

Action research
in teacher development:
an overview of research methodology



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Action research in teacher development: an overview of research methodology

**Edited by
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Preface

This book has grown out of the perceived need for and desire to promote reflectivity: reflectivity in teaching and reflectivity in learning. The context for this is well-defined here, that of foreign language learning and instruction, but its relevance and utility go far beyond this application. Reflectivity is required in all areas of our life, professional and personal. It is my deeply-held belief that teachers who think of themselves as continuously developing learners become more successful and in the long run can avoid the well-known 'burn-out' stage in their career. This is particularly so if they 'catch the bug' early enough and get involved in their own classroom-based research, that is, action research (AR) conducted for their own purposes.

This volume is to constitute a basic working tool both for students in teacher training programmes and for in-service teachers with varied degrees of professional experience: novices as well as experienced pedagogues. It introduces the idea of action research (AR) and outlines its various stages and procedures ("Introducing action research..."). The chapters that follow present the main research methods and tools in a way that is adapted for individual mini-scale action research projects teachers and students can design themselves. Each chapter is structured in the same way. It starts with a description of an appropriate method, which later on is illustrated with examples of studies based on this given method. To give teachers and students some practice, discussion questions and practical tasks are proposed in each case. As each method/tool is described in a somewhat synoptic fashion, additional source material is presented in the form of an *Additional reading* section in each chapter, to allow the user to

supplement and expand his/her knowledge in a given area. In the final part of the volume the reader will find a *Glossary of terms*, containing definitions of the key concepts and terminology presented in the book. The additional material which is included in the *Appendices* may be of help in designing and writing a research proposal and even the project itself. This book however is not concerned with instruction on academic writing per se nor in the formal side of presenting a final dissertation or project. Nevertheless, it does refer the reader to useful sources on the writing up of a project report or thesis by indicating relevant printed guides in the *Appendices*.

All the authors in this book, who generously agreed to participate in this project, are researchers and teacher trainers at the University of Silesia and at various teacher training colleges in the region. I would like to thank them for their enthusiasm for and commitment to promoting action research work among our trainee students and in-service teachers, who are still engaged in developing their professional abilities and extending their qualifications.

I hope that this little volume will offer encouragement and advice to teachers and students eager to develop their own AR projects and so become more reflective and, as a consequence, more autonomous in their teaching. I also trust that getting involved in one's own research will inculcate the curiosity and enthusiasm for teaching which is a sine qua non for sustaining high professional standards, here sought and applied to the teaching of a foreign language.

Danuta Gabryś-Barker

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