CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Action research is qualitative research in which the teacher–as-researcher uses life experiences and classroom situations to gain a deeper understanding of his/her practices. This research method can bring practical solutions for specific classroom situations. The process of action is in planning, intervening, evaluating, and re-applying the new teaching approaches in order to improve the teaching practice. It is my contention that this practical form of research would benefit both the art classroom and the teacher's professional development. However, many art teachers are fearful of the unpredictable outcomes or lack the experience to develop an action research program. Therefore, they resist the opportunities to conduct this self-reflective type of research. This thesis addresses the question, "How can an individual art teacher investigate his/her teaching and students' learning through an action research process?" The goal of this thesis is to inform and inspire an art teacher to design and implement a classroom research plan.

In this thesis I first present a review of literature regarding the most important characteristics of the interpretive individual type of action research that apply to a working teacher. I then present several aspects of ethnographic research. Ethnography can be of great assistance to an art teacher conducting classroom action research. Narrative inquiry, which is commonly used in both action research and ethnography study, can be an important tool in presenting new knowledge and the understanding of social situations. Narrative is a fundamental component in undergoing an action research. Narrative, when used in the course of action research, can help art teachers to collect their

field notes as well as present the results of their research. This thesis puts forth the steps and research process that go into a good classroom action research. It covers development of the research question, methodology, data collection, narrative reflection, action, revision, and dissemination of the research results. In addition, I impart a series of suggested ideas regarding the art teacher's individual research process.

Vocabulary List

Action research

Action research is a reflective inquiry often conducted by classroom teachers in order to solve problems, improve practice, or have a real-world application of an idea or program.

Alternative student writings

Alternative student writings are student-created expressions not assigned by their teacher. Such writings may include papers that were left behind by students on their classroom desks, misplaced loose-leaf papers, the backs of the students' artwork, or random writing found on the classroom walls. If such writings can count as evidence for art teachers' research, they should be included the research data.

Analysis

In this thesis document, the analysis is a teacher's work on separating and reviewing the collected classroom data in order to gain better understanding of his/her practices.

Artwork

In this thesis document, artworks are students' classroom art projects assigned by an art teacher who is doing research.

Assigned student writings

Assigned student writings are teacher-assigned narratives given to students in addition to their classroom art projects. Those writings represent students' narrative reflection about the project's idea or students' personal reflection towards the overall classroom work.

Classroom research

In this thesis document, a classroom research is a teacher's method of analyzing the question or issue he/she has in the teaching practice. As a research method, it involves a collection of data and students' feedback from the classroom.

Curriculum

A curriculum or program is an integrated course of study at school.

Data collection

Data collection is a process of collecting, classifying, and preparing information relevant for a teacher's research.

Ethnographic research

Ethnographic research, or ethnography, is a style of writing that uses field notes to create a descriptive study of a group, culture, or society. It can be used as a research tool in the classroom.

Interpretive action research

In interpretive action research, teachers document students' and teachers' classroom experiences as research data to improve teaching practices. It allows teachers to apply their own judgments and experiences in viewing the group of students, their culture, and relationships towards their teacher and the curriculum.

Individual action research

In the individual action research the teacher, single-handedly, defines the area or a problem question, and then decides how to approach the research study.

Lesson plans

A lesson plan is a teacher's detailed description of an individual lesson within a curriculum.

Logs

Logs are relatively formal groupings of data and can be created by a teacher to classify specific information.

Narrative

Narrative is a meaningful interpretation of a story.

Narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry is a term established by Conelly and Clandinin (1990) to concentrate on the importance of the use of written personal narrative by teachers who want to improve their own practice.

Qualitative tools

Qualitative tools are the research data collected for this qualitative-type of research. It can include tools or data that are often considered non-scientific, such as diaries, journals, informal interviews, or students' artwork.

Qualitative research

Qualitative type of research is research that does not use formal statistical methods or numerical data, and uses limited and fixed research questions and tools. Instead, it makes use of personal, and often very subjective, life experiences and classroom situations to gain a deeper understanding of one's practices. However, not all qualitative types of research are completely non-statistical and non-numerical.

Rating scales

Besides visual graphs and logs, rating scales are another form of statistical data that can be used in an already established form or are partially or completely modified.

Reflection

In this thesis document, a reflection, also referred to as a narrative reflection, is a written expression of a teacher's classroom experiences.

Research process

Research process is a group of steps arranged around the collection, analysis, and evaluation of information, for the purpose of making relevant conclusions.

Student performances

Student performances are the overall "picture" of students' achievements in various areas of a visual art subject. Basic elements of student performances can include assigned written works, drawing exercises, and visual art tests.

Teacher-as-researcher

Teacher-as-researcher is the concept of a classroom teacher who wants to take charge, analyze, and improve his/her own teaching practices in the form of a classroom research.

Visual graphs

Visual graphs are forms of visual statistical data that can be used in an already

established form, or are partially or completely modified.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I present two major types of educational research, interpretive action research and ethnography, and their basic characteristics. Though interpretive action research uses the same methodology as individual action research, the individual classroom focus is the most suitable type for art teachers seeking to do classroom action research. In addition, ethnographic research (ethnography) can help illuminate the classroom situation, students' learning, or teaching practices. Finally, I will present a narrative inquiry, a form of collecting classroom data suitable for art teachers, whether they do action research or ethnography.

Action Research

The purpose of action research is for individual teachers to better understand the true reality of their teaching practice, classroom situation, everyday events, student behavior, or curriculum problem (Stringer, 2008). The outcome of action research is to have a "practical theory" and a more effective teaching plan that promotes success in the classroom. Some kinds of action research could be evolutionary. For example, the implementation of minor changes in teaching practices will evolve over time. Others can be revolutionary, creating opportunities in which teachers can radically change their teaching action. Regardless of the nature of the research outcome, the most important aspect is that the implementation of changes improves teaching. Better teaching leads to informed students who understand what they are learning in ways that are particularly

meaningful to them. Finally, the teacher gains a better understanding of his or her teaching style and develops definite ways to improve or change their teaching techniques.

Action research allows individual teachers-as-researchers the flexibility to take into consideration many aspects of their unique classroom, as well as the students-participants they are teaching (Stringer, 2008). The student population in the particular classroom is a unique culture that may present novel and differing issues. The teacher may observe that his/her classroom culture and the issues it carries do not match established views about that group of students. Teachers have to believe that each group of students is distinctive.

The beliefs and self-reflections of the teacher-as-researcher help formulate the framework for a classroom research (Kelsay, 1991). Teachers typically ground their research questions in a theoretical basis or a general question. The teacher's goal is to gather a deeper understanding of his or her practices and bring practical solutions for specific classroom questions. However, the focus and the questions of their research inevitably change through the research process. The final results are commonly based on the findings from the classroom (McCutcheon and Jung, 1990).

The process of action research is in planning, intervening, evaluating, and re-applying the new teaching approaches. The research process is the most important aspect of this plan, designed to gain a better understanding of various aspects of a problem. Through analyzing and making sense of the process, teacher-as-researcher can make sense of social constructions that take place in the classroom and their unique components. Action research follows teacher-created structure and planning, but the researched events are allowed to develop relatively naturally.

Interpretive Action Research

In action research, especially interpretive action research, the relationships between teacher-as-researcher and participants-subjects are positioned differently from the traditional research. Students' personal classroom experiences, and their relationships toward the teacher, can influence their behaviors and learning processes within the particular classroom. (Mead, 1934; Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Stringer, 2008; McCutcheon and Jung, 1990).

The major goals of interpretive action research are to build a meaningful and constructive understanding of an issue within a curriculum and to explore how this affects the participants. The teacher involved in the study first presents his or her personal expectations, beliefs, and perceptions in order to approach the classroom research from an interpretive perspective. The teacher then begins to study the students' personal classroom experiences in order to understand the issue. The teacher explores different perspectives of the issue and then creates a solution or instructional practice to develop a more effective curriculum.

Interpretive Action Research Types

Calhoun (1994), Glanz (1998) define the three major "approaches" of interpretive action research that can also be called "types" of interpretive action research for easier understanding. There are three major types of interpretive action research; these include individual action research, large-scale school-wide action research, and collaborative

action research. This thesis document emphasizes the individual action research approach as the most applicable type for art teachers-as-researchers.

Individual action research is the most desirable model for art teachers primarily because they can individually guide and develop their creative research skills and continue to grow as professionals in their pedagogy. The main purpose is to improve or make changes in a single classroom. Even though the teacher is doing the research individually, the ideas or support usually comes from the school-wide advancement project, university, art education article, teaching colleague, book, or similar outside sources. In most cases, the presentations of the results are not for general review, but rather the research is solely for the teacher's professional improvement. Also, the prospective audience of the results is primarily the teacher him/herself. The results of this kind of research usually do not reach outside the classroom. This aspect is oftentimes perceived in research literature as a drawback to the research approach. However, it can allow for art teachers-as-researchers to think through some other creative ways of presenting their results to the public.

Ethnography and the Classroom Research

Ethnography is defined as a detailed description of people and their unique cultural and social organizations within the larger context of culture or social order (Wiersma, 1995). In ethnography, the researcher does not manipulate or impose any specific structure to the situation, but analyzes it as place and person specific. This is put in the perspective of a wider culture. There are no particular theoretical or hypothetical guidelines for this kind of inquiry. Ethnography is one of many research approaches that

bring confidence and educational opportunity to teachers (Kantor, Kirby, and Goetz (1981, in Wiersma, 1995, and Cohran-Smith and Lytle, 1990).

In educational research, ethnographies can help to explore the curriculum on both the individual and collective level. (Burgess, 1985; Glanz, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Tomal, 2003; Thomas, 1998, Wiersma, 1995). Ethnography uses highly observational and subjective approaches and is suitable for extensive and individual-based inquiries. Besides being subjective, the researcher can place him or her in the context of the situation or culture. This allows for exploration on the collective level. In other words, the researcher tries to experience the situation, classroom, or curriculum from the point of view of participants. The topics can be people's behaviors, ideas, and actions, which are situation-specific. These comprise the main content of the ethnography.

There are different types of ethnography in educational research: autobiography, phenomenology, case study, educational criticism, and micro-ethnography. Autobiography is a narrative and an historical type of ethnography (Conelly/Clandinin, 1990, La Pierre/Zimmerman, 1997; Stokrocki, 1998; Tomal, 2003).

The advantages to using ethnographic methods in a classroom depend on the approach of teacher-as-researcher as well as the research question or issue of inquiry. If an art teacher wants a detailed description of their students participating in a particular situation, then ethnography can be an effective method of inquiry. In contrast to action research, an ethnographic-type study does not require a further action plan. However, the ethnographic approach to study can help the teacher-as-researcher build a hypothesis or theory about the studied topic (Erickson, 1986). The insights gained from the research can directly influence the teacher's practice or future research. It becomes a powerful

integration tool for teaching and scholarship. This, in turn, provides a solid basis for instructional decisions.

Narrative Inquiry

The use of narrative in data collection is common in action research and ethnography (McKernan, 1991; Wiersma, 1995; Thomas, 1998; Altrichter, Posh and Somekh, 2003; Lankshear and Knobe, 2004; Johnson, 2005; Stringer, 2007). Narrative can be called an organized analysis of an experience, story, or a group of stories. However, the terms "narrative" and "story" or "storytelling" are used in combination, interchangeably, and without distinction (Conelly/Clandinin, 1990; Brunner, 1994; Beatie, 1995; Barone, 1990; Baverstock-Angelus, 1999).

Narrative techniques include: diaries and journals, dialogue journals, field notes, and videotape recordings. In art education, teachers can use visual images as a main source for gathering the narrative data. This includes, but is not limited to creative techniques such as photography, videotape recordings, student performances, artwork, and craft products. In addition assigned writings, alternative writings, logs, rating scales, and visual graphs provide essential data. All these qualitative tools are considered simple and readily available to teachers-as-researchers when doing action research and ethnography.

The most effective use of narrative inquiry for art educators is the latest work by Clandinin, Pushor, and Orr (2007). Narrative inquiry is refined and presented as a research method of its own. It describes the "three commonplaces" and "eight design elements" as guiding points in writing a narrative. These items are created to help

potential teachers-as-researchers to organize ideas and collect their field notes more

efficiently. Moreover, narrative inquiry can be used in combination with other kinds of
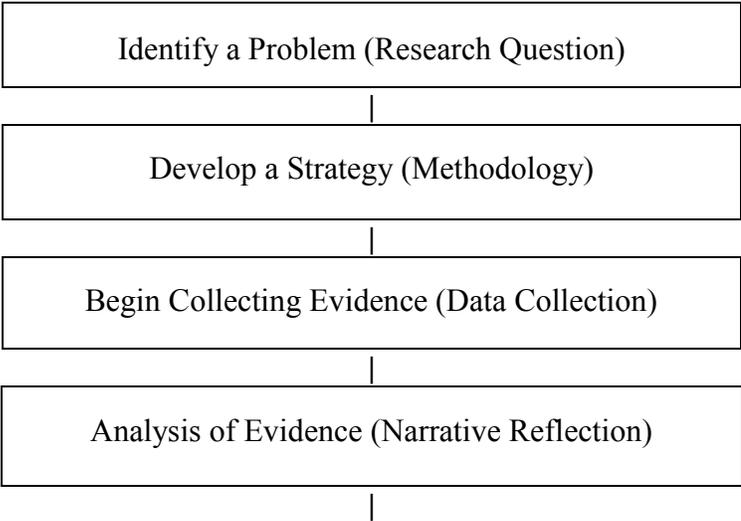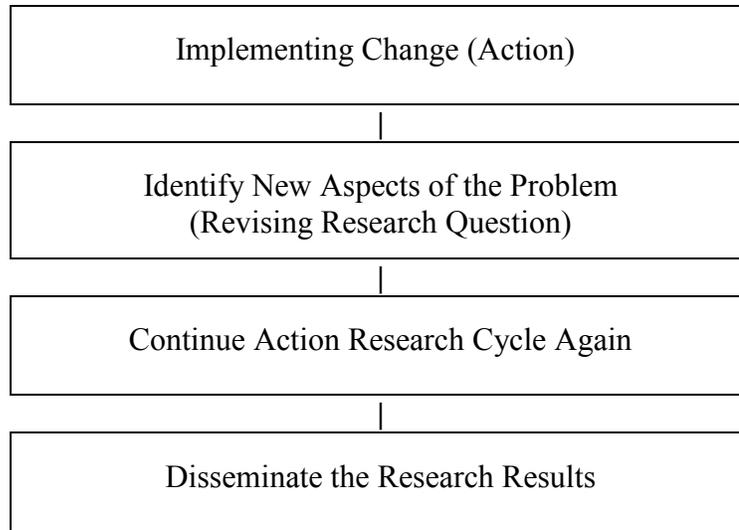
qualitative research.

CHAPTER 3

STEPS AND RESEARCH PROCESS

In an effort to do basic classroom research, the well-designed approach of a classroom action research is not required. Not all teachers will use action research, ethnography, or narrative inquiry as defined in literature. Art teachers in particular are likely to personalize and creatively define their research methods for studying their classroom. In an effort to find the best research process for art teachers to research their curriculum or students' group, I present in this chapter some basic ideas that use the action research model. I will also provide an overview of some aspects of ethnography and narrative in data collection and reflection.

Individual Action Research Process

TABLE A

Identify a Problem (Research Question)
Develop a Strategy (Methodology)
Begin Collecting Evidence (Data Collection)
Analysis of Evidence (Narrative Reflection)

Implementing Change (Action)

Identify New Aspects of the Problem (Revising Research Question)

Continue Action Research Cycle Again

Disseminate the Research Results

Identify a Problem (Research Question)

Action research, in its process and its results, will assist teachers in answering research questions, discovering problems, and implementing changes. Art teachers are in a unique position to see some serious issues regarding not just art education, but a wider society as well. The research itself might bring an answer to their classroom problem, but more than that, it will be a good learning experience for the teacher. The research begins when an art teacher finds a need to inquire about a situation in their classroom. Thus, the teacher has entered an inquiry mode. In an inquiry mode, the teacher begins their investigation into the questions they want answered or the issues they want resolved. The problems or questions can emerge from the curriculum, a particular lesson plan, the way students' respond to the curriculum or lesson, and various other aspects of teaching and learning about art. Here I present some of my own examples of research questions to begin the research process:

- What are the major questions or issues in my classroom, my students' group, and the curriculum?

- What would I gain by researching those questions or issues in an action research?

- What kind of modifications might I make to my curriculum that will spark my students' interested in drawing?

- What kind of paradigms and prejudices do my students have regarding learning about and creating art?

- What kind of paradigms and prejudices do I have regarding learning about and creating art? How might these affect my students?

- How do I modify my art program to reflect the current art scene and visual art workplace?

- How do I best include current social, political, and cultural issues in my art program?

- How do I motivate my students to be attentive to detail and presentation in their art projects?

After first outlining the general questions, an art teacher must define the issue or question that is specific to classroom teaching for this particular group of students. The purpose of pinpointing a specific problem is not only to solve that problem. The objective need not be summarized by one isolated question. Rather, the teacher can elaborate further on the issue by writing a descriptive paragraph. This explanatory writing ideally includes the teacher's thoughts and feelings toward the problem.

For example, of particular concern to me is that I feel my Studio Art curriculum does not integrate and connect art created in the classroom with the current happenings in

the art world. My Studio Art curriculum was very successful, UC approved, and used by my colleague for many years. I am expected to keep the program successful, follow the UC standards, and implement changes as I see necessary.

The first obstacle that I need to overcome is the nature of the changes that must be made in my art curriculum. This is where my teacher's narrative data will be of importance. The narrative will serve to document and follow the process of implementation. In doing so, the changes in the curriculum can be tracked and the outcomes of it can be recorded. However, an equally important part of this narrative research will be documenting my personal reflections. This will include the process involved in overcoming anxiety that is inherent in facing the unexpected, unplanned, and unwanted problems that change entails. My narrative paragraph will outline the specific areas that need focused attention. In addition, it will provide me with a better ability to conduct thorough research.

Develop a Strategy (Methodology)

The strategy for an action research study involves preparing and organizing the process of data collection and analysis. In other words, it is a list of things that are critical in conducting the research. Before the classroom research begins, the art teacher has to create a plan, determine some basic elements needed, and develop a timeline for the research.

The basic elements of a classroom research study include the specific group, the grade levels, the number of classes, and the skill level of participating students. Considering the amount of time available for the research and the requirements of the art teacher's everyday teaching responsibilities, research with a large pool of participants is

not possible. Therefore, a limited amount of participants makes for a manageable examination of the topic while still producing quality results. The teacher will need to establish a formal, but flexible, timetable for the research. When developing this timeline, the teacher would be wise to consider his/her teaching schedule and any other potential factors or possible situations that may arise. A teacher's most important job is to teach; therefore, doing research should not become a major distraction. However, if the teacher informs his/her colleagues and administrators, he/she will find that their support will facilitate the project.

Begin Collecting Evidence (Data Collection)

Data collection is a process of collecting, classifying, and preparing information relevant for a teacher's research project. This step is an important component of the research process and can include a variety of tools and techniques. Action research and ethnography use narrative tools and techniques such as diaries and journals, dialogue journals, field notes, photography, videotape recordings, audio, tape, and slide recordings, student performances, artwork, products, and writings.

These approaches also utilize many forms of logs, rating scales, and visual graphs which function as the primary forms of data collection. All those tools are quantitative, personal, honest, and recommended as excellent methods for ethnography research and classroom action research by many authors (McKernan, 1991; Wiersma, 1995; Thomas, 1998; Altrichter, Posh and Somekh, 2003; Lankshear and Knobe, 2004; Johnson, 2005; Stringer, 2007).

Diary/Journal

There are various kinds of diaries, but the intimate journal, memoir, or log is best suited for an art teacher and the art classroom. An intimate journal contains the most experiential account of the personal sentiments, confessions, and fundamental classroom experiences. Memoir-style writing demands a more objective view of the situation, and is less concentrated on personal feelings than a journal. A log is a visual means of formal record keeping. A log might include actions taken and people contacted in the course of the research. It is the least descriptive, and most factual, form of recorded data. The teacher and students alike could perform all three types of record keeping, and both serve as valuable data sources. A teacher can assign students to keep a personal diary for the purpose of the classroom research.

Dialogue Journals

Dialogue journals are interactive personal journals that contain dynamic narrative communications between the teacher and the students. Through a dialogue journal, teachers can communicate with one another and students can give their written opinions about a topic. In this manner, the individual attitudes and viewpoints can be shared between the students and disclosed to the teacher. Dialogue journals present opportunities for collecting data or assigning topics for reflection. They also serve to develop curriculum action or ethnographic case studies. Both curriculum action and ethnographic case studies can be immense. Online discussion boards are also an effective way to conduct conversations amongst participants.

Field Notes

Field notes on the researched classroom are semi-organized narratives that may take on various forms. This plethora of widely diverse records includes, but is not limited to: interview transcripts, journal records, observation records, storytelling, autobiographical and letter writing, class plans, newsletters, class rules and principles, pictures, and teachers personal philosophies. For organizational purposes and quicker analysis, teachers should arrange their field notes into "ideas," "observations," and "procedures." Eventually, all the data collected can be called field notes. Those accounts can be used in both action research and ethnography.

Interview Notes

Interview notes are the main data source for an ethnographic approach to research. They are also an essential supplementary data source for a classroom action research study. The teacher-as-researcher decides if interviews should be formal or informal, and group or individual styles. An open-ended style of interviewing is an informal approach. This approach is designed to help the researcher bring some topics through in a seemingly informal conversational style. The information that is provided through this unstructured type of interview can bring better insight to the research subject. However, in some cases, open-ended interviews can provide unimportant information that may not be relevant to the research questions. Thus, a researcher can become distracted and move off task. In contrast, fixed response interviews provide more formal answers that are easier for the researcher to analyze. This helps to retain focus on the research questions.

Photography, Videotape Recordings

Photography and videotape recordings are additional forms of data collection. They constitute visual field notes. Recordings are underdeveloped in both ethnography and action research. Including the use of these tools provides different perspectives for art education research. This visual data can be collected from the classroom situation and analyzed at a later time by the art teacher-as-researcher. Photography can narrate situations and happenings directly to the researcher without words. Slide recording can act as documents (field notes), artifacts, and evidence of the researched subject. Also, all audio taping and videotaping can be administered during class time. Hence, the research does not become an interruption or distraction, but rather is inclusive of classroom education time. There are also alternative forms of photography that teachers can use, such as found documentary photographs, yearbooks, newspaper photos, and researcher-produced photographs.

Student Performances, Artwork, Products, and Writings

In addition to teacher's narrative data, student performances, artworks, products, and writings about art are all important data sources that are collected from student participants. These data sources can contain rich narratives about students' creations, their styles, education, and personal opinions about the given subject. Art teachers have access to a variety of assigned materials to employ as data. These cover such items as students' written work, essays, exercises, and tests. Students' storytelling, when administered as a classroom assignment, can be a powerful data source. Storytelling acts

as a connection between past and present (as well as future). Equally, alternative visual and written "found" evidences such as class magazines, graffiti on the walls, desks, et cetera; can be fundamentally valuable to the data collection.

The Use of Technology

Technology is a crucial element of the research process because it permeates active and visual presentation of a research process. Technology allows collaboration between the art teacher and other interested parties. The art teacher will be cognizant of the need to choose which type of technologies will be best for the research. Types of technology that may be useful are web sites that display the research process presented visually and in narrative, discussion boards, webinars, and visual web presentations centering on the status of the research. The use of technology allows the teacher-as-researcher to interact with other researchers, document and collect data, and present research to all the interested parties.

Analysis of Evidence (Narrative Reflection)

Narrative reflection can be a part of both the data collection and the analysis. As a form of data collection or analysis, reflection is the most important aspect of a teacher's research process. The reflective tools can be sketches, graphs or tables, and various forms of narratives, comments, and notes. The reflections about students, the peer culture, and their relationships towards art can bring many unforeseen happenings, pose new questions, and answer many existing questions. Therefore, the narrative reflections can be the analysis. During reflection, the teacher will need to creatively summarize and

evaluate the data in an effort to create a new action plan. In essence, these reflections go on to formulate a new action plan. The art teacher's immediate narrative reflections during research need to be properly organized. This will assist the teacher in becoming a reliable researcher. Through this reflective process, the teacher is guided toward specific ideas and items. The focus is then concentrated on people, places, and time-specific facts. A teacher's descriptive reflection of particular elements could help illuminate and reveal solutions to critical problems. A properly presented narrative reflective inquiry helps the art teacher compare and discover important similarities and differences between data.

Implementing Change (Action)

In order to implement changes in the classroom and the curriculum, a new plan of action needs to be directed. This is best-accomplished thorough analysis of all the data. The teacher should review the initial research questions and aim to create a summary of the collected data. Examples of questions a teacher may consider posing when trying to recreate a plan of action, include:

- Is my collected data answered in the context of the research question? Does it pinpoint the problems that I want to research?

- Did I gain any interesting and unexpected insight(s) from my data analysis, (such as lower-achieving students performing better when using different visual tools)?

- Can I find a solution and feasible idea(s) for a new action plan from my collected data, such as varying and fresh ideas for drawing projects for students?

- Did the data bring any new questions, points of view, or concepts that I did not consider previously, such as a completely contrasting form for the presentation of student projects?

- Can I pinpoint the specific problems in my teaching in a more detail-oriented fashion?

In further analysis of data collection, the art teacher should compare various data sources and locate patterns and dilemmas to supplement the analysis. The system of patterns may include repeated behaviors, teaching moments, or lesson types that show the existence of potential areas of concern. Additionally, the teacher needs to determine whether those patterns are significant to the research and whether they can be addressed with a new action plan. Besides the analysis of found patterns, the art teacher should determine possible dilemmas. Possible dilemmas to concentrate and focus on include: positive and negative sides of individual/group work, teaching style, the effectiveness of the teacher's drawing and painting program on low achieving students, and other pertinent items. After study and investigation of the found dilemmas, the teacher should be able to determine if a solution is immediately available. The analysis of pattern and the teacher's dilemmas are vital parts of the creation of a new action plan to address the problems more effectively.

The re-created action plan can have diverse results for student learning and the curriculum. Some of those results can be predicted or estimated through the teacher's narrative. The new plan of action might be formed around an individual unit or project that the teacher deems most successful. In this case, the rest of the program need not be

altered. Such smaller, evolutionary changes developed with the new action plan can produce outstanding results and new insights into a research problem. Alternatively, the art teacher can undertake the implementation of more radical changes that may conceivably produce visible and direct results. However, radical changes potentially result in unexpected drawbacks and resistance from students, administration, or parents. The final outcome of a newly outlined action plan is not wholly known until it is implemented and analyzed.

For example, in the process of analyzing the collected data from my classroom, I might find that some information leads me to valuable, but unexpected, conclusions. I might discover that a few smaller changes in the types of information students receive from me are more effective than the changes to the art projects themselves. My students' classroom projects might now include information about Los Angeles art happenings. Those changes would be the evidence, reflecting the connection of real art happenings to the formal art classroom projects. However, in my teacher's narrative, I might find an unexpected result, such as recognition of my own discontent with this particular approach. I might conclude that I need a more direct way of engaging students in the art world. Perhaps I would express my excitement about the new ways of teaching art and estimate students' reactions to it. Concurrently, I could forecast the potential problems that such a direct approach might bring, and search for strategies to avoid them.

Identify New Aspects to the Problem (Revising Research Question)

In the process of action research and the implementation of the new action plan, the art teacher might discover that there are other aspects of the research question that

may not have previously appeared. The art teacher may need to create a new series of narrative dilemmas in order to review and address them further. The following are examples of newly found aspects that have initiated questions for the action research study:

- The problem is determined and an action plan is created to address it. However, the lower-achieving students work better when using textbooks while working on this new action plan. How can it be balanced to better meet the needs of differing students?

- During the implementation of the new action plan, the teacher realized that most of his/her higher achieving students are not particularly interested in the creation of art, but in achieving good grades. What can be done to improve their genuine interest in art?

- While evaluating the collected data, it was discovered that many of the students have strong opinions of what should be the focus of classroom art making at the high school level. Oftentimes, the teacher's professional views, which are equally strongly, are in disagreement with the students' opinions. How can the teacher improve the new action plan to address this issue?

- During the implementation of a new action plan in drawing, the teacher noticed that the students appeared confused by the multitude of ideas presented. Should the teacher limit the number of ideas to one or two?

- The teacher concluded the project and introduced the new plan for students' work. During the presentation, the teacher noticed that the students with attention deficit became increasingly restless. They appeared confused by the

unconventional way of presenting the project. Would it help if the teacher prepared a longer introduction before launching a new type of presentation for them?

As a continuation of my own teaching research, the best approach is to analyze the new narrative data from my re-created action plan and decide which way my research will progress. Theoretically, I might decide that the most effective way of connecting real-life art happenings in the Los Angeles area to my art classroom is through a field trip. A trip to an art exhibition can be a starting point for teaching formal art elements. The art department in my school did not have a field trip planned for their Studio Art program. This newly proposed idea might be the best major change to implement for the classroom. From my teacher's narrative data, I noticed that my lower-achieving students, usually the ones with ADD/ADHD diagnosis work more effectively when placed outside the classroom. However, my high-achieving students felt somehow overwhelmed by the mandatory field trip and larger workload that followed as a result.

My research could be directed toward creating a balance between those two student types. I might, as a consequence, discover that students have a preconceived idea of a field trip. They may perceive it as a way of filling up the day, and not a form of beginning early art exposure. My continued and enhanced efforts to make a connection between art exhibitions and classroom art projects could ultimately become overwhelming for me. These are just some of the many issues related to the changes in the art curriculum that need to be reflected in the narrative data.

Continue the Action Research Cycle Again

Once a new research question is identified, the cycle of research can continue again. This cycle starts with the art teacher's interpretation of classroom data from the previous cycle. Reviewing the data will assist in focusing on the most important new issue or question. The questions that arise should be viewed from many different sides. The teacher might consider the positive aspects instead of focusing on the flaws. It is of more value to build on the strengths and beneficial processes of teaching situations and curriculum. The new issue or question will then be addressed in a proper action plan. Sometimes, the art teacher will need to consider the opinions of his/her colleagues. Consulting and researching current literature is another valuable tool in discovering the best novel solution. While analyzing the data, I would recommend asking the following questions:

- Does the collected data from the classroom about students' behavior give me a straight answer about what to do?

- Did I understand the connection between my teaching of the art curriculum and the students' responses to a project?

- What do I really want to change in my teaching? At this point, what aspects of my teaching can I change? What elements exactly do I want to be different?

- Are the students learning about art in a more effective way than before? Are the low-achieving students becoming more, or less, interested in learning art? Are the high-achieving students more interested, or more stressed, because of my different approach? What should I change in my classroom in order to make this high school classroom more adaptable to the students' needs?

- How can the ideas that I: 1) learned at the teachers' conference 2) heard in a dialogue with a colleague 3) read in an art education article 4) saw at the current art exhibition, help me improve my new approach?

The following is one example of a classroom application of a new action plan and the active collection of new data. During the process, the art teacher is reflecting on the process and incorporates the reflections into the classroom data.

At this point in my classroom research, I am intending to discover more than just the curriculum changes and their effects. I might discover many yet unknown aspects of my teaching and the classroom environment I create as a teacher. The collected research narrative could help me realize my shortcomings and acknowledge my strengths. It is very important for me to analyze the data without giving excuses, or trying to alter its meaning. The data can bring up not just the results of the action plan, but make my thinking processes more obvious to me. The possible shortcomings that I notice in my teaching might be directly related to the re-application of my action plan. However, I might realize that regardless of the type of lesson I teach, the roots - and real reasons - for my desire to teach beyond the art classroom, might lie somewhere else. The well collected, various narrative data could illuminate different aspects of my research than the ones I intended.

Disseminate the Research Results

The research can be presented first to the teacher's immediate audience, such as colleagues at school, school administration, parents, and students. The art teacher could

orally report the findings at a parent's group meeting, teacher's advancement seminar, or faculty meeting. If the research included students' direct participation, they may benefit from being made aware of the findings in the report. The students might be assigned roles producing or editing a classroom video for the presentation, photographing the research process, or writing a series of narratives. If a colleague had active involvement in the research project, perhaps an art teacher, he or she should be involved in the presentation of the report, as well.

A preferred way of disseminating the research results to art teachers might be in a visual format. One presentation idea would be editing a series of video clips from the collected classroom data and presenting them as an introduction highlighting the research. Another visual display method to deliver the results of the research would be through an art exhibition. In this case, instead of showing the audience only the final product, the art teacher can focus on the process of creation. Adding the teacher's own visual logs, reflections, or writings along with the gathered data would enhance the exhibition.

The students' development of the project along with the teacher's work is an excellent way to clearly show the initial idea and the thinking process behind it. If the art teacher decides to focus on his/her personal experiences or reflections, the presentation of the results can take the shape of a narrative story. Another avenue for disseminating the results could be through an article in a local or national art education magazine. Likewise, an online article on an art education site would reach an interested audience. In addition, the art teacher can have a web site on which to post the complete research along with a discussion board where other teachers can post their responses to the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

SIGNIFICANCE TO ART EDUCATION

In this chapter, I share the significant ways that action research is important to the field of art education. My experiences in action research offer a set of ideas for other art teachers who are facing similar problems and are unsure of where to begin to find solutions. For example, in my Studio Art class, I find myself in a personal dilemma as to whether to follow the teaching methods that other, more experienced, teachers have applied to their art classes or whether to develop and use my own methods. Experienced teachers have adapted their techniques over the years to achieve successful results in their classrooms. However, each teacher has a slightly different set of beliefs and attitudes that make it necessary to adapt other teacher's methods to my own capabilities. In my case, I have acquired knowledge and experience through personal trials and evaluations. The use of teacher narratives has helped me to view and analyze such questions and dilemmas.

Significance to the Individual Teacher

Classroom action research through the use of narrative data can be a very humbling experience. The teacher-as-researcher can see and document his/her teaching successes. Action research also highlights teaching mistakes. Though it lacks the rigorous methodology of scientific research it does provide an alternative to subjective, impressionistic problem-solving in the art class. Decisions can be based on collected data and changes are reflective of the researched observations. Classroom action research offers the possibility of making changes to the teaching techniques and achieving

accurate delivery of the information. Classroom action research in the art class allows the teacher to make adjustments that allow the teacher to reach the students more effectively.

By using action research, the researcher-as-teacher can study his/her teaching and reflect on the learned practice. This method means the teacher is engaged in a critical reflection of ideas. The self-directed teacher as a classroom researcher can reflect, and then correct based on this reflection. Encouraging teachers to become their own researchers can have rewarding and lasting benefits on the art curriculum.

Action research serves the well being of a teacher through self-evaluation. Through this type of qualitative research, the teacher can solve the problems they are aware of in their classroom. The teacher can then begin the process of solving his/her classroom problems through carrying out this type of research and then putting the changes into effect. This process is self-evaluative, in that it provides the teacher with new skills and methods of teaching that come through heightened self-awareness. Action research encourages self-directed teachers to further their own professional self-development.

Another benefit of action research in the art classroom has to do with innovation. Having a method of testing results gives the teacher the confidence to inject innovative approaches into teaching. Change can be tested. Typically a teacher might ask him/herself, "What do I do when I teach?" or "Should I change the way I speak/communicate to my classroom?" Using action research to test new teaching techniques will help the teacher to assess the results of new, innovative methods (Richards, Nunan, 1990).

The teacher can articulate his/hers theories and personal beliefs and put them to the test against the present classroom situations. Through classroom action research in the art classroom, a teacher can test and modify his/her theories through practice. This links theory and practice into one whole approach. Essentially this allows the teacher to observe ideas-in-action (Richards, Nunan, 1990).

The teacher-as-researcher is placing him/herself into the position of his/her students and tries to see the classroom situation through their eyes. Action research is situational, or context-based. It can remedy problems that the teacher has diagnosed in a specific classroom situation. The teacher can work at improving a given set of circumstances that have developed with the students in the classroom setting. The teacher may have different dynamics developing in different groups of students. The observation and data analysis can enlighten the teacher as to how his/her students are seeing the teacher's techniques. Through deeper understanding of his/her students, the teacher can then understand why they respond as they do and modify his/her methods to better communicate to them.

The teacher-as-researcher develops a sense of personal and professional validation by doing a classroom research. Sharing both the journal entries and the student data with other interested parties allows for colleagues to gain knowledge as well. Personal empowerment comes from learning and experimentation. It can strengthen oral and written communication and make the teacher more effective. The teacher can become more aware of problems and more attune to finding workable solutions through notes, especially daily journal writing. This allows the teacher to grow both as a teacher and as a researcher. It can transform and empower the teacher on a daily basis. Gaining these new

perspectives will enhance the teacher's confidence and self-esteem. Teachers can revitalize their careers. It can transform not just their classroom, but can lead to an empowered leadership role that improves the art curriculum and brings about educational change (Pine, 2008).

Significance to the Field of Art Education

A benefit of doing art action research in the classroom is that of gaining data that will increase the perceived value of the field of art education. The teaching of art in schools has its share of unsolved problems, the most persistent of which is the need to secure a continued position and secured level of funding. As a long-standing problem, it threatens the fate, mission, and future of the field. Budgetary shortfalls can lead to the question, "Why do we teach the arts in school?" Art classroom action research can serve to inform parents, administrators, and school boards of the data supporting long-term educational benefits of the art curriculum. Such skills as visual-spatial abilities, reflection, self-criticism, and the willingness to experiment are all gained through school art education.

Art education teaches skills that may not be evidenced by standardized testing. Though difficult to quantify on a test, the data analysis of action research can provide insight into the gains the students have made in such broad thinking skills as persistence, expression, observation, envisioning, innovation, and reflective self-evaluation. It is through action research that art teachers can provided qualitative research supporting the value of their curriculum.

One of the primary functions of art education is to train future artists and art professionals as well as to develop a life-long appreciation for art. Since the selection of research is personally meaningful, action research heightens the curiosity of the teacher. This curiosity then is passed on to the students. Curious students may become more involved in their learning, especially in a creative curriculum such as studio art. This involvement, or participatory element of learning, helps students to consider vocational options in the arts.

Each art teacher may have different aims or objectives. Action research can help to find the best methods to achieve these aims. An individual teacher might have the objective of teaching his/her class to discriminate between well-made, well-designed art objects and badly made, poorly designed objects. This might involve learning the formal and expressive qualities of works of visual art and design. Another teacher's aim may be to instill in his/her students a sensitive visual awareness of their environment and an understanding of artistic perception. Other aims may be such things as vocational training in the arts or thinking skills and learning habits that can be developed through the arts. The collaborative efforts of the teacher, the students, the parents, and the administrators, allow for the teacher to express his/her aims and also meet the goals of others involved in the education process. This furthers the entire field of art education since all the individual action research projects can be assessed and help to develop the overall aims and objectives of art education in schools for the wider community to understand.

Also, the field of art education has several paradigms or sets of beliefs with the romantic paradigm as a major set of beliefs among teachers. The romantic paradigm looks at the artist as a marginalized figure, cut off from society and struggling with

reality. This no longer fits (if it ever had fit) with the actual lives of artists, but there is an expectation that creative, intuitive people are ill equipped to function in the adult world (Becker, 1996).

However, in their practice, teachers encounter different sets of beliefs by which their students live. Art classrooms are very diverse and the teacher is faced with many different types of students, each with different motivations and goals. The students' writings in the forms of dairies and journals can be enlightening for the art teacher. The exposure to those beliefs, and teachers' better awareness of their own beliefs, can develop balance. It can also affect possible change in teachers' values and beliefs. Generally, the field of art education would be better served if it embraced alternative or multiple paradigms. This would encourage mutual understanding and positive change in art education. The new beliefs will likely be more coherent with the current developments in art education.

The contributions of the research of several individual teachers can bring about greater understanding as to their own preparation in the pedagogy of art education. This and the way teachers in general were taught about the arts, helps in conducting studies that improve the status of the arts in schools. Recommendations can be produced based on the analysis of action research. These allow educators to contextually view issues, questions, and unsolved problems. In looking at the essence of the issues from the art classroom setting, it enables bridges to be built among art professionals and teachers with different sets of beliefs about art education.

Those individual benefits, as addressed above, then directly impact the larger field of art education as a whole. They are significant to the field of art education in that when

teachers increase their knowledge of how to teach the curriculum more effectively, and

gain confidence in their teaching methods, then the perceived value of art education in

schools also is strengthened.

THESIS BIBLIOGRAPHY

Baverstock-Angelus, D. (1999). *Using Teacher Narratives for reflection, representation and reforms in teacher training programmes*. Unpublished master's thesis, Concordia University, Montreal, Quebec, Canada.

Becker, Carol. (1996). Zones of Contention; Essays on art, institutions, gender and anxiety. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Beattie, M. (1995). *Constructing professional knowledge in teaching: A narrative of change and development*. Toronto; New York: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education: Teachers College Press, 1995.

Brunner, D. D. (1994). *Inquiry and reflection: Framing narrative practice in education.* Albany, NY: State University of New York.

Burgess, R, G. (1985). Strategies of educational research: qualitative methods. London; Philadelphia: Falmer Press.

Connelly, F. M. and Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry. Educational Researcher L1.E3887v19no.5 pp.2-14, 1990. June-July 1990.

Glanz, J. (1998). Action Research: an educational leader's guide to school improvement. Norwood, Mass.: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

Johnson, A. P. (2005). A short guide to action research. Boston: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.

Lankshear, C., and Knobel. M. (2004). A handbook for teacher research: from design to implementation. Maidenhead, England: New York: Open University Press.

La Pierre S. and Zimmerman, E. (1997). Research Methods and Methodologies for Art Education. The National Art Education Association, Reston, Virginia.

Merriam, S.B. (1988). Case Study research in education: a qualitative approach. San Francisco: Jossy-Bass, 1988.

McKernan, J. (1991). *Curriculum Action Research.* Kogan Page Limited, London NI9JN: St. Martin's Press, Inc., New York, N.Y.

McCutcheon G., and Jung. B. (1990). Theory Into Practice, Volume XXIX, Number 3, Summer 1990.

Pine, Gerald J. (2008). Teacher Action Research: Building Knowledge Democracies. Thousand Oaks, CA. SAGE Publications.

Richards, Jack C, and Nunan, David. (1990). Second Language Teacher Education. Cambridge, UK. Cambridge Language Teaching Library, Cambridge University Press.

Stokrocki, M. (1994). A School Day in the Life of a Young Navajo Girl: A Case Study in Ethographic Storytelling. *Art Education*, 61-69. July 1994. Retrieved May 14, 2006, from CSUN Library: N1. A 773, v. 47, 1994.

Stringer, E. T. (2008). Action Research in education. Columbus, Ohio: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Tomal, D. R. (2003). Action Research for educators. Lanham, MD, Scarecrow Education, 2003.

Wiersma, W. (1995). Research methods in education; an introduction. Philadelphia, Lippincott, (1969).