

Appendix D

Critical Assignment #3b

Action Research Plan

Students choosing this Critical Assignment will design a 5 part Action Research Plan. The topic/subject of the Action Research Plan is open to the student's choosing, but students are encouraged to select a topic that is relevant to their professional interests and goals. A practical purpose of this assignment is for each student to delve deeper into scholarly research in his/her personal area of interest, so this assignment is most worthwhile if students design an Action Research Plan that they might follow through on later in their studies. As an example, you might use the Action Research Plan you develop for this class as part of your practicum (EDUC 794). It is also important to keep in mind that the major purpose of this assignment, with respect to assessment and evaluation of learning in the course, is for students to demonstrate their understanding of Action Research in an authentic way.

The requirement for style, format, and content are intended to emphasize students' understanding of course topics. The final paper must be 10-15 pages long (inclusive of cover page, abstract, and Reference page), be double-spaced and use 12 Times New Roman font. APA (6th edition) formatting is required. The paper will include a minimum of 10 sources of which 8 must be from peer reviewed primary research (i.e., journal articles like those listed on page 11 of this document or theses/dissertations). These sources may include any scholarly work such as journal articles, position papers, a discipline-specific handbook of research, etc. However, since this is a *research* course, and a primary purpose of this assignment is for each student to examine, in depth, original *research* in his/her area of professional interest, the majority of cited sources must be peer reviewed, primary research articles (i.e., the researchers collected, analyzed, and reported on their own data). Sources should be current (i.e., published within the past 15 years) except in the case of seminal studies or theoretical work that continues to influence contemporary thought.

In addition, Internet sources may be included. However, because the authenticity/accuracy of information obtained via the Internet is difficult to verify, *online sources will not count toward the ten (10) source minimum* – except in the case of peer-reviewed online journals. Students are encouraged to consult with their major advisor, or other faculty in the area of interest, to identify appropriate journals and other sources to include in their literature review. All manuscripts must be submitted electronically, via e-mail as they will be submitted to Safe-Assign by the instructor upon receipt.

Your Action Research Plan will include the following:

Cover Page

Abstract

Part 1 – Introduction (1-2 pages)

Like Chapter 1 of a Research Proposal this part of your plan is to include an introduction to your study as well as the following sections - Statement of the Problem, Research Questions or Hypothesis, and Significance of the Study.

Part 2 – Literature Review (5-6 pages)

Here, you will provide the reader with a comprehensive review of the literature related to the problem under investigation. The Literature Review may contain theories and models relevant to the problem, a historical overview of the problem, current trends related to the problem, and significant research data published about the problem.

Part 3 – Methodology (1-2 pages)

Include in this chapter a description of the population and sample of your proposed study and how they will be selected, the instrumentation to be used for the study, data collection and analysis methods to be used, conclude with a short summary.

Part 4 - References (1-2 pages)

Develop your Reference list using proper APA 6th edition formatting.

Part 5 – SMART Goals (1 page)

Conclude your Action Research Plan by detailing 2-3 SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely) Goals you can use in implementing your proposed study.

Specific -

Well defined. Clear to anyone that has a basic knowledge of the project

Measurable

What exactly will be measured so that you know the extent to which your goal has been reached?

Achievable

Identify the perceived barriers to your Action Research Plan and how you will overcome them.

Relevant

How is this Action Research Plan relevant to you as an educational professional?

Timely

What is your timeframe for completing the Action Research project you are proposing?

Action Research (example)

Hughes (1999, as reported in Creswell, 2008) was a fourth-grade teacher in a small country-suburban K-8 district school. She begins by describing her class and the problem of not having in-class support for high-ability students in her room. The gifted students were pulled out of her classroom daily during math instruction to work on special science projects. In view of this, she wondered whether she was meeting the needs of these high-ability students, and she initiated an action research study. Here were the steps she took:

1. She first reviewed the published literature on her issue (e.g., pull-out programs, inclusion of gifted in the classroom, and meeting the needs of the gifted).
2. In addition, she interviewed colleagues from her school and neighboring elementary schools for their perspectives.
3. From the literature review and her interviews, she identified four themes – school reform, enrichment versus acceleration, pull-out versus in-class, and new educational strategies – and developed a flowchart listing the factors that surfaced for each theme, such as: school reform movement ideas, equity for all – every child receives what he or she needs to grow and learn, and not every child receives the exact same instruction, excellence for all where every child is challenged to the limit of his or her abilities.
4. Based on this information she refined her original research questions and collected both quantitative and qualitative data through parent telephone interviews, student surveys, teacher conferences with students about their work portfolios, and classroom observations by six different teachers for each question. She placed this information in a chart so that her team members could help her analyze the data.
5. She enlisted six other elementary teachers from her building to create a team to help with the process of data analysis.
6. The team first skimmed the data to obtain a clear picture of it and then sorted all of the data under four themes about how to incorporate gifted children into the class (in-class flexible groups, differentiated instruction, enrichment, and acceleration).
7. She turned these themes into four major activities for the teacher to try in her classroom.
8. Next, she put the findings into an *action plan*, resulting in specific activities (e.g., continue to self-evaluate and find ways to incorporate differentiated instruction and assessment in the classroom).
9. She shared her findings with others to “make a difference on a larger scale”. This included sharing her study with other fourth-grade teachers, her principal, and a district committee.
10. The study ended with Hughes reflecting on future questions that she needed answered, such as, “Which is better, pull-out programs, in-class programs, or a combination?”

These 10 steps illustrate a good practical action research study in which the teacher collaborates to study a local problem, develops as a professional, uses a systematic approach to inquiry (e.g., gathering and analyzing data), and implements a plan of action. (pp. 601-602)

Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson

Hughes, L. (1999). Action research and practical inquiry: How can I meet the needs of the high-ability students within my regular educational classroom? *Journal for the Education of the Gifted*, 22, 282-297.

Additional Information on Action Research

What is Action Research?

Action Research is a process in which participants examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully using the techniques of research. It is based on the following assumptions:

- teachers and principals work best on problems they have identified for themselves;
- teachers and principals become more effective when encouraged to examine and assess their own work and then consider ways of working differently;
- teachers and principals help each other by working collaboratively;
- working with colleagues helps teachers and principals in their professional development.

Teacher Researchers:

- develop research questions based on their own curiosity about teaching and learning in their classrooms;
- examine their underlying assumptions about teaching and learning;
- systematically collect data from and with their students;
- share and discuss their data and research methodology with fellow teacher researchers;
- analyze and interpret their data with the support of their colleagues;
- write about their research;
- share their findings with students, colleagues, and members of the educational community;
- discuss with colleagues the relationships among practice, theory, and research;
- assume responsibility for their own professional growth

Use these prompts as a guide or starting point in developing your Action Research question:

- I would like to improve...
- I am perplexed by...
- Some people are unhappy about...
- I am really curious about...
- I want to learn more about...
- An idea I would like to try out in my class is...
- Something I think would really make a difference is...
- Something I'd like to change is...
- Right now, some areas I am particularly interested in are...