

The inviting professional educator: A reflective practitioner and action researcher

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This article calls for all educators (teachers, administrators, counselors, supervisors) to implement systematic reflection and action research in their day-to-day professional activities. Additionally, it invites readers to go one step beyond to publish - thus making their findings public. Relevant resources and suggestions for further reading are given at the end of the article

It is teachers who, in the end, will change the world of the school by understanding it.

(Lawrence Stenhouse, as cited in Rudduck, 1988, p.79.

The purpose of this article is two-fold: 1) to encourage educators (teachers, administrators, counselors, supervisors) to think about undertaking action research activities and 2) to publish their findings in the *Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice* (JITP).

Now before you say:

“Research! I can’t do that! I’m a teacher - NOT a researcher. Besides, I don’t have the necessary background in statistics nor publishing expertise.

Let me state some ‘home truths’ that just may get you to rethink your perception of your research and publishing ability.

What is Action Research?

It [Action Research] is research that is undertaken by educational practitioners because they believe that by doing so they can make better decisions and engage in better actions (Stephen M. Corey, 1953, p. viii).

In the first instance, ALL teachers in fact do undertake research! Corey (1949) succinctly stated:

Anyone who tries to get better evidence of the success or failure of his/her teaching or administrative or supervisory activities, and what he/she does in the light of this evidence is conducting a type of action research (p.149).

As can be inferred educators are undertaking research when they reflect on their non-systematic memories of teaching events.

However, systematic reflection of one’s professional practices, in order to increase teaching effectiveness, is the core of action research in an educational setting. Action

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research is an ideal approach for facilitating educational changes within a classroom, a school, across districts, if not nationally (Johnson, 2008).

The concept of teacher-as-researcher is not new. According to Parsons and Brown (2002) the concept of teacher-as-researcher has been around for many years:

Although action research is currently receiving a lot of attention among educators, it is far from a new or short-lived approach to professional practice. In fact, the concept of teacher-as-researcher was discussed in the 1920s. Further, the use of action research within the classroom has been in evidence since the early 1950s. (p. 4).

As previously stated educators have always undertaken research as they observed students, modified teaching strategies to improve learning, and cultivated a desire to improve their effectiveness and maintain their professionalism. So how does this “normal” teacher behavior differ from teacher-as-researcher? Author and educator Geoffrey Mills (2000) identifies the teacher-as-researcher as:

Any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counsellors, or other stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment to gather information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn (as cited in Henney, Stone, & Kelly, 2009, p. 5).

It can be inferred that systematic reflection of one’s activities is the hallmark of a teacher-as-researcher. The teacher-as-researcher systematically investigates his/her teaching and learning so as to improve their own and their students’ learning. The educational researcher, B. R. Buckingham (1926) supported this idea when he stated:

The teacher has opportunities for research, which if seized, will not only powerfully and rapidly develop the technique of teaching, but will also react to vitalize and dignify the work of the individual teacher (p. iv).

What is required of a teacher in order to undertake this systematic reflection is a five step process namely; Planning, Collecting data, Analyzing the data, Data reflection, and Action (implementing action based on findings). Undertaking this systematic reflective approach to teaching will not only improve one’s own teaching but in addition improve student learning (Henning et al., 2009; McIntyre, 2008).

Publishing

We have read your manuscript with boundless delight. If we were to publish your paper, it would be impossible for us to publish any work of lower standard. And as it is unthinkable that in the next thousand years we shall see its equal, we are, to our regret, compelled to return your divine composition, and to beg you a thousand times to overlook our short sight and timidity (A rejection letter from an economics journal).

All submissions to the *Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice* (JITP) will never receive such a letter as above. The Editor of the JITP and the Board of Reviewers employ a very inviting perception of the process that results in a published paper. Considerable support to authors in meeting the submission guidelines is provided. Additionally, upon request, the Editor and the Board of Reviewers are readily available to assist teachers-as-researchers in presentation styles, research design, and qualitative and quantitative analyses.

Submissions are expected to be relevant to invitational theory and practice and adhere to the published “Guidelines for Authors”, with particular reference to the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (APA, 2010). For concise JITP manuscript submission requirements refer to <http://www.nova.edu/~danshaw/jitp/subinfo.htm>.

Following review of a submission, authors receive detailed advice on how to improve their manuscript to meet the standards of the JITP. While not forgoing quality, the overriding principle of the JITP is to assist educators to publicize their invitational activities in a systematic and professional manner. By publishing the results of your research you have the opportunity to reach to the wider community, to share your findings, and to promote discussion.

Conclusion

Teachers learn best by studying, doing, and reflecting. By collaborating with other teachers; by looking closely at students and

their work. And by sharing what they see (Linda Darling-Hammond, 1999, p. 8).

A major goal of invitational theory is to encourage individuals to enrich their lives in each of four basic dimensions: 1) being personally inviting with oneself; 2) being personally inviting with others; 3) being professionally inviting with oneself; and 4) being professionally inviting with others (Purkey & Novak, 1996). By attempting to be a reflective, teacher-as-researcher, one is striving to be professionally inviting to oneself and to others. The underlying notion behind this approach is that to be successful, educators must develop an authentically professionally inviting attitude, toward themselves and others, both inside and outside of school. One way of achieving this goal is to undertake a systematic reflective approach to one’s educative activities and to share the findings of such activities with others. Undertaking such activities is surely an example of professional inviting with oneself and with others.

The following useful resources are included to assist new and aspiring authors to commence undertaking action research and in preparing your research for publication.

Further Reading

- Baumfield, V., Hall, E. & Wall, K. (2008). *Action research in the classroom*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Burton, D. M. & Bartlett, S. (2005). *Practitioner research for teachers*. London: Paul Chapman.
- Fichtman, D., & Yendol-Silva, D. (2003). *The reflective educator's guide to classroom research: Learning to teach and teaching to learn through practitioner inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Koshy, V. (2009). *Action research for improving educational practice: A step-by-step guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Mertler, C. (2006). *Action research: Teachers as researchers in the classroom*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Mills, G. (2006). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Noffke, S., & Somekh, B. (Eds.). (2009). *The SAGE handbook of educational action research*. London: SAGE.
- Sagor, R. (2005). *The action research guidebook: A four-step process for educators and school teams*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Stringer, E. (2008). *Action research in education* (2nd ed.). Columbus, OH: Prentice Hall.
- Whitehead, J. & McNiff, J. (2006). *Action research: Living theory*. London: SAGE.

Useful Action Research Websites

- <http://www.ericdigests.org/1993/researcher.htm>
(*Teacher-As-Researcher*)
- <http://teachingtoday.glencoe.com/howtoarticles/teacher-as-researcher-taking-action-research-to-task>
(*Taking Action Research to Task*)
- http://www.teach-nology.com/currenttrends/teach_as_rese/
(*Online Teacher Resource*)
- http://www.nefstem.org/teacher_guide/intro/index.htm
(*Action Research for Teachers*)
- <http://gse.gmu.edu/research/tr/>
(*Teacher-as-Researcher Resources*)
- http://www.nelliemuller.com/Action_Research_Projects.htm
(*Action Research Projects for Teachers*)
- <http://www.teachers.tv/video/4883>
(*Action Research Video*)

Useful Publication Resource Websites

<http://www.nova.edu/~danshaw/jitp/subinfo.htm>

(*Journal of Invitational Theory and Practice Manuscript Submission Information*)

<http://flash1r.apa.org/apastyle/whatsnew/index.htm>

(*What's New in American Psychological Association 6th edition Publication Manual*)

<http://apastyle.apa.org/>

(*American Psychological Association Style Website*)

<http://www.docstyles.com/apacrib.htm>

(*American Psychological Association Publication Style Crib Sheet*)

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

(*American Psychological Association 6th ed. Formatting and Style Guide*)

<http://www.psychwww.com/resource/APA%20Research%20Style%20Crib%20Sheet.htm>

(*American Psychological Association Research Style Crib Sheet*)

<http://umclibrary.crk.umn.edu/apa6thedition.pdf>

(*American Psychological Association Format, 6th ed., 2010*)

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- Corey, S. (1953). *Action research to improve school practices*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (1999). Teacher learning that supports student learning. *Educational Leadership*, 55, 6-11.
- Henning, J., Stine, J., & Kelly, J. (2009). *Using action research to improve instruction: An interactive guide for teachers*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Johnson, A. (2008). *What every teacher should know about action research*. Columbus, OH: Allyn and Bacon.
- McIntyre, A. (2008). *Participatory action research*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE.
- Mills, G. (2000). *Action Research: A guide for the teacher researcher*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
- Parsons, R., & Brown, K. (2002). *Teacher as reflective practitioner and action researcher*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/ Thomas.
- Purkey, W., & Novak, J. (1996). *Inviting school success: A self-concept approach to teaching and learning* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Rudduck, J. (1988). Changing the world of the classroom by understanding it: A review of some aspects of the work of Lawrence Stenhouse. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 4, 30-42.