

EDEC/EDMS 8010

Teacher Action Research

Fall, 2004

*** This syllabus is negotiable and subject to alterations.*

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Overview/Purpose of the Course

Action research serves as a context for personal and professional renewal and reform across diverse fields of study. For teachers, action research can be a powerful guide to inform wise decisions in the quest for excellence in teaching and learning.

This course examines action research and teacher inquiry within individual classroom, team, school and international contexts. You will critically analyze readings, relate the ideas in the texts to your own teaching and learning, and develop and conduct an inquiry project. Because this is a graduate course, you will participate in leading activities and discussions about the readings and will be expected to take initiative in seeking out and sharing related resources found in the library, the Internet, school and district professional libraries, and the public media.

In this course you will consider the history and definitions of action research and analyze a variety of perspectives on its purposes, processes, and theoretical foundations; simultaneously, you will explore processes and issues involved in doing action research. You will be continuously examining the research reports of other teacher researchers and practitioners to analyze the models they use for the research and reporting processes. This analysis will help you develop your own “road map” for undertaking an inquiry project.

Recommended prerequisites of this course include EDEC/EDMS 6990 and EDEC/EDMS 7650 or their equivalents. Accordingly, prior knowledge of quantitative and qualitative research methodologies is a benefit.

Required Texts

There is one required text available at the University Bookstore:

Hubbard, R. S., & Power, B. M. (1999). *Living the questions: A guide for teacher researchers*. York, Maine: Stenhouse Publishers.

The instructor will make available core readings from the journal literature and selected text-books. You will be expected to read and critique relevant course articles. You will also need to purchase miscellaneous materials for class projects. In addition, you should purchase the APA 5th edition, if you do not already own a copy.

The following books are suggested for further reading:

Burnafor, G., Fischer, J. & Hobson, D. (2001). *Teachers doing research: The power of action through inquiry*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Hollingsworth, S. (Ed.). *International action research: A casebook for educational reform*. London: The Falmer Press.

Hollingsworth, S. & Sockett, H. (Eds.). (1994). *Teacher research and educational reform: Ninety-third yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Kemmis, S. & McTuggart, R. (1988). *The action research planner*. Victoria, Australia: Deakin University Press.

Reason, P. & Bradburg, H. (Eds.). (2001). *Handbook of action research: Participation inquiry and practice*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Schwalbach, E.M. (2003). *Value and validity in action research: Guidebook for reflective practitioners*. Latham, ME: Scarecrow Press.

Steinberg, S. R., & Kincheloe, J. L. (Eds.). (1998). *Students as researchers: Creating classrooms that matter*. London: The Falmer Press.

Stringer, T. E. (1999). *Action research* (second edition). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Tomal, D.R. (2003). *Action research for educators*. Latham, ME: Scarecrow Press.

Course Expectations

I expect you to:

- ◆ Be an active participant in class discussions and activities
- ◆ Attend all course sessions
- ◆ Be prompt in attendance
- ◆ Read and reflect critically on assigned readings
- ◆ Locate and read additional materials related to action research
- ◆ Demonstrate reflection through discussion and writing
- ◆ Share resources, readings and insights
- ◆ Collaborate with colleagues regarding learning
- ◆ Complete all assigned tasks to the best of your ability
- ◆ Communicate expectations, frustrations and ideas

Academic Honesty

As in many classroom courses, students may find studying together beneficial-asking each other questions, reviewing texts, exploring or discussing course guide information and exercises. As in the classroom courses, what is not the individual student's own work must be clearly indicated.

The following are some examples of (or can lead to) inappropriate collaboration, plagiarism, and misrepresentation:

- * copying and submitting answers prepared by another or from a general source
- * copying and submitting material from the Internet without acknowledgment
- * submitting answers verbatim that have been agreed upon in a study group
- * failing to give proper documentation to words and/or ideas of another that are not common knowledge
- * permitting one's own work to be submitted as another's

Instructors are committed to the principles of academic honesty and subscribe to the UGA Academic Honesty Policy guidelines for the definition and processes of academic integrity. All students are subject to these academic guidelines; Instructors have and will initiate academic dishonesty proceedings if in their courses they find reasonable cause to do so.

All students are encouraged to read and understand A Culture of Honesty (the UGA Academic Honesty Policy) found at http://www.uga.edu/ovpi/academic_honesty/culture_honesty.htm. Printed copies of A Culture of Honesty may also be obtained from the office of the University of Georgia Vice President for Academic Affairs or from the Independent and Distance Learning office in summary form. Students may talk with their instructors about

academic honesty. E-mail and/or telephone contact information is available in this course guide and in the Independent and Distance Learning Student Handbook.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Course evaluation will be based on the following assignments:

Timeline of professional of professional development (10 pts.): You will develop a personal teaching and learning history by creating a timeline of professional development (see example in chapter 9 of *Living the Questions*) Your timeline should reflect: a) your history as a learner and teacher; and, b) the themes and issues arising from your history. Your timeline may include patterns, evolving interests, passions, interests, insights and future directions.

Action research critiques (10 pts.): You will read and reflect on several examples of teacher action research, and develop a reflective summary of each reading according to the format described below:

1. APA citation of reading.
2. Purpose of article/reading.
3. Summary of key themes/ideas.
4. Description of what was learned.
5. Questions and implications for classroom practice.
6. Methodological questions and issues.

The summaries should be 1 to 2 pages single-spaced and typed.

Classroom case (15 pts.): You will develop a classroom case narrative to explore a dilemma in your teaching practice. This case will serve as the basis for developing the questions that will inform your action research plan. Guidelines for writing your case will be provided.

Field-based mini-inquiry (20 pts.): You will conduct this project with a partner or in a small group. The group will design and carry out the project and present findings of their inquiry to the class through a poster session. In general, the following format will be used to guide your inquiry (see examples in *Living the Questions*, chapter 3).

- a) Inquiry Purpose
- b) Origin of the Questions
- c) Questions and Subquestions
- d) What We Will Do
- e) Artifact Construction

- f) Analyses and Reflection
- g) What We Learned

Literature review (10 pts.): You will locate and read six“articles” with relevance to the focus of your research plan. In order to explore different kinds of writings that may be useful, you will critique:

- a) recent research article (last 5 years)
- b) recent philosophical or pedagogical article (last 5 years)
- c) newspaper, tea bag, other writing

You will follow guidelines that were established for action research critiques.

Action Research Plan(35 pts.): You will construct a detailed plan that investigates an important issue in your classroom, in your practice or in some other relevant setting. This research plan should be “organic” to your professional issues and goals and designed and ready for implementation. An outline of the action research plan format and its various components will be provided.

Critical Reflections and Writings

Advance preparation and discussion of readings is central to the success of the class. Please read all assigned work prior to class. Your writings for the course will be evaluated both on what you write (your essential ideas) and how well you write. I will be interested in how well you express your critical thinking about issues and concepts discussed in class, and how well you demonstrate understanding of your experiences and readings. Assignments should be word-processed and spell checked. It is wise to ask someone to proof-read your work and for you to read your work aloud in order to strive for the highest standards in written and oral communication.

Grading

Each assignment carries a specified point value. You will always have the opportunity to “re-do” any assignment that does not meet the highest standards. A holistic scoring rubric will be used to evaluate your work.

Attendance

Class participation is a very important aspect of this course. In this regard, you are responsible for attending **all** class sessions. Please arrive at class in a prompt and timely fashion. Equally important is your advance preparation for each class. Before class please evaluate readings and/or assignments from the perspective of your own teaching and learning experiences. Your careful preparation and enthusiastic participation will contribute to the course. If it is necessary for you to miss class due to an emergency, please make every effort to notify me in advance.

THE RESEARCH PLAN

History leading to the interest in this area of inquiry	History as a learner and teacher Themes and issues arising from my history
Questions	Burning Question and related subquestions
Research Purpose and Rationale	Why is this an important area of study, and what do I want to be able to do with the information I gather and analyze? What do I want to be able to say something about? Who and/or what do I hope to influence?
Context and Activity Setting	a) Description of school and/or community b) Where will I focus my attention - what part of the day, school year, school, etc.? What aspects of practice will I study - what specific teaching/learning engagements will I investigate? If I am implementing new practices, what are they (describe in detail)? c) Description of the specific activity setting
Data Collection/ Construction	What information do I already have that informs my study? What information will be natural parts of the element of practice I plan to study? What additional information will I need to collect? What will key stakeholders count as evidence, if I hope to influence others? Description of the various types of data that will be collected.
Data Analysis	How might I go about making sense of my data? How will I organize it? Description of how you will organize and analyze your data.
Review of Relevant Literature	What can I learn about my topic by reading the writings of others? What are different sources for useful literature? Synthesis of the relevant literature you reviewed.
Data Presentation	How do I hope to share this information (within school, local or national conferences, presentations, written forms - policy brief, newspaper article, Bread Loaf magazine, journal article, book, etc.). What forms will be most convincing and appropriate to key stakeholders? Description of your plan for sharing what you've learned.
Time Line	Plan for implementation of practices and phases of study
Resources	Related readings People Potential collaborators Other
Permissions	Students, parents, school district, other

Include sample permission form.

Ethical concerns

What potential ethical issues do I need to consider?
Describe the ethical issues and how you will address them.

Actions

What actions/changes do you anticipate as a result of your study? How will you do things differently?

COURSE SCHEDULE

DATE	ASSIGNMENTS
Monday, August 23	<p>Human graphs (assertions) What are your experiences with research? Overview of action research What about “qualitative” and “quantitative” “positivist” and “interpretive?”</p> <p><u>For next week:</u> * Read chapters 9 & 10, Living the Questions: chapter 9, (Identity Balancing Round Stones); chapter 10, (Students as Research Partners). * Create an “I Used To ... But Now I ...” list (see Ch. 9) * Chart the highs and lows of your professional development (see Ch. 9). * Create your timeline of professional development.</p>
Monday, August 30	<p>Sharing of professional development timeline. Action research example: The other side of the world–Exploring community.</p> <p><u>For next week:</u> Where do questions come from? * Read chapter 2, Living the Questions: (Questions Evolving)/ * Bring list of “I Wonder ... What If” questions. * Critique other examples of action research: “Listen to the rhythm: Crossing Multi cultural Boundaries” “Gender Equity in the Elementary Classroom: The Power of Praxis.”</p>
Monday, September 6	Labor Day Holiday
Monday, September 13	<p>Discuss “I Wonder ... What If” questions Discuss action research critiques The telling of stories: Reading and writing the case Perspective taking</p> <p><u>For next week:</u> How can we know? * Reach “Action and reflection: Narrative and journaling in Teacher Research” (provided) * Read chapter 4, Living the Questions (Harvesting Data) * Write caselets</p>

<p>Monday, September 20</p>	<p>Discuss readings Share caselets Exploring Ways of Collecting Data: Journaling, photoessay, mapping spaces, cultural artifacts, videocases, metaphor, roving interviews and many more Exploring Roles in Participatory Action Research For next week: * Write dilemma-based case * Identify questions, sub-questions that emerge from your case. * Read chapter 3, Living the Questions (Research Plans) * Read “Action research rationale and planning: Developing a Framework for teacher inquiry” (provided) *Read “Interviewing” in Ch. 3, Action Research for Educators</p>
<p>Monday, September 27</p>	<p>Share questions identified through case writing. Discuss readings. Interviewing in Action Research For next week: What role does literature and theory play in action research? * Read, Reviewing the Literature, Value and Validity in Action Research * Read Ch. 6, Living the Questions–(Citing a tea bag: When researchers read) * Read and critique six examples of literature. –research article –pedagogical article –tea bag, newspaper, other ...</p>
<p>Monday, October 4</p>	<p>Discuss readings Share literature critiques Organize and plan for mini-inquiry For next week: What is “data?” How is it generated? What do you do with it? * Read Ch. 5, Living the Questions–(What likes what? Data analysis) * Read pgs. 58-76, Data Collection, Value and Validity in Action research</p>
<p>Monday, October 11</p>	<p>Discuss readings Plan for field-based inquiry project For next week: * Review research plan format * Read “Creative arts and photography in participatory action research in Guatemala.” (Provided) (for 11/1)</p>
<p>Monday, October 18</p>	<p>Conduct field-based, inquiry project (No class)</p>

Monday, October 25	<p>Poster Share-a-Thon of field based inquiry</p> <p>For next week: How do you learn about the questions you have?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Prepare history of my school, community and themes and issues arising from my history. * Read chapter 7, Living the Questions–(Honest labor, Writing up Research).
Monday, November 1	<p>Discuss themes and issues arising from history.</p> <p>Discuss readings.</p> <p>Guest Speaker: Using art in action research: Mr. Jamie Calkin</p> <p>For next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * “ Fine Tuning” research plans–Develop and refine research purpose,, questions, activity setting, data collection.
Monday, November 8	<p>Collaborative sharing of research plans</p> <p>For next week: Philosophical Perspective in Action Research</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Read “The three P’s in teacher research: Reflecting on action research from personal, professional and political perspectives” (provided) * Read “How does it matter? Teacher inquiry in the traditions of social science research” (provided) * “Tuning” research plans–data analysis, relevant literature data presentation, timeline, resources
Monday, November 15	<p>Discuss the readings</p> <p>Collaborative fine tuning of research plan</p> <p>For next week:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Complete action research plan (due Monday, November 29) * Generate action research celebration list. * Ethical Standard in Action Research
Monday, November 22	Action research celebration
Monday, November 29	Action Research Plan due Mini-conference
Monday, December 6	Action Research Plan due Mini-conference

Holidays: Labor Day – Monday September 6
Fall Break – Thursday-Friday, October 28, 29
Thanksgiving – Wednesday-Friday, November 24-26
Classes End - December 9