

# Action Research as Pre-Service Teacher Inquiry Physical Education

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**Abstract** The newest Canadian Elementary Health and Physical Education (2019) provincial curricula promotes inquiry as a pedagogical mode. AR complements this inquiry mode of instruction with its grounding in experience and practice which infuses educational roles. AR as practice-based inquiry helps new educators identify and reveal resolutions; however, first a need to want to improve needs to be identified, before next steps are taken. AR has the potential to open doors of perception, trigger new insights, and cultivate teacher development within teacher training and beyond while in-service. Admittedly, teachers change, no matter how incrementally, which permeates professional development, as witnessed in over 100 years of action research drawn upon herein. Extant AR literature is grounded in the educational development of participants as they teach. Development in AR is not actually a problem needing investigation; instead it remains a possibility that needs recursive attention to ensure it exists within the training of educators globally. Herein AR is illustrated via narrative accounts that reflect experiences while teacher training in an Ontario Faculty of Education programme.

**Keywords:** Action research; elementary curriculum; teacher training

## **Investigación-Acción como indagación de la formación inicial de profesores y desarrollo profesional en la Salud Primaria y Educación Física de Ontario**

**Resumen** Los planes de estudio provinciales de Salud Primaria y Educación Física más recientes de Canadá (2019) promueven la investigación como un modo pedagógico. La Investigación-Acción (IA) complementa este modo de instrucción de investigación con su base en la experiencia y la práctica que infunde roles educativos. La IA como investigación basada en la práctica ayuda a los nuevos educadores a identificar y revelar resoluciones; sin embargo, primero se debe identificar la necesidad de querer mejorar antes de continuar con los siguientes pasos. La IA tiene el potencial de abrir puertas a la percepción, desencadenar nuevos conocimientos y cultivar el desarrollo docente dentro de la formación docente y más allá mientras se está en servicio. Lo cierto es que el cambio de los maestros, sin importar cuán incremental sea, impregna el desarrollo profesional, como se atestigua en los más de 100 años de investigación-acción que se esbozan aquí. La literatura de IA existente se basa en el desarrollo educativo de los participantes mientras enseñan. El desarrollo en IA no es actualmente un problema que necesite investigación, sino que sigue siendo una posibilidad que necesita atención recursiva para garantizar que exista dentro de la formación de educadores a nivel global. Aquí la IA se ilustra a través de relatos narrativos que reflejan experiencias durante la formación de profesores en un programa de educación de una Facultad de Ontario.

**Palabras clave:** Investigación-acción; currículo de nivel primario; formación de profesores.

## Introduction

In our current year of 2021, Action Research (AR) infuses many disciplines and reaches a global audience (Rutten, 2021). For example, Action Research can be found in most school districts as a means of professional development (Ryan, 2020). AR is often enacted by educational practitioners as a practice embedded in daily work (Kennedy, 2016). AR is an authentic research tool rooted in educational landscapes that are both practical and progressive (Ryan, 2018). AR causes educational practitioners to look repeatedly at practices. AR uncovers elements of practice that may be problematic, while leading participants towards plausible responsive action while instigating reflection on past, present and future pedagogy (Rutten, 2021; Ryan, 2020). AR incorporates a 360-degree reflective pivoting, allowing educational practitioners to examine one's place within a particular setting to find out what works, what doesn't, and possibly what can be improved. AR is experienced, and in many ways is unending as the AR mode can become habitual within educational roles (Ryan, 2018). Habitual practices are imbued with teacher intuition which provides an inner compass for the teacher. AR provides perspective, scope and admittedly, informs educational policy, curricular guides and peers. AR can be a means to reinforce teacher intuition which is comforting to many new and experienced educators.

Within Education, the discipline of Health and Physical Education can benefit from AR efforts, whether in training or in-service once teacher training has been completed (Ryan, 2006). Teacher training in the province of Ontario (Canada) unfolds over two years and includes class instruction and in the field teaching practice. It is during this training that many questions surface, and it is this questioning that serves as both an instructional tool and a professional development mode. Questioning one's teacher role from within "leads to knowledge from and about educational practice" (McNiff et al., 1996, p. 8). Questioning supports and nurtures further inquiry, and is valuable as teachers develop their professional identity, self-knowledge and critical literacy understanding. Critical thinking in the role of educator most certainly includes "skills such as questioning, predicting, analysing, synthesising, examining opinions, identifying values and issues, detecting bias, and distinguishing between alternatives" (The Ontario Health and Physical Education, 2019, p.80). In addition, "students who are taught these skills become critical thinkers who can move beyond superficial conclusions to a deeper understanding of the issues they are examining" (p.80). This deeper learning has been a goal of Education in the province of Ontario and beyond for at least a decade.

## Teaching as Inquiry: Questioning

The significance and importance of deep inquiry and questioning is historically noteworthy since it was Socrates who believed that a life without inquiry is not worth living (Fadiman, 1978). Building on this Socratic belief, the Ontario educator in training will learn in teacher training that "inquiry and research are at the heart of learning in all subject areas. In health and physical education, students are encouraged to develop their ability to ask questions and to explore a variety of possible answers to those questions" (Ontario Health & Physical Edu-