

**Mertler, A. C. (2009). *Action research: Teachers as researchers in the classroom* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.**

As the readers of this journal are already aware, there is often a disconnect between researchers and teachers. As a teacher in the international school setting, I wanted to know more about research and classroom practices. This curiosity led me to graduate studies since I needed to know more about how research worked. Mertler wrote this book for classroom teachers and other school personnel who wanted to be agents of change inside their classrooms and schools. I wish that I had had this book to read before beginning my graduate studies because it provides a general overview of research in terms that teachers can understand. It is an excellent introductory textbook for teachers interested in research in general, and in action research in particular.

Action Research's nine chapters are divided into four main sections, each of which addresses a question that the new action researcher might have: "What is action research?", "How do I begin my research study?", "What do I do with all these data?", and "I've got results...Now what?". In the section "What is action research?", Mertler defines this phrase and other terms that are essential for readers of research to know. He briefly covers different kinds of research and distinguishes these forms from action research. He also provides a general overview of the stages of the action research process: planning, acting, developing, and reflecting (see p. 30). He expands on these four stages by creating nine steps: identifying and limiting the topic, gathering information, reviewing the related literature, developing a research plan, implementing the plan and collecting data, analyzing the data, developing an action plan, sharing and communicating the results, and reflecting on the process.

In the second section of the book, "How do I begin my research study?", Mertler provides two chapters which describe how an action researcher should select a research topic, conduct a relevant literature search, choose between quantitative and qualitative research methods, and get informed consent from participants. The information on how to use databases is very interesting, especially for those who have been out of university for a few years. He explains such sources as ERIC and gives an overview of Boolean logic. He effectively addresses issues of informed consent in research by providing explanations and a sample letter to be given to participants. This is a challenging concept which is addressed differently in various institutions, but Mertler provides enough information on the topic so that the reader is aware of some of the more pressing issues in ethics for participants.

Mertler writes the third section of the book, "What do I do with all these data?", to address the issues of collecting and analyzing data. In two chapters, he defines common methods of data collection for quantitative and qualitative studies, such as observations, interviews, journals, classroom artefacts, surveys, checklists and other formal tests. These definitions are informative and descriptive for the novice researcher; however, I feel that the methods are not sufficiently explained so that the new action researcher can use them appropriately without having to consult another text. The new action researcher can best use the information covered in Mertler's text to identify the relevant research methods and then consult an additional text since each of these topics would merit a book of its own. He does provide extra direction for the new action researcher by providing information on the companion website and suggesting other websites. I feel it would have been beneficial for Mertler to have included a bibliography of available research texts so that new action researchers could find suitable resources. This is this book's biggest weakness.

The fourth section of the book, "I've got results!...Now what?" is the strongest. Mertler provides excellent information from using the results to create change to writing up the results of the research for a conference or journal. He makes suggestions for "celebrating" results in small settings (such as colleagues or action research communities) to larger settings (such as professional conferences and journals). He gives the reader a list of refereed journals of action research (including this one). In the final chapter, he offers instructions for academic writing. Some of the points he covers are tense,

clarity, consistency and format. This section is followed by two sample action research reports so that the reader has an example to consult when writing up a project.

The book is well-designed and the layout is easy to follow. The graphs and charts support the material in the text and facilitate the reader's comprehension. Each chapter has a brief summary, a questions and activities section, and a reminder to check the book's website. The companion website includes excellent information on each chapter, examples of action research reports, and instructions on how to read research. The website also includes study aids such as PowerPoint slides, quizzes, flashcards of key terms, and lists of other web resources. I highly recommend this textbook for any university class on action research methods, as well as for classroom teachers who are interested in knowing what really works in their classroom from a methodological perspective. It is interesting and easy to follow, especially for those who do not have great amounts of training in research methods.

Trudie Aberdeen  
*PhD Candidate*  
*University of Alberta*