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Suzanne Porath

UW-Madison, porath@wisc.edu

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A Comprehensive Step: A Book Review of *Teachers Taking Action*

Reviewed by Suzanne Porath

Lassonde, C. & Israel, S. (Eds.). (2008). *Teachers taking action: A comprehensive guide to teacher research*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Action research, as a term, has been around for over half a century, but it has only become accepted as legitimate research within the last two decades. In education, action research both challenges and is informed by traditional scholarly research and promises to empower teachers to become active participants, and not just consumers of university-based research. Cynthia Lassonde, an assistant professor at the State University of New York College, and Susan Israel, a literacy consultant, have provided an overview of the action research process in their book *Teachers Taking Action: A Comprehensive Guide to Teacher Research*, a 2008 monograph of the International Reading Association.

This edited title is intended to promote teacher research within K-12 schools and schools of education. The book is divided into six parts that guide the reader from the foundations of teacher research, through the process of completing an action research project, and into some future directions in teacher research. Although each chapter is written by a different author, there are common features across the chapters that provide unity. In addition, the International Reading Association's website for the book provides several case studies to accompany the book. These features make this a useful text for teacher education classes, and one that could just as easily be applied to study groups or for individual personal reflection.

Part 1 begins with the foundations of teacher research, with an emphasis on helping the reader craft an identity as a teacher researcher, and provides an overview of the process. Part 2 discusses the fundamentals of developing a research project, such as framing a researchable question, choosing research methods, and planning the project. Because this book is not a handbook of methods, each research methodology receives only about a paragraph of attention. It is clear that teacher researchers would need to follow up with more in-depth texts to understand the specific methods they have chosen to employ. In Part 3, Chapter 6 explains organization and analysis of qualitative data, and Chapter 7 highlights potential complications in cooperation or collaboration in teacher research. The details on data analysis are minimal and teacher researchers would need further study to fully understand how to examine data.

The last half of the book is concerned with the external issues of teacher research such as funding and publishing. Although included in Part 3, Chapter 7 (mentioned above) seems more appropriate for Part 4 - Supportive Strategies and Funding - as it illustrates the benefits and drawbacks of collaboration in teacher research. Much of Chapter 8 centers on real teachers' stories to illustrate perceived stumbling blocks and the problem-solving processes these teachers used to complete their action research projects. Vital issues such as

ethics and bias in research, becoming critical consumers of published research, and creating a comprehensive plan for research before implementation, are briefly touched on in Chapter 9. Grant writing and funding often become the determining factors in completing classroom research, especially if new materials or equipment must be purchased. Because there are many other books specifically dedicated to grant writing, the authors provide only a brief synopsis of grant writing in Chapter 10.

Presenting finished research projects is the theme of Part 5, including finding an appropriate voice in writing, reviewing the publication process, and delivering a polished presentation. The conclusion of the book asks the question, "Where do we go from here?" and looks at some theoretical and political issues of teacher research. The authors also propose a research agenda focusing on the area of literacy for future teacher researchers. The Appendices

provide an annotated bibliography of resources, a list of associations and conferences of interest to educators, and reproducible forms for use in research.

As an introductory text, *Teachers Taking Action* provides what it promises: a comprehensive look at teacher research. However, the wide-ranging scope of the book limits the depth of any particular topic. Novice teacher researchers would appreciate the clear organization of the chapters, concise writing style and especially the bibliography of resources in the appendices, to further their understanding of research processes. Experienced teacher researchers might use this book to introduce fellow practitioners to action research. This book is a solid first step to understanding the complex, exciting and challenging process of teacher research, with plenty of resources to lead the researcher to the next step.