



Classroom Action Research: Improving Student Achievement and Promoting Equity

Maria Nova Ardine, Siti Nur'Aini, Wiyaka

Universitas PGRI Semarang, Jl. Sidodadi Timur – Dr. Cipto No. 24, Karangtempel,
Semarang Timur, Kota Semarang, Jawa Tengah 50232, Indonesia

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Abstract

Teaching and learning centers play a vital role in supporting teachers who are seeking to improve their practices or find new strategies to address the challenges in their classrooms. One major dilemma teachers face is selecting the most effective teaching strategies for their specific classroom situations. This challenge is influenced by a variety of factors, including class size, subject matter, student demographics, and the teachers' own skills and teaching styles. As educators strive to meet the diverse needs of their students, finding the right approach can be overwhelming. Classroom Action Research (CAR) provides a systematic way for teachers to explore and address these challenges. Through this process, teachers engage in a cycle of inquiry—planning, acting, observing, and reflecting—allowing them to make informed decisions about their teaching practices. CAR empowers teachers to critically examine their own teaching methods, consider their personal values, and identify strategies that best align with the needs of their students. By working collaboratively, teachers can share insights and refine their practices, creating a collective, evidence-based approach to teaching. This paper discusses the interactive process of CAR, emphasizing its role in helping teachers reflect on their practices, experiment with new strategies, and develop a shared understanding of effective teaching. It highlights how CAR can lead to immediate, meaningful changes in teaching and learning.

Keywords: Interactive Classroom Action Research; Students' Achievement; Equitable Classroom

(*) Corresponding Author: wiyaka@upgris.ac.id

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning centers offer various programs to support teachers who may be struggling or seeking new approaches. In such situations, teachers often face a dilemma: how to choose the most effective teaching strategies for their classroom. Many teachers tend to rely on traditional methods rather than modern approaches, and this can present challenges. For example, some students are particularly difficult to manage, taking a long time to settle down, struggling to focus during lessons, or acting out without clear reason. This dilemma is influenced by several factors, such as class size, subject matter, and student demographics. When classes are large and students come from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, teachers may encounter additional difficulties. Teachers' individual skills and teaching styles are also crucial in addressing these challenges. Without strong classroom management skills, teachers may find it difficult to maintain control over the class, resulting in a limited ability to engage a substantial number of students effectively.

In such situations, what can teachers do? Action research provides an effective methodology for addressing these challenges. The term "action research" combines two key concepts: "action" and "research." Although these concepts are often used together, it is helpful to consider them separately to understand their importance and how they relate to one another. "Action" refers to purposeful activity, while "research" involves exploring what teachers are doing and generating new knowledge about their practices (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010: 18). Action research is aimed at improving teaching practices, making it a valuable tool for creating new knowledge about how to



better engage and support students (McNiff & Whitehead, 2010: 7). The knowledge generated through action research is both original and practical, directly tied to improving teaching and learning.

It will influence the classroom situation which is being an interactive teaching learning process. According to McNiff and Whitehead (2010: 8-10), the action research has three main purposes, they are: 1) creating new knowledge and making claims to knowledge. This research aim is to find out the knowledge which is already unknown. The knowledge can be both objective and subjective based on the people understanding; 2) testing validity of knowledge claims. Making claims to knowledge, especially original claims, can be problematic. It is because when someone knows something new, the other people can be expected to assume why they should be trust to the new knowledge. So, there would be some responsibilities to prepare the claims and test its truthfulness. It needs to show how and why the knowledge claim may be believed because this is the basis of and reason for doing research; 3) generating new theory. This process of showing how and why a knowledge claim may be believed means offering an explanation.

There are some common characteristics of action research that make it different from the traditional research. They are: 1) the action research is practice based, and practice is understood as action and research. This action research is conducted by practitioners who regard themselves as researchers.

Action research is a dynamic process that integrates both action and research to improve practices through collaborative learning. Unlike traditional research, which often places researchers in a position of authority over practitioners, action research positions practitioners as equal participants. This collaborative approach allows practitioners to take control of their own practices while also bearing the responsibility of explaining and justifying their actions. Traditional research tends to create a power imbalance where practitioners follow instructions from researchers, but action research disrupts this hierarchy by fostering autonomy and mutual respect.

One of the core principles of action research is its dual focus on improving practice and generating knowledge. The term "action" refers to deliberate efforts to enhance practices, whatever form they may take, and to continuously refine them based on reflective inquiry. This process involves creating "living theories," which evolve as practitioners engage in ongoing cycles of action, reflection, and adaptation. Importantly, action research prioritizes the improvement of learning rather than simply addressing behaviors. Learning in this context is not limited to individual growth but is seen as a social process, shaped by relationships with others. As individuals engage in purposeful actions, they develop a deeper understanding of themselves and their connections to the broader community.

A key aspect of action research is its emphasis on values. Values are the core beliefs that give meaning to people's actions and lives. The process begins with participants reflecting on their values and considering how their practices align with these values. This reflection guides their actions, ensuring that their work is grounded in what they find meaningful and equitable. In practice, this means creating workplaces and environments where equity and fairness are prioritized, and actions are taken to uphold these principles. By focusing on values, action research transcends routine professional practices and becomes a tool for ethical inquiry and transformation.

Another distinguishing feature of action research is its emphasis on knowledge creation. It is not merely about solving immediate problems but about understanding the underlying reasons for actions and gathering evidence to validate those actions. This evidence is used to justify the alignment between actions and values, ensuring that decisions are both intentional and informed. The process of gathering and interpreting data is rigorous, involving critical reflection and dialogue with others. This collaboration fosters a shared understanding and co-creation of knowledge, where individuals work together to refine their practices based on feedback and critical insights. Through this cyclical process, practice becomes a site of continuous learning and improvement.



Action research also involves a process of interrogation and deconstruction. Participants critically examine their assumptions, beliefs, and practices, questioning the logic and values that underpin their actions. This process, known as deconstruction, helps individuals recognize that their perspectives are not the only valid ones. It involves decentering—acknowledging that each person operates from their own worldview and respecting the diverse perspectives of others. This reflective stance encourages openness to new ideas and fosters an environment of mutual respect and understanding.

The questioning process in action research occurs at multiple levels, often described as first-order, second-order, and third-order questioning. First-order questioning involves gaining a deeper understanding of the situation at hand. Second-order questioning examines what has been learned and challenges initial assumptions. Third-order questioning goes even further, asking why the situation exists as it does and exploring how it can be changed or reimaged. This multi-level questioning fosters a deeper level of critical thinking and encourages participants to engage in reflexive and dialectical critique.

Accountability is another fundamental aspect of action research. Participants are expected to take responsibility for their actions and the outcomes of their work. Unlike traditional research, where researchers often follow directives from external stakeholders, action research demands that individuals hold themselves accountable for their decisions and actions. This accountability is not only to themselves but also to their communities and the broader social context in which they operate.

Finally, action research has the potential to contribute to social and cultural transformation. By focusing on improving learning and fostering collaboration, action research empowers individuals to influence others and create positive change. Through the documentation and sharing of their practices, participants make their knowledge accessible to others, enabling collective learning and improvement. This openness and transparency can inspire others to adopt similar practices, creating a ripple effect that extends beyond the immediate context. In this way, action research becomes a powerful tool for driving social and cultural change, rooted in values, collaboration, and a commitment to continuous improvement.

Through its emphasis on values, collaborative knowledge creation, and critical reflection, action research not only enhances individual practices but also contributes to broader societal transformation. By engaging in this iterative process, practitioners become agents of change, fostering learning, equity, and ethical action in their communities.

METHODS

There are many ways of finding out and creating new knowledge in action research in the classroom. One of them is classroom action research which is done by teachers in their own classrooms. So, classroom action research informs decisions about teaching. Classroom action research process has provided a structure in which to pursue questions of immediate importance to teachers and their students. Kemmis (1983) in Hopkins (1993: 44) says that action research is a form of self-reflective inquiry undertaken by participants in social (including educational) situation in order to improve the rationality and justice of (a) their own social or educational practices; (b) their understanding to these practices; and (c) the situations in which the practices are carried out. It is most rationally empowering when undertaken by participants collaboratively, though it is often undertaken by individuals and sometimes in cooperation with outsiders. Classroom action research starts from teachers' serious concern about their success in their own instructions, their students' learning progress, their students' behavior, their students' learning problems, and the learning environment, which they assess throughout the whole process of instruction for the purpose of planning, implementing, and evaluating improvement.



FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Findings

There are some commitments in educational improvement when doing the classroom action research, they are: 1) the idea of improvement. The idea of improvement is often taken to imply that something is faulty and needs fixing. This is sometimes the case with practice. Students experience aspects of practice as unsatisfactory and take the action to improve them. However, a thing does not have to be faulty to improve; it can be the best and still be able to improve. Improvement can therefore be seen as an ongoing process of changing for the better over time; 2) the nature of processes of improvement. The improvement does not imply an end-point where everything will be perfect; 3) the question of who improve what. It is not possible to improve someone learning, or education, because all people are born with the capacity for originality of mind. So, each of students take intentional action in, and improve, their own learning; 4) the nature of education. The idea of education is central to action research, and does not necessarily have anything to do with the discipline of education or with a teaching profession. It refers to intentional processes of learning which the teacher can do in a bus queue as well as in a classroom. Education is not what one person does to another; it is what people do to themselves when they decide to take action to improve their own learning. So, when the teachers decide to take action in their students' learning, the teachers would probably ask questions of the kind; 'How do I improve this ...!', which bring the students to the next significant features of classroom action research.

As English teachers, they have to solve their classroom problems or improve the quality of their classroom practices to result in better English achievement of their students. There will be some stages that the teachers need. Classroom action research involves four common basic stages as the characteristics in enriching students' achievement. They are: 1) identifying the research problems or question. This first stage in this research is clarifying the problems concern. This research is most appropriate when teachers wish to make something better, improve their practical, deal with a troublesome issue, or correct something that is not working; 2) obtaining the necessary information to answer the question. Once a problem has been identified, the next step is to decide what sorts of data are needed and how to collect them. Teacher can be either active participants or nonparticipants. Whichever role is chosen, it is good idea to record as much as possible during the observations, in short, to take field notes to describe what was seen and heard. The second major category of data collection involves interviewing students. Data collected through observations often can suggest questions to be followed up through interviews or the administration of questionnaires. Both of administering interviews and questionnaires can be a valid and productive way to assess the accuracy of observations. The last category of data collection involves the examination mark and analysis of documents. This method is perhaps the least time-consuming of the three and easiest to commerce. In this research, the researchers must avoid collecting merely anecdotal data, which is just the people opinion about how the problem might be addressed; 3) analyzing and interpreting the information that has been gathered. This stage focuses on analyzing and interpreting the data. The important of this stage is that the data be examined in relation to resolving the research question or problem for which the research was conducted; 4) developing a plan of action. Fulfilling the intent of a classroom action research requires creating a plan to implement changes based on the finding. Indicating clear directions for further work on the original problem or concern is necessary while the formal documents be prepared (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2006: 570-572).

In classroom action research, teachers collaborate in evaluating their practice jointly, raise awareness of the teacher personal theory, articulate a shared conception of values, try out new strategies to render the values expressed in their practice more consistent with educational values, record their work in a form which is readily available to and understandable by other teachers, and thus develop a shared theory



of teaching by research practice (Elliott, 1991). Those are also the characteristics that can be found in classroom action research. There are also several features of action research, they are: 1) the duration usually conducted over short period of time; 2) the size of the project involves one or more teachers from a school or several schools; 3) in the ethical consideration, informal consent is given as the students participation are known to the teachers and the purpose is beneficial to the parties involved; 4) classroom action research investigates one or more practical teaching/ learning factors; 5) the design of classroom action research is made in form of practical and manageable in teaching learning process; 6) the classroom action research uses one or more research tools to collect and analyze data. It usually simple and straightforward procedures; 7) the result of the research usually localized to a specific class, teaching and learning community or context with practical implications. The result can be in form of formal or informal and reported in local international referred journals for the benefits of those who teach; 8) classroom action research is classroom-based or school based and may involve one or more school context within the same region.

Classroom action research has a number of benefits. In the process of conducting the classroom action research, the teachers and collaborators should collaborate with others. Glanz (2003: 19) mentions some benefits of conducting classroom-action research, they are: 1) classroom action research creates a system wide mind-set for school improvement. This is such kind of a professional problem-solving ethos; 2) classroom action research enhances decision making. It provides the greater feeling of competence in solving problems and making instructional decisions. In other words, the classroom action research provides for an intelligent way of making decisions; 3) Classroom action research needs reflection and self-assessment; 4) Classroom action research instills a commitment to continuous improvement; 5) Classroom action research creates a more positive school climate in which teaching and learning are foremost concerns; 6) Classroom action research impacts directly on practice; 7) Classroom action research empowers those who participate in this process of research. In this process, the educational leaders who undertake this research may no longer uncritically accept theories, innovative, and programs at face value.

McMillan (2012: 345) defines the additional benefit which is very important, that is the implementation of classroom action research gives the teachers the tools to think more systematically about the effectiveness of the practices. This research encourages teachers and collaborators to engage in reflective practice and is considered a form of professional development.

Discussion

Classrooms are complex social settings where students interact with one another in a multitude of ways. For classrooms to be positive social and learning environment, order, discipline, and cooperation must be present. It means that creating equitable classroom is needed. Equitable refers to the suitable classroom atmosphere related with the instructional of teaching learning process. Thus, helping the students to learn and maintaining order in the classroom are closely related; some amount or orderliness is needed if teaching and learning are to be successful. According to McNiff (in Burns, 1999: 35) action research should be flexible. That flexibility makes difference interpretations of what are appropriate processes for the circumstances of the research.

CONCLUSION

This paper reviews the interactive and equitable classroom action research process of planning, acting, observing, reflecting as the detail steps in every cycle that the research should be done. According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1998) in Burns (1999: 32), action research is a dynamic and complementary process which consists of four fundamental steps in a spiraling process. They are as follows: 1) Planning. Developing a plan of critically informed to improve what is already happening. After knowing the problems faced by the students, the teacher should



arrange the appropriate plans for solving the students' problems; 2) Acting. Act to implement the plan. Doing all the plans that have been arranged for getting the solution for the problems; 3) Observing. Observe the effects of the critically informed action in the context in which it occurs. Collecting the data can be done in some techniques, they are: a) logs and diaries; b) observation methods; c) questionnaires; d) interviews; e) test. Analyzing and interpreting the data can be done in two ways, they are both of quantitative and qualitative; 4) Reflection. Many of problems faced by the teachers are situational and characterized by the students' uniqueness. Unique and situational cases cannot be learned very well from reading. It needs the effective teachers who always learn to approach unique situation with problem-solving orientation. Reflect these effects as the basis for further planning. Teachers are faced with pressure for increased efficiency in the context of contracting budgets, demand that they rigorously teach the basis, exhortation to encourage creativity, build citizenship, and help students to examine their values (Schon, 1983: 17). Those four stages should be done in a cyclical term to enrich the students' achievement and create the equitable classroom sections.

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