

APPLIED RESEARCH VS. ACTION RESEARCH: WHICH IS BETTER?

by:

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The Department of Education – Schools Division Office of Bataan has continuously encouraged teachers and administrators to pursue research writing. Basically, the SDO requires the submission of either action research or applied research. But come to think of it, what is the difference of two? Aren't they just any other research papers we used to write when we were in college? If they really are different, then where do the difference lie?

The answer to the first question, is action research different from applied research, is a big YES. To understand fully how they differ, we have to take note of the main purpose why such research papers were written.

For applied research, the main purpose is to discover the main cause of a problem. It's as if we are trying to unlock the main chamber which holds the explanation why a lot of problems have come about. By tracing the main source, the solution applied can solve not just the ultimate problem but all other problems it has caused. For example, there is a problem regarding the reading proficiency level of students. There can be a lot of factors affecting that. What a teacher does is that the teacher tries to single out which is the most prevalent cause of the reading retardation. If the main cause is determined, then the solution may now be proposed to resolve the dilemma. That how applied research is used. Simply put, the researcher is trying to trace out the root cause of a problem so that a best solution can be applied.

The action research on the other hand, tries to solve the problem right away by implementing an intervention. Here the researcher already knows the main cause of the problem and then tries to resolve it by executing a specific course of action or an academic

program which also termed as intervention. The action research focuses on how well or how effective is the intervention in resolving the problem of the student. If the result of the action research is positive, then the intervention may be suggested to other schools who are experiencing the same dilemma. In simpler terms, the action research is trying to test and to show how well or how poor is the intervention doing in dealing with the problem at hand.

Basically, those are the main points how the two are varied from one another. Other aspects contribute to their differences. Such aspect is the structure and components. The action research requires rigorous statistical treatments and validations. The applied research sometimes may only require frequency distributions or mean scores. The action research need not be supplied with literature reviews. Action research concludes that an intervention is either good or bad while the applied research only suggests a possible intervention and that's it.

By understanding the main purpose of each type of research, the researcher – in this case the teacher or the admin, will be able to plan out properly and effectively how to provide solutions to prevailing school-based problems.

References:

Burns, Anne. 2000. "Action Research and Applied Research: What are the Relationships?" JALT Conference.