Action research communities for language teachers

Angela Gallagher-Brett

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www.ecml.at/actionresearch
Project aims

• To make techniques for action research widely available to language teachers through the establishment of a community of practice

• To strengthen professional networks by linking academic expertise on action research & good practice in the language classroom

• To contribute to improvements in language education by giving teachers across Europe better access to action research

• To enable teachers to reflect on practice & to propose & test innovations within a community of practice
Project objectives

- To design action research tools which help to improve the quality of teaching & foster dialogue between teachers in different sectors.
- To show how undertaking action research is beneficial to teachers & learners.
- To create European models for peer learning activities which can be implemented at school/national level.
What is action research?

Many definitions

• “Educational Action Research involves teachers making & creating *educationally* worthwhile changes in their classrooms & other learning environments” (Elliott, 2011: 1)

• Action research is a “a paradigm, a methodology & a ‘practice-changing practice’ that requires a commitment to non-negotiable, quality of life-enhancing values” (Zuber-Skerritt 2012, xi)

Action research involves:

• Planning, then making a change, and then reviewing the situation to generate learning (Lewin 1946)

• Collecting data - often interviews, observations, reflections on practice, questionnaires, assessments etc.
Why do action research?

• Teachers develop skills in thinking systematically about what happens in the classroom & implement action where they can improve things (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1982)

• Helps teachers to empower themselves to make and create change (Elliott, 2011)

• Collaborative process so helps teachers to feel less isolated (Burns, 2005)

• Positions teachers as active producers of knowledge (Wennergren, 2016)
Project team

Christine Lechner, Pädagogische Hochschule Tirol
• Co-ordinator

Brynhildur Ragnarsdóttir, Language Centre, Reykjavik
• Web-site correspondent

Angela Gallagher-Brett, SOAS, University of London
• Communications person

Tita Mihaiu, Centrul pentru formarea continuă în limba germană (CPD)
• Second language documentalist

• Associate partners: Renata Zanin, Jim Murphy, Anita Konrad, Melanie Steiner, Marianne Jacquin
What we’ve done

• Networking & discussions at regional levels of partners
• First workshop during International Week at Pedagogical University Tirol
• Action Research Workshop for German teachers in Sibiu / Hermannstadt October 2016
• Action Research Workshop in Graz November 2016
Graz workshop mini-projects: research topics

- Does an explicit focus on critical thinking skills in our lesson planning and instruction enable students to engage in critical thinking? (Participating countries: Albania, Netherlands, Malta, Latvia)
- How can pupils’ language skills be enhanced by using news media and Facebook sharing in language teaching? (Croatia, Iceland)
- Breaking barriers: Can we identify barriers for professional learning English as a second language at university level? (Armenia, France)
- What is the role of the teacher in university student-centred activities? (Finland, France)
- How does teaching vocabulary learning strategies contribute to learner autonomy in CLIL & MFL classrooms? (Ireland)
- Improving target language use in German lessons (Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Romania)
- Using the European Portfolio of Student Teachers of Languages (EPOSTL) as a self-reflection tool for improving pre- and in-service teachers’ competences. (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Estonia, Greece)
- Challenges of CLIL teachers (Czech Republic, Poland)
- CLIL in secondary vocational schools seen through students’ perspectives. (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia)
- Intercultural projects in English lessons (Austria, Denmark, Montenegro)
- The teacher as co-constructor of knowledge (Bulgaria, Switzerland, Germany, Norway, Slovenia)
Workshop Follow-up

• Collaborative action research projects developed and carried out by workshop participants
• Dialogue throughout the year with project team acting as critical friends
• Abstracts published on project web-page: http://www.ecml.at/ECML-Programme/Programme2016-2019/Professionallearningcommunities/Results/tabid/3040/language/en-GB/Default.aspx & full project reports shared on a Padlet wall
• Project team working on action research tools for language teachers
• All results to be shared at network meeting in Graz in May
Bibliography


• Austrian action research studies by teachers: https://www.imst.ac.at/imst-wiki/index.php/Hauptseite
Project website
Action research communities for language teachers
http://www.ecml.at/actionresearch