Conducting Action Research

Carolyn Daoust, Ph.D.
Saint Mary’s College of C.A.
Presentation Topics:

- What is Action Research?
- How is it Different from Traditional Research?
- An Example Montessori Classroom Action Research Project
- Doing Your Own Action Research
What is Action Research?

- Inquiry or research to improve the quality of an organization and its performance
- Research designed and conducted by practitioners who analyze the data to improve their own practices
- Enables teachers to:
  - Reflect on and assess their teaching
  - Explore and test new ideas, methods and materials
  - Assess the effectiveness of new approaches
  - Share feedback and make decisions about curriculum and instruction
How is Action Research Different from Traditional Research?
How is Action Research Different from Traditional Research?

Who identifies the research question(s) and conducts the research?

**Traditional Research**  
Trained researchers: university professors, scholars, graduate students

**Action Research**  
Practitioners: teachers, principals, counselors
How is Action Research Different from Traditional Research?

Where is the research Conducted?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Research</th>
<th>Action Research</th>
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<td>Settings where variables can be controlled, i.e. universities, day cares, and laboratories, field settings</td>
<td>Schools and classrooms, and other institutions</td>
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How is Action Research Different from Traditional Research?

What is the goal of the research?

**Traditional Research**
Knowledge that can be published and generalized to the field

**Action Research**
Knowledge that is relevant to the local setting; to effect positive change
How is Action Research Different from Traditional Research?

What about the Literature Review?

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How is Action Research Different from Traditional Research?

What about the Literature Review?

- **Traditional Research**: Extensive
- **Action Research**: Brief

What about the Instrumentation?

- **Traditional Research**: Measures are selected based on technical adequacy
- **Action Research**: Instruments that are convenient and easy to administer and score
How is Action Research Different from Traditional Research?

- **What about the Sampling?**

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What about Data Analysis?

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<td>Descriptive and inferential</td>
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How is Action Research Different from Traditional Research?

How is the research Disseminated?

Traditional Research
To other professionals
in different settings

Action Research
To the specific individual,
classroom or organization
What Montessori teachers do daily on a smaller scale:

- Little Billy loves cars; how can I use this interest to help him focus for more than 3 minutes?
- How can I set it up so children wear slippers in the classroom?
- I wonder what would happen if I moved the line from the corner to the middle of the room – would children use it more?
Sometimes we have larger problems, issues or concerns:

- Is it more beneficial to introduce 2 or 3 objects when using a 3 period-lesson?
- Would introducing Brain Gym in my classroom benefit my students?
- How can I direct my school in the most “Montessori” way possible?

Our “experiments” becomes action research when a more systematic approach is needed
An Example Montessori
ECE Action Research Project
The Creation, Implementation & Evaluation of a Learner-Centered Conflict Resolution Program, by Julie Riordan

The Problem: The peace table approach to conflict resolution wasn’t working effectively
Example Montessori Action Research Project

The Creation, Implementation & Evaluation of a Learner-Centered Conflict Resolution Program, by Julie Riordan

- The Problem: The peace table approach to conflict resolution wasn’t working effectively
- Research Question: How could the approach be improved?
The Creation, Implementation & Evaluation of a Learner-Centered Conflict Resolution Program, by Julie Riordan

- **The Problem:** The peace table approach to conflict resolution wasn’t working effectively
- **Research Question:** How could the approach be improved?
- **Literature Review:** Examined research on approaches used in non-Montessori ECE classrooms
Example Montessori Action Research Project

- **Instrumentation**: Developed a checklist to assess areas needing improvement
Example Montessori Action Research Project

**Instrumentation:** Developed a checklist to assess areas needing improvement

- Acceptance of responsibility
- Voice tone
- Aggression
- Body calming
- Empathy, etc.
Example Montessori Action Research Project

**Procedure:** Using the checklist results, introduced new conflict resolution procedures with

- Role-playing
- Grace and courtesy lessons
- Peace activities and storytelling
Example Montessori Action Research Project

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**Data Analysis:** After 3 months, reassessed children using the checklist
Example Montessori Action Research Project

Findings:
- Children resolved conflicts more independently and confidently.
- They created more complex negotiations and resolution.

Result: A more Peaceful Classroom
Small Group Discussion:

What is a problem area, issue or concern in your classroom or school?
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What is a problem area, issue or concern in your classroom or school?

How might you obtain more information?

- Observing (passively or as a participant)
- Interviews (informal or structured)
- Questionnaires, checklists, attitude scales
- Standardized tests and educational assessments
- Student records, recorded conversations
“Where to go from here” ideas:

- Obtain Angela Murray’s White Paper on Action Research from the AMS website (under Research)
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- Obtain Angela Murray’s White Paper on Action Research from the AMS website (under Research)

For help contact:

- Me, at SMC: cdaoust@stmarys-ca.edu
- Sharon Damore, Ed. D., chair of the AMS Research Committee, at sdamore@depaul.edu