**Lesson Three: Classroom Action Research**

**3.1 Definitions**

Action research is characterized in terms of purpose, it is “the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it” (Elliot, 1991, p. 69).

Action research is an approach designed to develop and improve teaching and learning. The essence of which is teachers’ solving everyday problem in schools to improve both students learning and teaching effectiveness.

It is typically focused on a single school or concern that is examined in a single school. The results tend to be localized to a given school, department or classroom.

Glickman (1992) said that action research in education is study conducted by colleagues in a school setting of the results of their activities to improve instruction.

Lewins (1947) described action research as a three-step spiral process of (1) planning that involves reconnaissance; (2) taking action; and (3) fact-finding about the results of the action.

Action research involves teachers identifying a school-based topic or problem to study, collecting and analysing information to solve or understand a teaching problem, or helping teachers understand aspects of their practice. Action research is educative, focuses on teachers and schools, focuses on problems of practice, and aims at improving practice.

Among the problems that teachers may attempt to address through action research:

* Poor student behaviour
* Limited understanding of a topic
* Intimidation and bullying behaviour within a group
* Lack of interest in a topic
* Poor quality of homework
* Not enough student involvement

**3.2 Differences between Traditional/Formal Research and Action Research**

There are differences between these two types of research

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| Traditional Research |  | Action Research |
| Who? Conducted by scholars, university  Professors or graduate students  On experimental and control groups  Where? In environment where variables can be    Controlled  How? Using quantitative methods to show  a cause-effect relationship between  variables  Why? To report and publish conclusions that  Can be generalized to larger populations |  | Conducted by teachers and principals on children in their care  In schools and classrooms  Using qualitative methods to understand the effects of some educational intervention  To take action and effect positive educational change in the specific school environment that was studied |

**3.3 Importance of Action Research**

* Assessing students understanding at mid-term helps you plan the most effective strategies for the rest of the semester.
* Comparing the outcomes of different strategies helps you discover which teaching techniques work best in a particular situation.
* Discover your own strengths and weaknesses and typical skill level of your students.
* It provides you with a new challenge to avoid routine and boredom.

**3.4 Steps of Action Research**

Action research involves a cyclical process of questioning, planning, acting, observing and reflecting. Thus, it goes through four steps:

**3.4.1 Planning**

At this step, the teacher identifies a problem or issue and develops a plan of action in order to bring about improvements in a specific area of the research context. This step is important as it helps the teacher find the kind of investigation appropriate to the situation he is in and the possible improvements thought to achieve.

When planning an action research, the teacher should decide on:

* The goals and purposes of the study
* Decide on a research question to guide the study
* Select the research participants
* Determine the method of data collection

**3.4.2 Data Collection**

During the data collection phase, actions are taken to carry out your action research project. These actions include implementing new teaching strategies and collecting data on them. Data collection could include conducting tests, observing students, and administering surveys and interviews.

**3.4.3 Analysis**

During the analysis phase, teachers carefully examine and analyse their data. The analysis could include observations of students’ interactions, the analysis of student work, the analysis of surveys and interviews, the analysis of pre-tests and post-tests, or the analysis of standardized achievement tests.

**3.4.4 Reflect**

It consists of a three-step process:

* Interpreting and explaining your observations
* Developing new teaching strategies
* Justifying your new teaching strategies by supporting them with data, best practice, educational research or educational theory.

**3.5 Characteristics of Data Collection in Action Research**

* When students are asked to complete checklists or questionnaires as part of the action process, they should be allowed to respond anonymously to protect students and to improve the validity of the data gathered.
* It is better for the teacher to build a comparison into data collection as he is the interpreter of the data.
* The identification of the specific aspects to videotape or audiotape is so important to collect more specific and relevant data.
* The selected data collection method should fitthe type of information needed to examine the problem or the topic.