

Introduction

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As language teachers we strive to become better professionals, to better understand our learners, to prepare more engaging lessons and to more effectively meet our students' needs. One way of achieving this is by teachers identifying an area for improvement in their own classrooms, and subsequently carrying out action research (AR), the central idea of which according to Burns (2010, p.2) is:

to intervene in a deliberate way in the problematic situation in order to bring about changes and, even better, improvements in practice. Importantly, the improvements that happen in AR are ones based on information...that an action researcher collects systematically...So, the changes made in the teaching situation arise from solid information rather than from our hunches or assumptions about the way we think things are.

One of the best known models is that of Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), who describe AR as consisting of 4 iterative cycles. These are:

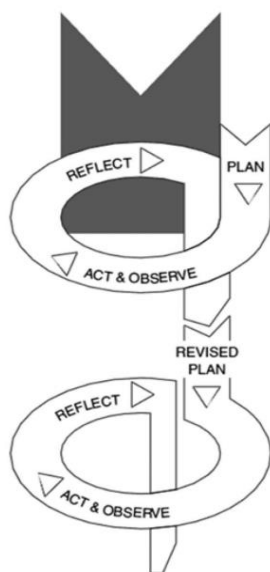


Figure 1. Action Research Cycles (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).

During the initial planning stage, a problem, dilemma or puzzle is identified and a plan of action developed. In stage two, the plan is put into action, and in stage three, data is collected on the effects of the plan on teaching and learning. In the final reflection stage, researchers analyse the data gathered and reflect on how this information can help them better understand their initial area of intervention. Much has been published on the value of teacher research, and a recent study has shown a positive relationship between the quality of the inquiry and the quality of teaching (Van Katwijk et al., 2021).

In this volume, three teacher researchers write about their experiences carrying out action research during teacher education programmes. In the first paper Paula Katchi Cravo writes about using formative assessment tools and practices to enhance the writing proficiency of 11th year learners. The study was carried out over a 6 month period and involved the use of rubrics, success criteria checklists, teacher feedback through the use of error correction codes and written comments, and learner self-assessment. The second paper by Inês Ribeiro Garcia de Paiva Couceiro focuses on how film can be used in 3rd cycle EFL classes to contribute to learners' linguistic and cultural knowledge. Data was gathered through focus groups and post-viewing written assignments. The next paper also discusses an action research project carried out with learners in the 3rd cycle of basic education. Here Pedro M. Lopes describes how he carried out dialogic literary gatherings involving whole-class interaction activities around discussion of classics of world literature, with the objective of investigating how these gatherings fostered opportunities for quality language learning. In our last paper, Carlos Mafra Ceia argues for the need for change within teacher education in Portugal.

We hope this collection of papers sheds light on what can be achieved through action research, and thank our authors for their contributions.

References

- Burns, A. (2010). *Doing action research in English language teaching*. Routledge.
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Van Katwijk, L., Jansen, E., & Van Veen, K. (2021). Pre-service teacher research: A way to future-proof teachers? *European Journal of Teacher Education*.

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