Making teacher action research 'learning-centred'

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Aims for this webinar

We will explore…

- Key differences between teacher research and academic research
- How we can make PTI action research lead to more learning
- How simple a good Action Research (AR) report can be
- A simple example, with a few suggestions for lightening the workload of teachers and increasing the learning
- Discussion of the current DPEd report format
- ‘Our role’ as PTI instructors / teacher trainers
- LOTS of useful resources to help you as PTI trainers and your teacher-learners

Teacher research and academic research

Teacher research

- ✓ based on something important to the teacher's own work in the classroom.
- ✓ relevant and useful to the teacher and her/his context.
- ✓ only shared if the teacher wants to share it.
- ✓ doesn't have to include a detailed report (or any report).

Teacher research is research ***by*** teachers, ***for*** teachers.

Academic research may be conducted for qualifications (e.g. MA, PhD), or for public dissemination (e.g. publication).

- ✓ It is usually 'supervised' by an academic.
- ✓ It *may* or *may not* be directly useful for the classroom.
- ✓ It often requires time consuming and complex analysis of data (research skills)
- ✓ It requires detailed written reporting.

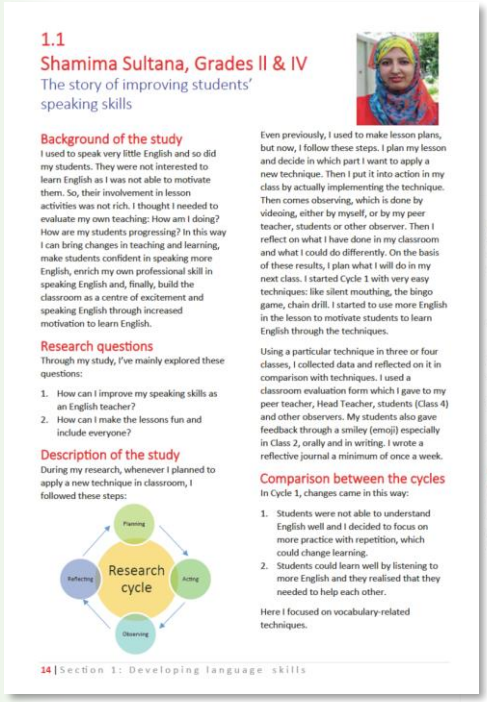
1. *Which of these will improve the teaching of Bangladeshi teachers most?*
2. *Why?*
3. *How can we make the PTI action research relevant and useful to teachers i.e., 'learning-centred'?*

Making PTI action research learning-centred

1. Reduce the amount of written work.
2. Reduce the amount of time on data analysis.
3. Increase the amount of time spent exploring and experimenting (in classrooms).
4. Increase the amount of time reflecting.
5. Provide support for reflection (e.g. as mentor, or peer-support through working with a ‘buddy’ or teacher activity groups).

How much written work is necessary for a teacher to demonstrate they've conducted useful action research?

2000 words. See: *Teachers' Voices: Capturing the Dynamics of Change*.



1.1

Shamima Sultana, Grades II & IV

The story of improving students' speaking skills

Background of the study

I used to speak very little English and so did my students. They were not interested to learn English as I was not able to motivate them. So, their involvement in lesson activities was not rich. I thought I needed to evaluate my own teaching: How am I doing? How are my students progressing? In this way I can bring changes in teaching and learning, make students confident in speaking more English, enrich my own professional skill in speaking English and, finally, build the classroom as a centre of excitement and speaking English through increased motivation to learn English.

Research questions

Through my study, I've mainly explored these questions:

1. How can I improve my speaking skills as an English teacher?
2. How can I make the lessons fun and include everyone?

Description of the study

During my research, whenever I planned to apply a new technique in classroom, I followed these steps:

Even previously, I used to make lesson plans, but now, I follow these steps. I plan my lesson and decide in which part I want to apply a new technique. Then I put it into action in my class by actually implementing the technique. Then comes observing, which is done by videoing, either by myself, or by my peer teacher, students or other observer. Then I reflect on what I have done in my classroom and what I could do differently. On the basis of these results, I plan what I will do in my next class. I started Cycle 1 with very easy techniques: like silent mouthing, the bingo game, chain drill. I started to use more English in the lesson to motivate students to learn English through the techniques.

Using a particular technique in three or four classes, I collected data and reflected on it in comparison with techniques. I used a classroom evaluation form which I gave to my peer teacher, Head Teacher, students (Class 4) and other observers. My students also gave feedback through a smiley (emoji) especially in Class 2, orally and in writing. I wrote a reflective journal a minimum of once a week.

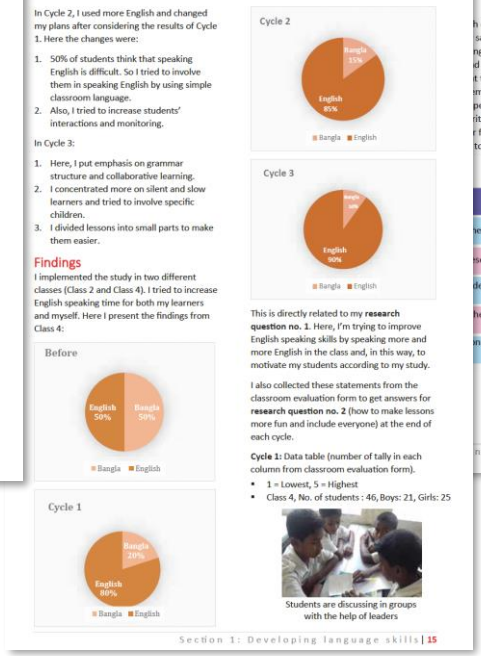
Comparison between the cycles

In Cycle 1, changes came in this way:

1. Students were not able to understand English well and I decided to focus on more practice with repetition, which could change learning.
2. Students could learn well by listening to more English and they realised that they needed to help each other.

Here I focused on vocabulary-related techniques.

14 | Section 1: Developing language skills



In Cycle 2, I used more English and changed my plans after considering the results of Cycle 1. Here the changes were:

1. 50% of students think that speaking English is difficult. So I tried to involve them in speaking English by using simple classroom language.
2. Also, I tried to increase students' interactions and monitoring.

In Cycle 3:

1. Here, I put emphasis on grammar structure and collaborative learning.
2. I concentrated more on silent and slow learners and tried to involve specific children.
3. I divided lessons into small parts to make them easier.

Findings

I implemented the study in two different classes (Class 2 and Class 4). I tried to increase English speaking time for both my learners and myself. Here I present the findings from Class 4:

Before

Cycle 1

Cycle 2

Cycle 3

This is directly related to my **research question no. 1**. Here, I'm trying to improve English speaking skills by speaking more and more English in the class and, in this way, to motivate my students according to my study.

I also collected these statements from the classroom evaluation form to get answers for **research question no. 2** (how to make lessons more fun and include everyone) at the end of each cycle.

Cycle 1: Data table (number of tally in each column from classroom evaluation form).

- 1 = Lowest, 5 = Highest
- Class 4, No. of students : 46, Boys: 21, Girls: 25

Students are discussing in groups with the help of leaders

Section 1: Developing language skills | 15

Serial	Title	1	2	3	4	5
1	How much did I use the new methods?	-	1	1	4	40
2	How well did I use these methods?	-	-	1	17	28
3	How much did the students enjoy these parts of the lesson?	-	-	-	5	41
4	How well did I get all the pupils to join in with the activities?	-	-	5	19	22
5	How good was my pronunciation of classroom phrases?	-	1	-	8	37

in a democratic way to change the way of learning. I have a lot to do to keep up with their demands.

Cycle 2: After Cycle 2, I noticed that the statement was changing. Class 4, Number of students: 51, Boys: 21, Girls: 30.

		1	2	3	4	5
	new methods?	-	-	-	-	51
	methods?	-	-	-	13	38
	dents enjoy these parts of	-	-	-	5	46
	pupils to join in with	-	-	2	7	42
	nunciation of classroom	-	-	-	7	44

ng language skills

As I'm implementing the study in two different classes, I also found that Class 2 can be very slow to respond, so sometimes I can't apply the same techniques here.

My learning from the study

I never thought of writing about my classroom experience focusing on feelings, love, hopes, smiles and a small degree of frustration. As I write every day, I'm looking back and getting something motivating. From this study I have learnt that my students are improving like a plant. I have to water them regularly. They need air and sunshine also. So I have to motivate them to learn English well.

Besides this, some other learning points are:

1. As a teacher I must avoid asking students to live in my world, I need to visit their world instead.

I started this unique and amazing journey with the mentors' workshop in December 2015. Now, I'm thinking about my classroom deeply. If my students don't learn anything, it makes me think about why they are not learning. My plan is to get more reflective experience of research by implementing more studies in the classroom and also to use different sources of evidence. I hope to inspire other teachers to do it for their professional and personal betterment.

Conclusion

In this journey I worked with three peer teachers in our upazila, who are also doing the same study in other schools. Sometimes our activities matched with one another's, but our classroom situation is not the same. So the study has been changed. I collected information about what they were doing in

change indicated to me that their ation to learn English was increasing. I looked at them when they worked her, and at their responses in my class, I to forget all my frustration. Sometimes ability to learn something is amazing. But aced one problem from the very ning of my study: I observed that some nts are not participating in the oom activities. I have thought about why students are not participating. I wanted k with them, but I thought that if other nts could help me with this case, I would the more authentic reasons. So, I made small groups that was not part of my plan. I selected leaders to lead each group consisting of six members. I wrote questions on the board, such as why

aren't the group members participating in the classroom activities and what are their expectations from my class. The leader was asked to discuss the questions with their group members. At the end of the group work, I collected data from my group leaders and it became clear to me. Some girl students said, 'If I say something in English, I may make mistakes and the boys will laugh at me.' Some students said that they were slow or nervous. So, I found the students do not have confidence to represent themselves. That meant I had to increase motivation to face this problem and I planned activities on the basis of this finding.

Cycle 3: Class 4, Number of students: 53, Boys: 22, Girls: 31.

		1	2	3	4	5
	How much did I use the new methods?	-	-	-	3	50
	How well did I use these methods?	-	-	-	11	42
	How much did the students enjoy these parts of the lesson?	-	-	1	15	37
	How well did I get all the pupils to join in with the activities?	-	-	-	10	43
	How good was my pronunciation of classroom phrases?	-	-	1	12	40

Students of Class 2 give feedback in the form of smileys

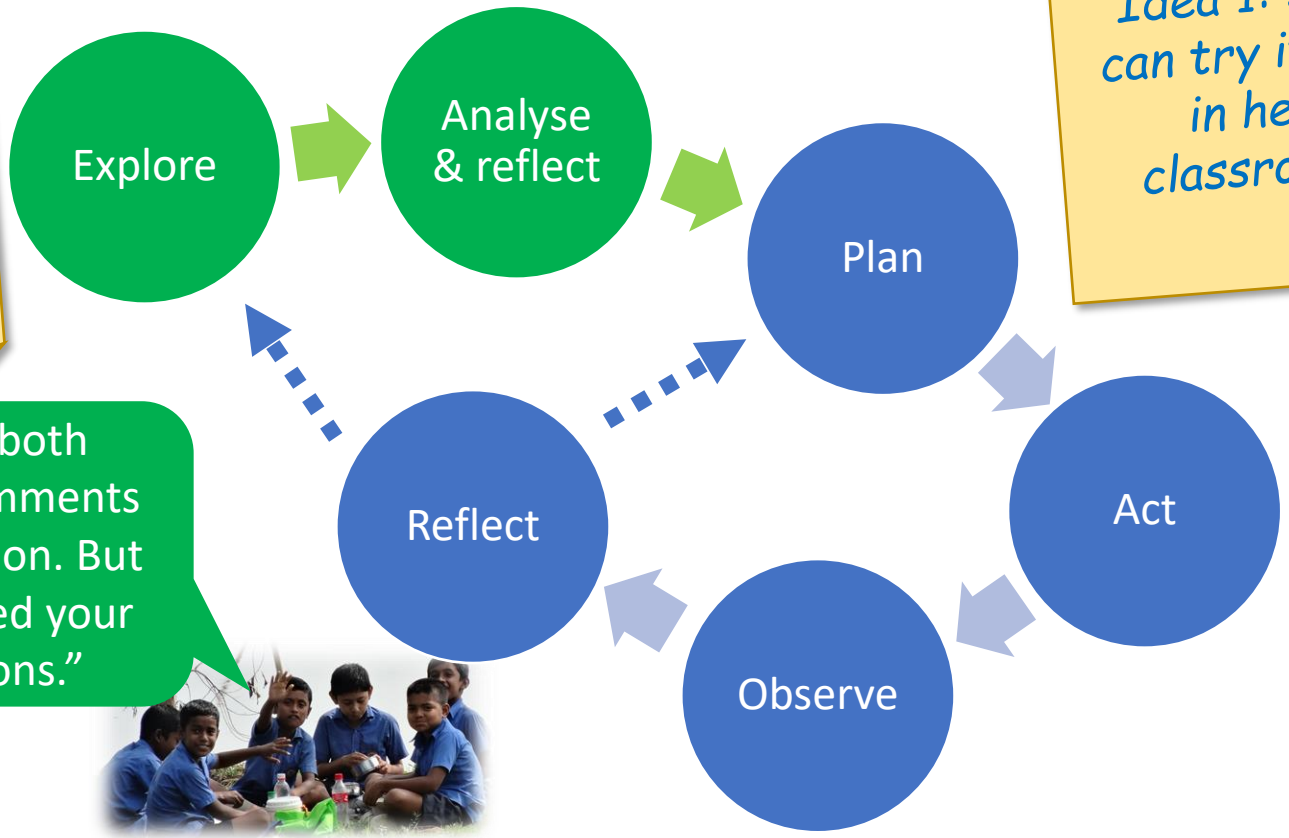
Interviewing students to get opinion

‘Exploration’ can precede ‘action’

E.g. teacher: Rumana reads an article that recommends that English teachers should not only correct mistakes in students’ work, but also write positive comments. She decides to try this out in an action research project.

Idea 2: She can begin by asking the students’ opinions

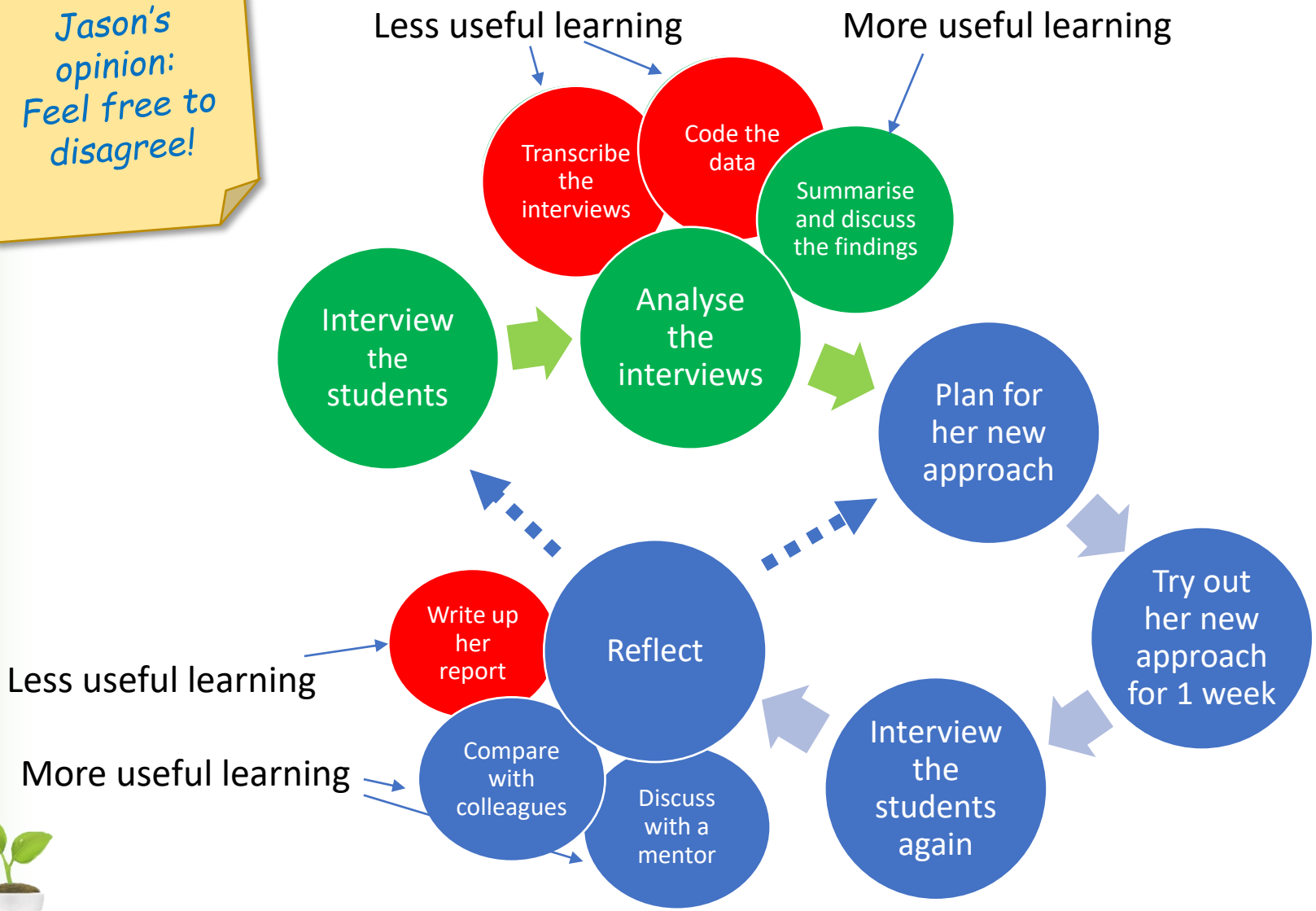
Idea 1: She can try it out in her classroom.



“We like both positive comments and correction. But we also need your suggestions.”

When is Rumina learning about teaching?

Jason's opinion: Feel free to disagree!



DPEd report

Clear guidance provided.

All elements might be expected in a more academic action research report (e.g., for a Master's level qualification).

How could we simplify this into 'learning-centred' questions?

Direction for DPEd student to write
Action Research Report

The following points should be included
1. Title
2. Introduction
(Definition of action research, genera
research)
3. Rationale (Reasons and objectives of
4. Methodology
(Sample, sampling, data collecti
5. Data presentation and analysis
6. Action plan (What do you want to do
7. Application (Description of your work)
8. Observation (Evaluation/Result)
9. Reflection (Comparing with previous data, cause and analysis of result)
10. Conclusion
(Summarize and explain the net result, limitation, future direction, closing)
11. Reference (List of helping elements, supporting documents)

- A cover page has to be added containing research title and students personal specification.
- Report has to be written on one side of A4 size paper.
- The following documents must be added as appendix.
- 1. Photocopy of base line survey report.
- 2. Photocopy of Interview paper (questioners and answer sheets) of student, guardians, English teacher and so on.
- 3. Photocopy of Fortnightly /daily lesson plan
- 4. Photocopy of fortnightly assessment report.

1. What changes did you decide to make? Why?
2. How did you collect feedback on the impact of the changes?
3. What did the feedback tell you?
4. What did you learn from doing this?
5. How will this affect your future teaching?

How do you see your role?

A: “A PTI instructor’s job is to make everything clear to the trainee teachers. It is up to the students to learn the content and do the work.”

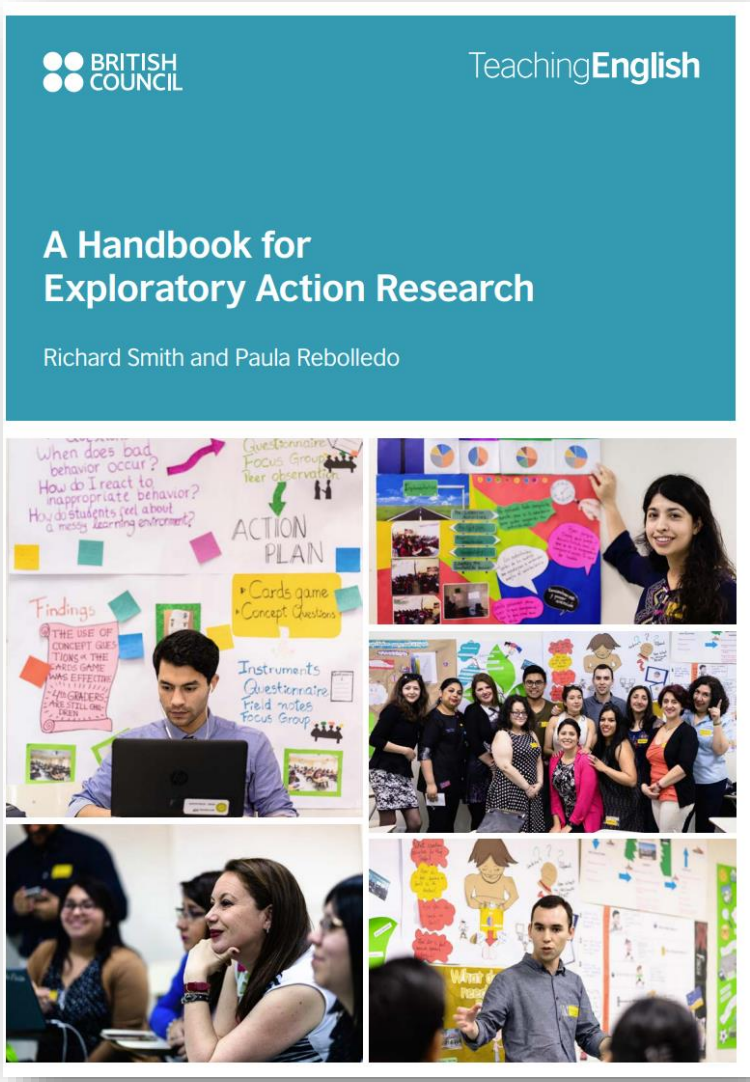
B: “A PTI instructor’s job is to help the trainee teachers to learn. If I do this, we all achieve our goals.”

C: “A PTI instructor’s job is like quality control. I need to make sure that all teachers make the required grade. If not, the quality of teaching goes down.”

Answer in the chat box: e.g. “I’m 20% A, 30% B, 60% C.”

Some useful resources

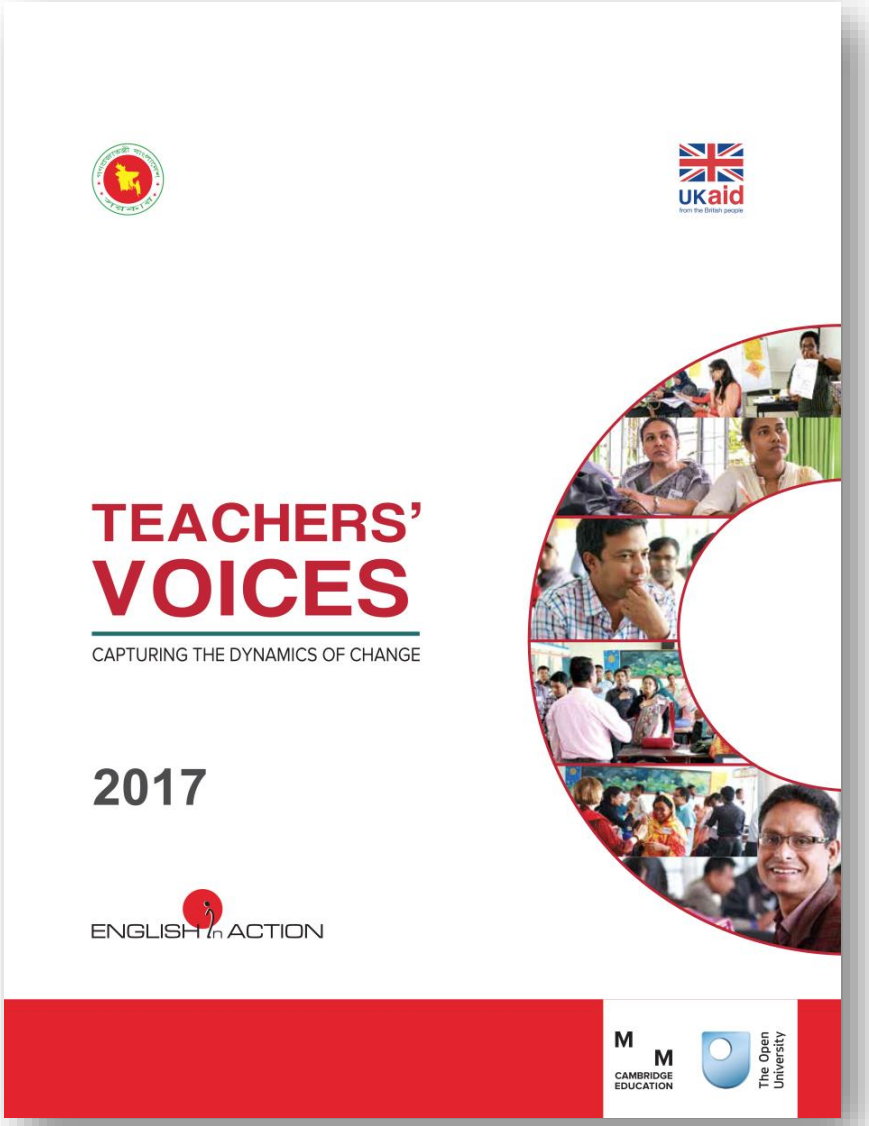
- A simple action research model for teachers
- Exploration → Action
- Step-by-step explanation
- Not technical
- Basic research techniques explained
- Lots and lots of examples
- Practical activities you can do with teachers to help them understand AR.
- If you are having difficulty understanding AR, start here!



https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/pub_30510_BC%20Explore%20Actions%20Handbook%20ONLINE%20AW.pdf

Some useful resources

- Bangladeshi – আমাদের দেশ !
- Simple but effective examples of AR projects.
- Examples of how to write a study up concisely, yet still demonstrate learning.
- Lots for us all to learn about regarding English teaching in Bangladesh!



http://oro.open.ac.uk/55909/1/EIA%20Teachers%20Voices_2017.pdf

Some useful resources

- Designed for those who are supporting teacher action-researchers – i.e. you and me!
- Simple, clear, practical.
- Based on extensive experience, mainly in challenging contexts (incl. India), so it's relevant and practical for Bangladesh.

https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/Mentoring_Teachers_Research_classrooms_handbook.pdf

Some useful resources

- Even more examples of real, useful AR projects by English teachers.
- From a different country (Chile, S. America), so there are some ‘fresh’ ideas here.

https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/pub_british_council_champion_teachers_1.pdf

Questions, comments, ideas

Slides available from www.jasonanderson.org.uk Go to the 'Talks' page.

References

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Richard Smith is talking tomorrow for the TESOL Society of Bangladesh:
https://www.facebook.com/tesolbangladesh.org/posts/214819876931668