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RESEARCHER-TEACHER AND ENGAGING IN TEACHER ACTION RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

One of the most significant current discussions in teaching field is the role of researcher teachers and action research in the field of teaching and learning process. This study aims at introducing teacher researcher as a new paradigm in educational research and providing a comprehensive, detailed review of thirty research articles on the effectiveness and stages of employing action research. Almost all scholars and teachers consented that this kind of research can revolutionize and institutionalize major changes and innovations in teacher training process; they also believed that the new paradigm of teacher researcher in educational research monitors professional requirements of teachers to manage teaching and seeks fundamental strategies to eliminate the gap between educational research and practice.

Keywords: Teacher researcher, learning process, teacher, teaching, educational.

INTRODUCTION

Most teachers have not heard of teachers as researchers or do not consider themselves as researchers. It is necessary for teachers to be active rather than being passive in class. This view of research as a passive endeavor has given way in recent years to a new perspective. Research can be active, relevant, and practical. Most importantly, teachers make ideal researchers.

A Teacher Researcher is someone who actively engages in reflection and inquiry as a way to better one's instructional practice, the educational experience of one's students, and the learning environment in one's school and community. Teachers can employ action research in order to make a change in their teaching process, to enhance their awareness of class, to have a positive attitude toward research and finally to apply the outcomes in classrooms. The research done by teachers is normally seeking to respond the questions and problems which happen in every day classes and trying to put findings into practice (Cabaroğlu, 2014). Action research can be done in many different situations and context, one of which is educational setting. Researcher teacher is the only person who can make a connection

between theory and action through action research; it can be considered as the most valuable feature of teachers' research. The most controversial challenge among researchers is to apply the findings into action and practice, which can be easily done in the required and appropriate place by teachers. Floden and Klinzing (1990) Stated that research knowledge can and should play a mail, constructive role in teacher education.

Objectives of the study: This study explores the extent to which researcher teachers can enhance and promote their professional capability and solve teaching problems encountered in the classroom, other interest of the current study is to find out the impact action research can have on promoting learning outcomes. It also investigates the roles that foreign language

1. Why is teacher research important?
2. How can English language teachers use action research to solve the teaching problems in classes?
3. What are the stages to do action research?

The rationale for calling teachers as researchers of their own classes is related to researcher –teachers' control over what is considered as their own practical knowledge. In modern world, teachers act as researcher and are mostly active and do research in a school setting. Working as researcher and doing action research is not the same as former educational research, it differs in the point that the work is applied by "insiders" in factual

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situations, real classrooms and school settings; it pays attention to each individual which can be ignored in other traditional research. Action research done by teachers is a critical reflective process which is often conducted collaboratively among colleagues, searching for solutions to regular everyday problems experienced in educational settings, or for finding ways to improve instruction and promote students' achievement. Teachers engaged in research are no more working theoretically but dealing with authentic materials which allow practitioners to highlight the issues and problems that need changes.

Researcher teachers: Teachers face many diverse situations while teaching, which make them to change the class structures, teaching approach to gain a better result. When the teacher is fully aware of class, students' needs, learning process and the related problems, he/she can employ an effective judgment by reflection from class. Researcher teachers must be ready to recognize critical parts of educational process, then employ educational research which would help to make educational settings better places for learning any subject. There is an idea which has been carried out through years to have educational research as an integral part of educational curriculum. In this regard, teachers work as researchers by engaging in action research applied in classrooms. Educational leadership tries to encourage instructors to do research in classrooms. Demirbulak (2011) carried out a study to realize how the information gathered in teaching would help the teacher to enhance their professional development. Demirbulak came up with the conclusion that there was a change in student teachers' perception on teacher as researcher concept. Iliev, Dimov & Atanasoska (2014) conducted a study in which it was indicated that there are situations in which students are given opportunities to find their own challenges with the goal of enhancing a situation in them. Action research can be meaningful only if they are engaged in the study according to their needs.

Action research: The term action research first introduced about 70 years ago when Kurt Levin (Levin, 1946) noted that action research could be taken into use to solve the problems that can encounter in groups which are based on successful communication to gain their purposes. Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) first showed interest in action research in the late 1970s and some years later, many

books were published on this issue to help the teachers acting as researchers (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Nunan, 1991; Griffiee and Nunan, 1997, Wallace, 1998). Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) defined action research as collaborative and systematic approach to solve the problems encountered in classrooms. Jiraro, Sujiva and Wongwanich (2013) stated that after doing many studies and research on competency development, action research was found as the most practical way to improve, adjust and develop the factors in research. The reason for such claim can be that action research considers reforming, practice, evaluation and reflection which will lead to individuals' improvement. This is in line with the findings of Koshy (2010) stating that action research can efficiently improve and enhance an individual's performance. Denscombe (2010) noted that an action research aim is to solve a special problem and to find guidelines to solve the problem. Teachers have been encouraged to apply action research in educational setting. Action research can be done to solve problems, to change methods, to create innovations etc. Koçak (2010) for instance conducted an action research to help the students' anxiety problem in speaking courses, the researcher started with the plan phase, continued with action and observing the same issue. Koçak successfully experienced and concluded the action research.

Types of action research: There are two main types of action research: participatory action research and practical action research. Practical action research addresses a particular problem in a class or school. This kind of action research can be done in different settings such as educational one. The main goal of practical action research is to improve practice in the short term and to inform larger issues. The other kind of action research is participatory action research; the aim of this research is to produce the knowledge and provide the gained knowledge and action to a group of people. The term collaborative research is also sometimes referred to Participatory action research, which respects people's opinions and need them to collaborate in the research. In this kind of study what people do or experience is included as part of the research. Fareh and Saeed (2011) tried to investigate the effectiveness of collaborative action research in language classrooms; they found it valuable to be shared with other colleagues. It is also named as a must in teachers' duties to be conducted in classrooms. Ioannidou-Koutselini and Patsalidou (2014) in their study noted that action

research is considered as a collaborative endeavor that can be efficient for implementation of new approaches and practices in class, and also for teachers' development at educational settings.

STEPS TO DO ACTION RESEARCH

There are many complex and extended descriptions of the steps in action research proposed (e.g., Burns 1999; Cohen, Manion, and Morrison 2000), and the most widely known model is that of Kemmis and McTaggart (1988: 10):

- a. to develop a plan of critically informed action to improve what is already happening
- b. act to implement the plan
- c. observe the effects of the critically informed action in the context in which it occurs
- d. Reflect on these effects as the basis for further planning.

Teacher researchers apply what is called "Teacher Action Research. "Burns (2002: 14-15; 2010: 8) identifies four basic steps to conduct action research. A brief description of each step is provided:

Planning: The first step to make action research is to identify the problem and to make plans to solve the problem; the outcome of planning stage is a detailed plan of the action you decide to take. In this section, you think about the questions in your mind, for instance, what are the ways to improve engage students in a specific part of class? What are ways to promote my teaching practice? If you decide to provide changes or offers, there should be also plans. Having developed the research questions, you need to collect objective, unbiased data, through questionnaire, interviews or other data collection tools. Step involved identifying a problem and developing a plan of action to be carried out for the purpose of finding a solution for the targeted problem.

Action: This phase is to implement the plan over a certain period of time. The plan have altered to be used as deliberate interventions into the teaching situation, it is you put into action over a limited period of time. In this stage you also have to make sure that which data collection methods you want to apply, it should be noted that one project may carry more than one data collection tool. Appropriate data collections have to be chosen according to the number of participants and time restrictions.

Observation: The next step is called observing, it is a systematic observation of the effects of the action and procedures on the participants. The context, actions and opinions of participants are also documented. In this

phase you should be open-eyed and open-minded to gather the information about what is going on. Your task is to identify the best process moving forward to analyze the data.

Reflection: At this stage, the researcher reflect on, evaluate and explain the effects of the action in order to make sense of what has happened. You may decide to share your research with others to improve your professional carrier. Another important component of reflection is to think about how your findings can help you develop a new set of questions that merit exploration. At this time, you are given chance to think in greater depth about what remaining areas of research can help fill the caveats in the current research project.

Therefore, action research begins with raising a question identifying a problem, gathering relevant data, establishing an action plan and reflecting on the effects of the action in order to evaluate how successful the plan was.

BENEFITS OF TEACHER RESEARCH

Numerous advantages for teachers as researchers and engaging in action research have been reported. For instance, Kincheloe (2003, 18-19) lists some benefits of such activities, he believes that teachers can gain a deeper understanding of what they get through experience; they can see themselves as learners seen as learners to find the answer to their own questions; they also will be able to observe the ongoing learning process in classes and try to make an interpretation. Teacher research would help teacher to enhance their knowledge. It is considered as the best way to solve a problem in coeducational settings, in order to change the unwanted situations. Teachers conduct action research to examine the issues dealing with in teaching and educational field and try to find scientific solutions for them. Teachers' research enables teachers to experience opportunities such as being a writer or leader.. Valica and Rohn (2015) employed a study to examine the possible benefits of an action research; samples including teachers were provided a model to apply innovations in their classrooms, the outcome of the study indicated an increase in teachers' professionalism and self-confidence, since they had the opportunity and responsibility of solving teaching problems through experience. In 2014, Mooi and Mohsin carried out a study to check the effectiveness of action research by exploring factors affecting students' learning, the results showed efficient awareness about the affecting factors

on learning, and application of action research as a supporting source for instructors is strongly recommended by the author. There was another study done by Magos (2007) which revealed an interesting benefit of action research, teachers can become aware of the discriminations and the stereotypical views of learners by observing and analyzing their own dominant views, attitudes and practices through action research. Halim, Buang and Meerah (2010) reported similar findings to other studies; results of the study indicated that trained teachers have gained more enhanced knowledge, developed pedagogical content information and enhanced research skills.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a large volume of published studies describing the importance of researcher teachers and action research. In general, the main purpose of action research is to develop and enhance various aspects of the professional development of the student teacher. There are two main types of action research conducted by instructors, collaborative action research and practical action research. Levin and Rock (2003) reported that teachers' engagement in collaborative action research had some benefits such as having more opportunities to collaborate and understanding others' pedagogical beliefs. According to the studies, Personal teaching efficacy appears to be an important issue positively impacting teachers' efficacy beliefs; teachers should think critically about their classrooms and behave actively in instructional improvement. Henson (2002) indicated that professional development opportunities can be gained though conducting participatory teacher research. Uztosun, Sercan, Skinner and Cadorath (2014) pointed out that there are many advantages for using action research by teachers, action research is introduced as an appropriate paradigm to enhance classroom process, they also mentioned that action research can collect authentic and first hand data for analysis and also the obtained results or data may be useful for other researchers and colleagues. Carter (2002) recommended that teachers should be trained to use action research and applying this kind of research as a core component of teaching process at any level. Action research can be trained and explained to teachers so that they can develop their knowledge on different learning situations, which in long term would lead them to professional, valid and reliable knowledge. This concept was challenged by Perrett (2002) in which he

drawn attention to the fact that there should be educational leadership collaboration for teachers to become serious teacher-researchers.

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