

Collaborative Action Research and Action Learning

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“Action research is an approach to professional development in which, typically, teachers spend 1 or more years working on classroom-based research projects” (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000, p. 199). Although action research for teacher development has gained prominence in the current literature, there has been little documentation as to how action research influences teacher learning and curriculum development. Moreover, little is known about how teachers have actually incorporated action research into their practice and worked with other teachers for curriculum development, particularly in the area of foreign language teacher education (Burns, 1999). This study aims at revealing how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers engaged in collaborative action research organized by university teachers and how; as a result, they changed their teaching practices in their school contexts.

15 Japanese high school teachers of English participated in this collaborative action research project for two years, which was organized by a university teacher and researcher. Using multiple data sources including interviews, classroom observations, surveys, and action research reports, this two-year long study delineates how these EFL teachers struggled with developing their practices through action research. All 15 teachers reported that collaborative action research encouraged them to reflect on their daily teaching and made it a habit of their profession. In fact, continuous teacher learning opportunities led to changes in their teaching style, developing their repertoire and building their confidence. On the other hand, only a few teachers reported that they could share new ideas with their colleagues in their workplaces. It appears that teacher collaboration within a school context seems to be essential for successful curriculum development

This study sheds light on the challenges and opportunities of collaborative action research for teacher and curriculum development. In short, Burns (1999) affirms that “experimenting with collaborative action research builds a professional learning community with other teachers...the research process empowers teachers by reaffirming their professional judgment and enabling them to take steps to make reflection on practice a regular part of everyday teaching” (p. 234).

I. SUMMARY

Although action research has gained prominence in the current literature, there has been little documentation as to how action research influences teacher and curriculum development. This study aims at revealing how EFL teachers in Japan engaged in collaborative action research and learned to teach in their school contexts.

REFERENCES

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