



How can I conduct Action Research?

Researchers are people with questions. Researchers are filled with the desire to better understand what they do everyday so they can improve their practices. In some cases, an empirical study may be undertaken in order to help make decisions about specific problems. In other cases, action research is more appropriate. Action research is different from traditional research because it looks more at the question of how, instead of why. Action research is not focused on the development of theory or the search for truth. Action research is designed to change our current situation for the better. It is designed to help us make decisions based on a new type of practice that is more useful than the previous one. Traditional research would try and draw conclusions and generalize to the rest of the world. Action research might ask “How can I make things better?”

For example, you may feel the need to develop a greater understanding of students’ thoughts and actions. You may wonder how often your child attempts to communicate with you. You may desire to develop a deeper understanding of teachers’ experiences with a particular educational setting. You may want to provide teachers the opportunity to examine their theoretical beliefs in relation to their instructional practices. You may be enrolling your child in a community recreation program and wonder what kind of impact it will really have. You may feel that your instruction could be a little better, but you’re not sure where to start. You may have an idea of a new way to present your curriculum, but you want to be sure your method is successful. If you have been in any of these situations, you want to conduct action research.

We need to keep in mind that experimental designs with strong internal validity are hard to find in action research because the opportunities to gather large numbers of students together in a controlled, experimental situation are hard to come by. For teachers and families of students with low-incidence disabilities, this is especially true. Many action researchers prefer qualitative designs because they are extremely flexible, and allow the researcher to capture contextual constructs.

The National Center on Low-Incidence Disabilities is pleased to offer support to individuals who are interested in conducting action research. Our staff is prepared to assist you in developing a research design that will answer the questions you have. We will guide you in the collection of data, and assist in the analysis of your data. After you have concluded your action research project, the National Center on Low-Incidence Disabilities will provide an avenue for publishing the results of your work. Take the first steps toward actively promoting the knowledge in your field! Contact us to learn more about how you can get started.

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