Sri Lanka Group 1

Planting the Seeds of Action Research

In the following accounts we see how colleagues in Sri Lanka began to engage with action research to improve their educational provision across one region. We see how they identify useful starting points for research, sometimes focusing on a single issue or an individual learner, and sometimes addressing a larger issue that influences a whole community. In each case, we see how the action research provides useful reflective space, prompting sensitive teacher researchers to review their established approaches to teaching and learning and to adopt and adapt fresh strategies to better meet the needs of their students and colleagues.

Action Research conducted by

Professional Development Center for Teachers – Yakarawatta Kuliyapitiya Education Zone, Sri Lanka,

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Introduction

In Sri Lanka, there are 118 Professional Development Centers and one role of these centers is to develop action research capacity of teachers. To represent action researches conducted by school professionals the following nine researches are presented.

Action research is participative and collaborative concept which leads to enhance the professionalism of teachers. It is a process to gather evidence to implement changes in practice. Action research is viewed as a research method in which theory and practice are explored by posing questions emerging from the researcher's social actions in relation to the education system. Action research can carefully monitor the planning, and practices. As a result of that Yakarawatta Teacher training center created the strongest circle with directors, principals and

teachers in the Zone. The following research was carried on by school personnel to improve school practices.

Re-establishment of the Zonal Computer Resource Centre - E.M.W.T. Edirisinghe

In this account, we see how a large-scale initiative needed to consider the wider "practice architecture" of the technology training within a Computer Resource provision for teachers across an educational zone. This involved revitalising the physical resources, employing progressive staff and reimagining the curriculum. As the improvements continue to develop, it will be interesting to see how this action researcher uses feedback from participants to guide future developments.

There are 100 education zones in Sri Lanka. Almost all the zones maintain their own Computer Resource Centre. The Centre manager is an assistant director appointed by education zone. When I assumed duty as the assistant director of the education zone I was appointed as the Centre manager of Zonal Computer Resource Centre (CRC). Then I did a SWOT analysis and identified the current situation of the zonal CRC. I identified some threats and weaknesses there and they were the issues for the advancement of the Zonal CRC. It was not economically viable, and there was a lack of physical resources- like computers, internet, office furniture and it also needed human resources with innovative ideas and new trends in ICT. Therefore, stakeholders were dissatisfied about it. I quickly intervened there to eradicate those issues. First, I empowered the CRC by transfer of two innovative teachers to the CRC as instructors. Then I enriched physical resources by repairing existing computers - with zonal hardware team and transferred excess computers of some schools to CRC by the approval of zonal director of education. And also I bought some needed infrastructure by existing CRC funds. As the next step, I designed new course contents with new ICT practices, suitable for the identified stakeholders with new instructors and started those new courses by pre-designed course fees. As a result of that, CRC has become an interactive place of stakeholders and number of attendees were increased. Gradually CRC became a profitable organization. I hope to identify new developments identifying new target groups, planning for new programs for the

stakeholders, improve and maintain of existing physical resources and continue the empowerment of human resources by adequate training of new trends in ICT.

Exploring the difficulties with regard to capitalization among second language learners in an ESL classroom - R.P.D.C. Ariyapala

This small-scale research shows the benefits of focusing upon one small topic to begin to understand the dynamics of the teacher-researcher's approach. As the research with this class continues, it will be interesting to see how this scaffolding approach can be transferred to other settings, and what new knowledge the teacher-researcher can share with other practitioners.

For my action research, I selected grade 8B class and 48 students in my school. When I am going through the teaching learning process, I could able to identify many errors and difficulties with capitalization. They mixed up it with their mother tongue. They struggled with "momma" letters (capital) and "baby" letters (simple). So I reflected on how to find a solution through an action research intervention. For that I started activities from simple to complex steps. I introduced differences of capital and simple, where should we insert capitals in a sentence and an essay. As a result, I think that my mission of finding solutions for difficulties with capitalization becomes successful.

Developing the students' conflict resolution and peaceful living skills through the methods of dancing arts - N.L.D.S.S. Liyanage

This study clearly illustrates how action research which focuses upon an individual learner can provide clarity and insight into the teacher's practice that stimulates teachers' self-awareness about their wider practice with other learners.

Conducted as part of my Postgraduate Diploma Course, this action research is the result of my endeavours to solve a problem in my capacity as a dancing teacher. Through undertaking this, I sought to solve the problem of one female student who exhibited aggressive, quarrelsome and

ill-mannered behaviour both in and outside the classroom. Based on my findings, it is my conclusion that by identifying the unique skills of a given student, by managing their emotions and impulses through the methods taught in the dancing arts, and by designing a proper education system in the school which befits students' strengths and preferences, it's possible to eliminate or at least minimize such unruly behaviour and significantly improve students' performance.

Changing behaviour of students through assigning leadership - Mr. L.N.S. Chandana

This report describes how action research projects can inspire staff to realise their values through their teaching. The principal encouraged staff to explore wider aspects of educational development, and this teacher had found ways to stimulate a change in culture through students being given responsibility for the smooth running of some activities in the school. This teacher's future research might explore how students talk about their experience of this approach, and the principal is now well placed to promote positive findings throughout the school.

I am the principal of Sripathi Royal College, Sri Lanka. There are nearly 1200 students in it. We have classes from grade 1 to 11 and each class has three parallel classes. This Action research was done by Mr. Dhammika who got the challenge which was tested many ways. He thoroughly believes that appreciation, admiration and acceptance of the students is a must. He comes to the school in the morning and selected students and randomly assigned various duties of the schools to them. He promised them to give valuable certificate. Students do not know that they will assume duties till morning. They have to be ready every morning. So day by day they have enthusiasm towards achieving leaderships at not only their classes but also students in other classes also prefer to be leaders and fulfill their duties. Through this everyone wants to be leaders and behave well in the school and set an example to their younger brothers and sisters.

Developing the use of correct postures in the practical skills of dancing through a therapeutic program for weak students - **A.M.T.H. Wijesiri**

In this useful study, which aims to support the lower-achieving students, the teacher-researcher used a range of methods to discover why learners were under-achieving. Importantly, this teacher-researcher questioned students through questionnaire and interview to add to their own observations, and thus were better able to identify the peer pressures that were limiting the students' progress. If the teacher-researcher continues to consult with the learners, they will discover how the conclusions of this initial study can help maintain the learners' progress.

In order to achieve the goal of producing a person with competencies through the present Sri Lankan education, a person with complete personality development should be produced through aesthetic development and physical skill development in the student. One of the nine national common goals developed by the National Education Commission in 1992 was to develop the skills in the student to achieve the goal of developing the abilities that will be used to have a respectable position in the international society. It is important to pay attention here to the pleasure, fun and skill development that comes from studying aesthetic in the skill of using sports and leisure effectively among the 07 skills that the National Education Commission shows in 2003. Providing theoretical knowledge and understanding in the classroom as well as developing practical skills is an essential factor in the teaching method of dance subject learning in the school curriculum. In the practical activities, the majority of the students show their skills at a high level by demonstrating practical skills with correct forms of dance. However, the identification of several students exhibiting weaknesses in practical skills that did not reach the essential skill level led to the implementation of this action research based on a therapeutic program. The objectives of this study were to identify the students who show weaknesses in practical skills who haven't reached the relevant performance level in the practical activities of dance and identify the cases where they show weaknesses, to identify the reasons why they do not reach the performance level of the students who show skills and to implement an appropriate feedback program for the development of those weaknesses. Accordingly, five grade 7 students who exhibit weaknesses in dance skills in the practical activities in a school were selected as the participants of this study. The primary step in developing the weaknesses of the participants in the study was to prepare the "Mandiya", which is the basic form of dance by manipulating the feet and hands for dancing with correct postures. Activities such as

flexibility exercises, worship drill, foot drills and hand drills were practised for two hours daily after school hours, and practical tests were conducted on two occasions to check the progress of the students. Following qualitative research approach, data were collected through interviews, questionnaires and participant observation and analyzed using triangulation and narrative methods. We discovered that those students had chosen the subject of dance due to lack of understanding of the aesthetic field in which they are talented. Further they have chosen the subject of dance because their peers are studying dance and they tend to stay in the back row of class with their friends and avoid practical activities. Analyzing the data revealed that lack of mastery was the reason for exhibiting weaknesses in practical skills. This study concluded that as a subject with practical activities, the development of talents in students should be carried out by daily practical training as well as by developing interest and commitment of students.

Improving computer base teaching in the classroom context (Computer base improvement program for teachers under SBPTD - K.H.S.M. Hemamala

This is a good example of the early stages of an action research study that has been made in response to social and economic change. The researcher understands the challenges that must be met, and this is an opportunity to decide how to focus the research in a manageable way. The researcher will consider what classroom factors may help or hinder teachers to make changes; which strategies the teacher researcher should adopt to help them overcome any barriers; and the best research methods to discover from the teachers which strategies are proving most effective for the teachers.

Today children are digital learners and readily engage with numerous innovative digital devices with ease. According to the statistics, the computer literacy of our country is 50%. Our school is located in rural area and the facilities are limited. As a result, during the COVID 19 phenomenon, the teachers as well as students face a lot of problems. Although the government implemented the online classroom method, our school community was not comfortable in dealing with the above matter. They were not used to digital devices. Some had to buy new equipment to cope with the new system. Thus all of them were able to manage the situation

and work hard to cover the targets. During this difficult time, the staff and the principal realized the need for a computer literacy development program at the school level in order to face the new challenges in the education sector. Today the application of technology in the classroom context is a must. The government has introduced the digitalization of education in 2020 after the COVID-19 phenomenon with 19 objectives that are designed to suit modern requirements. The staff of our school has realized the value of acquiring computer-based literacy in the teaching-learning process. As the ICT teacher of the school, I decided to help them to improve their computer skills through our SBPDT program, which was introduced in 2012. In the SBPTD introduction book, the government has emphasized the need of adapting to changes, and the contribution to professional development by sharing experiences of the use of Information Communication Technology. Based on this background, the aim of the action research was to develop selective computer base abilities of the teachers in order to use in the teaching process. Objectives included: developing MS Word ability in the use of a keyboard so the teachers will be able to complete their document tasks; developing the ability of teachers in using Power Point to make a presentation in relevant to their subjects, developing ability in internet searching for relevant tasks and sending and receiving emails and finally developing presentation skills.

Increasing school attendance of a grade 7 student - W.H.C.P. Madhuwanthi

This is another good example of the benefits of small-scale, focused action research. By fully exploring the child's social situation and engaging in discussions which revealed the individual's interests and motivations, the teacher-researcher was able to meet the child's needs. Importantly, this improved the teacher-researcher's understanding of their personal pastoral skills and their own counselling potential which can be further developed as they support the attendance of other disadvantaged children in future.

I chose this research because absenteeism due to various reasons is a current issue in schools nowadays. By carrying out this research, many factors that cause students to not attend school were identified. The family environment and economic condition of the student selected for this research, as well as his parents' problems, were the main reasons for his low school

attendance. During this research, it was easy to bring the child to school because of his passion and talent for drawing. Also, this process includes many activities such as closeness to the child, personal counseling, parental counseling, teachers' support, etc. After that, the child's attendance at school gradually increased, and later I gave him the necessary support to complete the learning activities he had missed due to absence. Finally, I look forward to doing the necessary things to increase the school attendance of other children in the future through the experience I gained through this research.

To obtain an authentic experience in field of construction - A.M.T. Adhikari

This study of personal professional growth explores how problem-based research is often an excellent stimulus for action research. The principal explored ways to make this research more successful, and other principals would certainly benefit from reading a richly detailed personal case-study of this process. This is what elevates problem-solving activities into action research – when the researched activities are made public, so that others can learn from, and contribute to, the research.

The aim of the research was the way of changing my role of principal as a lady to fulfill the construction within the school premises successfully. In research I had to face main three issues, as lack of practical experience, less experience in maintaining the relationship with unfamiliar professionals and workers, and less knowledge in purchasing the raw materials with relevant standards in the field of constructions. There I had to take intervene steps to reduce influence of those issues. These steps included having discussion with relevant professionals and workers; further studying the process of construction of selected workers and identifing their behavioral patterns; and identifying the relevant standards of raw materials by visiting stalls and factories. At the end of that process I was able to fulfill the construction of the school premises successfully, and develop the leadership skills and documentation method by associating various professionals, traders and workers and received a clear understanding about the construction process. Now I can identify the suitable personal standardized raw materials, shops and factories and worked according to the financial rules and regulation.

Developing the writing skills and behavioral patterns of a slow learner - T.A.S. Dimuthumali

This very positive account summarises how a teacher and individual explored a variety of strategies for addressing learning difficulties. The study describes how teacher and learner developed a working understanding of strategies that can help learners who have reading difficulties. It would be interesting to read a fuller account of the action research process, revealing how the teacher and learner reflected as they gradually developed strategies, and discovered which strategies were more and less successful, and whether this learner's development has influenced other teachers in the school.

This research will prove that slow learners can be as smart as other children by using different techniques of learning. This research participant from grade 8 has clinically diagnosed ADHD and Tourette syndrome from 2014. Even though he has this kind of serious illness issues he gained 123 out of 159 in 2020 for Grade 5 scholarship exam. But from grade 6 he has changed his written pattern. He has Surface dysgraphia where students have trouble with orthographic representations of words. Therefore this research design includes many technical approaches of learning for slow learners. They are related to Fine Motor Skill Development and Fine Visual Motor skills Development. As mentioned above, for his ADHD this research introduced Behavioral Modifications as well.