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Editorial Introduction

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An On-line Journal for Teacher Research

Editorial Introduction

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“Action research is a democratic and participative orientation to knowledge creation. It brings together action and reflection, theory and practice, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern. Action research is a pragmatic co-creation of knowing *with*, not *on*, people.” (Bradbury, 2015, p. 1)

Action research comes in various forms such as teacher inquiry, participatory action research, practitioner research, and cooperative inquiry. But, as Bradbury’s introduction to the third edition of the *SAGE Handbook of Action Research* highlights, “It brings together action and reflection, theory and practice, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern.” The articles in this eighteenth volume of *Network: An Online Journal for Teacher Research* illustrate the unique combination of action and reflection, theory and practice that leads to increased knowledge and understanding of educator practice across grade levels and subject areas.

Combining participatory action research (PAR) and the performing arts in “Poetics of Justice: Using Art as Action and Analysis in Participatory Action Research,” Ayala and Zaal show how high school-aged youths and adults worked together in short research camps to use art, poetry, music and multimedia to understand and communicate changes in educational policies in New Jersey. The camps provided spaces for reflection and interpretation through art, which led to action within the community.

Action research is more than a procedure, it is a way of thinking and being in the classroom, according to Rainville and Enriquez’s article “Researching and Reshaping Literacy Learning: Three Urban K-6 Teachers’ Ongoing Transformations through Everyday Action Research.” They follow the transformation of three in-service teachers who engaged in action research in their literacy classrooms for a graduate-level course. Through the process of negotiating the roles of teacher and researcher, the teachers realized that the ways of thinking about practice within the boundaries of action research became part of their everyday teaching lives and expanded their leadership roles within their schools.

Using cooperative inquiry methods, Bower-Phipps, Cruz, Albaladejo, Johnson, and Homa reflect on how their experiences of being “othered” (being an outsider) throughout their teacher preparation impact their professional work in the article “Developing as Teachers and as Researchers: Emerging Professionals’ Experiences with Cooperative Inquiry.” Having completed a first cycle of inquiry together previously, in this article, the researchers review the long-term impact of participating in a cooperative inquiry project and encourage other teachers to participate in similar projects. Through their participation, they have increased their understanding of themselves, become advocates for recognizing marginalized people, and intentionally provide experiences for their own students to increase awareness of “othering” and to combat stereotyping.

In a classic example of action research, Benders and Craft investigate the teacher’s use of flexible grouping in a first-grade math classroom in “The Effect of Flexible Small Groups on Math Achievement in First Grade.” Craft, the classroom teacher, shows how she defined her research question, developed an action research plan, and completed the research. Her investigation showed her the benefits of providing a workshop-type approach in her math instruction to provide targeted instruction in flexible groups.

Morrison’s article “Teaching about Neoliberalism and Education De/reforms in Teacher Education Courses” highlights the cyclical nature of action research in her inquiry on how to teach about current educational policies in a teacher education program. In three rounds of inquiry, Morrison framed and reframed her problem statement; tried different pedagogies, assignments, and readings; and found specific activities that helped her student become critical thinkers about the rhetoric and policies of education in the United States.

Drawing from self-study techniques and document analysis, Dippre applies Brandt’s notion of sponsors of literacy to better understand his high school English classes and explore the sponsors of his own teaching pedagogies in his article “Sponsorshaping: How a Teacher Used Sponsors of Literacy for Pedagogical Purposes.” He found five sponsoring forces in his documents for students and parents (syllabus, assignments) that shaped the way he portrayed his class and pedagogy.

Finally, Dziedzic reviews *Engaging in Action Research: A Practical Guide to Teacher-Conducted Research for Educators and School Leaders* by Jim Parsons, Kurtis Hewson, Lorna Adrian, and Nicole Day. Dziedzic states that this overview of action research “straddles both practitioner and academic worlds” and is a useful text for both students of education (undergraduate or graduate) and educators.

Bradbury stated in the *SAGE Handbook of Action Research* that, “Action researchers nearly always start with a question, such as “How can we improve this situation?” (2015, p. 1). Each of the inquiries published in this volume asks a question like this and seeks to improve practice, inform action, and make a particular situation better. What questions do you have about your work? Hopefully this edition will inspire you to ask your own questions, plan your own research, and take action to make a positive impact in your community.

References

Bradbury, H. (2015). Introduction to the SAGE handbook of action research. In Bradbury, H. (Ed.), *The SAGE Handbook of Action Research, 3e.* (pp. 1-9). London: Sage Publications