

ШОЛУЛАР, СЫН ЖӘНЕ БИБЛИОГРАФИЯ

ОБЗОРЫ, КРИТИКА И БИБЛИОГРАФИЯ

REVIEWS, CRITICISM AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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PROFESSIONAL GROWTH THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH: PERSPECTIVES OF EFL TEACHERS IN MASTER'S PROGRAMS

This article provides a comprehensive overview of action research, emphasizing its significance as a systematic inquiry process conducted by English teachers within their own classrooms to improve teaching and learning. The main goal is to identify the popularity and usage of Action Research among EFL teachers, at the same time Master's degree students. The study explores Action Research's role in improving teachers' professional growth and the basic knowledge of the graduate students on Action Research. Action research was first conducted in Kazakhstan in 2012 as a joint project of the University of Cambridge and Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS) with the goal of improving educational practices. The quantitative research was conducted on the basis of the discipline "Action Research" for the 1st year graduate students of the profession "Two Foreign Languages" of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University. The results of a survey given to Master's students have different levels of familiarity and experience with Action Research. The study will assist to identify the spread and the usage of Action Research among EFL teachers in Kazakhstan. In addition, the study will help school administrators, teacher mentors to understand obstacles faced by EFL teachers and improve educational system in Kazakhstan.

Key words: Action Research, challenges, professionalism, efficacy, cyclic, observation, participants.

MAIN PROVISIONS

There are several approaches that teachers may take to advance their knowledge and abilities in order to enhance their teaching practices. However, current studies and research demonstrate that Action Research (AR) is a highly useful tool for assisting instructors in discovering ways to enhance their methods [1, 14]. AR is a form of study that educators do out in the classroom to make it meaningful and real for them. Since Aristotle's idea of "phronesis," or "practical wisdom," and its connection to other moral and intellectual qualities may be seen as the foundation of Action Research (AR), the birth of AR can be traced back to him [2, 18]. According to Mills, AR is defined as "any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counselors, or other stakeholders in teaching/learning environment to gather information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn" [3]. This definition encompasses all of the characteristics. Teachers in the field of Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL) welcomed and encouraged the use of AR in their work throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s [4, 130].

AR is a powerful technique. According to Cohen et al., it may be applied in practically any situation where an issue involving individuals, activities, and protocols has to be resolved or when adjustments need to be made in order to get a better result [5]. Consequently, AR has the perspective to improve learning outcomes in the cognitive, motoric, and attitudinal domains as well as solve

issues. AR can help students improve their vocabulary, grammar, and language abilities in an EFL setting. Siahaan, in 2012 implemented augmented reality to enhance the vocabulary of young English language learners [6]. Every lesson featured a narrative reading by the teacher, who was employing the traditional curriculum. The three cycles of research yielded quantifiable data that demonstrated how narrative reading strategies enhanced participants' vocabulary knowledge [6, 217]. Moreover, the emphasis on reflection is highlighted as a key component of action research. Teachers are encouraged to engage in deep, critical reflection about their practices and their impact on students [7]. This reflective aspect is positioned as a catalyst for significant insights and improvements, aligning with the broader goal of enhancing teaching and learning.

Scholars as Carr, W., & Kemmis, S, underscored action research as a dynamic, teacher-centered, and collaborative process with a strong emphasis on continuous improvement through reflective practices. The cyclical nature of the approach, coupled with its adaptability and potential for collaboration, positions action research as a valuable tool for educators seeking to enhance their teaching and positively impact student learning outcomes [8].

INTRODUCTION

The main idea of this study is to identify the relevance and spread of Action Research, Also the study considers opinions of EFL school practitioners on AR's significance in teachers' professional development. The goal of the research is to review the importance of conducting educational research in school settings. Especially among school teachers, who mostly only make a practice of teaching, not researching, which is also crucial. The practical significance of the study is to demonstrate levels of school teachers, simultaneously master's degree students with overall knowledge and usage of AR. It will help researchers, school administrators and mentors of teachers in designing materials and assisting professional growth of teachers.

The aims of action research are delineated into three main areas [3][1]. Firstly, there is a focus on improving teaching practice, positioning it as the primary objective of most action research projects. Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their practices and experiment with new strategies to discern what works best for them and their students. This emphasis on self-reflection and adaptability aligns with the cyclical nature of action research highlighted in the previous analysis.

Secondly, the aim is to improve student learning outcomes. Action research is presented as a catalyst for significant enhancements in student performance by tailoring strategies to the unique needs of students and implementing research-based approaches. This underscores the practical application and impact of action research on the learning environment [9].

The third aim is to develop professional knowledge and skills among teachers. Engaging in action research is portrayed as a means for educators to enhance their research skills, critical thinking abilities, and problem-solving capacities. This, in turn, is seen as fostering a more informed and reflective approach to teaching, contributing to ongoing professional development.

In addition to these general aims, the text highlights the versatility of action research in addressing specific issues or concerns within a school or district. Examples include improving student engagement, reducing classroom disruptions, or developing a new curriculum. This flexibility underscores the adaptability of action research to diverse educational contexts and challenges.

In the work of Kemmis authors review key findings from action research in education, further substantiating its efficacy [10]. It emphasizes that action research proves most effective when conducted collaboratively and supported by school administrators. Collaborative efforts among teachers are seen as beneficial for sharing support and feedback, while administrative support is deemed crucial in providing resources and backing for action research initiatives.

Action Research can help students improve their vocabulary, grammar, and language abilities in an EFL setting. It can also be applied to boost learners' motivation and to encourage analytical, critical, and creative thinking abilities. The examined Action Research reports that follow provide some instances of how Action Research might be used to improve results or solve issues in a variety of EFL learning and teaching contexts.

Eight advantages of educational AR were stated by Burns in the context of teaching English. She claims that by implementing AR, educators can improve their ability to: (1) think systematically about what occurs in the classroom or school; (2) apply action where enhancements are thought to be possible; (3) observe and evaluate the effects of the action for making continuous improvement; (4) critically and practically monitor sophisticated situations; (5) apply a flexible method to the classroom or school; (6) create enhancements through reflection and action; (7) study the real, complex, and frequently confusing conditions and constraints of the modern school; and (8) identify and turn evolving ideas into action [11].

One of the successful reforms in the field of education was the implementation in 2012 of the Head Teacher Leadership Programme and three tiers of professional development for teachers. These initiatives were created by the University of Cambridge's Faculty of Education and the JSC Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools' Centre for Teaching Excellence. The curriculum for elementary and secondary education in Kazakhstan was revised based on this program, and numerous more programs on criterion-based evaluation, the use of ICT in the classroom, and interactive teaching techniques were created. Since 2013, Cambridge University has collaborated with leaders and educators at the Autonomous Education Organization Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools to develop reflective practice and collaborative action research. The goal is to create the necessary infrastructure and culture to support this approach to teacher learning and development. With a continued emphasis on educational principles, the faculty team has gradually given teachers a foundation on which to participate in curriculum review procedures [12].

In Kazakhstan, action research was first introduced in 2012. In order to promote an educational environment in line with NIS, the University of Cambridge and 20 NIS schools in Kazakhstan collaborated on a project in 2012. The project recognized the possible obstacles teachers may face and worked to address them by implementing creative techniques. With assistance from the Cambridge team, teams from each NIS school participated in workshops and cycles of action research over a three-year period. This included assessing the new curriculum, encouraging teamwork, and supporting the incorporation of these principles into regional alliances. Evaluation phases collected viewpoints from a range of stakeholders, highlighting the necessity of balancing new educational principles that support collaborative learning cultures with outdated social values that were oriented on obedience and competition [13].

The JSC "Nazarbayev Intellectual Schools (NIS)" and the JSC "Orleu" National Centre for Professional Development" led the majority of the professional development courses for teachers.

The Orleu National Professional Development Center JSC trained 24,335 teachers, while the NIS team trained 38,553 instructors between 2012 and 2021 [14].

According to academics like Cochran-Smith & Lytle and Kemmis & McTaggart, action research is an intentional, introspective study carried out by practitioners [9][10]. Action research is still an important strategy for improving effective teaching, even though questions about its methodology, researcher preparation, and dissemination have been raised.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This article is considered as the part of the research on thesis "Action Research in developing Professionalism of English teachers in Kazakhstani Education". According to the topic of the study, quantitative research was conducted at Google Forms. The questions were formulated according to the "Beliefs" and "Behavior" sections of the book "Designing an effective survey" by Mark Kasunic. Belief – is a type of survey that considers participants' evaluations of what they trust to be true and untrue. The main purpose of this questions, to identify how people think about a given subject at a particular time. Belief questions are more focused and specific than attitude questions. Behavior questions are used to find out the participants experiences on a particular topic in the past. Usually, they are asked in terms of behavior presence or absence, behavior frequency, behavior performance. Behavior questions, ask respondents about their beliefs regarding their actions. When people are asked to characterize their behavior, they frequently respond differently than when asked to describe

a cognitive experience of something [15]. The appliance of these types of questions helped us to identify the role of Action Research in graduate students' teaching practices.

The next two issues of this study, if Master's degree students are aware of this method and use it in teaching practice. The expected outcomes are positive on the basic knowledge about AR, however they haven't experienced in applying it to their practices yet. Because it is one of the newest implementations in Kazakhstan's educational system. The study consists of three periods. Firstly, the agreements were taken from participants to keep ethical issues. Each participant signed the agreement to use their answers as the part of the research. Secondly, gathering information from the graduate students in a survey form. Lastly, interpretation and discussion of the results on the collected data was analyzed. A quantitative analysis survey was conducted to find out how much knowledge graduate students had about action research, evaluate their prior experiences with it, determine the importance they place on teamwork, identify common problems they face, and find out how they feel about action research's prospective to improve EFL teachers' professionalism. Quantitative method of research can provide exact, objective results. The number of participants are 8, the 1st year Master's degrees students of Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, whose major is "Two Foreign Languages". The survey consists of five questions designed to understand different aspects of action research in educational settings.

RESULTS

The discipline "Action Research" was implemented among the first year graduate students of the major "Two Foreign Languages". With the agreement of teacher and these students, I had an opportunity to observe the classes. These students are all currently employed as English teachers. During this academic pursuit, their research efforts were mostly focused on improving student motivation and expanding vocabulary in the classroom. Their dedication to carrying out their research studies in real school settings was clear throughout this time. These students, who were also practicing teachers, conducted research and practical application, which led to the creation of a survey (see Figures 1 - 5) that consists of 5 questions.

The first question of the survey: "Have you heard about the concept of action research before this discipline?". Responses are displayed in a pie chart in Figure 1.

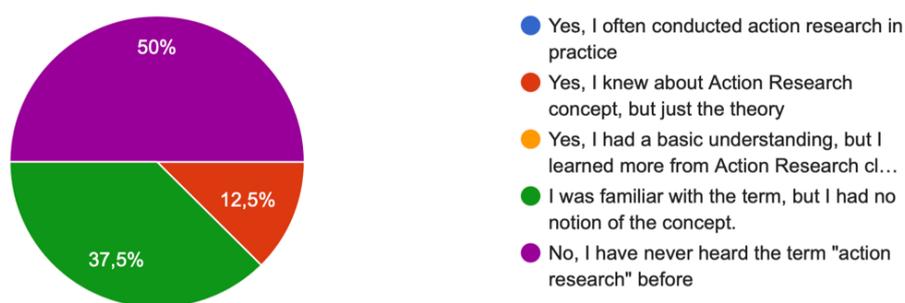


Figure 1 – Answers to the question about action research concept

The results show that 50% of the students reported never having heard the term "action research" before; 37.5% of the students were familiar with the term "action research," but had no understanding of the concept; 12.5% of the students had a basic understanding of action research, but learned more from the class.

The second question of the survey is stated as: "Have you previously conducted any form of action research within your studies or professional practice?". The answers are provided in Figure 2.



Figure 2 – Responses to the question about engagement in action research within studies or professional practice

The results show that 75% of the students never having conducted action research before; 12.5% of the students had participated in action research projects with colleagues, but not in the field of language teaching; 12.5% of the students had not conducted action research yet, but were eager to explore this methodology.

The third question of the survey: "How important is collaboration with peers or colleagues in the process of conducting action research in your point of view?". This question helps to understand the respondent's perspective on the value of working together with others in the process of action research. The respondents' answers are shown in Figure 3.

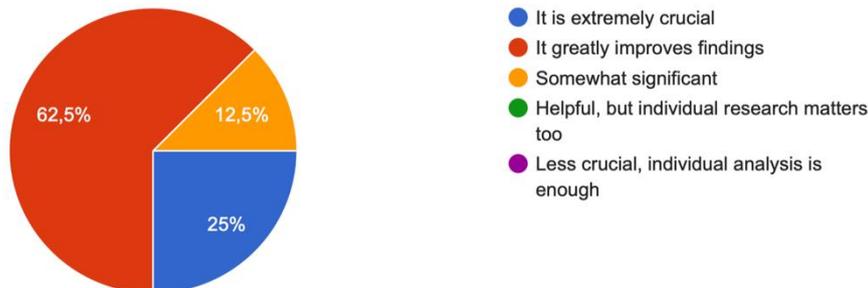


Figure 3 – Responses on the importance of collaborating with peers or colleagues in conducting action research

62.5% of the students believe that collaboration with peers or colleagues greatly improves findings; 25% of the students believe that collaboration with peers or colleagues is extremely crucial; 12.5% of the students believe that collaboration with peers or colleagues is somewhat significant, but individual research matters too; 12.5% of the students believe that collaboration with peers or colleagues is helpful, but not essential.

The fourth question of the survey: "What challenges do you often face when conducting action research?". The question aims to know about the challenges one usually encounter when doing action research. The results can be viewed in Figure 4.

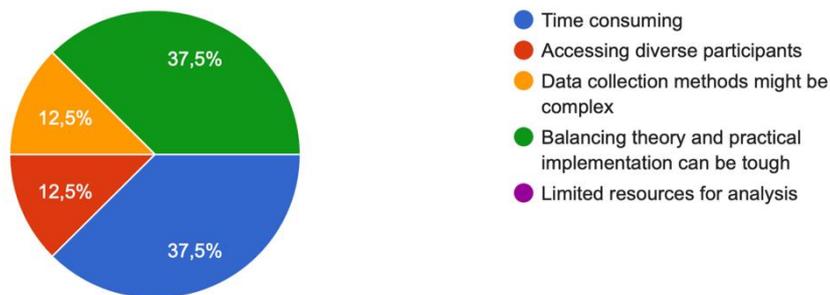


Figure 4 – Responses to challenges encountered in conducting action research

The results show that the most common challenges faced by students when conducting action research are: time constraints 37.5%; Accessing diverse participants 12.5%; complex data collection methods 12.5%; balancing theory and practical implementation 37.5%; limited resources for analysis 12.5%.

The final question states: "Overall, do you believe that action research can improve professionalism of EFL teachers?". Its aim is to understand students' opinion on whether action research is effective for professional development in EFL teaching. The question answers are illustrated in Figure 5.

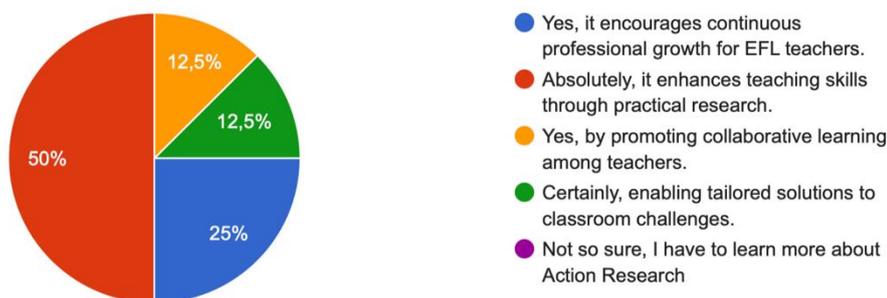


Figure 5 – Responses on the potential of action research to enhance the professionalism of EFL teachers

According to the results of the final question, 87.5% of the students believe that action research can improve professionalism of EFL teachers. The remaining 12.5% of students are unsure.

DISCUSSION

According to the findings of the survey conducted, several issues were observed.

The results of the first question highlight a serious lack of information that the students had about action research; most were completely ignorant of the existence of AR. Half of the students never heard about the term before. It means that Action Research is a new field which is in the process of acknowledging by Kazakhstan's EFL teachers.

The responses of the second question tells us that the vast majority of the students have not prior experience with action research. They have never conducted or participated in this type of research before.

From the third question, the vast majority of students (87.5%) believe that collaboration with peers or colleagues is important in the process of conducting action research. This is a positive finding, as it suggests that students recognize the value of working together to improve their teaching practice. Students overwhelmingly believe that collaboration with peers and colleagues is important

or crucial in conducting action research. This suggests the value of creating opportunities for collaboration in action research courses and professional development programs.

The challenges demonstrated in the fourth question's responses are not surprising, as action research can be a time-consuming and demanding process. It can be difficult to find the time to conduct action research, especially when teachers are already struggling many other demands. It can also be difficult to access diverse participants, especially if the research is being conducted in a school setting. Additionally, some action research projects require complex data collection methods, which can be challenging to implement. Time constraints, accessing diverse participants, complex data collection methods, balancing theory and practice, and limited resources for analysis were identified as the most common challenges. These challenges should be addressed by providing support and training in time management, participant recruitment, data collection techniques, theory-practice integration, and access to resources. Finally, it can be difficult to balance theory and practical implementation, especially when teachers are new to action research.

The last question asks about perspectives of action research to enhance teachers' professional improvement. The students who had taken an action research class believe that it is a valuable tool for professional development. They believe that action research can help them to improve their teaching practice, develop their research skills, and become more reflective practitioners.

A vast majority of students believe that action research can significantly improve the professionalism of EFL teachers. This highlights the perspectives of action research for professional development and its positive impact on teaching practice.

CONCLUSION

The study of action research within graduate students shows its transformative perspective for teachers. The results of the study illustrates that Master's students had differing degrees of knowledge, indicating a need for specialized training and assistance. The broad consensus about action research's ability to improve professionalism, even in the face of obstacles like time and resource limits, highlights its importance. As educators struggle with the subtleties of contemporary classrooms, Action Research stands as a guiding concept as much as a methodology. Since it is a new implementation in Kazakhstan's education, it needs more study and research to be adapted in Kazakhstan's educational system. To be professionally competent, teachers need to be more active, interested and focused on self-improvement and self-development. This article highlights Action Research as a powerful tool for continuous professional growth, building a capable cadre of teachers who can adapt to the changing nature of education. Especially with the help of cyclic process as Action Research, teachers have an opportunity to repeatedly enhance the drawbacks in their teaching process.²

In Kazakhstan, Action Research is extremely significant for EFL teachers since it helps teachers to solve challenges in the local educational setting. Teachers and administrators can actively explore, put into practice, and assess student-centered initiatives by participating in action research. This promotes ongoing progress. The findings of this kind of research contribute to the improvement of instructional strategies, curriculum design, and general educational practices with the ultimate goal of raising Kazakhstan's educational standards in line with changing global standards. It will help school administrators, teacher mentors, teacher training courses to actively support teachers in conducting Action Research and help them to struggle challenges.

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Action research арқылы кәсіби өсу: магистрлік бағдарламадағы ағылшын тілі мұғалімдерінің мүмкіншіліктері

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Бұл мақалада Action Research-ке жан-жақты шолу жасалып, оны оқыту және оқуды жақсарту үшін ағылшын тілі мұғалімдерінің өз сыныптарында жүргізетін жүйелі процесс ретіндегі маңыздылығына баса назар аударылады. Негізгі мақсат – ағылшын тілі оқытушылары, магистратура студенттері арасында Action Research-тің өзектілігі мен қолданылуын анықтау. Мұғалімдердің кәсіби өсуін жақсартудағы Action Research-тің рөлін және магистранттардың осы сенімге қатысты пікірлерін зерттейді. Action Research алғаш рет Қазақстанда 2012 жылы білім беру тәжірибесін жақсарту мақсатында Кембридж университеті мен Назарбаев Зияткерлік мектептерінің (НЗМ) бірлескен жобасы ретінде өткізілді. Сандық зерттеу әл-Фараби атындағы Қазақ Ұлттық Университетінің «Екі шет тілі» мамандығындағы I-курс магистранттарына арналған «Action Research» пәні негізінде жүргізілді. Магистранттар арасында жүргізілген сауалнама нәтижелері Action Research-пен танысу мен тәжірибенің әртүрлі деңгейлерін анықтады. Зерттеу Қазақстандағы ағылшын тілі мұғалімдерінің арасында Action Research-тің таралуы мен қолданылуын анықтауға көмектеседі Сонымен қатар, бұл зерттеу мектеп әкімшілігіне, тәлімгерлерге cation Research жүргізетін мұғалімдердің қиындықтарын түсінуге көмектесіп, Қазақстанның білім беру жүйесін жақсартуға мүмкіндік береді.

Кілт сөздер: Action Research, қиындықтар, кәсібилік, тиімділік, циклдік, бақылау, қатысушылар.

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Профессиональный рост через Action Research: перспективы преподавателей английского языка в магистерских программах

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В этой статье представлен всесторонний обзор на Action Research, подчеркивая его значение как систематического исследовательского процесса, проводимого учителями английского языка в своих классах с целью улучшения преподавания и обучения. Основная цель – выявить популярность и использование Action Research среди преподавателей английского, а также студентов магистратуры. В исследовании изучается роль Action Research в

повышении профессионального роста учителей и мнение студентов по этому поводу. Action Research было впервые проведено в Казахстане в 2012 году как совместный проект Кембриджского университета и Назарбаев Интеллектуальных школ (НИШ) с целью улучшения образовательных практик. Количественное исследование проведено на базе дисциплины «Action Research» для студентов 1 курса магистратуры специальности «Два иностранных языка» Казахского Национального Университета имени аль-Фараби. Результаты опроса, проведенного среди магистрантов, выявили разные уровни знакомства и опыта с Action Research. Исследование поможет выявить распространение и использование Action Research среди преподавателей английского языка в Казахстане. Более того, это исследование поможет администрациям школы и наставникам лучше узнать проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются учителя английского языка в процессе проведения Action Research, что поможет улучшить систему образования в Казахстане.

Ключевые слова: Action Research, проблемы, профессионализм, эффективность, цикличность, наблюдения, участники.

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