

TEACHER AS RESEARCHER

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ABSTRACT

In the present scenario, where globalization, privatization and liberalization are prevalent, there is an urgent need for new and different knowledge skills, values and varied patterns of life and work. It is essential to develop adaptive, flexible, independent and self-regulating learning processes. So that the teachers are able to learn, live and work in a globalize and complicated changed society therefore, there is an ongoing need for teachers to learn and adapt, have new subject knowledge and utilize new pedagogical approaches throughout their career. We know that learning is a lifelong process. Its objective is to develop further and sustain a highly competent, committed workplace of enquiring professional who focus on the devoted possible outcomes for children and young people. Teachers should enhance their knowledge, understanding and skills. Teachers should explore and challenge their thinking and consider how this creates an impact on their teaching and learning of the students. This career long professional learning guidance and the framework for educational leadership are underpinned by effective professional review and development and professional updated processes. Teachers are working in a dynamic and complicated society. There is an urgent need that teachers should be critically informed, have professional values and knowledge and take actions that ensure a positive impact on learners and learning. Teachers therefore need opportunities to develop in order to address these changing demands. In the 21st century, teachers have an ongoing commitment to maintain their professional expertise and recognize themselves as learners. Teachers are supposed to boost their knowledge, skills of teaching and learning with new inventions in such areas. The main objectives are; to know how teachers can become good teachers, who measures the quality of professional development for teachers and what counts as quality professional development for teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Albert Einstein is right when he said, “if a country is to be corruption free and become a nation of beautiful minds, I strongly feel there are three key societal members who can make a difference they are; the father, the mother and the teacher. Teachers are one of the main pillars of a sound and progressive society. They are the main source of knowledge and values creator for students. They are the resources by excellence. The books are important; the important are the chairs on which they sit.”

Today teachers are working in a very complicated and dynamic society. It means that teachers should be critically informed, have professional values and knowledge and take actions that ensure a positive impact on learners and learning. Therefore, teachers need opportunities to develop in order to facilitate themselves according to the changing demands.

The most successful education system helps in developing their teachers as reflective, accomplished and enquiring professional who are able, not simply to teach successfully in relation to current external expectations, but who have the capacity to engage fully with the complexities of education and to be key actors in shaping and leading educational change. Every day teachers engage in research. Working with students to facilitate learning, teachers develop lesson plans, evaluate student work and share outcomes with students, parents and administrators. Teachers then begin again with new units and lessons to clarify and review concepts as well as new understanding. When a teacher moulds itself according to the changing scenario and develop new design and implement a plan of action , observe and analyze outcomes and modify plans to better meet the needs of students it is called research. Teacher researcher is a systematic investigation of how teaching influences student learning over time in a single classroom or learning community. As Khalil Gibran said, " the teacher who is indeed wise does not bid you to enter the house of his wisdom but rather leads to the threshold of your mind." So the teacher helps and guides the students to be a good learner.

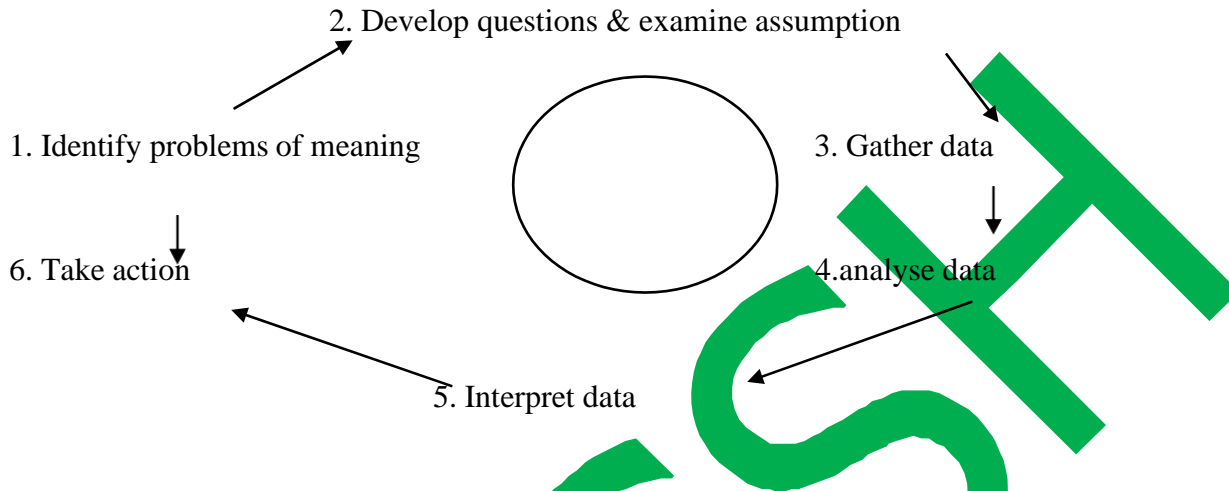
Teacher research consists of intentional and systematic inquiry. So that it may improve classroom practice. Intentional because a teacher chooses to pursue a particular question and systematic because she follows the steps described below. Teacher research is of course including good teaching that is planned and written down in a formal way. There is nobody in the classroom who decides whether teacher is a researcher or not. In teacher researcher, teacher decides what to study. Marion MacLean and Marian Mohr explain, "teachers are subjective insiders involved in classroom instruction as they go about their daily routines of instructing students, grading papers, taking attendance, evaluating their performance as well as looking at the curriculum. Traditional educational researchers who develop questions and design studies around those questions and conduct research within the school are considered objective outside observers of classroom interaction. But when teachers become teacher – researchers, the traditional descriptions of both teachers and researchers change. Teacher- researchers raise questions about what they think and observe about their teaching and their students learning...." 1 the key to achieving a critical awareness of significant issues and existing findings in an area of research is an ongoing review of relevant research and literature. The main role played by a researcher is guiding and informing policies and practices. The work of teacher researcher is important because when teachers conduct research, they have the opportunity to grapple with dilemmas. Try solutions, reflect on data, and generate understandings that have the potential to constructively impact students learning. Creating such places for inquiry is a vital step in improving the quality of our teaching and developing positive learning contexts for students.

What we believe about children, learning and knowledge dictates. How we teach? What we say we believe and what we believe may not be the same. Choices about how to teaching and what to teach are constantly being made. These choices are based on our values and the image we hold of children, learning and knowledge.

Learning is the key factor on which new way of teaching what we believe about children, learning should be based, becoming a complementary resource to the child and offering multiple options, suggestive ideas and sources of support. Learning and teaching should not stand on opposite banks and just watch the river flow by; instead they should embark together on a journey down the water. Through an active, reciprocal exchange teaching can strengthen learning how to learn. 2 a teacher play various roles in this educational system whether it is a school, college or university. Teaching and learning are two sides of the same coin. A teacher actively engaged in research has a deep impact on students. In the 21st century the role of teacher as researcher not only enhances the knowledge of teacher but improves the learning process and provides strategies for continuous professional development of teachers. If the teachers have the competencies and research skills, only then they can face the varied teaching–learning situations and challenges in the varied classrooms, can seek answer to questions and solutions to problems. The methods of imparting are not limited. These are expanding in geometrical progression. Professional learning activities result in teachers refreshing their awareness, knowledge, understanding and skills. Particularly in relation to pedagogy, curriculum areas and the use of technology to support learning and teaching. A report from OECD in 2009, 'No matter how good pre-service training for teachers is , it cannot be expected to prepare teachers for all the challenges they will face throughout their careers . Education system therefore seek to p[rovide teachers with opportunities for in-service professional development in order to maintain a high standard of teaching and to retain a high –quality teacher workforce.' in 2010, J.S.Verma Commission has given recommendations on different aspects of teacher education in India including in-service training of teachers and now an action plan is on the way for supervision and implementation of these recommendations.

Many teachers are overburdened with curriculum requirements, accountability requirements, and all the day to day pressures of keeping a classroom running wonder why they should take on one more thing. Teacher researcher is not an odd one; it is a way of being. Different educators and different texts advance particular methods of teacher research; the models are generally variations on a theme. Teacher chooses a research question, gather data from the classroom, then analyze the data to determine how classroom practice can be modified to better meet students need. Teacher research gives teachers the opportunity to develop new relationships with both colleagues and students. Marion and MacLean are teacher educators who have collaborated on a book, Teacher –Researchers at work published by the National Writing Projects. The text is divided into four sections. Part 1 deals with model of the teacher research process. From choice of research question, through data collection and analysis, to working with research groups. Part 11 deals on question teachers have posed to the authors over the years. E.g. what happens when you teach and conduct research at the same time? When do

you find time to do teacher research? Part 111 of the book deals with examples of teacher –researchers and part 1v deals with resources for teacher researchers the author discussed these aspects in a very detail.



The cycle of Teacher Enquiry

The role of teacher researcher inevitably collides. Teachers feel the need to impart knowledge, to show students what they know about their subject. Researchers want to find out what goes on in the classroom. To understand what the students do when they are learning. Teachers do not stand back and suggesting solutions to problems. Researchers maintain objectivity towards their subjects, not attempting to effect change. Teacher researcher is an inquiry that is intentional, systematic, public, voluntary, ethical and contextual. The teacher researcher;

1. Develop questions based on their own curiosity about their students learning and teaching.
2. investigate their questions with their students systematically documenting what happens
3. Collect and analyze data from their classes including their own observations and reflections.
4. examine their assumptions and beliefs
5. articulate their theories
6. discuss their research with their colleagues for support as ‘critical friends’ to validate their findings and interpretations of their data
7. present findings to others
8. talk to their students
9. give presentations(talk to teacher in room next door, go to conferences)
10. Write about their research (school –wide publication, national) participate in teacher research web sites, online forums and e-mail communications.

Many teachers considered themselves as overburdened with curriculum requirements, accountability requirements and the day to day pressures of keeping a classroom running. The objective of teacher

researcher is to put ‘‘BEST PRACTICES’’ about teaching/learning into actual practice in your classroom. Teacher researcher gives teacher the chance to develop new and different relationships with both colleagues and students. A teacher can pursue research on her own, the value and effectiveness of teacher researcher are magnified when several teachers work together, forming a supportive research group to act as a sounding board, provide encouragement and explore next steps.

Teacher researcher empowers teachers to make a positive difference in terms of classroom practice; it enables us to provide relevant information about teaching and learning in actual classroom. The teacher researcher improves the lives of students by always seeking to discover better, more effective ways of implementing teaching /learning.² the concept of teacher as researcher in recent literature on educational reform which encourages teachers to be collaborators in revising curriculum, improving their work environment, professionalizing teaching and developing policy. Teacher researcher has its roots in action research.

WHAT IS ACTION RESEARCH?

Action research is deliberate, solution oriented investigation that is group or personally owned and conducted. This is focused on spiraling cycles of problem identification, systematic data collection, reflection, analysis, data-driven, action taken and finally problem redefinition. The linking of the terms ‘‘action’’ and ‘‘research’’ highlights the essential features of this method; trying out ideas in practice as a means of increasing knowledge about improving curriculum, teaching and learning.³the concept of action research can be traced back to the early works of John Dewey in the 1920s and Kurt Lewin in the 1940s but Stephen Corey and others at Columbia University who introduced the term action research in 1949.Corey defined action research as the process through which practitioners study their own practice to solve their personal practical problems. The focus of research is on designed, conducted and implemented a staff development project in which teachers establishes expertise in curriculum development and teaching⁴ The focus of teacher is to expand the researcher role as inquirer about teaching and learning through systematic classroom research.⁴ the approach is naturalistic, using participant –observation techniques of ethnographic research, is generally collaborative and includes characteristic of case study methodology.⁵teachers advice each other and connect on the progress of individual efforts. Engaging on collaborative action research helps eliminate the isolation that has long characterized teaching as it promotes professional dialogue and creates a more professional culture in schools. Action research is demanding, complex and challenging because the researcher not only assumes responsibilities for doing the research but conducting teacher action research. It also enacts changes. Enacting change is not easy-it requires time. Patience and sound planning, communication and implementation skills. To start with action research, that modest beginnings are no disgrace and are in most respects preferable to more ambitious one.

The objective of action research is Curriculum development as a professional development strategy, in preservice and graduate courses in education and in systems planning and policy development. Action research can be used as an evaluative tool, which can assist in self- evaluation whether the

“self” be an individual or an institution. So, it is necessary for the teacher to be much more deliberate in documenting and evaluating their efforts. Action Research is one means to that end. The self-evaluating aspect of action research is congruent with the philosophies contained in the total quality education and outcomes based education movements currently being advanced by numerous states and districts throughout the nation. Action research provides teachers with the opportunity to gain knowledge and skill in research methods and application and to become more aware of the options and possibilities for change. Teachers participating in action research become more critical and reflective about their own practice.⁶ Teachers engaging in action research attend more carefully to their methods, their perceptions and understandings and their whole approach to the teaching process. The recursive, iterative and spiraling nature of action research suggests that a research question may change and be defined as new data and issues surface in the research study. Scottish education recognizes the importance of high quality career long professional learning for all teachers. In recognition of this national partners are working together to inform and support the teaching profession.

The general teaching Council for Scotland’s (GTCS) professional standards and supporting guidance has been developed to support self-evaluation within professional learning. As teachers progress through their career, the standards can be used to identify, plan and develop professional learning needs, ensure continuing development of professional practice as part of the PRD process and help to prepare for a variety of roles. This guidance and the framework for educational leadership have been developed not as stand-alone resources but to be used in conjunction with the professional standards to support self-evaluation and professional learning.

It is vital that engagement with the professional standards, these career long professionals learning guidance and the framework for educational leadership is underpinned by effective professional review and development (PRD) and professional update processes.

This guidance for teachers is about a strengthened model of career long professionals learning. This will support teachers to improve further their approach professionals learning. So, that there is maximum benefit to themselves, the children and the young people they teach, their colleagues, their individual school and across schools in the wider learning community. This guidance will be developed further as approaches to career long professionals learning evolve more resources and sources of support including case studies will be added as these become available.

Lawrence Stenhouse once said, ‘the teachers who .in the end, will change the world of the school by understanding it.’⁸As soon as teachers engage themselves in action research, they are increasing their understanding of the education process. What they are learning will have great impact on what happens in the classrooms, schools and districts in the future. .it has been said by Wolfy in (1989),” Teachers often leave a mark on their students, but they seldom leave a mark on their profession.” Through the process and products of action research, the teachers will do both. The efficient and effective taker always tries to utilize all the resources for effective teaching to make his lesson attractive and interesting to his learner. Effective teaching can foster security and satisfaction among

students. It can promote co-operative learning and helps students develop self-direction. It fosters creativity; develop values and helps in providing opportunities for social action.

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