

Action Research

Prof Revathi Viswanathan

ABSTRACT

Teachers need to focus on their teaching strategies and their students' performance in the classroom. It is worthwhile to mention that teachers have to periodically conduct classroom-based research to review the impact of their teaching on students' participation in learning. This article emphasizes the importance of doing action research and discusses the stages of action research for the practicing teachers to understand the concept.

Keywords: classroom-based research, teaching strategies, reflective diary, interpretation of data

The term 'Action Research' refers to a classroom based research, which could be conducted by practicing teachers whenever they come across an issue in the teaching and learning process. Before you understand the concept, try to answer the questions,

1. How do you rate the success or failure from your classroom experience?
2. What makes a classroom experience challenging or unsatisfactory? Which aspects of it proves problematic?

According to Stremmel (2002), when a practicing teacher handles a research it takes many forms and serves a range of purposes, but it is conducted by teachers, individually or collaboratively, with the primary aim of understanding teaching and learning in context and from the perspectives of those who live and interact daily in the classroom (Meier & Henderson 2007; Zeichner 1999).

Now let us understand the process involved in a classroom based research

Steps involved

1. Identify a problem
eg. Students' lack of interest in writing skills

2. Develop questions and examine assumptions
Eg. Why do students lack interest to write in English? How can I motivate students to show interest in writing.

3. Gather data
Eg. Qualitative data—Observation notes on activities given to students in writing and students' responses to the tasks given.
Quantitative data – short tests in writing and the score given based on rubrics in writing.

4. Analyze data
Eg. Qualitative data—analyse your observations about each student's performance to tasks given compare that with the score got (quantitative data)

5. Interpret data
Eg. See if there is any relation between qualitative data and the quantitative data.

6. Take action
Eg. Design more tasks that would help students show commitment to writing.

Data collection methods

When you conduct an action research, like any

research study, you need to collect data. The qualitative data includes Narrative inquiry, i.e what teacher researchers can use in the form of field notes, interviews, journals, letters, oral stories, and autobiographical memories, as qualitative data. In other words, you need to maintain a record of the activities given in the classroom, our teaching strategies, the effectiveness of using those teaching methods and the responses of the chosen sample, in the form of observation notes, oral narration and reflective diary. If you plan to conduct an interview, the recording of those audio or video files will be considered as qualitative data.

Similarly, the quantitative data has to be collected through

- ★ Surveys or questionnaires – a set of standardized questions that explore a specific topic and collect information about demographics, opinions, attitudes or behaviours.– can be created with Google forms or Survey monkey or menti.com– use rating scales
- ★ Students writing samples/test papers/ homework(relating to the aspect taken up for research)

Analysis of data

a. You need to analyze the qualitative data collected through various tools like interviews, observation notes, reflective journals and oral stories or narrations. Similarly, the scores received by the sample (quantitative data) for their responses to tasks have to be analysed.

b. The results got from the analysis of qualitative data have to be compared with the scores got from

quantitative data. In this way it is possible to verify the relation in the results got from both the data.

Interpretation of data

The analyses of the results provide us the insight about the effectiveness of teaching and learning process. If the observation and the score prove that the selected samples have shown improvement, then arrive at the conclusion that the particular strategy had worked well.

It must be stated that once the research is completed, it is necessary to use those successful teaching strategies more for students to perform better in their learning process. However, if you identify that a particular teaching strategy has not given positive results, you have to attempt another strategy, collect data, analyse the data and interpret the results again.

Thus, it is essential to know that a classroom based research is an ongoing study done in a classroom.

Reference:

Stremmel, A. (2002). The value of teacher research: Nurturing professional and personal growth through inquiry. *Voices of Practitioners*. Retrieved from <https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/pubs/Value%20of%20Teacher%20Research.pdf>

Prof. Revathi Viswanathan, a former Professor & Head, English at B.S.Abdur Rahman Crescent University, Chennai, is currently serving as a freelance ELT Consultant and Teacher Trainer. She has 26 years of teaching experience at the tertiary level.