

Action research for student teachers



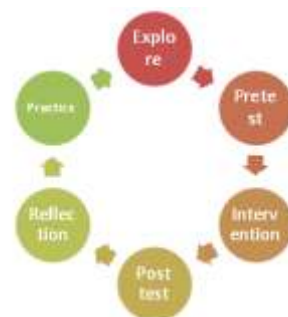
The context that required initiation of the practice.

Action research helps teacher professionals to demonstrate that they can create their own learning space and contribute valuable knowledge in their own professional practice. And hence Action research is acknowledged worldwide as a powerful form of learning. As educators and as teacher researchers one often carries out research within schools or classrooms to improve teaching, to assess a newly developed educational theory or to implement and evaluate an educational plan. Undertaking a project in action research methodology provides professionals working in the education system with a systematic, reflective approach to address areas of need within their respective domains. The B.Ed. syllabus offers Action research as an optional paper. However not all students opt for it and some are left without any exposure to the important domain of educational research.

In order to introduce student teachers to a semblance of a scientific direction, the Principal and the faculty decided that all students irrespective of the special field chosen would undergo training for action research. The aim was also to bring in variety by introducing different kinds of research, like classroom based action research, evaluative action research, Case study etc.

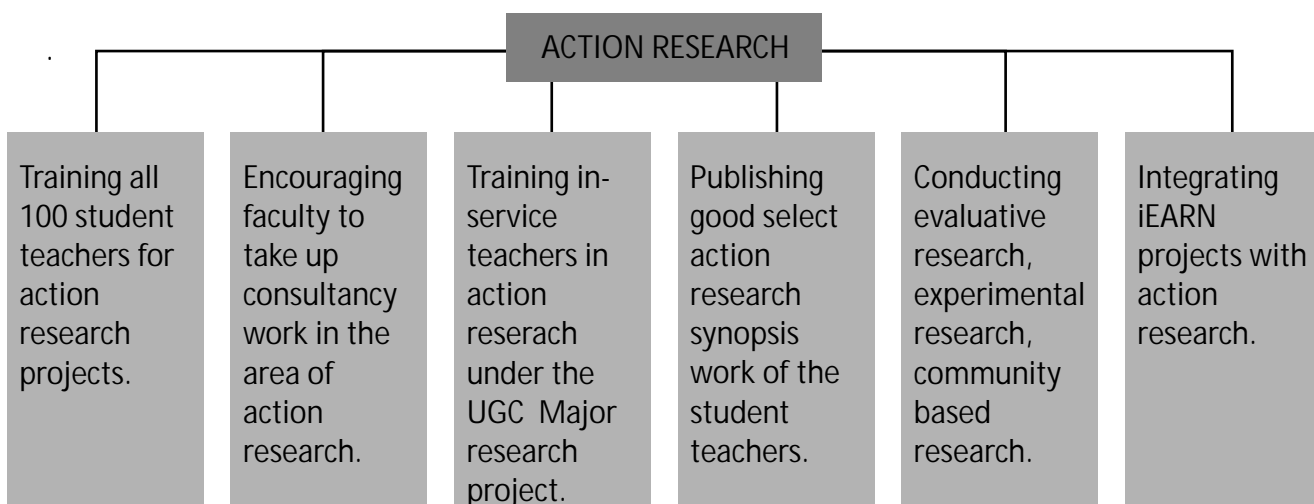
Objectives of the Practice:

- To orient student to the concept and steps in action research.
- To provide students with the practical experience of carrying out action research.
- To develop appreciation for the potential of action research to improve teaching-learning practice through action and reflection.
- To encourage a variety in research like classroom based action research, community oriented action research, evaluative action research, and collaborative research.
- To develop faculty expertise in action research.



The Practice:

The practice has developed into many strands over a period of time.



This practice of having several strands helped us improve our knowledge and awareness. The idea of evaluative action research was a simple and yet powerful way to establish an open transparent process of looking into our performance. When we allow a student to evaluate, interview key people and write what went well and what did not in the institution on certain interventions, the level of trust and openness to scrutiny increase.

Also the practice of having collaborative research with organizations like the community radio of Mumbai University helped us to develop radio lessons on different topics even subjects like Mathematics. Collaborating with iEARN an international organization for encouraging project based work on the lines of action research also was an interesting learning.

Obstacles faced: To train student teachers in action research in a short span of time can be very challenging. The idea of keeping it simple and yet doable was our aim. Also the different strands took time. For instance, if you want a group to collaborate and do a project you need to invest time to orient student teachers and talk to the collaborating institution. There also are instances like for instance for the radio lessons project, after all the scripting is done and the group leaves for the radio station, sometimes the coordinator may not be available in spite of coordinating. At other times we would need to re-script the radio lessons all over. Teacher educators would have to be present to make this happen.

iEARN is an international project which involved working on educational projects from the international website, reframing it in an action research format and sharing their work on an online platform. The challenge was to meet international standards and keep the student motivation high, without getting intimidated by the process. So separate meetings with the group, training faculty etc. required committed time and coordination.

Impact of the Practice: The practice of committing to action research had paybacks in terms the following:

- It increased teacher educator strengths to facilitate action research.
- It pushed students to think scientifically and many times out of the box
- Gave faculty an opportunity to use their knowledge and skills to offer consultancy in the area of action research.
- The expertise allowed us to successfully bag an UGC project to train in-service teachers for action research.
- Encouraged us to take up an international project iEARN and set it up in action research frame work for which we got recognition at an international platform.



In-service teachers training for action research in the UGC Major research.



Students displaying their work for the iEARN initiative.