lives
- Willingness to learn anything through playing
- Listening, watching, imitating and practicing
- Enhancement in controlling attention and selectivity



# Participatory-Action Research (PAR)

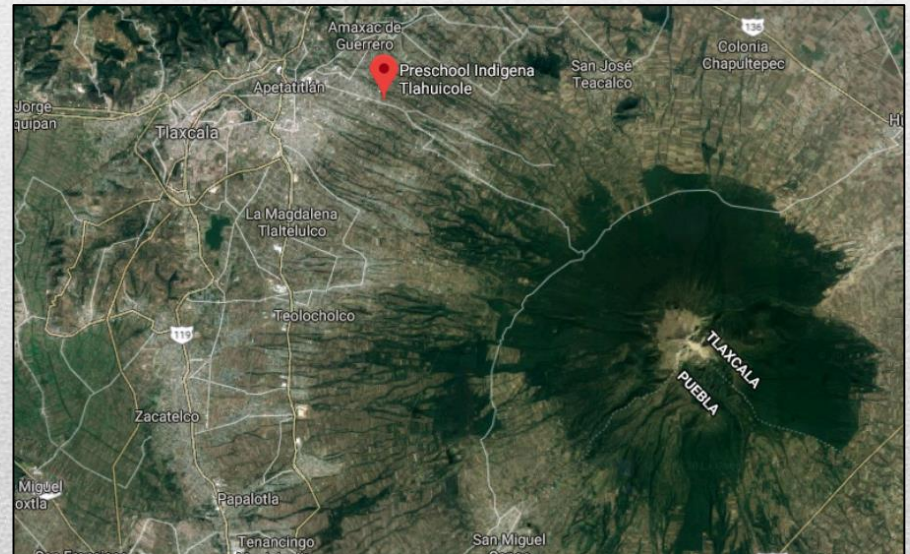
- Research conducted **IN** the community, **FOR** the community and **WITH** the community
  - Researcher(s) and participating community members are united by a goal to improve the community's well-being in certain aspect
  - The purpose of action research is to bring about change, analyzing what provokes the change and what does not
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# Four Phases of Action Research and Multiple Loop Learning





**2010 Census**  
**Total population:**  
**~ 1,170 000**



**Speakers of indigenous languages:**

**Nahuatl** – **23,402 (2 %)**

**Totonaco** – **1,668**

**Otomí** – **594**

# “Tlahuicole” kindergarten (interior)



# “Educación Indígena”: origins

- 1978: “Dirección General de Educación Indígena” established in Mexico
- Main purpose: create an alternative for assimilationist policies in public education
- Also: improve the quality of education in indigenous communities
- After 40 years of operating, the results leave much to be desired



# “Indigenous Education” in Tlaxcala: Organizational issues

- Lack of teachers’ training
- Lack of testing/evaluation of teachers’ capacities
- Nepotism
- Reluctance to feedback



Secretaría de Educación  
Pública de Tlaxcala



# “Indigenous Education” in Tlaxcala: Issues in teaching Nahuatl

- Lack of teaching materials
- Focus on writing and reading over speaking
- Formalistic approach  
(cramming texts without understanding)
- No leveling up



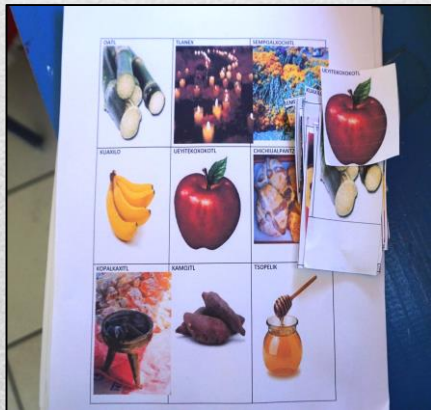
# Work Progress (Oct 2018 – Jan 2019)

- Acquaintance and access
- Observation of teaching practices
- Interviews with teachers
- Studying internal documentation (plans, reports, etc.)
- Collecting information about the work of other educational institutions in the area
- Discussion of findings and suggesting innovations
- Planning the implementation of innovations



# Teaching Attitudes and Practices of “Tlahuicole”

- Pro-Nahuatl ideology
- High level of enthusiasm
- Focus on games



# Suggested Experimental Innovations

- Active games with verbs:

- physical activity

- interactivity

- liberty

- inclusivity

- informativity

- An active game of true/false (“kema/amo”)

- Changing focus from reading & writing to speaking

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# Three Levels of Desirable Outcome

- ① Children enjoy new games and willingly participate
  - ② Children memorize Nahuatl verbs and learn how to use them in the game context
  - ③ Children spontaneously use Nahuatl verbs between the classes or outside the kindergarten (in communication between themselves, with teachers or their family)
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# Challenges for the implementation of innovations

- Teachers' workload
- Inconsistency with colloquial practices
- Changeability of the staff
- Internal disputes
- My own mistakes



For updates please visit: <http://colingua.eu>



Looking into the future with hope...

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