Action Research:

Self-directed Professional
Development

•Professional Development/Teacher Appraisal

- •Purpose? to help us become better teachers
- •That's great – doesn't apply
- •When was the last time you were actually in a classroom?
- •Thanks – Already learned this stuff in college

•Action Research as a tool

- •Direct application within your classroom, right now
- •Self-directed professional development
- •Think of a problem in your classroom/area of interest (frame of reference)

What Is Action Research?

- Derived from problem-based learning model
- Planned inquiry
- Reflective practice
- Real-time, real-world application

•Good teachers already use reflective practice to make themselves better… AR is just a formalization of this reflection and goal setting.

Traditional vs. Action Research

- Explanation … Improvement
- Knowledge … Development
- Experimentation … Perspectives
- Universal … Local

■ Source: Schmuck, 1997

•Difference is in the objectives, means, and scope:

  •TR seeks explanations for what is, AR seeks progress toward what should be

  •TR broadens knowledge base, AR develops teachers and learners collaboratively

  •TR uses experimentation to gain perspective, AR uses various perspectives to solve problems and make changes

  •TR creates generalizations for universal application, AR creates solutions for local application

Action Research is…

- Practical
- Participative
- Empowering
- Interpretive
- Tentative
- Critical

- Source: Schmuck, 1997

•Practical – already discussed

•Participative – students are participants in the process, not subjects in an experiment

•Empowering – developing metacognition and reflective teaching

•Interpretive – gaining understanding through various perspectives

•Tentative – continuous cycle of change and improvement, not one final answer

•Critical – holding a mirror up to ourselves… challenging and sometimes painful

Phases of Action Research

- Initiation: Research *for* Action
    – Find and shape problem
    – Collect and analyze data
    – Implement strategies
- Detection: Research *in* Action
    – Collect and analyze data
- Judgment: Research *of* Action
    – Evaluate results
    – Plan future actions
        - Sources: Sagor, 1992 & Schmuck, 1997

Phase I: Initiation

- Select focus
  - "Hot" topics (cooperative learning, testing, brain-compatible classroom, etc.)
  - Areas of interest
  - Forces inhibiting/promoting progress
  - Goals not being achieved
- Breadth/depth
  - Answerable questions
  - One to two year scope

Phase I: Initiation

- Shape problem
  - Discrepancy between what is and what should be
- Collect data as evidence of discrepancy
- Research analysis
- Select and plan interventions

Phase II: Detection

- Implement solutions
- Collect and analyze data

Phase III: Judgment

- Evaluate results of implemented solutions
- Reflect on implementation phase and effectiveness of solutions
- Plan future interventions and research
- Publish results

Potential Research Topics:

- Ability Grouping
- Classroom Management
- Cooperative Learning/Peer Tutoring
- Bilingual Instruction
- Learning Theory
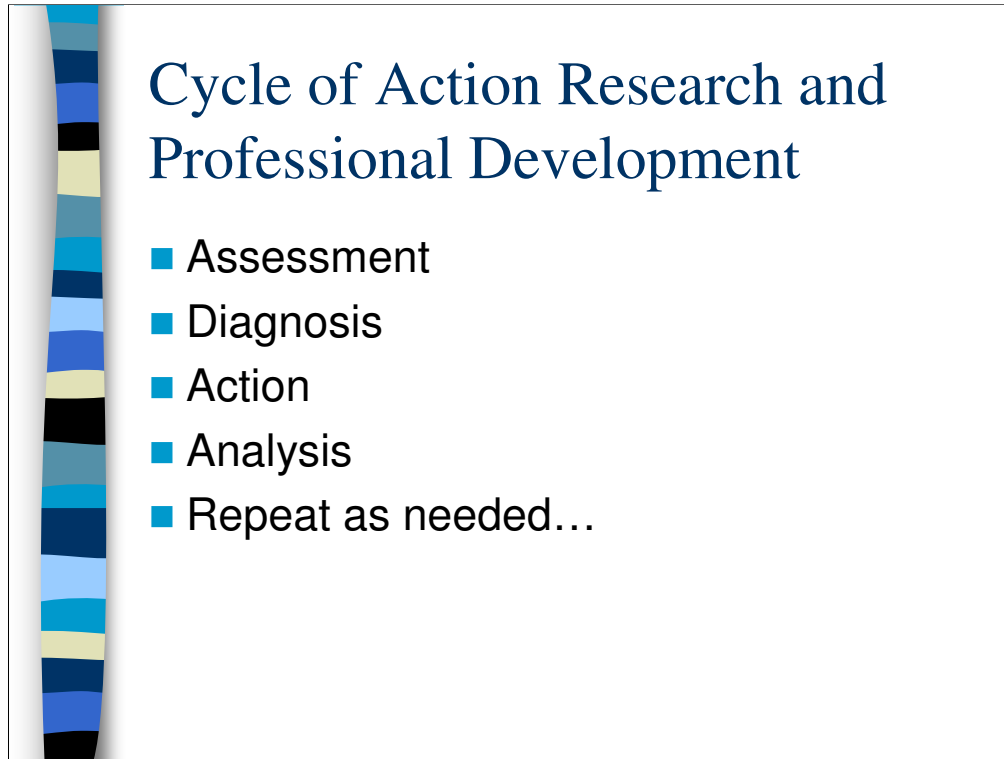
- Source: Berliner & Casanova, 1996

Potential Research Topics:

- Motivation
- Parent Involvement
- Citizenship/Character Education
- Performance/Authentic Assessment
- Standardized Tests/Test Anxiety
- Others?

•Multiple intelligences

•Assessment strategies

•State standards (implementation)

Cycle of Action Research and Professional Development

- Assessment
- Diagnosis
- Action
- Analysis
- Repeat as needed…

Resources

- www.reecezone.com/portfolio
  - Action research project in progress
- www.reecezone.com/EDUC630.htm
  - Web resources for action research
- FirstSearch
  - Databases of professional journals and dissertations
  - Available through Riverdale's library

References

- Berliner, D. C., & Casanova, U. (1996). *Putting research to work in your school.* Arlington Heights, IL: Skylight Professional Development.
- Sagor, R. (1992). *How to conduct collaborative action research.* Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Schmuck, R. A. (1997). *Practical action research for change.* Arlington Heights, IL: Skylight Professional Development.