Title of Session: Action Research
Moderator: Diane Painter
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Room: Action Research Group

DianeDP: Hello everyone- Diane P is here

BillBe joined the room.

DianneA: Hello Diane

BillBe: hello everyone

DianeDP: Hello Bill- where are you from?

BillBe: Selkirk, Ontario, Canada--across Lake Erie from Erie, PA

DianeDP: Terrific- are you members of ITRN then?

DianeDP: Welcome back Dianne - were you on last week?

DianneA: yes Diane, I was in last week's discussion

DianeDP: That is a good idea- when you detach the chat screen see if you can position your box so you can see the whiteboard. Last week we talked about what is action research. So, who do we have left in the room?

DianeDP: Bill - are you involved with Jackie DeLong's AR group in Canada?

BillBe: No, I'm really just here to get a basic understanding.

DianeDP: Bill, take a moment to see what is listed on the whiteboard and that will give you an overview of what teacher-researchers do when engaged in action research.

BillBe: thank you

DianeDP: I am from VA- a retired teacher who led the Fairfax County, VA teacher-research group prior to retiring. Now I am a teacher-educator at Shenandoah U in Winchester, VA

DianeDP: Dianne, want to tell Bill what you do?

DianneA: Yes Diane

DianneA: Bill, I am from Wollongong NSW Australia

DianneA: I have recently finalised a thesis using action research methodology and exploring what I understood to be reflective research of practice

DianeDP: Can you give Bill an example of that?

DianneA: my background includes high school science teaching, management of a public library service

BillBe: you beat me to it

BillBe: what kind of data did you collect for your thesis?

DianneA: an example of reflective research of practice ... it is about attending to what I do in practice ... and then exploring (1) how it is working (2) how I might do it better

BillBe: (I am just looking through some of the headings at GMU.)

DianneA: and in my thesis work I was working with a professional development design which sought to introduce other professionals to some self-awareness tools and to see how that helped them develop their practice

DianeDP: do you mean from the TR website at GMU?

BillBe: yes, that's right

DianeDP: When we developed that site it was based on MacLean and Mohr's Teacher Researchers at Work book and we added additional information from the International Teacher Research Conference that I attended in Canada

DianeDP: I think Dianne you will find tools a part of the web site. Lynn Willner developed that part.

DianneA: kind of data collected? (1) what was my thinking and intentions going into a session (2) what happened in the session and how I was thinking about that (3) how the professionals were responding to the session - capturing some immediate session evaluation using a structured reflection grid

BillBe: is AR something that teachers at all levels can benefit from?

DianeDP: Do you have an example of the structured reflection grid that you can post on this TI site? I would love to see it.

DianeDP: Absolutely- it is the best self-development I can think of for any professional.

BillBe: then I'm eager to see that grid too

DianneA: One minute

DianeDP: In the GMU's TR examples section you should see studies from all levels-different disciplines

DianeDP: while Dianne is looking, I will give you an example of a reflective component. I wanted to know what happens when I used text to speech software with special needs writers.

DianeDP: I observed them and noted in a journal what I saw happening. I questioned what I saw happening and wrote about it in my journal. From there I developed questions to ask my students to verify, extend or dispute what I thought was happening.

BillBe: quite a coincidence as it happens

BillBe: I'm working on a document for visually impaired and I can use a feedback system like that

DianneA: Diane and Bill, over the period of working with my thesis I 'collected' what I called reflective proformas - people's grids of questions to guide reflective work

DianeDP: The process involves an in depth look at your teaching and students' learning-but you are the researcher rather than having an outside researcher looking in

DianneA: if you open my profile here you can download a file of citations and commentary

DianeDP: That would be wonderful to see

DianneA: do you know how to access my profile here?

DianeDP: Sometimes a teacher-researcher gets stuck on what steps to take next, or questions to ask

DianneA: you highlight my name under the HERE tab to the left of this chat space and then click on the green I icon to open the profile

DianeDP: Yes- member management, right?

DianneA: and then scroll down some and download the file with reflective proformas in its title

DianeDP: I found it and downloaded it- how about you Bill?

BillBe: Could you please point us to an example that somehow conveys the essence of pro formas? Or a place where I might see one?

BillBe: yes, thank you--I've looked through the doc

DianneA: Bill to share my own ...

DianneA: I had three headings under which I would collect data ...

BillBe: that would e great

DianneA: (1) Surprise - John Dewey's 'starter' for reflective work

DianneA: (2) self-censoring from Chris Argyris and Donald Schon - an indication that I might be avoiding some emotional aspect of what was going on, or protecting someone else unilaterally

DianneA: (3) discomfort - my own visceral alert to potentially emotional difficulties

DianneA: as I worked with these three I began adding a couple more ...

BillBe: so this is 'active' research because one is not a passive participant

DianneA: (4) elusive - to try and help me capture those kinds of thoughts that seem to be peripheral and quick and quickly forgotten, but which if captured might convey something of the context that I was attending to non-verbally and which might suggest some of the as yet unarticulated synthesis I was making of it, and where a creative solution might be developed

BillBe: this reminds me of early attempts to find 'flow' by keeping diaries

DianneA: my (5) was about 'being there' from John Heron's work, since I was trying to improve my facilitation skills

DianeDP: some people refer to action as something one does to address a puzzlement

BillBe: must read more!

DianeDP: Dianne thank you for giving us this example

BillBe: yes, thank you!

DianeDP: I notice you have one of my favorite authors listed in the doc I just downloaded- Stephen Brookfield. I love his book Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher. Bill, you may want to read that one

DianneA: I tend to understand 'surprise' now as an indication of something that means what I thought I knew and could therefore predict, appears not to be so, and so I have some more thinking to do!

DianneA nods to Diane

DianneA: Brookflied has a number of great structures for reflecting in that book

BillBe: I'll take a look

DianeDP: Teacher-researchers often tell me that their research leads to more questions than answers- I tell them that means you are on the right track and keep digging and reflecting

DianneA: Bill, my list of books was a result of thesis literature work - knowing the field that I want to 'add' to

DianneA: I think any thoughtful teacher can construct their own structure, and focus it on where they want to focus their research energy

BillBe: I just want to do a better job

DianneA: so, tell me where is one area where you want to be better?

DianeDP: very true- there is no one prescribed way of looking at your puzzlements

BillBe: I should tell you I'm not really a teacher. It just seems to keep coming up in my life.

DianneA: Bill almost everyone is a teacher in some role or form ..

DianneA: just as everyone is a learner

BillBe: about 35 years ago when I was teaching in grad school a friend taking one of my courses told me I had a way of stopping my explanations just short of the goal.

BillBe: I still do that, I think.

DianneA: OK so there's your first heading ... stopping explanations ...

DianeDP: I wonder if the passion I have for using technology as tools for learning can be adequately conveyed to the preservice teachers I teach - or will they discover it once they are full into their teaching and see the results of learning if used properly in the classroom

BjB . o O (without action research you remain stagnant and static)

DianneA: do you notice yourself doing that, or do you rely on someone else to tell you that you have done that?

DianeDP: agree with that, Bj

DianneA: Diane tell me some more about how your passion for using technology developed

DianneA: Bill, have you stopped to think about why you might 'stop explaining'? Do you have a reason for what you find that you do?

DianeDP: When teaching preservice teachers how a technology resource tool can be used (such as Inspiration for webbing in the writing process) they will say- cool- but get little excitement. If I show the same tool to a seasoned teacher who is struggling with getting students to relate their ideas, organize their thoughts- or build a visual roadmap for a story, they get real excited. I have often heard them say, "I have a student now who can use that!"

DianneA: Another question Diane ... do you remember a teacher conveying passion to you, a passion you wanted to get involved in too?

DianeDP: I think teachers need a real frame of reference in order to connect with the possibilities that technology can bring to learning in the classroom

DianeDP: Yes- my sixth grade teacher when he turned out the lights and read Poe's Telltale Heart- with passion!

DianneA: I am of a mind that people need to be 'ready' for some things, by having unsuccessfully tried to solve a problem

DianeDP: Of course, my mom was horrified. He read what to you? I fell in love with Poe because he wrote with such passion.

BillBe: I agree with that.

DianeDP: No one wants to be frustrated- so being ready for a solution can also mean survival

DianneA: Diane, Can you remember what was the trigger for your response that 'here was passion'?

DianeDP: I had a teacher next to me who wanted to quit teaching because she could not see how her gr 2 kids would pass the state mandated fluency tests- they were ESOL students. We helped her devise an AR approach to seeing how the use of talking books and peer models could provide the kind of intervention they might need to improve their

reading. It was such a success that instead of quitting, she became a reading specialist!

DianneA: Diane, what did you do to 'help her devise an AR approach'?

DianeDP: When you see the excitement, the eyes light up, and hear from a teacher that he/she has planned next steps because of the success, I see that as passion

DianneA: I have another question Diane: did all of your class in 6th grade respond to Poe in the same way you did?

DianeDP: We started with a lit search. What could we find about best practice that helps students build fluency skills. There was evidence that teaching the children to read along with fluent models promotes fluency. From there, our teacher-research team supported her and offered peer buddy readers, one person organized parents to create books on tape, I helped her write a grant to purchase tape recorders. Then we all taught her to journal, observe, reflect, interview her students and peer buddies

DianeDP: No, I was a 12 year old - so I am not sure, but I don't think so

DianneA: OK, let me see if I can explain a bit of what I have been trying to do ...

DianneA: I have been asking specific people questions to extract from them .. what is your particular interest/ problem area

DianneA: ie AR let's people focus on something really important for them

DianeDP: Back to my friend- the best finding was what happened when her students took the books on tape home. Their parents read with them and when the kids went to bed, parents reported practicing. She received several thank yous from parents who learned to read English that way.

DianneA: and work with that until they have a sense of competency

DianneA: success is a powerful motivator for keeping on

BillBe: You are asking that we identify what is meaningful to us as individuals.

DianneA: then I have been trying to help you identify a 'heading' for your area ..

DianneA: for Bill it was 'stopping explanations', and for Diane it might be 'conveying passion'

DianeDP: and that is what happened to my friend. She met success which was a motivator for going on with her teaching

DianneA: then I am asking you to identify when you might know when you will

recognise it

DianneA: and reminding you, that others' responses are varied

BillBe: Why do you consider that part important?

DianeDP: because they are looking and responding to things from their own perspectives, experiences and lenses

DianneA: having identified what it is that is the area that you really want to know about, the next step would be to work with your memory/ies of instances where this aspect arose ...

BjB looks at the clock on the wall.

DianneA: Bill sometimes we have expectations that we want everyone to respond in a certain way ...

BjB: Diane, the next AR discussion will be on March 12?

BillBe: oh, BJ, such a party pooper.

DianneA: not letting them be themselves where they are at

DianneA: we are working with people, in learning and teaching, not with atoms etc

DianeDP: I can put that on the calendar, yes. BJ will you do that?

BjB nods to Diane

BjB . o O (Bill, always leave 'em wanting more ;-))

BillBe: hehehehe

DianneA: and I should be at Teachers-in Training ...

DianneA: sorry

BjB: and Dianne has a Teachers in Training discussion scheduled that you might want to participate in

DianeDP: Bill- we hope you will let us know what you discovered about AR in the mean time.

BillBe: I will start reading tomorrow

DianeDP: Thank you everyone. Bye

DianneA waves bye for now

BjB : join this group and post to the discussion board, Bill

BillBe: thank you, all

BillBe: thanks for reminding me

BjB . o O (quite a dialogue is taking place on the discussion board)