REFLECTIVE PRACTICE AND BEYOND: THE WHY AND HOW OF ACTION RESEARCH

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GOALS

I can give examples of reflective practice.

I can explain the basic features of action research.

I can identify ways in which action research could benefit teacher-participants in STARTALK programs.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & REFLECTIVE PRACTICES
KSU STARTALK PROGRAMS

• **Teacher Leadership Academy**
  - Arabic, Chinese, Russian
  Residential, Micro-teaching, three graduate credit hours
  Aligned with student Foreign Language Academy

• **Foreign Language Academy**
  - Arabic, Chinese, Hindi, Russian
  Residential, four week immersion program
  Academic year follow-up, five university undergraduate credit hours
  Blended online and face to face environments
COMMUNITY

- TLA teacher-participants
- TLA instructors
- TLA / FLA Technology Tutors
- FLA Lead Teachers
- FLA Assistant Teachers
- FLA Resident Advisors
- FLA Peer Mentors (alumni of previous FLA)

All members of the expanded learning community have received training and are familiar with STARTALK Principles and Best Practices
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

What strategies do you use for your own professional development?

- Most useful? (top 2)
- Least useful? (2)

What strategies do you believe most teacher-participants use? and

What criteria do you believe they use in selecting a STARTALK professional development program?
How can our teacher-participants (teacher programs) get the most out of their professional development experience?

How can the Lead Teachers (student programs) get the most out of their classroom experiences?
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT
SPIRALING UP

Challenges

• Teacher-participants: recognizing and understanding their own strengths and needs

• Instructor-guides (for professional development): determining the strengths and needs of teacher-participants who have been accepted into their programs
TEACHER LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

- Application Process
- Pre – Program Assessment

Multi-pronged approach
- Narrative
- Pre-academy survey – interests and needs assessment (beliefs and how those beliefs guide their practice)
- Examples to support “I can” statements
- Timeline and description of recent professional development
PROFESSIONALISM
HOW DOES MY CONTINUED GROWTH AS A PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT STUDENT LEARNING?

I am a Reflective Practitioner

Instructional Topic: Connecting Beliefs and Practices to Student Learning.

• Participants complete a self-assessment using (TELL) self-assessments.
• Participants keep a daily journal to answer focus questions and record personal reflections and about what they are learning.

• Participants reflect on how their beliefs were either reinforced or challenged by their learning in the program.
PROFESSIONALISM

Instructional Topic: Creating a Professional Development Plan

• Participants identify areas for development through self-assessment

• Participants begin to build an online portfolio outlining their professional goals
PROFESSIONALISM

I participate in professional development opportunities both in district and beyond throughout the school year and in the summer.

Instructional Topic: Connecting with Colleagues Locally and Globally to Facilitate Learning

• Participants research face-to-face and technology-delivered professional development opportunities in which they would like to participate.
• Participants research and document professional learning opportunities over the coming year that specifically address dimensions they want to focus on developing.

• Participants document their professional development history to date.

They research new opportunities and create a professional learning plan covering at least three years.
PROFESSIONALISM

I give back to the profession in a variety of ways.

Instructional Topic: Participation in PLNs and/or Professional Organizations

• Participants draft a professional engagement plan (professional reading, conference attendance, and professional service within their school community.)
Figure 1.1 The reflective cycle and professional development
EXAMPLE: TYPICAL DAY

- Topic
- Background knowledge and understanding
- Input
- Research article, aligned with topic
- Technology tool, aligned with topic
- Observations (FLA)
- Application
- Implementation
- Micro-teaching

Reflective process integrated throughout the various steps
REFLECTION AND INCREASED AWARENESS

Learning occurs

Increased levels of awareness of the teacher’s assumptions, beliefs and practices

Behavioral changes in the classroom?
TEACHER LEADERSHIP AND ACTION RESEARCH
Teachers of Critical Languages must be teacher leaders:

- Able to explain the challenges of learning critical languages for native speakers of English to parents, students, administrators, etc.

- Must create your own community (often the only instructor of this language at a school; often working in more than one school)
TEACHER LEADERSHIP AND ACTION RESEARCH

Teachers Leaders:

• Advocate for the study of critical languages, which are among the most widely spoken languages in the world but among the least commonly taught in the U.S.

• Serve as a resource in your school (on best practices and the integration of the latest educational technologies)

• Become a member of a larger learning community (involvement in professional organizations, community outreach)

• Model reflective practice
FROM REFLECTION TO ACTION

Action research is a natural outgrowth of reflective practice

Reflection generates questions

Action research allows us to answer those questions
Figure 1.1 Cyclical AR model based on Kemmis and McTaggart (1988).
WHAT IS ACTION RESEARCH?

Action Research is an approach for investigating questions and finding solutions to problems that people confront in their everyday lives (Moen and Solvberg 2012; Stringer 2014).
“Action research is a family of practices of living inquiry that aims, in a great variety of ways, to link practice and ideas in the service of human flourishing. It is not so much a methodology as an orientation to inquiry that seeks to create participative communities of inquiry in which qualities of engagement, curiosity and question posing are brought to bear on significant practical issues.

(Reason and Bradbury 2008: 1)

As such, it shares many of the qualities of a problem-solving curriculum: inquiry, communities, engagement, close relationship to practice
ACTION RESEARCH AS EMPOWERMENT

• “shifts the locus of control (Herr and Anderson 2005)
• Teachers involved in Action Research are no longer just the (passive) subjects of research; they become (active) researchers
• Replaces a top-down model of theory to practice with a bottom-up model (reflection on practice produces theory)
• Breaks down the barriers between “experts” and practitioners/thinkers and doers
• In so doing, it creates a community of inquiry
• It models problem-solving for our students and peers
GOALS OF ACTION RESEARCH

To generate contextually-relevant solutions to real problem

To increase the effectiveness of the work in which the action researcher is personally engaged (Stringer 2014).

As such, it can be considered a kind of applied research, as opposed to pure research

Action research is generally considered to be qualitative as opposed to quantitative research
ORIGINS OF ACTION RESEARCH

Social psychologist Kurt Lewin. (1946) promoted shared decision-making by stakeholders in the workplace and the establishment of community action programs.


In the U.K. in the 1970s, Lawrence Stenhouse advocated for cooperation between higher education personnel and teachers, arguing that, the “fruitful development in the field of curriculum and teaching depends upon evolving styles of co-operative research by teachers and using full-time researchers to support the teachers’ work” (1975: 162). (Loop between theory and practice)

In Australia, Stephen Kemmis encouraged teachers to explore their own practice through action research
ACTION RESEARCH

Asking questions:

**Stage 1: Pre-study planning**

What is my concern about my practice?
Why am I concerned?
How do I gather evidence to show reasons for my concern?
What can I do about the situation?
ACTION RESEARCH

Stage 2: Implementation of Action

How do I test the validity of my claims to knowledge?

How can I check whether any conclusions I come to are reasonably fair and accurate?
ACTION RESEARCH

Stage 3: Post-study Analysis

How do I modify my practice in light of my evaluation?

How do I explain the significance of my work to others?
STAGE TWO: GATHERING DATA

Observations,
Scores,
Interviews,
Survey responses,
Grades
Conversations

Mixed methods and triangulation

A Community of inquiry allows for testing and retesting of hypotheses
FURTHER READING


DISCUSSION AND SHARE OUT
QUESTIONS

What are your views about teachers doing research?

What are the challenges?

What are the benefits?

(Advantages / Disadvantages of being a Teacher-Researcher)
QUESTIONS

What are your experiences with action research?

Where do you see a need for action research?

What are your views about various approaches to research – individual approach / collaborative approach?
PROPOSED JOINT RESEARCH PROJECT
PROPOSED JOINT RESEARCH PROJECT
(ONLINE LANGUAGE)

• Joint action research project to evaluate the effectiveness of online language instructional support

• Gathering interest and contact info
  Listserv