

A Brief Introduction: The Teacher Education and Action Research SIG

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Adult Education and Action Research SIG Co-chairs

As your co-chairs, we (Gaye Horne and Chris Tombari, respectively) would like to work toward demystifying the action research process. What we as teachers call "action research" may be a natural process that you have already engaged in without calling it such.

The term action research has different interpretations regarding the nature of the inquiry, the rigor of data collection, and even the decision as to who should be involved. In general, action research is initiated and practiced by teachers who wish to improve their craft because they see a need for further study, a question they would answer, or a particular problem they would like to solve. At its most basic, action research involves identifying an issue, posing a question, creating a hypothesis, collecting and analyzing the data as the plan is implemented, and reporting the results. And we must not forget that teachers are always in their research environment: the classroom is their laboratory. Thus, as Hubbard and Power wrote in *The Art of Classroom Inquiry*, "If you have a problem-solving mind as a teacher, you are ready for research" (1993). By engaging in action research, teachers take an active role in their own professional development and build the habit of being reflective in their practice. And it goes without saying that this level of motivation is contagious to the students. In the end, we as teachers are the beneficiaries of action research, as are the institutions where we work, the practice as a whole (especially when findings are presented at CoTESOL conferences), and most importantly, the students for whom we work. Teachers as researchers bring more professionalism, develop more confidence, and increase their level of ownership and commitment to their jobs.

Gaye and I would like to create a space for teacher contributions in the arena of action research so we can share your successes and failures (or "learning events") with our CoTESOL community. What action research projects have you done or what questions are you interested in investigating? We would love to hear what you're doing by email - and in the near future through a wiki. Our email addresses are ghorne@springinstitute.org and christopher.tombari@ccaaurora.edu.

Gaye Horne is the Community ESL Program Manager for Spring Institute for Intercultural Learning. Chris Tombari is the Chair of the Aurora Language Center Community College of Aurora's ESL Department.