Week 2 Assignment: Background – Real Life Research Action Examples

Overview

Last week students had an opportunity to examine the differences in action research and traditional research. Students began to answer questions like:

- Why do action research?
- How will action research benefit leaders and stakeholders in educational settings?
- Why is reflection an important skill for leaders?
- Why are blogs beneficial in sharing what we are learning about action research?

This week’s lecture, interviews, readings and assignments focus on examples of action research in educational settings. These examples will help you begin to identify your topic for your action research project and provide you with a clear purpose describing why this action research project is important in your professional development.

Here are the Learning and Performance Outcomes for Week Two:

Learning Outcomes

1) Identify possible action research topics from the intern plan developed in EDLD 5311 and skills needed to successfully lead the research project.

2) Be familiar with areas frequently identified by school leaders needing further research (e.g., school and curriculum development, school culture/campus improvement, school performance in reducing achievement gaps, etc.).

Performance Outcomes:

1) Describe some examples of action research from reviewing interviews with current school leaders.

2) Review your internship plan and meet with the site supervisor to brainstorm potential needed and/or desired research topics.

3) Using Leading with passion and knowledge: The principal as action researcher, identify at least nine areas that are common targets or themes of school-based action research.
Rubric

Use the following Rubric to guide your work on the Week 2 Assignment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Accomplished</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
<th>Needs Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action Research – Lessons from Scholar Practitioners</td>
<td>Student selects two of the interviewed scholars and clearly answers questions thoroughly, and for each selected scholar, the student identifies at least one topic for action research; suggestions for conducting action research; and writes a meaningful reflection on lessons learned from the interviews. (3 Points)</td>
<td>Student selects two of the interviewed scholars and attempts to answer questions, but does not thoroughly address all three areas addressed in the activity. (2 Points)</td>
<td>Student only comments on one interviewed scholar and does not thoroughly respond to all areas addressed in the activity. (1 Point)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common action research topics in educational settings</td>
<td>Student clearly identifies eight or nine of the text topics and provides an example of action research for each of those 8 or 9 areas, along with explaining the benefit(s) of conducting action research in each of the identified topics. Student basically receives a full point for each topic identified and providing thorough responses to each topic. (8 – 9 Points)</td>
<td>Student identifies six or seven of the text topics and provides an example of action research for each of those 6 or 7 areas, along with explaining the benefit(s) of conducting action research in each of the identified topics. Student basically receives a full point for each topic identified and providing responses to each topic. (6 – 7 Points)</td>
<td>Student identifies five or fewer of the text topics and provides an example of action research for each of those 8 or 9 areas, along with explaining the benefit(s) of conducting action research in each of the identified topics. Student basically receives a full point for each topic identified and providing thorough responses to each topic. (1 – 5 Points)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selecting an Action Research Topic</td>
<td>Student follows directions and provides thorough responses to the following: Identify at least three topics for possible</td>
<td>Student responds to only two of the following activities: Identify at least three topics for possible action</td>
<td>Student responds to one of the following: Identify at least three topics for possible action research</td>
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<tr>
<td>action research</td>
<td>research</td>
<td>Assignment Mechanics</td>
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<td>• Describe the conference with the site supervisor(s) regarding topics of interest for action research</td>
<td>• Describe the conference with the site supervisor(s) regarding topics of interest for action research</td>
<td>Responses are relevant to course content; no errors in grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Students demonstrate proper APA style.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Describe the topic or problem agreed upon for the action research project.</td>
<td>• Describe the topic or problem agreed upon for the action research project.</td>
<td>(3 Points)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(2 Points)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Responses do not reflect knowledge of course content, lack clarity and depth, and/or include multiple errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1 Point)</td>
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**3 Points**

**2 Points**

**1 Point**
Week Two Assignment, Part 1 – Action Research Lessons from Scholar Practitioners

Go to Week Two Lectures and watch the interviews with three school leaders who discuss action research projects and suggestions for conducting action research. The three school leaders completed their doctorates at Lamar University, and their dissertations are available in the Lamar library and in the resource section of this course. The three leaders are:

- Dr. Johnny Briseno, Principal, Rancho Isabella Elementary, Angleton ISD
- Dr. Timothy Chargois, Director of Research, Planning and Development in Beaumont ISD
- Dr. Kirk Lewis, Superintendent, Pasadena ISD

After watching and listening to these three scholar practitioners, select two of them and answer the following based on the comments from the two interviews you analyzed:

1. Identify the scholars you selected

For each scholar, answer the following:

2. Identify at least one area or topic for action research discussed by each scholar.

3. Describe at least one suggestion or purpose described by each scholar for conducting action research.

4. Reflect on what you learned from watching and listening to each of these scholars.

Remember if you wish to follow-up on the topics these scholars selected for their action research, please see their respective dissertations located in the Resource Section of this course, as well as available with other Educational Leadership dissertations at the Lamar University library site.

Also, in the Week One Lecture, we discussed an outstanding web resource on action research, Electronic Textbook - A Blast from the Past: Your Literature Review
http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~mid/edr720/class/literature/blast/reading2-1-1.html.

Dr. Mary Dereshiwsky, who served as a consultant and action research scholar, to this course, shared her web site, and this particular link provides you with insightful information regarding conducting a literature review, also discussed in the Dana text, Data Collection Strategy 9: Literature, pp. 93 – 94. This website provides you with guidance in researching what has been written or published on a particular research topic of interest. The professors strongly suggest that you examine this website, also referenced in the Resource Section of the Course.
Dr. Johnny Briseno, Principal, Rancho Isabella Elementary, Angleton ISD discusses the need for using data to support the need for change. In his discussion, he brings out the fact that he does not take action on suggestions until he has all the facts and data on the subject. For instance if a teacher wants to retain a child, he wants to have quantitative reasons for that retention.

One process that may be put into place is to have faculty keep worksheets on each child throughout the year to serve as supporting documentation when the decision must be made. This will help in the teacher being able to remember, rather than relying strictly on memory from an issue that may have taken place several months prior.

I respect this way of thinking, as it is the same way in my department. If I take a suggestion to my supervisor to eliminate or initiate a new tool within our Blackboard system, the first thing I know I will be asked is “what data do you have to back up this decision?”. And I realize she is asking this of me because it will be asked of her at the next level. Dr. Briseno’s rationalizations only reinforce my belief in the need for data to support change.

Dr. Timothy Chargois, Director of Research, Planning and Development in Beaumont ISD talks about ways to compare and combine the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of teachers when considering their level of degree and teaching experience. All of this data is then combined to determine their level of job performance.

Again, documentation is key in this situation. A file should be maintained on all faculty members to track accomplishments, areas for improvement, etc. Keeping these records will assist the principal in recalling any issues – positive or negative – that may influence the performance rating of the faculty member.

I think this is a wonderful study to conduct. We are actually implementing a new performance management system that does just that. The crux of our performance is based on the college values, then the overall performance of the employee is rated, and the two are combined to determine the overall rating. This method allows for a more consistent and fair way to determine those who are doing their job, exceeding expectations, or needing improvement. Using data to support the findings gives the supervisor an effective and sure way to speak to the performance ratings being applied.
Week Two Assignment, Part 2 – Common Action Research Topics in School Settings

Read chapter two, The Passions That Drive Your Journey, from the Dana text, pp. 29 – 68, and focus on the following nine areas that the author describes as major wonderings of many school leaders:

1. Staff development
2. Curriculum development
3. Individual teacher(s)
4. Individual student(s)
5. School culture/community
6. Leadership
7. Management
8. School performance
9. Social justice or equity issues

For each of the identified areas, do the following:

- Provide at least one example of action research in each of the nine areas
- Describe why this might be an important area for action research in schools
## Workspace

Complete your work on Part 2 of this assignment below. The box will expand as you type.

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<td>1.</td>
<td>Staff development – An area of action research might be to determine which faculty is truly able to access and effectively use technology tools available to them in their instruction. This is important because without the faculty using the tools in the most efficient way, time, money, and knowledge are wasted.</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Curriculum development – A way to implement action research here would be to have peers from the previous and next grade levels evaluate the current curriculum of any given grade level. This would assure students are prepared for what is being taught as well as what will be taught in the current and upcoming years. This will assure knowledge gaps are not experienced by the students from year to year.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Individual teacher(s) – Each teacher is important to a school campus. Active research must be implemented to elicit their satisfaction with their work environment, their understanding of the school culture and policies, their understanding of state standards, etc. Each year they should be polled concerning these and other issues that will affect their abilities to teach, while remaining fresh, excited, enthusiastic, and happy. This data should be recorded to identify year-to-year trends. Teacher turnover rates are at alarming rates, and this must be stopped to insure consistency and effectiveness within our schools.</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Individual student(s) – One question that may be asked concerning our individual students is “Which method of reading is more effective: sight or phonics?” I would love to see statistics comparing the two approaches to determine the reading abilities of students from each group. Reading is the very foundation of all learning, and if we miss out teaching this basic need, our students are affected throughout their educational life. We need to make sure we are providing the best foundation possible.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>School culture/community – When entering a school the first thing a principal must learn is the culture of the school, and its ties to the community. One thing that should be researched is how high achievements are recognized, and who is involved in that recognition. Then it should be determined how this recognition affects other students. Does it make them feel competitive, thus creating a positive influence; or does it make them feel inferior, thus creating a feeling of jealousy, causing them to act out? This knowledge is important in order to determine how to find a happy medium in which to make all students feel positive when these achievements are indeed recognized.</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Leadership – Leadership is an ever-changing aspect of any profession. Action research should be continually conducted to determine the effectiveness of key decisions. Leadership teams should request feedback from those affected by these decisions to determine the acceptance, compliance, and effectiveness of their required tasks, and adjust accordingly. It is important to have buy-in from all stakeholders, and action research such as this would be a way to obtain the information.</td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Management – Managers must conduct action research to determine their self-effectiveness within their organization. Much like those on the leadership team, managers should find ways to assure they are a help and not a hindrance. They could ask a question such as “What can I do to assure my leaders have the tools needed in order to conduct their jobs?” This will help the manager determine new ways in which they can make necessary changes that may affect actions as well as budget.</td>
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| 8. | School performance – Research in this area can include questions such as “What changes
have been put into place that improved the performance of my campus?” If changes are tracked and studied from year to year, a principal will be able to identify trends that appear to have made a difference in the improvement of students’ grades, therefore resulting in a better school performance. This will affect funding, confidence in the community, atmosphere of the faculty and attitude of the students.

9. Social justice or equity issues – It is important that schools recognize not the social and economic diversity in his/her students, faculty and staff. For instance, when introducing new technologies into the learning process, it must be remembered that all stakeholders may not be able to afford the “gadget” required to use the tool. Therefore before making decisions on course delivery methods, it must be determined how to assure equitable access is acquired for all. This will assure equality in learning opportunities.
Week Two Assignment, Part 3 – Selecting Action Research Topics

Review your intern plan and identify at least three topics that might appeal to you and your site supervisor(s) as possible action research projects. Indicate if you have reviewed these topics with your site supervisor(s). Students may have reviewed the potential action research projects in the initial conference reviewing the intern plan with the site supervisor(s) in EDLD 5311. If you have not discussed your top three topics with your site supervisor(s), schedule an interview and discuss the possibilities of doing your action research project on a mutually agreed upon topic. If you cannot meet face to face with your site supervisor at this time, select 3 topics or questions you are considering for your action research project and email or communicate those to your site supervisor and ask for some feedback. Remember in Week 4 of this course, we ask that you meet with your site supervisor(s) and try to reach consensus on an action research topic(s) or question(s). So instead of having two interviews, you can do the Week Two brainstorming via email or other communication that is effective for you and your site supervisor and then complete the decision-making process on the action research project in Week Four.

If you have selected a topic of interest not in your intern plan, be sure to add it to your revised intern plan, and visit with your site supervisor(s) to make sure this is a topic that can be researched and supported.

In completing this assignment, do the following:

- Identify at least three topics for possible action research
- Describe the conference with the site supervisor(s) regarding topics of interest for action research
- Describe the topic or problem agreed upon for the action research project
One possible topic of research is Wimba Classroom. Once implemented and rolled out to users, the questions will be:

a) will the product reduce travel costs as it allows for virtual meeting rooms in which participants can see and hear one another as well as share documents;
b) will the product increase participation by distance learning students for the same reasons;
c) will the product allow for greater productivity as employees would cut travel time and not have to shut down processes then pick them back up once they have left and returned from meetings?

Another topic considered is Starfish Retention Solutions. Questions would include:
a) Will this product help retain students as it is intended? 
b) Will it save time and effort in tracking troubled students? 
c) Will it provide convenient reporting/data gathering to justify its cost?

A third possible area of research would be Blackboard Mobile Learn. Questions would include:
a) How many students and faculty members use the product? 
b) How often do the users access the app on their device? 
c) Which type of device are the users implementing? 
d) Do the users find the app to be useful in their learning experience? 
e) Would the user recommend the use of the app to their peers?

All of these research issues will eventually be conducted, as it is a part of my job to determine the effectiveness of technology tools integrated within our Blackboard system. My supervisor and I have extensive discussions each time a product is suggested to determine its potential use, how and when to implement, and follow-up research to determine its future. It has been determined that the primary focus, however will be on the Starfish Retention Solutions, as this is also my project for my Internship within this program.

Blog Reflection – Please remember to post at least one reflection or comment regarding lessons learned from Week Two on your blog.

http://marthasellsactionresearch.blogspot.com/