

Title: Exploring Action Research During Teacher Education

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Abstract

Reports on Issues Related to Teaching Education: Exploring Action Research During Teacher Education

The intent of this study is to investigate the action research model process of the Master of Arts in Teaching Program and provide data about the activities of the participants, the value of the studies, the complexities and tensions during the evolution of the model and its effect on participants during the student teaching practicum. Examples of the different types of studies will be summarized and shared. Data collection took the form of interviews, questionnaires, student artifacts, and a personal journal. Data encompassed issues related to the planning of the research project process, and the effects of this type of collaborative effort on the student teachers, their mentors and my own leadership as the university instructor and program director.

Description of the Project

Students in the Master of Arts in Teaching Program (with K-8 certification) at Alaska Pacific University, Anchorage, Alaska, participate in a Professional Development School Model in which they are involved in rigorous practicums from the very beginning of the program. Professional Development School refers to a school-university

partnership that brings university instructors, school teachers and administrators together to strengthen the preparation of teachers and to renew K-12 education with the central aim to increase student learning (Goodlad, 1995). Practicum refers to all varieties of observational and teaching experiences in a preservice teacher education program. Students are involved with cohorts who provide forums for collaborative study and optimal learning as courses build upon the knowledge and experience gained in each proceeding semester. During their first semester, students begin an action research study and continue it during their five semester program. Action research is systematic self-reflective scientific inquiry by practitioners to improve practice (McKernan, 1991). McCutcheon and Jung (1990) provide the following definition: “A systematic inquiry that is collective, collaborative, self-reflective, critical, and undertaken by the participants of the inquiry. The goals of such research are the understanding of practice and the articulation of a rationale or philosophy of practice in order to improve practice” (p.148). Experience teaching in both urban and rural Alaska is also an important component of this program. Students travel to rural Alaska with a member of the university faculty where they teach a unit of study which they have designed. Their action research is continued throughout the program during the student teaching internship. In the final semester, students write-up and present their action research studies.

Titles of some of the various studies are the following: Teaching Writing Effectively: My Journey with a 6th Grade Class; Empowering Students Through Play in the Classroom; Beyond the Lesson: Strategies to Reinforce Understanding; Catch Me, I'm Falling: Identifying and Addressing the Issues Surrounding Student Failure;

Addressing the Whole Child: Meeting the Affective Needs of the Student. Below are examples of several students' action research proposals.

References

Goodlad, J. (1995). *Partner schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

McCutcheon, G., & Jung, B. (1990). Alternative perspectives on action research. *Theory into Practice*, 29(3), 144-151.

McKernan, J. (1991). *Curriculum action research: A handbook of methods and resources for the reflective practitioner*. New York: St. Martin's Press.

