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Environment Management and Monitoring

Janak Rani* and Gunjan Rani

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ABSTRACT

The environment is the basic life support system for all living things on planet Earth. It is a combination of natural and human-made components. The Earth's environment makes Earth the only planet on the solar system where life and sustainability is possible. From the beginning of time, the Earth has provided all the inhabitants of the planet with everything they need for their survival. On the other hand, human beings have exploited all the natural resources for their own selfish needs and have rendered the planet like a burren and namsbackle land.

Keywords: Environment, solar system, human-made components, selfish-

Human beings are an integral part of the environment and hold a huge responsibility to upkeep the living conditions for their own sake and for the sake of all the inhabitants of the planet, including plants and animals. The balanced management of natural resources and the environment as a whole is crucial for the well-being of all living beings and for the economic growth of the entire world. Managing the use of resources (both renewable and non-renewable) effectively, can help solve the many disputes between countries, states and people for the power to claim at least a part of the resources as their own. It is high time people understand that the health of the environment is vital, and only if the environment is healthy will all living beings have a chance of survival.

The environment is the fundamental source of all possible existence on planet Earth. However, over the recent years, the environment has been exploited excessively because of which the

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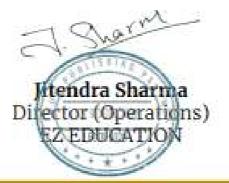


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भनोहर मेमोरियल शिक्षण महाविद्यालय, फतेहाबाद (हरियाणा) (सनोहर मेमोरियल शिक्षण सांगित (स्थापित 1969) के तत्वावधान में संधालित (सनोत से मोरी स्थापित 1969) के तत्वावधान में संधालित (सन से टी, हे से मान्यता भाव सं सं संसार से संसार त्या आधा समिति (शिक्षा मंत्रालय, भारत संसकार) आहतीय भाषा समिति (शिक्षा मंत्रालय, भारत संसकार) ती त दिवन्ती व नाव्दीया में आयोजित ती त दिवन्ती व नाव्दीया कार्यीया काट्टीय भाषाओं में सम्योधित	क्रमांक म. 2366 प्रमाणित किया जाता है कि सुश्री/श्री/श्रीमती/डांo <u>श्रेलवन्ती</u> सिंह., सहायक साध्याप्तक माध्याप्तक स्रा. ह्या. नहा,विद्यालय , फ़तौटावॉर स्रा. ह्या. नहा,विद्यालय , फ़तौटावॉर	 भारतीय भाषाओं में सम्प्रेषण कांशल विकास की कामना करता है। कार्यशाला में भाग लिया। मनोहर परिवार आपके उज्ज्वल भविष्य की कामना करता है। कार्यशाला में भाग लिया। मनोहर परिवार आपके उज्ज्वल भविष्य की कामना करता है। कार्यशाला में भाग लिया। मनोहर परिवार आपके उज्ज्वल भविष्य की कामना करता है। कार्यशाला में भाग लिया। मनोहर परिवार आपके उज्ज्वल में कामना करता है। कार्यशाला में भाग लिया। मनोहर परिवार आपके उज्ज्वल में कामना करता है। कार्यशाल में भाग लिया। मनोहर परिवार आपके उज्ज्वल की कामना करता है। कार्यशाल भाग करता में भाग लिया। मनोहर परिवार आपके उज्ज्वल की कामना करता है। कार्यशाल भाग करता के मान लिया। मनोहर परिवार को कामना करता है। कार्यशाल भाग करता के मान लिया। मनोहर परिवार को कामना करता है। कार्यशाल भाग करता करता के मान लिया का का का का को कामना करता के का का
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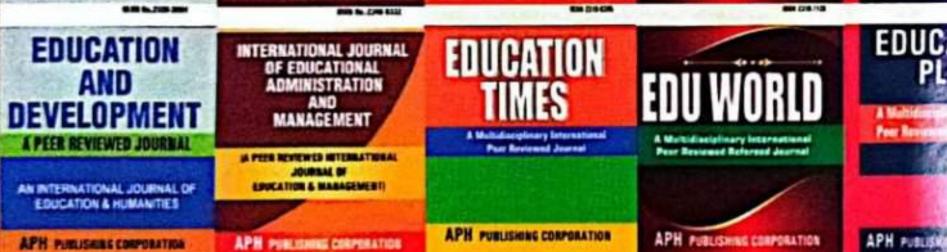
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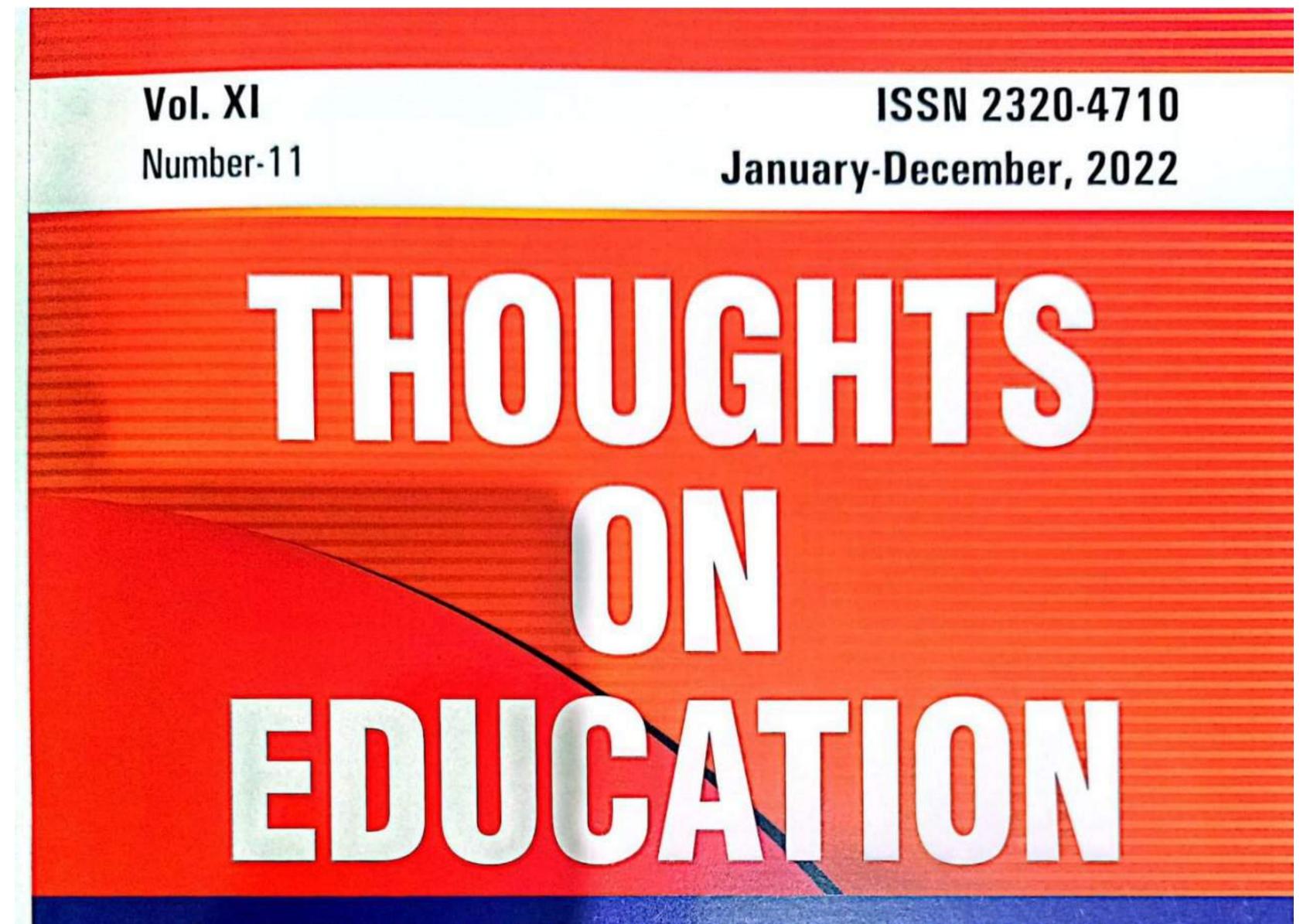
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Rethinking Education: Montessori's Approach Mr. Balwant Singh

Early Childhood Care and Education Dr. Narender Kumar

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Changing the Paradigm for Student Evaluation Dr. Vanita Malewar and Dr. Kavitha

Guidelines for Contributors

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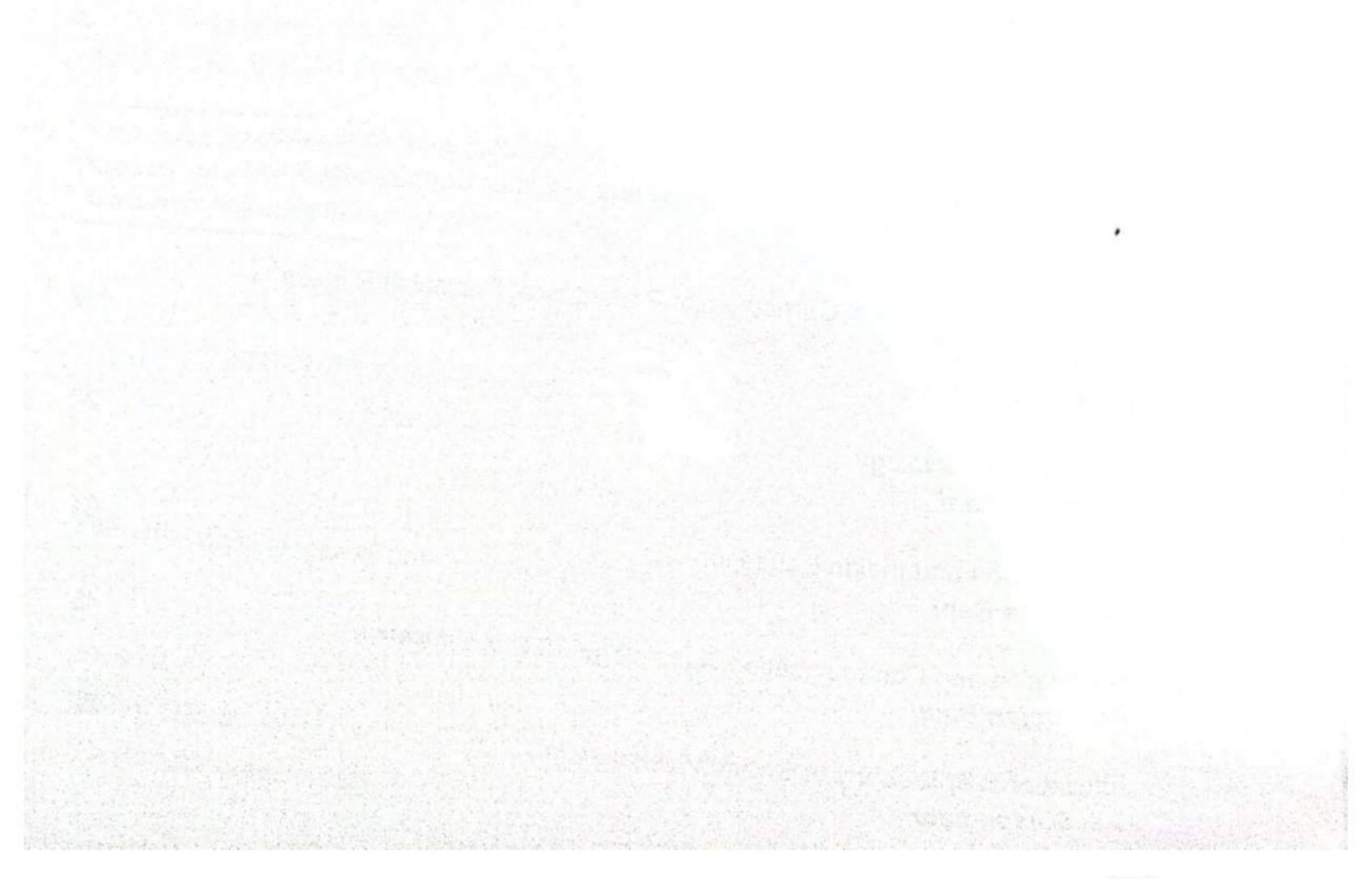
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Early Childhood Care and Education

Dr. Narender Kumar*

ABSTRACT

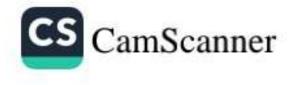
Early childhood education is education for children at early age especially between the ages of three and six. It is commonly referred to as preschool, nursery school or simply early education. During this period, children learn the social, emotional, physical and cognitive abilities which are important for child development in future. Unfortunately, in India early childhood education is not much focused.

IMPORTANCE OF GOOD EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT

- Socialisation: Humans are social beings and the main socialisation takes root in early childhood. In a safe environment away from family, children meet other people of their age, sowing the seeds of socialisation and friendship in young minds. This helps to develop self-confidence in your children by eliminating their shy nature.
- Cooperation: During this phase, children learn to share and cooperate. These are all part
 of a social life. This is especially beneficial for single children. In the safe environment
 provided, the child learns to cooperate with guidance from professionals.
- 3. Holistic Development: It is important to have a strong foundation in every aspect of the personality such as emotional, social, mental and physical. Teachers who handle young children are well trained to identify the weaker aspects of a child and to encourage them to improve through practical sessions. Interaction amongst peers is extremely important in this context. 4. Enthusiasm for Lifelong Learning: Children develop a hunger for learning if they are taught through fun and exciting activities in early childhood. This eagerness and enthusiasm for learning remains with them their entire lives. 5. Value of Education: The new environment provided in preschool gives children an entirely different perspective on the requirement of education. Grasping knowledge and applying them to their lives demonstrates the value of education. 6. Teamwork: Many preschool activities are focused on teamwork and help children improve their attitude towards working as a team. A person's teamwork capability is based on their respect for others opinions, listening skills and mentality towards equality. All these qualities are needed to be taught at a young age. 7. Confidence and Self Esteem: A sense of wellbeing is important for a person to explore their talents. The positive interactions with peers and teachers encourage a positive view of themselves. This is an important impact of early childhood education. 8. Cognitive Development: Professionally crafted activities in preschool enhance the development of the brain. Various activities involving analysing and logical reasoning help them to develop their skills.

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DEFICIENCIES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING PROGRAMMES ACCORDING TO NEP

- Accessibility: Early childhood education is costly and available only in urban schools mostly. Due to this many people are unable to access early childhood education nearby their area. Furthermore high cost is an impediment as poor are unable to spend money on early childhood education.
- Poor quality education: In addition to problems of access, the Committee observed several quality related deficiencies in the existing early childhood learning programmes. These include:
 - Curriculum that doesn't meet the developmental needs of children.
 - Lack of qualified and trained teachers, and
 - Substandard pedagogy.
- Less focus on early childhood education: Currently, most early childhood education is delivered through anganwadis and private-preschools. However, there has been less focus on the educational aspects of early childhood.

VARIOUS PROVISIONS REGARDING PRIMARY EDUCATION IN NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY

- Early childhood Curriculum: The draft Policy recommends developing a two-part curriculum for early childhood care and education. This consist of:
 - Guidelines for up to three-year-old children (for parents and teachers).
 - Educational framework for three to eight-year-old children.

This would be implemented by improving and expanding the anganwadi system and colocating anganwadis with primary schools.

- The Right to Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act): Currently, the RTE Act provides for free and compulsory education to all children from the age of 6 to 14 years. The draft Policy recommends extending the ambit of the RTE Act to include early childhood education and secondary school education. This would extend the coverage of the Act to all children between the ages of 3 to 18 years.
- No detention Policy: In addition, the draft Policy recommends that the recent amendments to the RTE Act on continuous and comprehensive evaluation and the no detention policy must be reviewed. It states that there should be no detention of children till class eight. Instead, schools must ensure that children are achieving ageappropriate learning levels.
- Curriculum framework: The current structure of school education must be restructured on the basis of the development needs of students. This would consist of a 5-3-3-4 design comprising:
 - 5 years of foundational stage (3 years of pre-primary school and classes one and two).
 - 3 years of preparatory stage (classes three to five).
 - 3 years of middle stage (classes six to eight).
 - 4 years of secondary stage (classes nine to 12).
- School infrastructure: The draft Policy recommends that multiple public schools should be brought together to form a school complex. Each school complex will be a semi-autonomous unit providing integrated education across all stages from early childhood to secondary education.

SIGNIFICANCE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

- Early childhood is a time of remarkable growth with brain development at its peak.
- Over 85% of a child's cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of 6, indicating the critical importance of appropriate care and stimulation of the brain in a child's early years for healthy brain development and growth.
- It is, therefore of the utmost importance that every child has access to quality early childhood care and education (ECCE).
- The overall aim of ECCE will be to attain optimal outcomes in the domains of physical and motor development, cognitive development, socio-emotional-ethical development, cultural/ artistic development, and the development of communication and early language. literacy, and numeracy.
- It also includes a focus on developing social capacities, sensitivity, good behaviour, courtesy, ethics, personal and public cleanliness, teamwork and cooperation.
- · These years lay the foundations for her/ his learning and holistic development.
- Children will be better prepared for primary school and will reach better education outcomes.
- Quality ECCE also helps reduce repetition and drop-out rates.
- Positive outcomes are even more pronounced among children from vulnerable groups.
- It helps promote human resource development, gender equality and social cohesion, and to reduce the costs for later remedial programmes.
- An overview of 56 studies across 23 countries found impacts on health, education, cognitive ability, and emotional development.

CHALLENGES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

- One of the major issues of ECCE is the unavailability of trained teachers.
- Anganwadis are currently quite deficient in supplies and infrastructure for education.
- As a result, they tend to contain more children in the 2-4-year age range and fewer in the educationally critical 4-6-year age range.
- Anganwadis also have few teachers trained in or specially dedicated to early childhood education.
- Private pre-schools often consist of formal teaching and rote memorisation with limited play-based learning.
- A 2017 study by the Ambedkar University showed that "a significant proportion of children in India who completed pre-primary education, public or private, did not have the needed school readiness competencies when they joined primary school.

EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION-WAY FORWARD

- For universal access to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), the Anganwadi Centres will be strengthened with high quality infrastructure, play equipment and well-trained Anganwadi workers/teachers.
- Every Anganwadi must have a well-ventilated, well-designed, child-friendly and wellconstructed building with an enriched learning Funds for this programme will be provided by the Central and State governments.
- ECCE teacher training should be added as a skill gap in the list of National Skill Development Corporation to ensure that easy investment is available to produce efficient ECCE teachers.



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- Universal access to quality early childhood education is perhaps the best investment that India can make for our children's and our nation's future.
- ECCE can also be introduced in Ashrams shalas in tribal-dominated areas in a phased manner.

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संदीप गुप्ता, विषय - वाणिज्य।



Action Research

Dr. Narender Kumar*

Educational research provides a vast landscape of knowledge on topics related to teaching and learning, curriculum and assessment, students' cognitive and affective needs, cultural and socio-economic factors of schools, and many other factors considered viable to improving schools. Educational stakeholders rely on research to make informed decisions that ultimately affect the quality of schooling for their students. Accordingly, the purpose of educational research is to engage in disciplined inquiry to generate knowledge on topics significant to the students, teachers, administrators, schools, and other educational stakeholders. Just as the topics of educational research vary, so do the approaches to conducting educational research in the classroom. Your approach to research will be shaped by your context, your professional identity, and paradigm (set of beliefs and assumptions that guide your inquiry). These will all be key factors in how you generate knowledge related to your work as an educator.

Action research is an approach to educational research that is commonly used by educational practitioners and professionals to examine, and ultimately improve, their pedagogy and practice. In this way, action research represents an extension of the reflection and critical self-reflection that an educator employs on a daily basis in their classroom. When students are actively engaged in learning, the classroom can be dynamic and uncertain, demanding the constant attention of the educator. Considering these demands, educators are often only able to engage in reflection that is fleeting, and for the purpose of accommodation, modification, or formative assessment. Action research offers one path to more deliberate, substantial, and critical reflection that can be documented and analyzed to improve an educator's practice.

PURPOSE OF ACTION RESEARCH

As one of many approaches to educational research, it is important to distinguish the potential purposes of action research in the classroom. This book focuses on action research as a method to enable and support educators in pursuing effective pedagogical practices by transforming the quality of teaching decisions and actions, to subsequently enhance student engagement and learning. Being mindful of this purpose, the following aspects of action research are important to consider as you contemplate and engage with action research methodology in your classroom:

- Action research is a process for improving educational practice. Its methods involve action, evaluation, and reflection. It is a process to gather evidence to implement change in practices.
- Action research is participative and collaborative. It is undertaken by individuals with a common purpose.
- Action research is situation and context-based.
- Action research develops reflection practices based on the interpretations made by participants.
- Knowledge is created through action and application.
- Action research can be based in problem-solving, if the solution to the problem results in the improvement of practice.
- Action research is iterative; plans are created, implemented, revised, then implemented, lending itself to an ongoing process of reflection and revision.

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 In action research, findings emerge as action develops and takes place; however, they are not conclusive or absolute, but ongoing (Koshy, 2010, pgs. 1-2).

In thinking about the purpose of action research, it is helpful to situate action research as a distinct paradigm of educational research. I like to think about action research as part of the larger concept of living knowledge. Living knowledge has been characterized as "a quest for life, to understand life and to create... knowledge which is valid for the people with whom I work and for myself" (Swantz, in Reason & Bradbury, 2001, pg. 1). Why should educators care about living knowledge as part of educational research? As mentioned above, action research is meant "to produce practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday conduct of their lives and to see that action research is about working towards practical outcomes" (Koshy, 2010, pg. 2). However, it is also about:

creating new forms of understanding, since action without reflection and understanding is blind, just as theory without action is meaningless. The participatory nature of action research makes it only possible with, for and by persons and communities, ideally involving all stakeholders both in the questioning and sense making that informs the research, and in the action, which is its focus. (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, pg. 2)

In an effort to further situate action research as living knowledge, Jean McNiff reminds us that "there is no such 'thing' as 'action research'" (2013, pg. 24). In other words, action research is not static or finished, it defines itself as it proceeds. McNiff's reminder characterizes action research as action-oriented, and a process that individuals go through to make their learning public to explain how it informs their practice. Action research does not derive its meaning from an abstract idea, or a self-contained discovery – action research's meaning stems from the way educators negotiate the problems and successes of living and working in the classroom, school, and community.

While we can debate the idea of action research, there are people who are action researchers, and they use the idea of action research to develop principles and theories to guide their practice. Action research, then, refers to an organization of principles that guide action researchers as they act on shared beliefs, commitments, and expectations in their inquiry.

REFLECTION AND THE PROCESS OF ACTION RESEARCH

When an individual engages in reflection on their actions or experiences, it is typically for the purpose of better understanding those experiences, or the consequences of those actions to improve related action and experiences in the future. Reflection in this way develops knowledge around these actions and experiences to help us better regulate those actions in the future. The reflective process generates new knowledge regularly for classroom teachers and informs their classroom actions.

Unfortunately, the knowledge generated by educators through the reflective process is not always prioritized among the other sources of knowledge educators are expected to utilize in the classroom. Educators are expected to draw upon formal types of knowledge, such as textbooks, content standards, teaching standards, district curriculum and behavioral programs, etc., to gain new knowledge and make decisions in the classroom. While these forms of knowledge are important, the reflective knowledge that educators generate through their pedagogy is the amalgamation of these types of knowledge enacted in the classroom. Therefore, reflective knowledge is uniquely developed based on the action and implementation of an educator's pedagogy in the classroom. Action research offers a way to formalize the knowledge generated by educators so that it can be utilized and disseminated throughout the teaching profession.

Research is concerned with the generation of knowledge, and typically creating knowledge related to a concept, idea, phenomenon, or topic. Action research generates knowledge around inquiry in practical educational contexts. Action research allows educators to learn through their actions with the purpose of developing personally or professionally. Due to its participatory nature, the process of action research is also distinct in educational research. There are many models for how the action research process takes shape. I will share a few of those here. Each model utilizes the following processes to some extent:

- Plan a change;
- Take action to enact the change;
- Observe the process and consequences of the change;
- Reflect on the process and consequences;
- Act, observe, & reflect again and so on.

DEFINITIONS OF ACTION RESEARCH AND EXAMPLES

At this point, it may be helpful for readers to have a working definition of action research and some examples to illustrate the methodology in the classroom. Bassey (1998, p. 93) offers a very practical definition and describes "action research as an inquiry which is carried out in order to understand, to evaluate and then to change, in order to improve educational practice." Cohen and Manion (1994, p. 192) situate action research differently, and describe action research as emergent, writing:

essentially an on-the-spot procedure designed to deal with a concrete problem located in an immediate situation. This means that ideally, the step-by-step process is constantly monitored over varying periods of time and by a variety of mechanisms (questionnaires, diaries, interviews and case studies, for example) so that the ensuing feedback may be translated into modifications, adjustment. directional changes, redefinitions, as necessary, so as to bring about lasting benefit to the ongoing process itself rather than to some future occasion.

Lastly, Koshy (2010, p. 9) describes action research as:

a constructive inquiry, during which the researcher constructs his or her knowledge of specific issues through planning, acting, evaluating, refining and learning from the experience. It is a continuous learning process in which the researcher learns and also shares the newly generated knowledge with those who may benefit from it.

These definitions highlight the distinct features of action research and emphasize the purposeful intent of action researchers to improve, refine, reform, and problem-solve issues in their educational context. To better understand the distinctness of action research, these are some examples of action research topics:

EXAMPLES OF ACTION RESEARCH TOPICS

- Flexible seating in 4th grade classroom to increase effective collaborative learning.
- Structured homework protocols for increasing student achievement.
- Developing a system of formative feedback for 8th grade writing.
- Using music to stimulate creative writing.
- Weekly brown bag lunch sessions to improve responses to PD from staff.
- Using exercise balls as chairs for better classroom management.

ACTION RESEARCH IN THEORY

Action research-based inquiry in educational contexts and classrooms involves distinct participants - students, teachers, and other educational stakeholders within the system. All of these participants are engaged in activities to benefit the students, and subsequently society as a whole. Action research



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contributes to these activities and potentially enhances the participants' roles in the education system. Participants' roles are enhanced based on two underlying principles:

- communities, schools, and classrooms are sites of socially mediated actions, and action
 research provides a greater understanding of self and new knowledge of how to negotiate
 these socially mediated environments;
- communities, schools, and classrooms are part of social systems in which humans interact with many cultural tools, and action research provides a basis to construct and analyze these interactions.

In our quest for knowledge and understanding, we have consistently analyzed human experience over time and have distinguished between types of reality. Humans have constantly sought "facts" and "truth" about reality that can be empirically demonstrated or observed.

Social systems are based on beliefs, and generally, beliefs about what will benefit the greatest amount of people in that society. Beliefs, and more specifically the rationale or support for beliefs, are not always easy to demonstrate or observe as part of our reality. Take the example of an English Language Arts teacher who prioritizes argumentative writing in her class. She believes that argumentative writing demonstrates the mechanics of writing best among types of writing, while also providing students a skill they will need as citizens and professionals. While we can observe the students writing, and we can assess their ability to develop a written argument, it is difficult to observe the students' understanding of argumentative writing and its purpose in their future. This relates to the teacher's beliefs about argumentative writing; we cannot observe the real value of the teaching of argumentative writing. The teacher's rationale and beliefs about teaching argumentative writing are bound to the social system and the skills their students will need to be active parts of that system. Therefore, our goal through action research is to demonstrate the best ways to teach argumentative writing to help all participants understand its value as part of a social system.

The knowledge that is conveyed in a classroom is bound to, and justified by, a social system. A postmodernist approach to understanding our world seeks knowledge within a social system, which is directly opposed to the empirical or positivist approach which demands evidence based on logic or science as rationale for beliefs. Action research does not rely on a positivist viewpoint to develop evidence and conclusions as part of the research process. Action research offers a postmodernist stance to epistemology (theory of knowledge) and supports developing questions and new inquiries during the research process. In this way action research is an emergent process that allows beliefs and decisions to be negotiated as reality and meaning are being constructed in the socially mediated space of the classroom.

THEORIZING ACTION RESEARCH FOR THE CLASSROOM

All research, at its core, is for the purpose of generating new knowledge and contributing to the knowledge base of educational research. Action researchers in the classroom want to explore methods of improving their pedagogy and practice. The starting place of their inquiry stems from their pedagogy and practice, so by nature the knowledge created from their inquiry is often contextually specific to their classroom, school, or community. Therefore, we should examine the theoretical underpinnings of action research for the classroom. It is important to connect action research conceptually to experience; for example, Levin and Greenwood (2001, p. 105) make these connections:

- Action research is context bound and addresses real life problems.
- Action research is inquiry where participants and researchers cogenerate knowledge through collaborative communicative processes in which all participants' contributions are taken seriously.

- The meanings constructed in the inquiry process lead to social action or these reflections and action lead to the construction of new meanings.
- The credibility/validity of action research knowledge is measured according to whether the
 actions that arise from it solve problems (workability) and increase participants' control over
 their own situation.

Educators who engage in action research will generate new knowledge and beliefs based on their experiences in the classroom. Let us emphasize that these are all important to you and your work, as both an educator and researcher. It is these experiences, beliefs, and theories that are often discounted when more official forms of knowledge (e.g., textbooks, curriculum standards, districts standards) are prioritized. These beliefs and theories based on experiences should be valued and explored further, and this is one of the primary purposes of action research in the classroom. These beliefs and theories should be valued because they were meaningful aspects of knowledge constructed from teachers' experiences. Developing meaning and knowledge in this way forms the basis of constructivist ideology, just as teachers often try to get their students to construct their own meanings and understandings when experiencing new ideas.

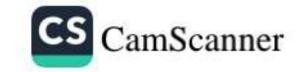
CLASSROOM TEACHERS CONSTRUCTING THEIR OWN KNOWLEDGE

Most of you are probably at least minimally familiar with constructivism, or the process of constructing knowledge. However, what is constructivism precisely, for the purposes of action research? Many scholars have theorized constructivism and have identified two key attributes (Koshy, 2010; von Glasersfeld, 1987):

- Knowledge is not passively received, but actively developed through an individual's cognition;
- Human cognition is adaptive and finds purpose in organizing the new experiences of the world, instead of settling for absolute or objective truth.

Considering these two attributes, constructivism is distinct from conventional knowledge formation because people can develop a theory of knowledge that orders and organizes the world based on their experiences, instead of an objective or neutral reality. When individuals construct knowledge, there are interactions between an individual and their environment where communication, negotiation and meaning-making are collectively developing knowledge. For most educators, constructivism may be a natural inclination of their pedagogy. Action researchers have a similar relationship to constructivism because they are actively engaged in a process of constructing knowledge. However, their constructions may be more formal and based on the data they collect in the research process. Action researchers also are engaged in the meaning making process, making interpretations from their data. These aspects of the action research process situate them in the constructivist ideology. Just like constructivist educators, action researchers' constructions of knowledge will be affected by their individual and professional ideas and values, as well as the ecological context in which they work (Biesta & Tedder, 2006). The relations between constructivist inquiry and action research is important, as Lincoln (2001, p. 130) states: much of the epistemological, ontological, and axiological belief systems are the same or similar, and methodologically, constructivists and action researchers work in similar ways, relying on qualitative methods in face-to-face work, while buttressing information, data and background with quantitative method work when necessary or useful.

While there are many links between action research and educators in the classroom, constructivism offers the most familiar and practical threads to bind the beliefs of educators and action researchers.



EPISTEMOLOGY, ONTOLOGY, AND ACTION RESEARCH

It is also important for educators to consider the philosophical stances related to action research to better situate it with their beliefs and reality. When researchers make decisions about the methodology they intend to use, they will consider their ontological and epistemological stances. It is vital that researchers clearly distinguish their philosophical stances and understand the implications of their stance in the research process, especially when collecting and analyzing their data. In what follows, we will discuss ontological and epistemological stances in relation to action research methodology.

Ontology, or the theory of being, is concerned with the claims or assumptions we make about ourselves within our social reality - what do we think exists, what does it look like, what entities are involved and how do these entities interact with each other (Blaikie, 2007). In relation to the discussion of constructivism, generally action researchers would consider their educational reality as socially constructed. Social construction of reality happens when individuals interact in a social system. Meaningful construction of concepts and representations of reality develop through an individual's interpretations of others' actions. These interpretations become agreed upon by members of a social system and become part of social fabric, reproduced as knowledge and beliefs to develop assumptions about reality. Researchers develop meaningful constructions based on their experiences and through communication. Educators as action researchers will be examining the socially constructed reality of schools. In the United States, many of our concepts, knowledge, and beliefs about schooling have been socially constructed over the last hundred years. For example, a group of teachers may look at why fewer female students enroll in upper-level science courses at their school. This question deals directly with the social construction of gender and specifically what careers females have been conditioned to pursue. We know this is a social construction in some school social systems because in other parts of the world, or even the United States, there are schools that have more females enrolled in upper level science courses than male students. Therefore, the educators conducting the research have to recognize the socially constructed reality of their school and consider this reality throughout the research process. Action researchers will use methods of data collection that support their ontological stance and clarify their theoretical stance throughout the research process.

Koshy (2010, p. 23-24) offers another example of addressing the ontological challenges in the classroom:

A teacher who was concerned with increasing her pupils' motivation and enthusiasm for learning decided to introduce learning diaries which the children could take home. They were invited to record their reactions to the day's lessons and what they had learnt. The teacher reported in her field diary that the learning diaries stimulated the children's interest in her lessons, increased their capacity to learn, and generally improved their level of participation in lessons. The challenge for the teacher here is in the analysis and interpretation of the multiplicity of factors accompanying the use of diaries. The diaries were taken home so the entries may have been influenced by discussions with parents. Another possibility is that children felt the need to please their teacher. Another possible influence was that their increased motivation was as a result of the difference in style of teaching which included more discussions in the classroom based on the entries in the dairies.

Here you can see the challenge for the action researcher is working in a social context with multiple factors, values, and experiences that were outside of the teacher's control. The teacher was only responsible for introducing the diaries as a new style of learning. The students' engagement and interactions with this new style of learning were all based upon their socially constructed notions of learning inside and outside of the classroom. A researcher with a positivist ontological stance would not consider these factors, and instead might simply conclude that the dairies increased motivation and interest in the topic, as a result of introducing the diaries as a learning strategy.

Epistemology, or the *theory of knowledge*, signifies a philosophical view of what counts as knowledge – it justifies what is possible to be known and what criteria distinguishes knowledge from beliefs (Blaikie, 1993). Positivist researchers, for example, consider knowledge to be certain and discovered through scientific processes. Action researchers collect data that is more subjective and examine personal experience, insights, and beliefs.

Action researchers utilize interpretation as a means for knowledge creation. Action researchers have many epistemologies to choose from as means of situating the types of knowledge they will generate by interpreting the data from their research. For example, Koro-Ljungberg et al., (2009) identified several common epistemologies in their article that examined epistemological awareness in qualitative educational research, such as: objectivism, subjectivism, constructionism, contextualism, social epistemology, feminist epistemology, idealism, naturalized epistemology, externalism, relativism, skepticism, and pluralism. All of these epistemological stances have implications for the research process, especially data collection and analysis

Again, Koshy (2010, p. 24) provides an excellent example to illustrate the epistemological challenges within action research:

A teacher of 11-year-old children decided to carry out an action research project which involved a change in style in teaching mathematics. Instead of giving children mathematical tasks displaying the subject as abstract principles, she made links with other subjects which she believed would encourage children to see mathematics as a discipline that could improve their understanding of the environment and historic events. At the conclusion of the project, the teacher reported that applicable mathematics generated greater enthusiasm and understanding of the subject.

The educator/researcher engaged in action research-based inquiry to improve an aspect of her pedagogy. She generated knowledge that indicated she had improved her students' understanding of mathematics by integrating it with other subjects – specifically in the social and ecological context of her classroom, school, and community. She valued constructivism and students generating their own understanding of mathematics based on related topics in other subjects. Action researchers working in a social context do not generate certain knowledge, but knowledge that emerges and can be observed and researched again, building upon their knowledge each time.

RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY IN ACTION RESEARCH

In this first chapter, we have discussed a lot about the role of experiences in sparking the research process in the classroom. Your experiences as an educator will shape how you approach action research in your classroom. Your experiences as a person in general will also shape how you create knowledge from your research process. In particular, your experiences will shape how you make meaning from your findings. It is important to be clear about your experiences when developing your methodology too. This is referred to as researcher positionality. Maher and Tetreault (1993, p. 118) define positionality as:

Gender, race, class, and other aspects of our identities are markers of relational positions rather than essential qualities. Knowledge is valid when it includes an acknowledgment of the knower's specific position in any context, because changing contextual and relational factors are crucial for defining identities and our knowledge in any given situation.

By presenting your positionality in the research process, you are signifying the type of socially constructed, and other types of, knowledge you will be using to make sense of the data. As Maher and Tetreault explain, this increases the trustworthiness of your conclusions about the data. This would not be possible with a positivist ontology. We will discuss positionality more in chapter 6, but we wanted to connect it to the overall theoretical underpinnings of action research.



ADVANTAGES OF ENGAGING IN ACTION RESEARCH IN THE CLASSROOM

In the following chapters, we will discuss how action research takes shape in your classroom, and we wanted to briefly summarize the key advantages to action research methodology over other types of research methodology. As Koshy (2010, p. 25) notes, action research provides useful methodology for school and classroom research because:

ADVANTAGES OF ACTION RESEARCH FOR THE CLASSROOM

- research can be set within a specific context or situation;
- researchers can be participants they don't have to be distant and detached from the situation;
- it involves continuous evaluation and modifications can be made easily as the project progresses;
- there are opportunities for theory to emerge from the research rather than always follow a
 previously formulated theory;
- the study can lead to open-ended outcomes;
- through action research, a researcher can bring a story to life.

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