

An Action Research for Better Training Strategies

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I. Introduction

Action research is one of those terms that we hear quite often in today's educational circles. Action research is a teacher, trainer, curriculum developer and researcher learning strategy. It continuously helps these people to update their professional knowledge. From this and following discussion we will understand that it is a major source of professional development. Action research refers to self-reflective inquiry that seeks to clarify and resolve practical issues and problems. There is no dearth of the definitions of the term 'action research', each one giving it a different emphasis and focus. The central focus of each definition will be immediate classroom problem and its solution for the future improvement or betterment. For our purpose, here, one definition will suffice us. According to Richards and Farrell (2005, p. 171) argue that action research refers to a systematic approach to carrying out investigations and collecting information that is designed to illuminate an issue or problem and to expand and improve classroom practice. It takes place in the teacher's, trainer's and curriculum developer's own place or it is conducted in naturally occurring settings, primarily using methods common to qualitative research such as observing and recording events and behaviors. It involves in a cycle of activities centering on identifying a problem or issue, collecting information about the issue, devising a strategy to address the issue, trying out the strategy and observing its effects. This type of teacher, trainer or curriculum developer-conducted research has the following common types of characteristics;

- Action research is contextual, small-scale and localized- it identifies and investigates problems within a specific situation.
- It is evaluative and reflective as it aims to bring about change and improvement in practice.
- It can be carried out by an individual teacher or in collaboration with other teachers in particular and by the trainers and curriculum developers as well in general. Therefore, it is participatory as it provides for collaborative investigation by teams of colleagues, practitioners and researchers.
- Changes in practice are based on the collection of information or data which provides the impetus for change.
- Its primary goal is to improve teaching and learning in schools and classrooms and it is conducted during the process of regular classroom teaching or training.

2. Purposes and benefits of action research

Action research can be a worthwhile pursuit for teachers and teacher educators/ trainers for a number of reasons. First and Foremost among these is simply **the desire to know more**. Good teachers and trainers are, after all, themselves students, and often look for ways to expand upon their existing knowledge. By and large, the purposes or benefits of action research as a teacher and trainer learning or professional development can be encapsulated in the following manner;

Focus on issue, problem, or area of collective interest

As we have said somewhere else that action research can be carried out by an individual teacher or trainer or in collaboration with others. If it is the issue or problem related with school, textbook, students, training and curriculum we can carry out action research to improve and make them fit into the local real world of the target groups. It is also noteworthy to know that a trainer is not just blindly following what the latest study seems to suggest, but is transforming the knowledge into something meaningfully and struggling for knowledge creating as well. This can be achieved through action research.

Form of professional development

Research and reflection allow trainers to grow and gain confidence in their work. Action research projects influence thinking skills, sense of efficacy, willingness to share and communicate, and attitudes toward the process of change. Through action research, trainers learn about themselves, their participants, their colleagues, and can determine ways to continually improve. It is also one major source of developing training professionalism.

Potential to impact change

Through the findings of action research we redefine the role of the trainer by giving the trainers the means to set their own agenda for improvement and by shifting the responsibility for change or improvement from an outside agency. By changing the role of trainers we can profoundly change the training and learning process in our educational training centers. Ultimate impact we can see in school change through students' learning outcomes.

Reflect on own practice

Opportunities for trainers to evaluate themselves in training centers are often few, and usually happen only in an informal manner. Action research can serve as a chance to really take a look at one's own training in a structured manner. While the focus of action research is usually the students, educators/ trainers can also investigate what effect their training has on the part of their participants.

3. Objectives of the study

The objectives of this action research were;

- to find out the weaknesses in the training delivery process
- to find out the better training strategies

4. Procedures for carrying out action research (Methodology)

There are not hard and fast procedures for carrying out action research. Many scholars have given different procedures. If we see different scholars' procedures, we could see the common procedures which I have followed in my action research. They are attempted to encapsulate in the following manner;

4.1 Exploring: When I conducted training sessions for the Secondary level English teachers what I found is that my delivery process did not become effective. Trainee teachers frequently wanted to go out and yawning, did not pay their attention and there was not active participation as well.

4.2 Identifying: In accordance with my experiences what I identified is that there is something lacking in my delivery process. There is problem in my presentation or delivery process. I have

to change the style of my presentation. I collected the necessary information like, the strategies used in the presentation. I used lecture method, most of my presentation and discussion were based on power point presentation, I did not prepare and distribute the hand-outs related to the presentation, I did not organize the group work and pair work.

4.3 Planning: If lecture method and frequent use of power point presentation do not work, what further plan I made is to use new strategies like collecting and verifying the trainee teachers' needs, preparing hand-outs and distributing before the discussion, providing sharing opportunities, interaction, discussion, pair work, and group work.

4.4 Interventions: According to my plan I strived to use new strategies. For example, at the beginning I set the environment where trainee teachers could share their needs in the forms of problems, discuss about current practice and share their expectations from the sessions. I provided ample opportunities to share their ideas. I did this on the belief that trainees' bring with them centuries' experiences in the room. These experiences have central significance in training room. Similarly, I distributed hand-outs before the discussion. Then, I asked to share their reactions towards the content mentioned in the hand-out. Me as a trainer also provided expert inputs to lead the discussion in a particular direction. Furthermore, I distributed meta-cards encompassing the questions related to the session and then, asked to share their ideas among the fellow teachers. I also made the fellow teachers share their valuable ideas on the idea presented by each trainee. I also shared some anecdotes related to the session and asked to the trainee teachers to share their humors and anecdotes if they have. Finally, I jostled for to provide my ideas of each discussion to strengthen their understanding.

4.5 Observing the effects (Reflection): From this kind of presentation what I found is that all the trainee teachers seemed very enthusiastic, active, showing their great zeal, found charm and happy in each teacher's face.

4.6 Re-planning: Me as an English trainer wanted to improve my training styles as far as possible because once I read a very remarkable book written by Shiva Khera, that is, "You Can Win". I was highly influenced by the saying that "Winners do not do the different things, but do the things differently." In the same way, I was also influenced by the saying that "People are generally better persuaded by the reasons which they have discovered by themselves rather than the reasons which are in others' minds." Believing on such sayings, me as a trainer always wanted to investigate, explore and use new strategies. I further planned to search some more strategies which are supposed to bring positive effects on my presentation or delivery process. I based my delivery process on **ABC framework**. In this framework, A refers to **Anticipation**. In this step what I did was my efforts were to work on trainee teachers' previous experiences. I explored their previous experiences and made them share their current practice about the certain problem and their expectations from the trainer as well. B refers to **Building knowledge**. At this step I predominantly followed the strategies which were mentioned in the planning stage. What further I did is I distributed the resource materials which could facilitate teachers' understanding about the whole profession in general and their subject teaching in particular. C refers to **Consolidation**. At this stage what I did is I designated to some teachers

randomly and asked to provide and reflect their personal reactions towards the whole discussion of the session. If necessary I also provided the suggestions for strengthening or consolidating their understanding. In this way I have developed a kind of confidence and competence in my training delivery process. Now, what I believe is this kind of experimentation of different strategies for the improvement or betterment should be a continuous process then only we could see our professional development there.

Conclusion

From the above mentioned discussion what we can see is action research is one major avenue for professional development. How does action research facilitate in the process of professional development? How one trainer's personal investigation of his or her practice in his or her training context can broaden his or her thinking power to consider the larger issues in the facilitation of trainer's professional development? In this regard, first of all, what we need to understand is that professional growth or development means enabling teachers and trainers to investigate and generate their own ideas about their practice. It is a major avenue of investigating and exploring new ideas which add new styles in teaching and training. It leads to trainers and teachers to delve into the deep of classroom reality in achieving local understanding and developing feasible solution to the problems. The following points wrap up action research for professional development.

- Action research is a process in which participants examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research.
- We trainers work best on problems which we have identified for ourselves. This means we follow the maxim that "people are generally better persuaded by the reasons which they themselves have discovered than by those which have come into the minds of others."
- We become more effective when encouraged to examine and assess our own work and then consider ways of working differently. We should follow the maxim that "winners do not do different things, but do the things differently" which entails the spirit to achieve the essence of professional development.