**A Simple Plan for Action Research (Part A)**

**Raymond Chodzinski**

During my tenure as a professor I often encouraged students to actively pursue thesis and project work that made sense to them as classroom teachers and school counselors. I challenged them to look at research with an eye to actually making a difference. In doing so I always reflected on what a very special colleague of mine used to refer to as the 5 “W’s” and an “H”. Jake Rogers, a veteran teacher and an instructor for several years in the Pre Service Intermediate Senior Program at Brock began every new class with an introduction to the words Why, What Where, When, Who and How as a means to explain almost every lesson plan he taught. In his words “if there ain’t no plan or purpose or action, their ain’t no use. Outcomes and student success meant everything to Jake and he taught his students that every lesson a teacher planned and taught should be directed with change and success in mind. I applied this model to the action research methodologies I taught in my statistics courses and research and change and innovation courses. It would be simple here to quote the likes of Michael Fullan and others who have championed the process of change in schooling in Ontario, or Friere’s approach to Participatory Action Research which influenced social change throughout the world, but this article is intended to provide a brief and simple outline of what a teacher should do if s/he decides to pursue a research activity either in a school setting or as an assignment for a graduate or preservice professor with the intent of transformational change within a school setting. In my model I include the word “Will”.

The plan is quite straightforward.

Identify a problem and ask yourself why do I want to do this? Reflect on what actually prompted you to even think of it as a problem requiring attention. Then ask how I address the problem even if I want to pursue it. Is the problem going to be beneficial and will it fit into the overall scheme of the school ebb and flow and school board policies and procedures? Will I be able to manage the parameters as I have defined them and can the problem be stated clearly in the form of a research question? Most important is can you explain the problem and your plan to whomever will need to approve the project. Once you have established a research question then you must ask how do I collect information, data and what types of data do I collect? Will I need permission? Do you need help? When can you implement the plan and what are the stages? Of course you must always keep in mind why you are doing this in the first place and who or what will benefit from this added stress to your already taxed and often overburdened day. Once you have decided that yes you must do this then consider who will you report your results to and who or what will care? Ask what can be learned from the data once it is analyzed and how will it affect the problem as you originally perceived it to be. Ask yourself what changes might be gleaned and how can they be implemented? Involve your colleagues in the project and try to get as many supporters as you can on board. There are usually five stages to any research project. Simply put they are Problem Identification, Plan of Action, Data Collection, Analysis of Data, Implications and Recommendations.

Armed with a half decent understanding of basic descriptive statistics and qualitative research methods you should be able to pursue and complete an action research project based on an assessed need. Your findings whatever they might be will help you to grow professionally and most important confirm that you are making a difference.

We must be the change we wish to see in the world

M.K. Gandhi