

## Action Research: A Remedial Approach in Teacher Education

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### Abstract

*Education is the most effective instrument of transforming society and the teaching professionals are the backbone of educational process. Today's educational world is very much challenging and it demands professional competencies in teachers who have to serve education in a reflective way. The teachers have to develop self-understanding and competencies about their changed role as reflective practitioners so that they would sustain longer and carry the complex task of teaching effectively. The philosophy of Teaching-Learning Process is taking turn from Learning Centered Approach to Teaching Centered Approach. And, in this turning process of education the educators have to play the role of a teacher- researcher for maintaining the quality and continuous innovations in all modes of education. The term Action Research was coined by Kurt Lewin (1944). Action Research is a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by practitioners in various social setting, including educational, in order to improve the current practices or to solve immediate problem scientifically. Action Research has applications in hospitals, industry, business, insurance, shipping, prisons, social administration, community projects and education. In an educational situation this action focused applied research is used by teachers, school Principals, administrators and organizational head. To see its maximum utilization in education, we can say that Action Research is- by the teachers, for the teachers. It is collaborative, situational, participatory, self-evaluative, formal, Interpretative, qualitative, experiential and experimental process of research. Action Research in an educational setting may be related to school based curriculum development, professional development of school staff, school campus discipline, system planning, learner's motivation, learning styles, attention span of the learners, group dynamics, teacher competence, teachers attitude, teaching methods, content transaction, evaluation process, impact of PTA, community participation, leadership style of principal and staff's work- motivation, problem of noise in the classroom, poor performance of students in a particular subject, non-participation in co-curricular activities, behavior problem of students, impact of visual aids in teaching of a subject, impact of mid day meal scheme on students 'attendance and achievement etc. Action Research may be various types i.e. Individual, Collaborative, School- Wide, District-wide, Experimental design, Developmental design. At pre-service teacher training programme, pupil-teachers should take collaborative project for Action Research because it will save time and energy of the teacher educators as well as the pre-service teachers will learn maximum in collaboration.*

### Introduction:

Education is the most effective instrument of transforming society and the teaching professionals are the backbone of educational process. Today's educational world is very much challenging and it demands professional competence in teachers, who have to serve education in a reflective way. The teachers have to develop self-understanding and competencies about their changed role as reflective practitioners so that they would sustain longer and carry the complex task of teaching effectively. The philosophy of teaching-

learning process is taking turn from Learning centered approach to Teaching centered approach. And, in this turning process of education, the practitioners have to play the role of a teacher-researcher for maintaining the quality and continuous innovations in all modes of education. **Lawrence Stenhouse** has highlighted the connection of teachers with Action Research in education and rightly said, **“It is the Teacher, in the end, will change the world of school by understanding it.”** The teacher learns this art of teaching in different ways through pre-service teacher training and in-service teacher training. In pre-service teacher training programme it is very important to train pupil-teachers about various aspects of Action Research so that they will be well versed about conducting Action Research in the real situation of Teaching-Learning Process. It will be the most valuable tool in the hands of teaching practitioners by which they may get continuous professional development and will also develop an insight into how to bring innovations towards the problems they faced. By understanding the procedures of conducting an Action Research, Pupil-teachers will help various stakeholders of educational process in their professional career.

### **Origin and Development of Action Research in Teacher Education**

The concept of action research is based on the Modern Human Organization Theory and this theory is “task and relationship” centered. It assumes that employees of the organization have capacity to solve the problems and take decisions regarding improvement and modifications in their current practice. Such modifications in their current practice will make them more efficient employees of the organization. Apart from this human organization theory, the origin of action research is also considered from the work of **Kurt Lewin** in the field of Social Psychology. The term Action Research was first coined by **Kurt Lewin** in 1940. But the concept of action research was first mentioned by **Backingham** in his book **“Research for Teachers”** in **1926**. It was **Stephen M. Corey** who applied action research to solve the problems of education. After the initiation taken by Kurt Lewin and Corey many other scholars have been significantly developing the theory and practice of action research and its uses in teacher education. Lawrence Stenhouse (1970s), Carr and Kemmis (1980-till date), John Eliot (1990-till date), Donald Schon (1980), Jack Whitehead (1970-till date), Jean McNiff (1990-till date) are the eminent scholars who have contributed to develop this concept in educational situations.

### **Nature of Action Research**

Action Research is a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by practitioners in various social settings, including educational, in order to improve current practices or to solve immediate problems scientifically. It is the research which is conceived, initiated, conducted and applied by the teachers, principals, administrators and organization head to achieve their own purposes more effectively. In the process of action research the practitioners attempt to study their problems scientifically in order guide, correct and evaluate their decisions and actions at all levels. It is mainly related to day-to-day problems in local settings. Action Research has its applications in health sector, industries, business, insurance, social administration, community projects and in education sector. To see its maximum utility in teaching-learning process we can say that Action Research is- by the teachers, for the teachers. It is a collaborative, situational, participatory, self-evaluative, formal, interpretative, qualitative, experiential and experimental process of research.

### **Areas of study for Action Research in Education**

In an educational setting Action Research may be related to vast areas of education like curriculum construction, professional development of human resources, campus discipline, system planning, learners’ motivation, learning styles, late submission of homework by the students, lack of study habits, classroom environment, different classroom situations,

unruly behavior of students, problems of teachers to teach in an inclusive setting, late coming of teachers, problems related to cleanliness, lack of reading habits in teachers as well as in students, lack physical amenities and its impact on students' health, timetable problem, stress on teachers to complete syllabus on time, administrative problems of heads, development of desirable attitudes among students, problems of books in the library, problem of copying in the examination, problems related to arranging co-curricular activities in the school, reliability of examination papers, problems of teachers in using ICT equipments, co-relation between achievement & physical and mental stress of students, problem of pronunciation, attention span of the learners, group dynamics and attitude of learners, peer group impact, teachers' competence and achievement of learners, teachers' attitude towards administration, job satisfaction of human resource, methodology of teaching, content transaction strategies, evaluation process, multi-media and effective teaching, leadership styles of Principals, motivation of human resources, problem of noise in the classroom, poor performance of students in a particular subject, non-participation of students in co-curricular activities, participation in co-curricular activities and emotional intelligence, impact of mid-day meal scheme on students' achievement and attendance etc. To enhance pre-service teachers' experience it is very important to train them how to conduct action research not only in educational areas but also in the inter-related areas of community and education process. Through community interaction they will construct and develop concepts regarding mutual impact of social environment and education on each other.

### **Types of Action Research**

Action Research may have various types in various sectors on the basis of their need and nature of the problems but in education sector it can be categorized in the following types:

- 1) *Individual Teacher Action Research*: It focuses on a single issue by an individual practitioner with the consent of supervisor or principal.
- 2) *Collaborative Action Research*: When two or more than two practitioners work on a common issue encountered by them and design a shared plan.
- 3) *School-wide Action Research*: It focuses on an issue shared by all the practitioners and work in a team to counter the problem.
- 4) *District-wide Action Research*: An issue concerned with all the schools of a district and the action is taken for entire district schools.

### **Cognitive process of Action Research**

The process of observing a situation puts a practitioner into a continuous pattern of rational thinking. In such a situation the practitioner may feel satisfied or dissatisfied. His dissatisfaction may be resolved in following ways. Firstly, if the practitioner has low level of aspiration then his dissatisfaction seems resolved because he doesn't want to correct the situation. Secondly, he may try to project the responsibility on others and his dissatisfaction is resolved. But in the case of high aspiration level practitioner, he decides to change the situation and go ahead. At this second stage if the practitioner has no confidence he withdraws himself but those having confidence remain focused to the problem. At third stage when the practitioner feels that his dissatisfaction is not genuine then no problem exists for him but in the case of genuine dissatisfaction he decides to study the problem and formulate the hypothesis. After formulation of hypothesis the practitioner will go step by step till the problem is solved as shown in the figure ahead.

**Steps Involved in Action Research:** Being a scientific process it should be conducted step by step. The following steps may be adopted for action research:

Step-1. **Identification and selection of the Problem:** The practitioner should identify and select the Problem very carefully. They must know the seriousness of the problem.

Step-2. **Defining and delimiting the Problem:** After identifying the problem, it should be defined and delimited so that action and goal may be specified.

Step-3. **Analyzing the causes of Problem:** The causes of the problem are analyzed with the help of some evidences. The nature of causes is also analyzed.

Step-4. **Formulation of Action Hypothesis:** The basis for the formulation action-hypothesis is the causes of the problem which are under the approach of the investigator. It indicates about the actions and the goals to be achieved. This is the most important part of action research in an educational set up which advocates a tentative solution of the problem.

Step-5. **Developing a Design to Test the Hypothesis:** A design is developed for testing the most important action-hypothesis. If one hypothesis is not accepted then another design is developed.

Step-6. **Conclusion:** The accepting or rejecting the action hypothesis leads to draw some conclusions. The conclusions are useful in modifying and improving the current practices.

### **Illustration of an Action Research Project**

**Problem:** Students lack drawing skills in Biology

**Defining and delimiting the problem:** Students do not know to draw diagrams neatly and correctly in Biology class. Students of class 7<sup>th</sup> may be taken as samples.

**Causes:** Lack of interest? Lack of practices? Lack of positive attitude in students?

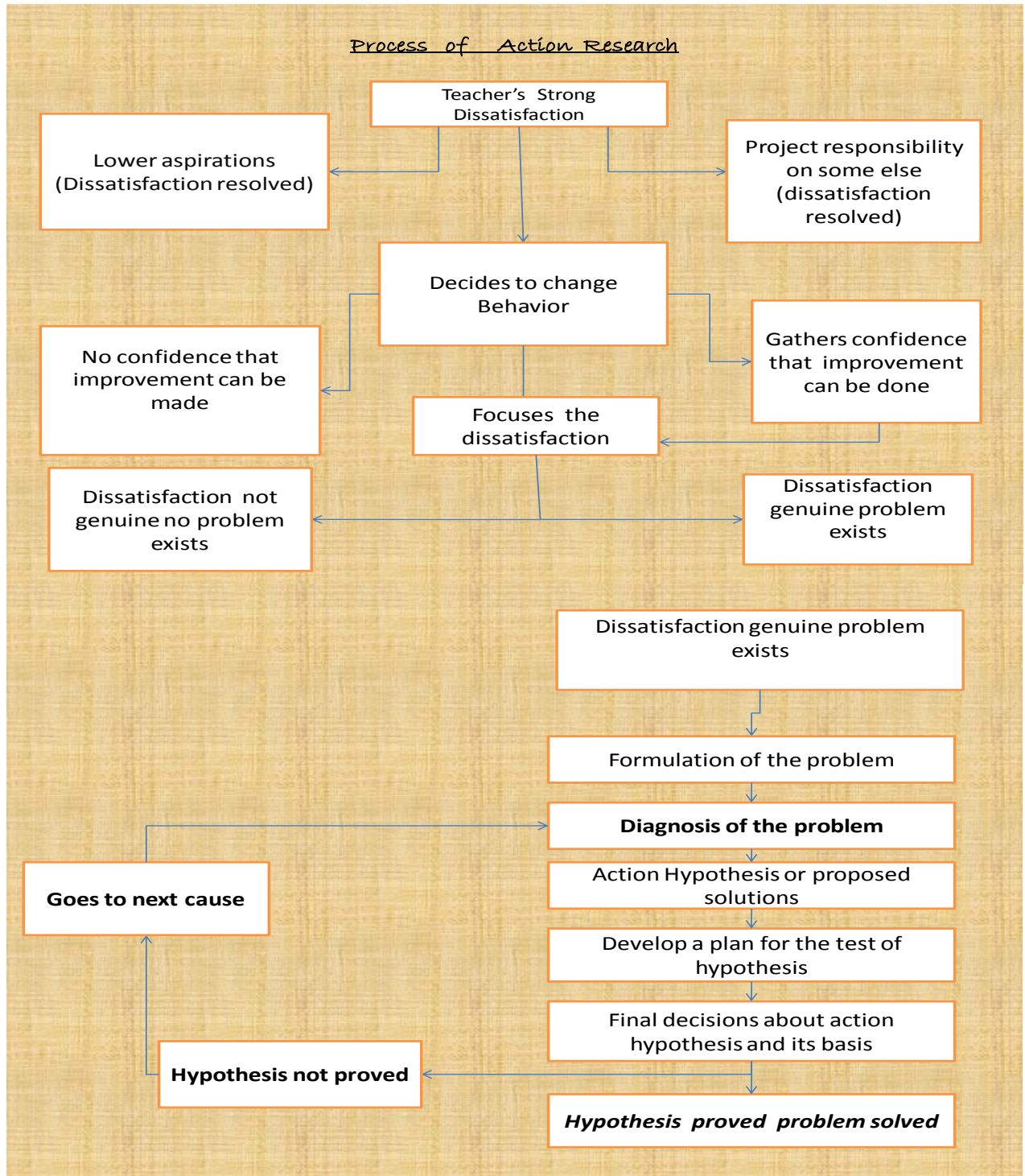
**Action Hypothesis:** Drawing ability can be developed by providing adequate time for observation of specimens and giving adequate practices of drawings.

**Design to test Hypothesis:** Pre-tests—Action programme-----post-tests----comparisons of scores –interpretation of data

**Conclusions:** Drawing skills can be developed by giving adequate practice to the children.

### **Objectives of Action Research in Teacher Training Programme**

To conduct an action research at teacher training programme is very much important for all the stakeholders of educational process because of its remedial nature. It may bring professional development to the practitioners and also improve the current situation of any organization. It is the tool in the hands of teachers by which they may always innovate their practices. It may develop a sense of scientific outlook among the teachers who will be served the society very effectively in the twenty first century.



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