RESEARCH

Researching teaching, learning and assessment practices

How action research can help educators understand their work better by focusing on day-to-day tasks – from the classroom to administration – and learning lessons from it

By David Powell

Action research is a practitioner-oriented form of research that can be applied in a range of educational settings. There are different forms, though normally action researchers examine their own practice or collaborate with colleagues and students to study an aspect of practice that is of mutual interest and benefit.

Stephen Kemmis, professor of education at Charles Sturt University, Australia, advocates a particular form: critical participatory action research. It is concerned with ‘changing three things: practitioners’ practices, their understandings of their practices, and the conditions in which they practise” (Kemmis, 2009, p.463).

Having these three goals makes this form of action research socially just, as it promotes equality, and is personally and institutionally transformative.

The term ecologies of practices describes the possible relationships between the five practices found where we work: students and their learning; the conditions in which they practise; practitioners’ practices, their understandings of their practices, and the relationship with other practices that shape them (Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon, 2014, p.224).

It is hoped each of these projects will provide participants with a deeper understanding of their practices and what shapes and influences them, as well as contributing “another brick in the wall” (Wellington, 2000, p.137) in terms of what we know about practices in the FE and skills sector.

In the words of Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon (2014, p.27) we hope the outcomes of the projects will make the world a “better” place to “live and practise in”.

REFERENCES