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School-Based Action Research: Reframing Teachers as Researchers

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Location
VCU Globe

Disciplines
Higher Education

Presenter Information
Jesse Senechal

Community-Engaged Research Institute

School-based action research: Reframing teachers as researchers

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Outline of presentation

- The problem of research knowledge in K-12 education
- School-based action research
- School-based action research examples
  - Kelvyn Park Social Justice Academy
  - MERC Action Research Initiative

The problem of research knowledge in K-12 education

Teachers don't use research

- "Teachers rarely draw from a shared knowledge base to improve their practice. **They do not routinely locate and translate research-based knowledge to inform their efforts.**"

- *Why do you think this is the case?*

  - Hiebert, J., Gallimore, R., & Stigler, J.W. (2002). A knowledge base for the teaching profession: What would it look like and how can we get one? *Educational Researcher, 31*(5), pp. 5-13.

Lack of teacher participation

- "Although current educational research has placed a considerable emphasis on developing a systematic and rigorous body of knowledge about teaching, little attention has been given to the roles teachers might play in generating a knowledge base. **Lack of significant teacher participation in codifying what we know about teaching, identifying research agendas, and creating new knowledge is problematic.**"

  - Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (1993). *Inside/Outside: Teacher research and knowledge.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Two types of knowledge

- "Most approaches for bringing research to teachers assume that researchers' knowledge is the best foundation upon which to build a professional knowledge base because of its generalizable and trustworthy (scientific) character. A significant alternative view claims that **the knowledge teachers use is of a very different kind than usually produced by educational researchers** (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1990, 1993; Doyle, 1997; Eisner, 1995; Huberman, 1985; Kennedy, 1999; Leinhardt, 1990). Called "craft" knowledge by some, it is characterized more by its concreteness and contextual richness than its generalizability and context independence. From this point of view, bridging the gap between traditional research knowledge and teachers' practice is an inherently difficult, perhaps intractable, problem." (Hiebert, Gallimore & Stigler, 2002, p. 3)

Lack of an infrastructure for teacher knowledge

- "To oversimplify this brief review, past decisions led to the creation of two communities. The research community has worked toward the goal of building a professional knowledge base and has developed an infrastructure for recording, sharing, and accumulating knowledge. But the problems framed and the methods preferred have produced knowledge represented in forms that make it difficult for teachers to use. The teaching community works toward the goal of improving practice at an individual level and many individual teachers gradually learn from repeated observations over many trials. **But no infrastructure encourages, or even enables, them to record, share, and accumulate the knowledge they construct.** Educators live with two professional communities struggling to bridge the chasm and build a knowledge base that is relevant for classroom practice." (Hiebert, Gallimore & Stigler, 2002, p.12)

- *Is there a similar problem in other fields?*
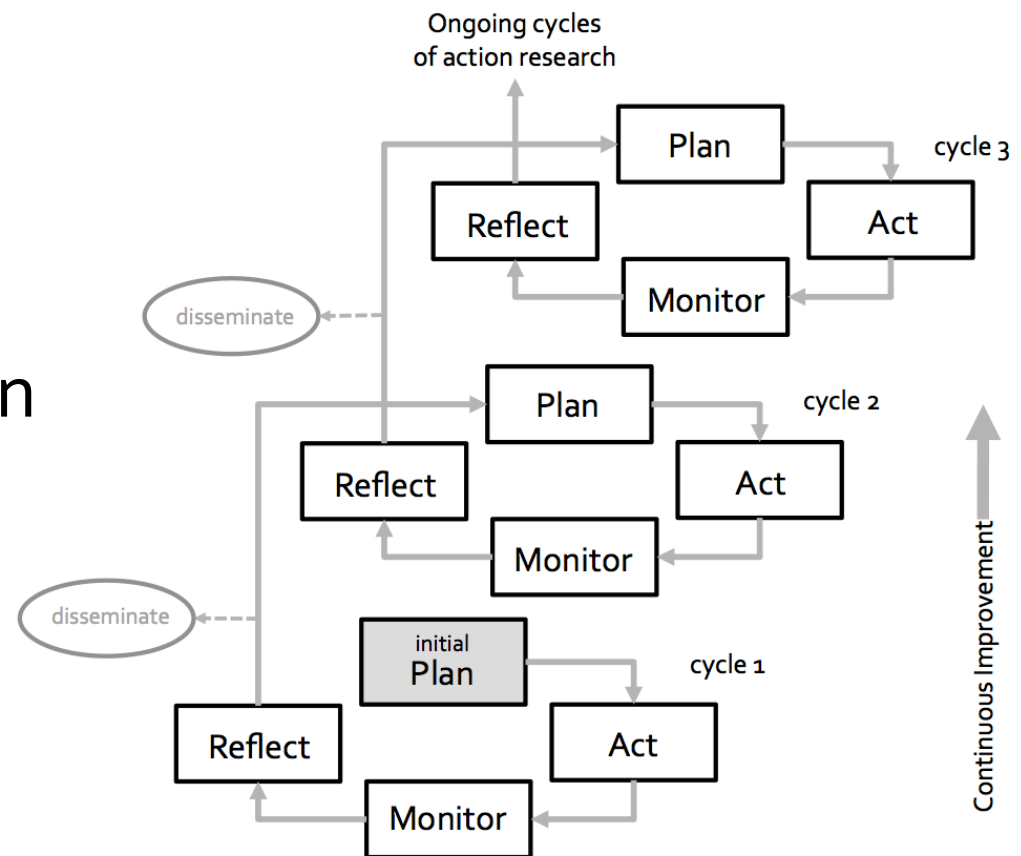
School-based action research

What is action research?

Action research is a participatory process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (Reason & Bradbury, 2008)
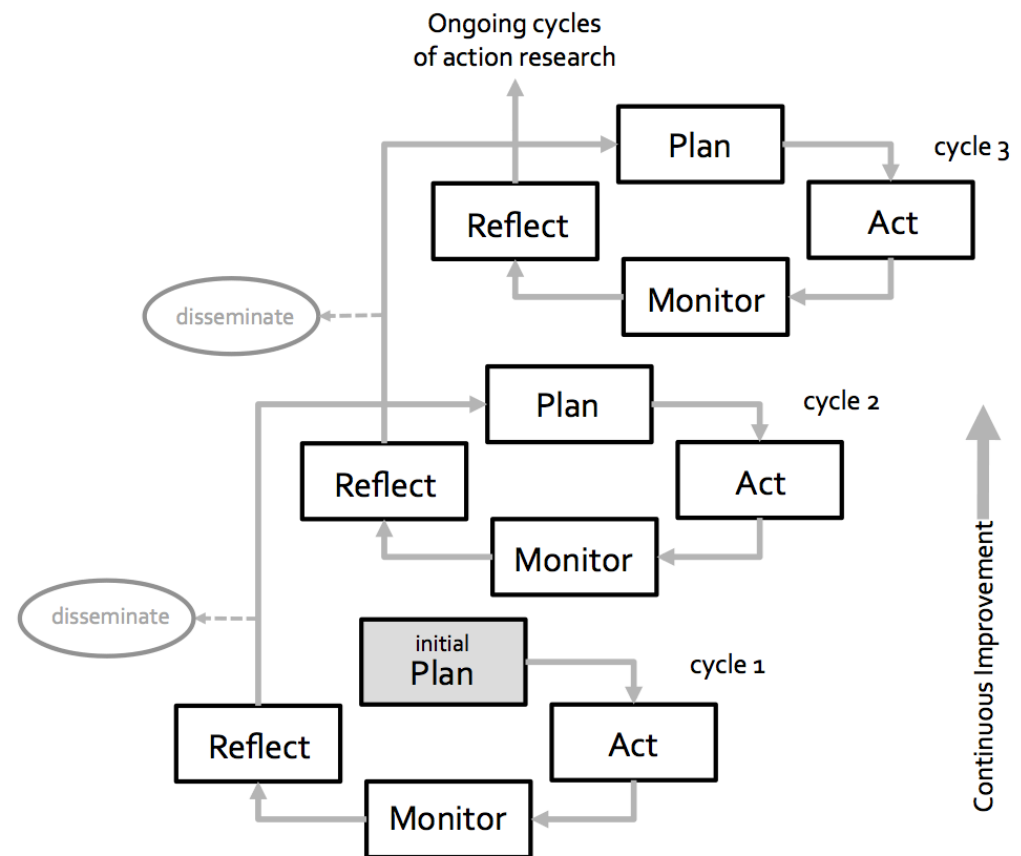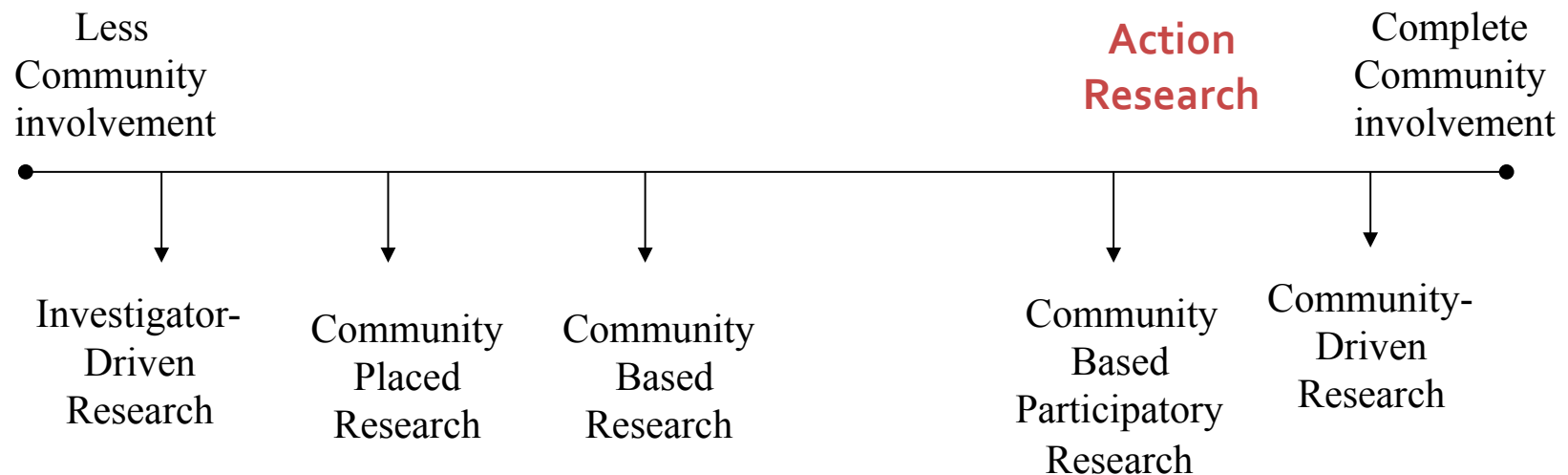
What is action research?

- Focus on practical knowing
- Bottom-up knowledge building
- Blurs practitioner/ researcher distinction
- Action-oriented
- Praxis-oriented
- Collaborative
- Axiological
- Critical

Benefits of SBAR

- Benefits for the school practitioners involved in the research

- Benefits to the schools and districts where action research occurs

- Benefits to the field of educational research

Community-engaged research is …

Less Community involvement → Investigator-Driven Research → Community Placed Research → Community Based Research → Action Research → Community Based Participatory Research → Community-Driven Research → Complete Community involvement

A collaborative process between the researcher and community partner that creates and disseminates knowledge and creative expression with the goal of <u>contributing to the discipline and strengthening the well-being of the community</u>. Community-engaged research (CEnR) <u>identifies the assets of all stakeholders and incorporates them</u> in the design and conduct of the different phases of the research process.

School-based action research examples

Two projects

- Kelvyn Park Social Justice Academy
- MERC Action Research Initiative

- Consider in relation to the characteristics
  - Focus on practical knowing
  - Bottom-up knowledge building
  - Blurs practitioner/researcher distinction
  - Action oriented
  - Praxis-oriented
  - Collaborative
  - Axiological
  - Critical

Project 1: Kelvyn Park Social Justice Academy

- Kelvyn Park
- KPSJA
  - Started in 2004-2005
  - Non-selective
  - 2 teachers (now 7 teachers)
  - 50 students (over 100)
  - Integration of community leadership and service learning

Project 1: Kelvyn Park Social Justice Academy

- How can we conceptualize and enact a social justice curriculum in in the neoliberal school context?

Project 1: Kelvyn Park Social Justice Academy

Social justice standards
>   Reading
>   Writing
>   Media Literacy
>   Critical Social Analysis
>   Community Action

Project 2: MERC Action Research Initiative

- Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium
- MERC is a regional consortium of Virginia Commonwealth University and eight Richmond-area public school divisions dedicated to improving education through conducting and disseminating action and applied research and evaluation.
- MERC's primary mission is to conduct research practitioners think is relevant, and transfer it into schools and classrooms.

Project 2: MERC Action Research Initiative

- Train teachers from MERC school divisions in methods of teacher action research.
- Support teachers as they design and conduct action research projects in their classrooms and schools.
- Help with the dissemination of action research within schools, divisions and the broader educational research community.
- Build a network of teacher action researchers within the consortium.

Project 2: MERC Action Research Initiative

Determining the Accessibility of Resources Desired by Families in a Rural School Setting
Barbara Adcock, STEM Academy Teacher
Pocahontas Elementary, Powhatan County Public Schools

Can Using Daily *Number Talks* Help First Graders Internalize Numbers?
Maria Catherine DiSanto, First Grade Teacher
Elizabeth Scott Elementary School , Chesterfield County Public Schools

Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS), student perspectives
Annamae Meyer, School Counselor
Hopewell High School, Hopewell Public Schools

Investigating the role of the school counselor in IEP meetings
Stephanie McGuire, School Counselor
Lee-Davis High School, Hanover County Public Schools

Independent reading: Identifying what works
Jennifer Hadlock-Young, English Teacher
Binford Middle School, Richmond Public Schools