

Action research

Education



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The idea for my action research study came from observing a heated conversation in the teacher's lounge. Several teachers complained about the new principal while others silently and cautiously agreed. More and more often the displeasure of her tactics with the teachers and other staff members was becoming more prominent and crystallized as the topic for a possible research. (See More on this page)

I was not so sure, however, whether the new principal (let us call her Mrs. A.) was aware of her affect on people. The topic entailed the small-scale active research format involving opinions and debates of willing participants. I knew I had to be careful not to create a situation of more of a social nature versus investigative and productive framework. I decided to call my action plan "An investigation into perceptions and opinions of successful practices in school management styles," thus centering and going away from Mrs. A. becoming a target of negative attention.

This was professional issue, and I knew that I needed some development in my knowledge within the subject, hence the need to be objective and to keep an open mind to extend the boundaries of my understanding in both directions. This was an opportunity to help both the school staff and the school administrator. The active part of the research came from the approach to actively involve all concerned (including Mrs. A.) and secure their cooperation by agreeing to answer a questionnaire (one in the beginning of the process and another at the end to raise the internal validity index) and the attitude survey.

In addition, and before the questionnaire was distributed, I invited all participants to participate in an open but formal debate with the specific structure and time limits. To elicit honest perspectives and avoid the threat of bias (I was a teacher in that school), I recruited an independent industrial/organizational psychology student from the local university to conduct and supervise the debate. I knew that I needed to remove myself from any perception of power or control over the resulting data to guarantee the validity to the process. Thus, the psychology student with the help of his professor also performed all statistical analysis. Moreover, I felt that the questions on the questionnaire I designed initially were too biased toward my own opinions.

I therefore, asked the same psychology student to redesign the questions for me. Once the questionnaire was ready, I took some extra time to personally meet with all participants and explain the purpose of the research. I was very careful not to give an impression that I had any private agenda in such matter. Designing the study as the technically oriented research I welcomed any duplication to increase reliability. Understanding my purpose in designing this action research plan, every participant was very cooperative.

After the questionnaires were administered and collected, I realized that an independent observer might perceive a possibility to gender bias in judging responses of the questions: both the psychology student and myself were males while the rest of participants were females. Conducting this research as active helped me to develop two relevant professional purposes: the data resulting from interviews and from the questionnaire are context related as well as the subject to external and mutual influences. The second purpose is <https://assignbuster.com/action-research-research-paper-samples/>

personal growth with the ability to generate new perspectives for all participants and non-participants alike. Sardo-Brown (1995) rose an interesting point about the practical benefits for practicing teachers conducting own research within their classrooms.

This practice has the potential to influence the teacher's work and to elevate themotivationand the desire to affect his or her students. The practitioner usually would begin with some questions defining the problem that is being present within the classroom life. Such problem is more relevant to the teacher who teaches that class than to the administrator(s). The solution of this problem relies on identifying the exact cause and finding a methodology to compensate for the negative affect. The teacher who becomes an active researcher has greater sense ofresponsibilityand motivation since the resolved problem will improve visibly the quality of work being performed.

Action research, then, is the tool carried out by the practitioner him or herself to address a practical problem and to influence practice affording greater responsibility. There is a sense of empowerment that becomes a source of increasing the teachers' role in school-wideleadershipand decision-making. To demonstrate the effectiveness of active research mode-type practices Sardo-Brown (1995) described the research processes of six classroom teachers; two of which taught at elementary level, two at the middle level, and two at the high school level.

More recent account was presented by Merrill (2004) who directly posited a question, " When was the last time you sat back and contemplated how effective your teaching is?" Most certainly, this type of inquiry can be asked

in any field of human endeavor, but the teaching is the most prominent since the quality of which is influenced by so many variables. This author had a particular interest in sustained technology education and hence was his interest in action research. To his credit, Merrill quoted a very descriptive definition of action research from the works of Stephen Corey (1953): A continual disciplined inquiry conducted to inform and improve our practice as educators. Action research asks educators to study their practice and its context, explore the research base for ideas, compare what they find to their current practice, participate in training to support needed changes, and study the effects on themselves, their students, and colleagues (Calhoun, 2002, p. 18).

This definition in its fullness describes the method and purposes behind such process. It names the research as an “ inquiry” implying on the generally set and the most primal purpose behind any research. Then it directs our attention as its reflect-ability. Indeed, we need to study our own practice and its context, “ explore the research base for ideas and compare (what was found) with (our) current practice...” But the main prerogative is to improve what we are doing even if its subjectively successful (Merrill, 2004). That main purpose was also supported by Zuber-Skerritt (1996) who provided the plan and concrete pathway to form new directions in action research. They were instrumental in that by first providing the readers in exact description and identification of different types of action research. They supported the practical definition of Calhoun by stating, “ Action research is research into practice, by practitioners, for practitioners...” Despite to such a practical

view, this author's book provided a good research foundation on how to do the action research and what exactly it is.

Works Cited

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