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](http://www.reecezone.com/portfolio) – Action research project in progress
- [www.reecezone.com/EDUC630.htm](http://www.reecezone.com/EDUC630.htm) – Web resources for action research
- FirstSearch
  - Databases of professional journals and dissertations
  - Available through Riverdale’s library
References