

Editorial

THE THIRD “R” OF ACTION RESEARCH

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For time immemorial, when people refer to “The 3 R’s” in education, they look to that back-to-basics experience of reading, writing and arithmetic. In this issue of the *Researcher*, however, this 3R curriculum takes on a new meaning. For those who embark on the challenge of Action Research, **reflection** represents the first “R”. This is the most highly promoted of the three and admonitions to *reflect* can be found in almost any journal article related to the subject. The importance of this skill lays in the reflector’s ability to see something in his/her classroom and have it strike a chord. This something (whether it is a change in math scores, in behaviour, or in room design) stays in his/her mind. It is worked around internally, and through reflection, tentative connections are made to help the reflector understand the situation.

The second “R” is the most traditional academic skill, and not a surprising choice of basic skills when used for Action Research. **Reading** is extremely crucial as it allows researchers to go beyond the limited vision they have from the classroom. Once a connection is made at the micro-level, the researcher must look outwards – is this happening elsewhere? What is the significance of my finding? Can further study show me how to understand the events that are unfolding in my classroom? This stems from the deep inner desire to validate one’s own work and show to oneself that what is being seen is actually happening.

The third “R” is the least talked about, and most tenuous to pursue. The researcher must continually **return** to the research. This sets action research aside from most other projects: Usually, a researcher sets out a problem, carries out an experiment, analyses the data, finds conclusions, writes it up, and moves on to some other problem. For the action researcher, initial solutions are just part of the ongoing process. Information is continually gleaned with each year of school. Conclusions remain tentative, and theory generation becomes impossible (nor is it desired). Rather, understanding becomes more deeply layered with each successive pass the researcher makes in the area.

This issue welcomes back three familiar contributors to the *Researcher* who all exemplify the importance of this third “R”. All return to earlier research to look at the situation from a new angle, an updated position, or a refreshed eye on the situation.

First, we will be featuring the second installment of **Dianne Stevens** and **Julian Kitchen**’s award winning research which examines various facets of an action research project undertaken with pre-service students at OISE. In this issue, they move on to “Setting the Stage for Action Research” – here they deal with the underlying motives and methods within themselves as they began the research project. As well, they outline the various models of action research that lay before them and discuss their reasons for the choice they made. The second contribution, written by **Louis Lim** and **David Pugalee**, returns to the familiar math class situation to examine it from a different angle. Through the use of journal writing techniques, the two researchers analyze the benefits of this approach when used with students, and the benefits of action research to their own understanding of the classroom. Finally, **Jennifer Webster** returns to the *Researcher* after a number of years with her ongoing research on “Encouraging Reflective and Critical Thinking During Silent Reading.”

While George Santayana may have been right concerning the repetition of history, it may also be said that those who have the ability to consciously return to a situation from a different angle are blessed to learn from it.