Turning Classroom Questions into Action Research

Loralee Simonitch

Professional Learning Specialist and Senior Educator

RMIT (SEUP)

Loralee.simonitch@rmit.edu.vn

TEACHER TALKS at RMIT Vietnam

RMIT UNIVERSITY SEUP

tion: Trusted

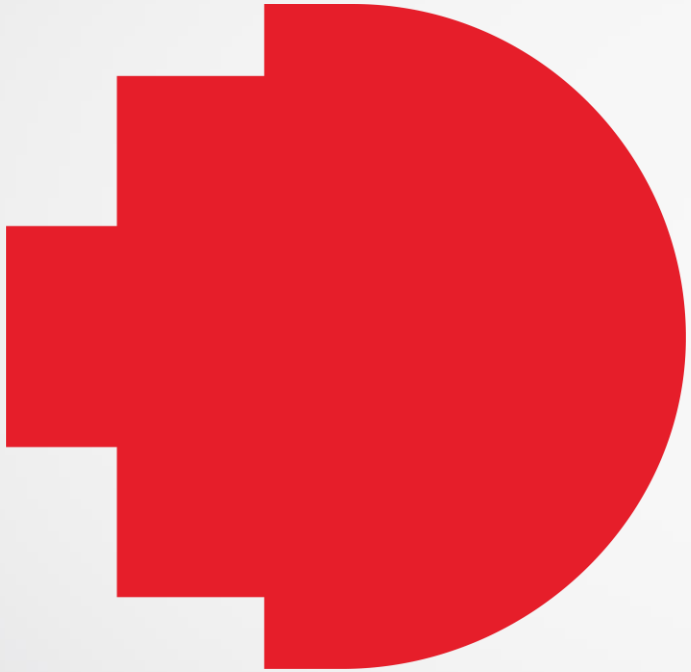
Why action research?



Action research can help us

- Explore: turn a professional question into a focused investigation.
- Develop: Build deeper expertise in an area that matters to us.
- Contribute: Use what we learn to improve practice, support others, and build leadership.

Workshop Agenda



Today, we are going to...

- Brainstorm and personalize possible AR topics
- Write problem statements
- Create research questions
- Develop a foundational draft for action research

Action Research Topics

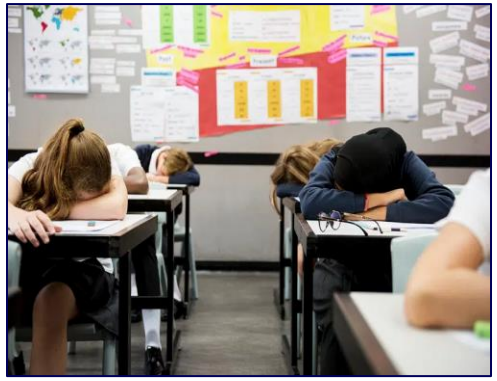
We often come across topics for action research through regular observations.

1. Classroom Observation or Practice

Student behavior, class management, or teaching style that needs to be explored.



Increase of L1 production in class



Low student engagement and motivation



Students consistently score low in a particular assignment.

What have you recently observed in your professional context?

Action Research Topics

Regular observations can also include looking at our own professional path.

2. Professional Development

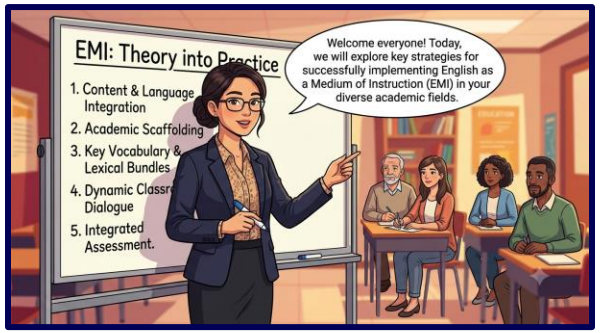
An observed skill, understanding, or teaching practice that could be developed for professional enhancement.



Building digital literacy



Enhancing reflective practice



Adapting your career path

What have you recently observed about your own development?

Action Research Topics

We can even observe something new that requires us to adapt.

3. Adapting to Change

When a new, unknown element is introduced to our known contexts.



Instructional design for VI or HI students



incorporating project-based learning



Developing inclusive instructions for mixed classes

What adaptations have you had to make recently?

Action Research Topics

Think about your professional context, interests, or adaptations.

Classroom Practice	Professional Development	Adaptations
Low student engagement and motivation	Building digital literacy	Instructional design for VI or HI students

As a group (table)

Brainstorm real or possible topics for each category that you think are worth exploring further.

05:00

Problem Statements

A short description of the topic and context of the action research project.

The purpose of the problem statement is to



CLARIFY

JUSTIFY

SPECIFY

Problem Statements

A good problem statement does 4 things:

WHERE

Context: Where and with whom is this happening?

WHAT

Issue: What specific problem, challenge, or area of development have you noticed?

SO WHAT

Importance: Why does this matter for students, teaching, learning, or the wider program?

NOW WHAT

Focus: What do you need to understand, investigate, improve, or develop?

Problem Statements

Model

In my Introduction to Presentation Skills class, several students give very short answers during post-presentation Q&A sessions. They often stop after one sentence and do not explain or support their ideas. This limits their ability to clarify their topic, and can appear unprofessional to their audience. I want to investigate what may be limiting their responses and how I can better support extended speaking during these sessions.

WHERE	WHAT	SO WHAT	NOW WHAT
Context?	**Issue?**	**Importance?**	**Focus?**

Problem Statements

Discover: In pairs or small groups, download the document and complete the activities.

10:00

https://tinyurl.com/2mvpcckm

Problem Statements

Statement A

In our English program, some new students in intermediate classes have difficulty completing tasks that use skills taught at the elementary level. Teachers often need to provide extra support or change planned activities. This can slow the pace of the course for the whole class. I want to understand why some new students are struggling and how the program can better support them.

WHERE	WHAT	SO WHAT	NOW WHAT
Context?	**Issue?**	**Importance?**	**Focus?**

Problem Statements

Statement B

Clear Unclear Unclear

I have a visually impaired student in one of my classes, and some parts of my lessons are difficult for the student. I do not know enough about teaching visually impaired students, so I need to learn better methods.

Unclear

Missing

WHERE	WHAT	SO WHAT	NOW WHAT
Context?	**Issue?**	**Importance?**	**Focus?**

Problem Statements

Statement B Possible Repair

In my International Business and Trade class, I have noticed that a visually impaired student has difficulty accessing some of the online materials and activities I use in lessons. This can limit the student's participation in activities and interaction with other students. I want to understand which parts of my current classroom practice create barriers and how I can make my lessons more accessible.

WHERE	WHAT	SO WHAT	NOW WHAT
Context?	**Issue?**	**Importance?**	**Focus?**

Problem Statements

Produce: It's now time to write your own problem statement. You can work **alone**, in **pairs**, or in **groups of 3**.

12:00

https://tinyurl.com/y9y52yfw

tion: Trusted

Problem Statements

What is worth investigating?



Research Questions

What do I need to find out?



Research Questions

There are three types of purposeful action research questions.

Question Type	Simple question
Descriptive	**Describe: WHAT** is happening now?
Analytical	**Understand: WHY might** it be happening?
Practical	**Action: WHAT could** I change or try?

You don't always need all three question types!

Aim for 2 questions minimum, 3 questions maximum.

Research Questions

Good research questions are 4 things:

CLEAR

Can I understand exactly what it asks?

FOCUSED

Is it narrow enough to investigate?

OPEN

Does it allow me to investigate, or does it assume an answer?

DOABLE

Can I realistically investigate this in my context?

Research Questions

In my Introduction to Presentation Skills class, several students give very short answers during post-presentation Q&A sessions. They often stop after one sentence and do not explain or support their ideas. This limits their ability to clarify their topic, and can appear unprofessional to their audience. I want to investigate what may be limiting their responses and how I can better support extended speaking during these sessions.

Describe	How long are student answers, and how well do they develop their ideas?
Understand	Why are students too shy to answer questions after their presentations?
Action	How can I adapt presentation Q&A sessions to support more developed student responses?

Research Questions

In my Introduction to Presentation Skills class, several students give very short answers during post-presentation Q&A sessions. They often stop after one sentence and do not explain or support their ideas. This limits their ability to clarify their topic, and can appear unprofessional to their audience. I want to investigate what may be limiting their responses and how I can better support extended speaking during these sessions.

Describe	How long are student answers, and how well do they develop their ideas?
Understand	What factors may be limiting students' ability or willingness to develop their answers during presentation Q&A sessions?
Action	How can I adapt presentation Q&A sessions to support more developed student responses?

Research Questions

Produce: It's now time to write **at least one** research question. You can work **alone**, in **pairs**, or in **groups of 3**.

10:00

https://tinyurl.com/ywrjh4n3

Continuous reflective cycle

Be prepared for change!

Today's takeaways are **drafts**.

The more you **learn**, the more your questions or focus may **change**.

The project ends when you are satisfied you have taken it as far as it can go.



RMIT Classification: Trusted

Next Steps…find a critical friend.

People you can work with

- Peers
- Mentors
- Senior teachers
- Teacher trainers
- Managers

When a colleague is not available

- AI can help you reflect, revise, and can challenge your thinking.

Questions?

https://tinyurl.com/4u3h5yk4

Document Folder

Thank you

Loralee Simonitch

Professional Learning Specialist and Senior Educator

loralee.simonitch@rmit.edu.vn