

Celebrating Success with Action Research

Dr. Penelope Keough

National University

Los Angeles, California, USA

E-Leader Croatia

June 6-8, 2011

Presentation Outcomes

1. Participants' awareness that Action Research can benefit an entire community.
2. Tools to support Action Research students for successful completion of the project.
3. Why it is vital to see students through to the completion of their project.



What is Action Research?



“Action Research is any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principles, school counselors, or other stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment....This information is gathered with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment (and on educational practices in general), and improving student outcomes and the lives of those involved” (Mills, 2011,p.5).

Need for Simplistic Theory

- Method to clarify components of AR so students grasp action research plan
- Only 1/3 of Master's Degree candidates were completing program
- Department adopted "Option 2": rigorous literature review plus "reflective element" to Chapter 4.



Theoretical Framework



- Constructivist Theory: the intent is to teach Action Research as a reciprocal interchange of statement of need/problem, purpose, and research question which drives methodology. A concrete approach to learning and teaching!
- Induction Theory: Focusing on the specific components of Action Research and their ultimate connection can bring the project together seamlessly.

Key Aspects of AR



1. Background/Statement of the problem
2. Purpose
3. Research Question (drives methodology)
4. Context of the study, i.e. participants, setting
5. Literature Review, i.e. what other studies have researchers completed that align with present study
6. Methodology: triangulation a must!

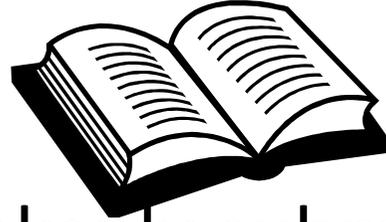
Keough, National University Symposium, March , 2011 presentation

Statement of the Problem

- What does the student want to address in the action research study?
- What can benefit the educational community, i.e. a classroom?
- What need must be fulfilled in order to create a more effective solution to the problem?
- The purpose/research question can answer the problem.



Literature Review



1. Student's mistakenly submit a "report" on the subject which is the antithesis of the review.
2. A literature review is intended to support and discover what other research can support the candidate in their original research.
3. Must "show relations among the items reviewed as well as relation to the total project" (Jones, 1973, p. 407).

Developing Research Question (example)

Problem: Students Dx LD: cannot retain content

Purpose: Study will examine the effectiveness of graphic organizers to improve content retention.

Research Quest.: Will the use of graphic organizers for students w/LD improve content retention?

Methodology: (to answer research question)

Pre-test (content specific), field notes while using graphic organizers, surveys (teacher satisfaction), post test (see matrix – next slide).

Action Research Data Collection Techniques (Mills, 2011, p. 89)

1. Experiencing: Through observation & Field Notes
2. Enquiring: When the researcher asks, i.e. informal & structured interview, questionnaires
3. Examining: Archival documents, Journals, Maps, Audio recordings & video recordings, artifacts, field notes

Importance and Example Matrix: Triangulation of Data

**R.Q: Effectiveness of
Graphic Organizers**

Data Source

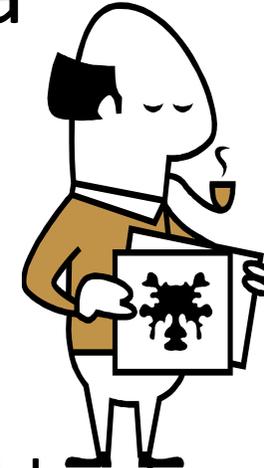
1. Prior knowledge:
2. Graphic Organizer
as variable:
3. Success of
Intervention
4. User friendly for:
teachers

Pre- tests

Observation/field notes

Post test

Surveys/interviews



Evaluation of “Simplify, Simplify, Simplify!”: Use of synthesis of “tools” to teach Action Research

Statistical: N=9

- *9 completed Opt. 2* successfully (as of May, 2011).*

Conclusion: 100% completed AR with “S” in a 2 month
parameter

- * **Option 2: SPED has chosen to allow candidates to write 4 chapters with heavy reliance on min. 20 peer reviewed journal articles as Lit. Rev. with no submission to IRB in 2 months time.**
- * **Option 1: Candidates must write a 3 chapter proposal, submit to IRB, physically collect data after approval and write Chapter 4 & 5 within 1 yr.**

Conclusion



- The success of student achievement, i.e. completion of the action research project brings gratification for both the student researcher and the instructor.
- The completion of the student action research project benefits educational communities to supplement “needs” and solve problems that would otherwise not be addressed
- Increase in the award of Master’s Degree allows for a candidate to compete in a rigorous global market.