

CIEP 488: Action Research to Improve Teaching and Learning

Fall 2011

Course Time: Tue 4:15-6:45

Location: CMUM 014

Instructor: David Ensminger, Ph.D.

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Office Hours: By appointment

Texts:

Pine, (2009) Teacher Action Research: Building Knowledge Democracies. Sage – ISBN 978-1-4129-6476

Hendricks, (2009) Improving schools Through Action Research 2nd ed. Merrill – ISBN 13: 978-0-205-57846-7

Stringer, (2007). Action Research 3rd ed. Sage - ISBN-10: 1412952239

Course Description:

Action research provides educators, administrators and community leaders a method to study localized problems that results in solutions and action plans to address these issues. The reflective aspect of action research helps individuals become aware of their own practices and helps them look for solutions to issues in their organization, building or classroom. In many cases these solutions lead to better instruction or practices that assist all students. This course will provide candidates with the knowledge and skills to use action research as a basis to make curriculum and instructional decisions both school-wide and at the classroom level. Additionally, the course will help candidates learn to develop an action research project to address a school or classroom problem and increase the dialogue within a learning community.

Social Justice Foundation: Action research has its foundations in solving social problems. Action research places the individuals within an organization, school, and community in the role of the researcher in order to define problems, identify possible solutions, and study the efficacy of these solutions within their specific context. The emphasis is placed on the use of data (both qualitative and quantitative) as the foundation for examining the problem within a context and determining a course of action.

Conceptual Framework:

Our Conceptual Framework – through its components of service, skills, knowledge, and ethics – guides the curricula of School of Education programs in the preparation of “*professionals in service of social justice*.” These dimensions of the conceptual framework also serve as the foundation to the School of Education [Conceptual Framework standards](#) – standards that are explicitly embedded in major benchmarks across all SOE programs. This course emphasizes the following framework standard:

- CF7: Candidates demonstrate how moral and ethical decisions shape actions directed toward service to others.

Goals:

- Describe how action research differs from other forms of educational research, and the role of action research plays in creating knowledge democracies within organizations
- Use different forms of data to identify classroom, school, or organizational problems
- Search the literature to find potential solutions to solving classroom, school, or organizational problems.
- Develop an action research plan
 - Write appropriate research questions and sub-questions
 - Determine appropriate data collection methods and analysis procedures to answer questions

- Discuss potential issues with plan and determine levels of collaboration with stakeholders to conduct the action research.
- Conduct qualitative data analysis
- Conduct quantitative data analysis. (descriptive statistics, central tendency, variance, t-tests)
- Discuss research ethics and their role in action research.

Assignments:

1) Problem identification and foundation (30 points)

Candidate will identify a problem or situation within their school/organization that will serve as the foundation for their action research plan. Candidate will define the problem as it relates to their classroom/school/organizational context and the relevant stakeholders. Candidate will provide a fishbone diagram of the problem identifying their assumptions and potential causes of the problem, a narrative explanation of the fishbone diagram, and suggest what data or evidence they will need to collect to verify the problem. Candidate will also provide a narrative reflection on how the problem

2) Problem Identification and Evidence/ Literature review (25 Points)

Candidate will provide a narrative discussion of the data or evidence they collected to substantiate the potential causes of the problem. Candidates will conduct a review of the literature that relates to their identified problem, and literature that might inform them of the potential actions that could be taken to address the problem within their own context.

3) Action research plan (40 Points)

Candidate will develop an intervention action plan to address the problem (or contributing factor to the problem) identified and substantiated in the Problem Identification and Evidence/ Literature review assignment. Candidate will also develop plan for researching the intervention within the context of the organization. (Although the research will not be conducted this term the plan should be detailed enough to allow the student to carry the plan out if approved by their organization).

4) Action research and your content area. (15 points)

Candidates will search action research journals and locate two action research articles related to their own content area. Candidate will read each article and then write a one-page summary for each article and a one page reflection of how the article might apply to their practice.

5) Action Research Ethics Essay: (CF 7) (10 Points)

Candidates will read the Belmont report and the article *Action Research in Education: Addressing Gaps in Ethical Principles and Practices*, and write 4-5 page double spaced essay discussing research ethics as they apply to action research, specifically candidates will discuss how they will apply ethical research practices to their action research plan. **(submitted via Livetext)**

Grading Scale (Percentages)

94-100	A	77-79	C+
90-93	A-	73-76	C
86-89	B+	70-72	C-
83-85	B	60-69	D
80-82	B -	<60	F

Course Expectations

As this is a graduate level course, I perceive each of you as students, learners and scholars. As such, I expect that you view yourself in the same manner. You have chosen to be here and therefore are responsible for our own behavior, learning, and success. However, as a group we make up a class and as such are a professional and scholarly community. In order to succeed as individuals and as a group we must be willing to agree that all members of the community provide meaningful contributions to discussions and activities. This can include insightful comments, relevant examples, thought-provoking questions, and appropriate responses to the comments/questions of others. Such participation also requires students to be sensitive to their level of participation in relation to others in the group, as well as respect the differences in perspectives, thoughts and ideas.

University Policies:

Academic Honesty

Academic honesty is an expression of interpersonal justice, responsibility and care, applicable to Loyola University faculty, students, and staff, which demands that the pursuit of knowledge in the university community be carried out with sincerity and integrity. The School of Education's Policy on Academic Integrity can be found at: http://www.luc.edu/education/academics_policies_integrity.shtml. For additional academic policies and procedures refer to: http://www.luc.edu/education/academics_policies_main.shtml

Accessibility

Students who have disabilities which they believe entitle them to accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act should register with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD) office. To request accommodations, students must schedule an appointment with an SSWD coordinator. Students should contact SSWD at least four weeks before their first semester or term at Loyola. Returning students should schedule an appointment within the first two weeks of the semester or term. The University policy on accommodations and participation in courses is available at: <http://www.luc.edu/sswd/>

Harassment (Bias Reporting)

It is unacceptable and a violation of university policy to harass, discriminate against or abuse any person because of his or her race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, age or any other characteristic protected by applicable law. Such behavior threatens to destroy the environment of tolerance and mutual respect that must prevail for this university to fulfill its educational and health care mission. For this reason, every incident of harassment, discrimination or abuse undermines the aspirations and attacks the ideals of our community. The university qualifies these incidents as incidents of bias.

In order to uphold our mission of being Chicago's Jesuit Catholic University-- a diverse community seeking God in all things and working to expand knowledge in the service of humanity through learning, justice and faith, any incident(s) of bias must be reported and appropriately addressed. Therefore, the Bias Response (BR) Team was created to assist members of the Loyola University Chicago community in bringing incidents of bias to the attention of the university. If you believe you are subject to such bias, you should notify the Bias Response Team at this link: <http://webapps.luc.edu/biasreporting/>

Diversity: Action research is a unique form of research that emphasizes both the specific context and collaborative relationships within an organization. Through this course, we will discuss these aspects of action research with particular attention being paid to the idea that multiple perspectives within an organization provide a stronger foundation for defining problems, and developing actions to solve these problems.

Technology: During the course, students will use electronic databases to search for articles relevant to their projects, students must use Livetext and Blackboard to submit assignments, Blackboard and Loyola University Chicago e-mail accounts to communicate with instructor and fellow students.

Course Calendar on next page

(P) - Pine, Teacher Action Research: Building Knowledge Democracies

(H) - Hendricks, Improving schools Through Action Research 2nd ed.

(S) – Sringer, Action Research 3rd ed.

Date	Topics	Readings	Assignments Due
8/30	Syllabus, Course overview and Introductions		
9/6	Nature of action research	(P) – Ch 1 & pgs 29-40 (S) – Ch 1 & 2 (H) – Ch 1	
9/13	Paradigm of Action Research -	(P) – Ch 3 & Pgs 278-299 (S) – Ch 9	
9/20	Reflection in action research Identifying the problem	(P) – Pgs 178-205 & Pgs 299-315 (H) – Ch 2 Assigned Readings #1	
9/27	Conducting action Research, Types of action research and using the literature in action research	(P) – Ch 11& pgs 47-60 (S) – Pgs 39-51 (H) Ch 3, & pgs 117-121	Action research and your content area
10/4	Action research questions and Data collection	(S) Ch 4 (P) Pgs 212-218 (H) Pgs 67-71, Ch 5	
10/11	Qualitative data analysis	(S) Ch 5 (H) 143-158 Assigned readings#4	Context and Problem foundation
10/18	No class Fall Break		
10/25	Quantitative data analysis	Assigned Readings #3 (H) 127-143	
11/1	Validity and action Research	(P) – Ch 4 (S) Pgs 54-60 (H) Pgs 111-112	
11/8	Planning actions and Strategic change	(S) Ch 6 & 7 (H) Pgs 117-124	
11/15	Collaborative action research and knowledge democracies	(P) Ch 6 & 7	Problem Evidence and Identification Literature review
11/22	Work on Action plan Assignments		
11/29	Communicating Action Research Design Based Research	(H) Ch 8 Assigned readings # 5	Action Research Ethics Essay
12/6	Wrap up and course evaluations		Action plan (Due Dec 11 th)