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Special Issue: Action Research

FOREWORD

I remember the moment that I discovered Action Research. It was at an early stage in my career as a primary school teacher. I was enthusiastic, but at times beaten by the challenges of the classroom. My then principal recognised my innate curiosity about what I did, why I did it and how what I did would materially affect the students that I taught. She recommended that I pursue a Masters in Educational Studies. My encounter with Action Research, provided me with the tools and skills needed to respond in a measured way to the unpredictability of the classroom.

These skills served me well during my many career transitions; as a teacher educator, administrator and now as a policy maker. Making sense of the world through action research sustains lifelong learning skills; forever always being and becoming; forever always, thinking, acting and reflecting; forever always approaching the known through the eyes of the unknown, to arrive at new ways of knowing, doing, thinking and speaking as a teacher. Action research is not simply a cycle of action, it is a spiral of enquiry!

Put another way, action research can be likened to a teacher's stock cupboard. We all know that cupboard that sits near the teacher's desk, in the corner of the classroom within easy reach. In this cupboard are teaching supplies like extra white board markers, copy books or pencils, spare school uniforms in case a student gets sick or gets into an accident, first aid supplies and official school documents like student records and the roll book. Let's think of action research skills as supplies in the stock cupboard, within easy reach. Like the items in the cupboard, these skills will be used significantly throughout the school day. Teacher action research is not extra work for the teacher. Rather, it is an assemblage of *empirical-pedagogical skills* deployed by the teacher specifically to predict, identify and respond to the range of educational challenges he or she confronts through the process of schooling in a quest for education. Hence, its social justice implications are immediately obvious.

This special issue focuses on the use of action research in teacher education. In many ways, the projects discussed share lessons for pre-service training and the continuing professional development of teachers. These studies are also instances of how teachers have used, and can use action research to reduce the effects of unplanned social and political factors coming to bear upon classroom practices. In this way, they re-emphasise the sociality of teaching: teachers with students or parents; teachers with other teachers; and, educational leaders and teachers. Together they are able to solve school-based problems while improving their own practice.

Importantly, I commend the efforts of the editors as they progress the scholastic interests of classroom teachers, *insuring* teaching as a practice of the intellectual. In creating the opportunity for teachers to navigate the cycle of academic publication, they have validated the importance of experience systematically reflected upon, and in so doing strengthened the professional

community of teachers in Trinidad and Tobago. I am sure that our Caribbean peers will find value in this special issue. It provides a means of insight into similar challenges other teachers are currently confronting, and motivates others to pursue their own action research skills.

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