Let it Be Known! Sharing your Results

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

• What are the best ways to share my findings?
• Why should I share my work at a conference?
• What are the key components of a report detailing your findings?

Many action researchers are not expected to share their findings or produce written reports, yet it is a useful endeavor for not only the educator-researcher, but also for colleagues in their related fields. For those who are compelled or required to share their findings, Hopkins (2003, 140) provides some guidance, asserting that all action researchers need to share their data and share it in a way that:

• the study could be replicated in another context;
• the evidence used to generate claims or action is clearly documented;
• the action taken as a result of the research is
the findings are accessible to the consumer and relatable to their practice.

I personally believe it is important to formally share your work one way or another, or at least prepare it to be shared. This process helps you think deeply and concisely about what you have researched, what your findings were, and what the significance is for you and your colleagues. When you prepare your work for public consumption, you add another layer of scrutiny and validity to your thinking and editing process.

Action researchers can share their findings in several ways that colleagues and other consumers of research will be able to engage with their work. The three following ways are the most common paths for educator-researchers to share their work:

1. **Written Report or Article**
   - Develop a report for personal documentation or to be shared with colleagues.
   - Write an article summarizing your research and its significance to the field.

2. **Presentation**
   - Local, State, Regional, National, or International Conference
   - District or School-Wide Professional Learning Session or Workshop
   - Research Symposium
3. **Web-based Contribution**

- Webinar
- Blog
- Personal Website

**Writing a Report or Article**

Regardless of the purposes for writing your report or article, there are a few factors to consider as you begin to write. Remember, the purpose of action research is to improve your practice and/or implement change, based on the findings of your research, as part of professional learning and development as an educator. As mentioned in previous chapters, your goal as an action researcher is not to make generalizable claims, but to share your research with other educators who want to learn from it, develop a similar study, or use your findings to improve their own teaching in a similar context. Whether it is a report that you share on your own, or an article accepted, edited, and published by a journal or magazine, the important part is to share your findings and contribute to the knowledge base.

Before you begin, the primary task is to consider the audience you are addressing and the requirements and the purpose of your report or article. An article usually has a specific audience and purpose. For example, if I submit an article to the *Elementary Social Studies Journal*, then I am trying to inform elementary teachers about my findings in social studies and I am providing pedagogical insights to them. However, reports can have several purposes depending on the intent and audience. Reports can be for the purpose of:

- Reporting to Grant or External Funding Agency;
- Completing a thesis or dissertation;
- Contributing to a Pedagogical or Educational Database;
- Documenting for Personal, Administrative, or District-Level Record.
Regardless of the purpose, it is important to demonstrate a clear and consistent understanding of the issues you have researched. With the exception of reports to some grant or external funding agencies (as they may require formal writing or templates), when reporting on your action research, the quality of your writing can be enhanced by writing in an authentic and personal style. I have always felt that reporting action research is often powerful for one's own professional learning and development because of the personal nature of the writing. It may be useful to think about it as you are reporting your own story, based on your experiences and collaborations with other people.

When writing a report or article you will want to have representations of the following sections:

- **Problematization of your Topic** (Why is your topic important to you or the field?)
- **Literature Review and Underlying Theories** (What do we know and not know?)
- **Methodology** (How was your study structured, what data was collected, and how was data analyzed?)
- **Summary of Findings** (What were the predominant themes, codes, patterns, or meaningful consequences of the study?)
- **Discussion of Findings’ Significance** (How do your findings compare to the literature?)
- **Implications of Findings for Practice** (How will your findings impact your practice?)

These sections will help you think about the important aspects of
your study, as well as the aspects that will be of interest to potential readers.

**Imagine the Reader**

As an educator-researcher you can imagine many of your colleagues as potential readers of your work. Imagining potential readers is a useful strategy to utilize as you write your report. In this vein, and as you think about the aforementioned sections, the following considerations provide further guidance in the writing process:

- Always provide the background to your study, your context, and your positionality as an educator-researcher. Readers will potentially relate to your study and more easily apply the findings to their own context.
- Clearly present your aims, intentions, and purposes to situate your study and present your findings within the context of what you have set out to achieve.
- Do not be afraid to describe the process, success and challenges, as readers appreciate realism and honesty.
- Write clearly and concisely so others may be able to replicate the study.
- Write in first person if it feels more natural and accurate to the study.
- Readers may not be knowledgeable about your topic. Be concise and explain all aspects of your study in clear, simple language, and explain any educational jargon to be clear about its meaning.
- It is easier to read text with subheadings. Use subheadings when possible.

Since your study will likely be an inquiry into your own practice, remember our discussions from other chapters related to subjectivity:

- Acknowledge your own beliefs, prior assumptions, and values
as part of your positionality or bias statement.

- Acknowledge any experiences that will relate directly to the study and your interpretations of the data.
- Discuss any ethical issues and how you addressed them.

Presentations of Action Research

There are many ways for educator researchers to present their findings. Some educator researchers present their research findings to colleagues and others at discipline-specific conferences before writing their final reports, as they believed that the preparation for the presentation helped to bring their thoughts together. Many others present their research findings after they have written out their reports, and still, many other researchers do not write a formal report, but instead disseminate their research through various presentations in other ways. These different methods of presentations all serve the purpose of bringing their ideas together and reflecting on them before sharing their work with colleagues and others. Here are some examples of presentations.

Conference presentations

A primary way for academic researchers to disseminate their research is through conference presentations at either the local, state, regional, national, or international level. I encourage educator-researchers to do the same, as these are some of the best ways to share your research with engaged and captivated audiences who attended the conference specifically to find out about new research. Similar to writing an article for a specific journal, many conferences will have a disciplinary or developmental level focus that will allow you to present your work to the most interested audience.

District or school-wide professional learning session or workshop

As an educator in a school context, your districts and schools will undoubtedly offer professional learning opportunities or workshops. Educators in the district or
school are often encouraged to present at these events, especially if you are researching a new initiative implemented by the district or school.

Research Symposium

If you and some other colleagues have all done action research studies, or maybe a group of colleagues researched the same topic, it would be appropriate to create a research symposium to share your work. These can be formal or informal, but they are a way to have a conference-like setting focused on a specific topic and for specific audience.

Web-Based Contributions

Many educator researchers are simply and effectively sharing their research online. There are many ways to share your research online, including some ways that would be in combination with writing an article, report, or sharing at a conference on an organization’s website. However, the most common ways for individual educator researchers to share their work is through providing a webinar, contributing to a blog, or uploading to a personal website. These online formats all provide a way for educator researchers to present their work and reflect on it with the potential to receive feedback from others. Below are some journals specifically focused on publishing education-based action research:

Action Research Publications

- **Action Research** – a print-based, international, interdisciplinary, peer reviewed, quarterly published refereed journal which is a forum for the development of the theory and practice of action research
  [https://journals.sagepub.com/home/arj](https://journals.sagepub.com/home/arj)
- **Educational Action Research** – Supported by Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) a print-based peer reviewed journal.
  [https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/reac20/current](https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/reac20/current)
- **Journal of Teacher Action Research** – an open-access,
online, international journal that publishes peer-reviewed articles and lesson plans written by teachers and researchers to inform classroom practice.  
http://www.practicalteacherresearch.com/

- **Inquiry in Education** – an online, peer reviewed international journal of action research in education and related fields.  
  https://digitalcommons.nl.edu/ie/

- **Networks: An Online Journal for Teacher Research** – offers a place for sharing reports of action research, in which teachers at all levels, kindergarten to postgraduate, are reflecting on classroom practice through research ventures.  
  https://newprairiepress.org/networks/

**Concluding Thoughts**

As we discussed in Chapter 1 of this book, Action Research is a cycle—the process is ongoing, and for many teachers, once you engage in Action Research, it becomes difficult to stop pursuing new and interesting questions in your classroom. As you answer one question, new ideas and issues emerge, prompting a new modification, and so on. Action Research, as such, is not finite. For teacher action researchers, disseminating your work is an important step in this cycle, as it offers you an opportunity to contribute your new knowledge to the field at-large, and it can open the door to new learning opportunities for both you and your colleagues. Please do not get stressed out about the dissemination portion of this cycle. Simply find the best way for you to share your hard work and accomplish your intended goals. The important part is to share your work and share in a way that allows you to deeply reflect, celebrate your progress, get feedback, and contemplate your next steps or project. The best teachers are lifelong learners, and Action Research allows you the space to continue the deep learning that is necessary in education. Hopefully, this book has provided a vehicle to engage in a cycle of research in your classroom.
The following supplemental chapter contains a full-length vignette from a high school English teacher. The vignette details the steps to an action research project using a real-life example from her classroom. While every project will look different, the vignette serves as an outline for how action research can develop from your classroom wonderings, and it includes the detailed steps the teacher took to fulfill all the parts of action research as outlined in this book.