



Some general guidance on action research

Establish the purpose of the research

It is important to establish clearly what the purpose and potential benefits of the research are at the outset.

Formulate questions for your proposed research

It is a good idea to summarise your proposed research as a question, or a short set of questions. Your question or questions should be well focused, for example to reflect a particular issue that has arisen as part of teaching and learning in your classroom. Whatever your topic, formulate it as one or more questions requiring answers.

If you are interested in accreditation, you will find further information on undertaking research on the BERA (British Educational Research Association) web site [<http://www.bera.ac.uk/>].

Specify the background to the project

Provide an understanding of the cultural context of your school and Key Stage/year team or department where appropriate. Include any conditions that you think might affect the outcomes of change.

Ethics

- Have you obtained consent to undertake research? Record the response of your discussion of the research with the head teacher, senior management, governors, other colleagues and pupils, as applicable.
- Can you ensure that, if required, confidentiality is protected? How?

Here are some ethical rules for school-based research:

1. Ensure that the research you propose is viable, that adequate research design has been established and appropriate data-collection techniques chosen.
2. Explain as clearly as possible the aims, objectives, and methods of the research to everyone involved.
3. If using confidential documents ensure that anonymity is maintained by eliminating any kinds of material or information that could lead others to identify the subject or subjects. Pupils' identity should not be revealed in web material published as a result of the research.
4. Ensure that you have permission from all involved before publication within the LEA of the research.
5. You should be aware of the possible uses of the research findings.

6. Research should not ultimately disadvantage any group of pupils.
7. Data collected should be stored securely and destroyed within 18 months of the end of the study.
8. If there is joint or collaborative research, all researchers must adhere to the same set of ethical principles.

(Adapted from G Hitchcock and D Hughes 1989: *Research and the Teacher*, London, Routledge, p201)

Setting up the research: some decisions

Before undertaking research, decide on the method of data collection and the reason for collecting it.

- What data will you collect?
- Who will you collect data from?
- In what form will data be collected?
- How will recording of data take place?

Consider the suitability (or otherwise) of a range of research methods.

Running the study

Ensure that the study is well organised before you start the research.

Reporting your findings

The structure, content, word length and style of presentation of your findings will depend on your intended audience. In this case, unless you are seeking accreditation, it is likely to be your own colleagues and staff in other Torbay schools.

General structure for a research report

Below is an outline of the presentation of a full research study and its findings.

1. Abstract
2. Background/introduction/context for the research
3. Review of relevant literature
4. Research methods
5. Findings
6. Analysis
7. Discussion
8. Conclusions
9. Summary and new directions

10. References

11. Glossary

12. Appendix

For information on good practice in educational research writing, see

www.bera.ac.uk/writing.html

A structure for a TARS report

If you are simply seeking to write a report for the TARS scheme, you might use the following structure:

1. Background/introduction
2. Research undertaken
3. Findings
4. Analysis
5. Conclusions

Finding the relevant literature

What existing work, including articles on research methods, relates to or informs your study? You will find useful books available for loan at the Torbay Professional Development Centre.

The internet is an excellent resource if you know where to look. The links below can help you to find relevant work.

- BUBL [<http://bubl.ac.uk/link/>] contains a comprehensive list of links to journals and research for specific subjects.
- Education on-line [www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/] has a directory of papers and research.
- Educational Action Research [www.triangle.co.uk/] has a publication on action research.
- PINAKES [www.hw.ac.uk/libWWW/irn/pinakes/pinakes.html] is a portal to subject-specific academic research directories.
- Social Sciences Information Gateway www.sosig.ac.uk/education/
- Teachernet [www.teachernet.gov.uk] is the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) portal for teacher information.
- General Teaching Council England research pages [www.gtce.org.uk/research/research.asp]
- UK Higher Education and Research Libraries [www.library.ex.ac.uk/internet/uklibs.html]

Other sources of information

- Becta Research web site www.becta.org.uk/research - information on Becta's research activities, links to further resources and details on joining the ICT Research Network
- Teacher Resource Exchange: <http://tre.ngfl.gov.uk/> - where teachers can submit and develop ideas into full resources for use in the classroom

- Virtual Teacher Centre <http://vtc.ngfl.gov.uk/> – links to practice across the curriculum, as well as news and updates for teachers