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Action Research in The Time of COVID-19

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Abstract

This study provides a picture of the impact the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) had on action research performed by graduate students at a small Midwest university. A qualitative case study was conducted to examine how the participants' abilities to implement their research, gather data, and analyze the results was impacted by COVID-19. Research participants, graduate students at the time of the study, were asked a series of questions regarding modifications made, the impact to the research that was done, the impact to their findings, and implications for future research. Based on the responses to these surveys, researchers determined four prominent themes: altered timelines, limited access to data and materials, quality of academic work, and long-term impacts. Overall, while most research participants were impacted by COVID-19, few were discouraged. Considering the research findings of this study, education can greatly be enhanced by a shift in mindset about the processes of teaching and lessons learned by the pandemic.

Keywords: action research, COVID-19, pandemic, graduate students

Introduction

The world's pandemic disrupted, dismantled, and generally fragmented so many routines, processes, and procedures in education. All aspects of education, not just academics, have been impacted including educators' abilities to conduct action research in classrooms and schools (Middleton, 2020; Kennedy, 2020). Action research, often referred to as classroom research, is defined as a methodical way educators study what is occurring in their classrooms to learn more about teaching and student learning (Mertler, 2017; Efron & Ravid, 2013), and is a pathway for "how we can become more powerful professionals conducting research inside our own teaching practice" (Schutz & Hoffman, 2017, p. 9). Interest in this study was the result of graduate students' responses to attempting to conduct action research, part of graduate course requirements, during an unexpected disruption due to the pandemic.

Need for Flexibility

This article demonstrates the need for flexibility when conducting classroom research because schedules in a school setting change daily, students move in and out, technology fails, and, as it turns out, pandemics occur. Schutz and Hoffman (2017) note, “Teaching practices are in a constant state of flux because they interact with contexts that are changing” (p. 8). If educators conducting classroom research are not flexible during the process, then we will have limited results and findings to inform our practice. Readers of this article will explore how classroom research, commonly referred to as action research, was interrupted during the spring 2020 semester for graduate students in two curriculum and instruction master’s degree programs and continued into the 2020-2021 academic year.

The Participants

The graduate students, educators in the United States, were research participants. Additionally, a cohort of first year teachers also completing their master’s degrees were invited to participate in the research. Their program was intended to be face-to-face, but changed significantly after mid-March 2020. Not only did the remainder of their program coursework shift into the online environment, but their ability to conduct the action research they had carefully planned for and the exhibition of research projects to district administrators changed significantly. Two end-of-program courses were greatly impacted for the graduate students during this time.

The Courses and Coursework

The qualitative case study was focused on the research participants’ disruption of the action research process in two courses, Academic Inquiry and Capstone Seminar, both taken at a small Midwest university. The two courses are purposefully sequenced, taken one after the other,

with the first stages of the action research completed during the Academic Inquiry course when graduate students identify their topic for research, conduct a literature review, craft research questions, make decisions about the data sources, and create a timeline for implementation. During the final course in the degree program, Capstone Seminar, the graduate students conduct the action research based on the identified strategies and resources, collect and analyze data, write about findings and implications, and determine new questions for further research based on what has occurred. The graduate students who enrolled in these two courses during the spring of 2020 had no frame of reference for what would occur by spring break to impact their action research projects.

The Pandemic Impacted Districts, Schools, Educators and Students

When schools were closed, physical access to schools was limited or impossible. This, in turn, impacted graduate students' access to important data, texts and other resources, as well as student work. During this time none of these were easily accessed. Instruction for student learning shifted to the online environment or through other delivery methods requiring unprecedented pivoting and adaptation to teaching and learning by educators everywhere. In addition, classroom assessments, of all kinds, were nearly impossible as expectations for student learning were altered, sometimes significantly, by school districts across the nation. Middleton (2020) noted that when classroom teachers suddenly began teaching in the online environment, "the standardization of both teacher and student performance was not easily attainable" (p. 2). In short, the action research was interrupted, disrupted, or shifted from the original plan for implementation and conducting the research.

Review of the Literature

Because the COVID-19 pandemic was quite different from others that have occurred, the

literature specific to this one was limited or just now being published. This one was surrounded by political turmoil in addition to the health concerns and controversies that surround the pandemic. And, while Chambers (2019) noted that more research has been conducted when extreme disruptions occur and dangerous situations arise, less research has been done dealing with the unexpected surrounded by politics. Certainly, if earlier warnings about the severity and scope of the pandemic had been handled differently in the United States (as early as February 2020), the impact on the research participants and their action research may have been different. In Sarwar, Shah and Akram's (2018) study on factors that delay graduate research, they stated that delay could occur due to availability and access to the needed resources, and that was a significant factor in the action research studies for the graduate students.

Kennedy (2020), in discussing the pandemic and its impact on K-12 school settings, noted that almost all students in the United States were impacted, not just classes, but all aspects of education. He said that some K-12 institutions did not engage in virtual learning because they simply did not have the technological capacity to do so including lack of devices for students, equitable access to the internet for many students' homes, and inability of school districts to quickly switch to platforms supporting online learning. The researchers' experiences related to higher education were that this impact was not felt as drastically by university settings. Undergraduate and graduate coursework, specifically, were not as disrupted as the work in K-12 settings because most university courses already had course sites developed in the online environment. This view is supported by Kennedy (2020) who noted, "Higher-education institutions were more ready to turn to online education because their students were more likely to have the devices and online connections to have access to the internet" (p. 16). However, teaching online during the pandemic does deserve reflection in the higher education setting.

Perotta and Bohan (2020) note, “faculty need to be able to consider opportunities and challenges” in order to understand “online instructional effectiveness [that] ultimately should advance the goal of enhancing student learning” (p. 61).

The action research was being carried out for two different programs, one an online program, the other a face-to-face format. However, the face-to-face course easily transitioned to a synchronous virtual format. Access for the graduate students was not the concern. While the university did extend spring break, this did not impact the graduate students’ calendar for completing the courses. The biggest hurdles were access to their classrooms, students, and data, and these factors, in turn, impacted those completion requirements for college level coursework. Kennedy (2020) wrote, “Within a few days, most K-12 school campuses in the United States were closed” (p. 17). Middleton (2020) noted limited access by some students to complete their assigned work or to participate in assessments, some districts dictated that no new material could be taught, and the “lack of preparation” (p. 2) to be able to teach online resulted in “deficits in learning” (p. 2). This lack of preparation continued in 2021 as some educators and school districts felt unprepared to conduct education virtually.

Methodology and Data Analysis

Qualitative Research Methods

A qualitative case study was undertaken to examine how COVID-19 impacted the action researchers’ abilities to implement the research, gather data, and analyze the results. Case study design was appropriate “to chronicle events” (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 44), and to “understand a research issue” (Creswell, 2007, p. 219) where themes were discovered by the researchers and assertions were made, as a result. Additionally, the bounded timeframe within which the research occurred (the COVID-19 pandemic) provided a parameter for the researchers

that is essential for case study design (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Our intent was to explore what occurred for each of the research participants knowing that there would be “no clear, single set of outcomes” (Yin, 1989, p. 25). The overarching research question was to find out how action research was impacted by events surrounding COVID-19.

Participant Details

Graduate students in three different course sections were invited to participate in the research; only the 30 graduate students whose research had been disrupted were contacted to participate. Nineteen (63%) graduate students returned consent forms; 17 (57%) research participants completed an email survey. Bampton and Cowton (2002) noted when an email survey is conducted with care, the responses are valid ones and result in saved time for the participants and results in rich, useful data. An additional consideration for using the email survey was respect of participant’s time knowing they were teaching virtually in most cases. The research participants were invited to take part in this study to investigate the impact of the pandemic and resultant school closings on the action research they had carefully planned to conduct. The survey completed by the research participants was not required as a part of any course requirements. Pseudonyms for research participants are used throughout the manuscript.

Survey and Research Questions Details

The survey was constructed with open-ended questions to discern how each research participant’s (also classroom teacher’s) experiences impacted their planned timeline for research and to attempt to discover if any aspects of the research were adapted as they transitioned to virtual teaching. The survey was useful for finding out if the research participants could access any collected data post school closings.

The survey questions were designed to explore with the research participants how their action research changed including the timeline for implementation and completing all of the steps in the research, what adaptations had to be made if data were available to collect or in order to collect data from assessments and student work, and what they learned not only from the action research itself, but about themselves as researchers, writers, and educators. Mills (2011) notes that action research “is intimate, open-ended, and often serendipitous” and researchers should prepare “to modify and adjust [the] action research plan if necessary” (p. 93). Research participants responded to an email survey containing open-ended research questions allowing each to provide detailed responses. The survey questions were:

- How was your action research impacted by events surrounding COVID-19?
- What modifications or adaptations were made in the action research as a result of COVID-19?
- How do you believe your results and findings were impacted by COVID-19?
- What have you learned about yourself as a researcher and educator through the action research and as a result of COVID-19?
- If you conduct action research again, how will you use what you have learned from this action research in the future?

The action research process is a fluid one, with changes documented within the action research manuscript, however, most often, these are minor. COVID-19 presented the action researchers with disruptions that altered the course of the research in sometimes major ways. With these purposes in mind, a qualitative analysis of responses to research questions exploring how the action research was impacted and what the research participants learned about

themselves as researchers despite the interruption, was conducted by the authors of this manuscript.

The Researchers

The lead researcher, Dr. Seeger, was a university professor teaching the action research coursework online and face-to-face. One co-researcher, Mr. Fredde, was an instructional associate for one of the action research courses at the time of the COVID-19 disruption to the research. Both are well versed in the conducting of action research having engaged in multiple research projects of their own as well as teaching the required coursework in the graduate programs. Two additional co-researchers, Ms. O’Neal and Ms. Stewart, were graduate students and classroom teachers at the time of the disruption to the action research and were in the process of completing their own action research to fulfill the requirements for their master’s degrees. They were invited to become co-researchers because of their competence and skill as researchers and writers. They were full participants as defined by Mertler (2017), “the researcher is first and foremost part of the group—as opposed to being an “outsider”—who also happens to be collecting data on the group” (p. 96). The co-researchers’ contributions were invaluable in interpreting the responses from other research participants.

Coding and Discovery of Themes

Seventeen graduate students responded to the email survey. Each researcher conducted an initial analysis of the data to identify themes. Common themes were identified and further data analysis using axial coding was used to develop and confirm themes and subthemes. It was critical to think about the returned surveys in two ways: 1) research participants who were still able to carry out their research, albeit differently than originally planned, and, 2) research participants whose research was halted because schools did not resume in timely ways or access

to students and resources was limited or not allowed. Identified themes are presented through subheadings and details for each.

Limitations of the Study

As with any study, there are limitations that may have influenced the interpretations of the data and the narrative that has resulted. The university researcher and instructional associate researcher have many experiences not only conducting action research, but facilitating the process for graduate students as part of their required coursework. These experiences have shaped their beliefs about how action research unfolds, progresses, and how data from action research is analyzed and interpreted. The graduate student researchers were action researchers at the time of the study. Their roles assisted in mitigating the biases the other researchers may have had in interpreting data. It was also recognized by all of the researchers that the graduate student researchers may have had feelings of frustration related to conducting the action research during the pandemic. All of the researchers worked at “self-understanding about the biases, values, and experiences that he or she brings to a qualitative research study” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 229).

Findings

Altered Timelines for the Research

The research participants completing the synchronous virtual course were impacted the most by the closing of their schools and the disruption to the action research. This was a cohort of graduate students completing their first year of teaching while also completing their master’s degrees in curriculum and instruction. The school district closed quite suddenly for COVID-19 (not unusual for the area) and extended spring break for all educators and students. However, equity issues loomed large for this school district in a diverse urban area serving over 17,000

students Pk-12. They did not have devices for students and many of the families did not have access to the internet. After schools closed, the teachers were required to work each week developing online lessons for their students but those lessons were intended for use during the fall 2020 academic year. Access to students was limited for the remainder of the spring 2020 semester. In fact, teachers were not allowed to contact students but could check in with families. This was perceived as traumatic for the teachers, especially those teaching young students in primary grades. Very little academic work was completed by students. These circumstances virtually halted the action research process for these research participants; Margaret stated,

With the pandemic sending all students home for months, my first concern was for my students who have difficult situations at home and making sure they have what they need to feel safe and loved while away from our school community.

These research participants had just begun implementation when the pandemic resulted in school closings. Alternative assignments including extensive additions to the literature review were developed for these graduate students. The capstone project, under normal circumstances, is a presentation of the action research projects to school administrators, faculty at the university, and peers; the exhibition of projects had to be completed quite differently. The graduate students developed video productions of the results of their literature review and what *was* to occur with the action research if they had been able to carry it out to completion. Little to no data was collected so the graduate students were unable to complete the action research.

Other respondents to the survey also discussed altered timelines for the research. However, they were able to conduct their action research, just not in the ways that the written timelines for the research had indicated. Brenda noted, “I had to delay the start of collecting data,” and “This threw the entire timeline off and I had to adjust the length of time I could collect

data.” The need to remain flexible was a theme that surfaced in many of the research participants’ survey responses. Brendan, a band instructor, paid attention to what was unfolding with the pandemic and noted the preparation leading up to the action research implementation through the coursework that allowed him to prepare for online learning. “Thanks to the proactive foreshadowing of the action research requirements...I had many aspects of my research set in place and partially completed prior to the COVID shutdown.” Another participant, Jessica, reported, “I only collected data from one unit instead of two units.”

An assignment completed in the Academic Inquiry course required the graduate students to construct a timeline for the action research. While it is not uncommon for the timeline to be changed as the research unfolds, major changes are rarely made as these could impact the flow of the research and change each step of the process going forward. Each of the research participants in the study experienced changes to the timeline. But, the necessity and value of creating a robust timeline for the research was noted by Lena, “What I realized is important for successful action research is a powerful timeline and sticking to that timeline. Creating a timeline would be the first thing I would do, after deciding on a topic of research.”

Limited Access to Data and Assessment Materials

Another theme that surfaced consistently and repeatedly was the research participants’ lack of access to their school settings to retrieve data including limited access to assessment materials, either paper/pencil or online. For the action research course, graduate students are given a choice about how to collect data. Most choose to do this using electronic tools like the Google suite or a school-based platform. They either upload or store data using these tools and many times these are tools they are already using for assessment purposes. However, many choose to also use a notebook and hard copies of the data or a blended model of electronic and

hard copies. When schools closed, teachers were not allowed to re-enter buildings for any reason. Any graduate student that had hard copy data and did not take it with them when leaving for spring break or was forced to leave because of COVID-19 was unable to retrieve their data from the school setting. Many lessons were learned about choosing to collect data electronically rather than hard copy. Jack noted that if he were to conduct action research again, he would “try to move my data collection process strictly online,” and another noted they needed to make certain resources could be accessed online *and* in the classroom.

Access to assessments also greatly impacted the action research process. Many research participants were relying on end-of-year standardized assessments to see what impact their strategy had on student learning. Because school did not resume (at least in traditional ways), those standardized assessments were not given to students during the spring semester of 2020. Kendall noted that she was to have ended her research process with the administration of the spring standardized assessment. “It was my big measurement tool to see how math achievement had changed... We were to take this when we returned from Spring Break, but we never returned from Spring Break.” Inability to assess students left the research participants feeling that they had limited data, as Kendall stated, she had “no strong data,” to determine if implementation of the action research strategy had an impact on learning.

Access for the candidates’ students surfaced in responses. Equity in access to the internet and to technological devices has been documented for many schools and districts. Lynette’s response noted that “the action research had to discontinue as school work was not required of students due to the inability to ensure everyone had access.”

Academic Work Completed by Students

An additional theme seen by the researchers that surfaced when analyzing survey results was related to the quality of the data that was collected. Since students were not required to turn in work in most districts, the graduate candidates experienced lack of motivation by the students to complete and submit work. Brenda said, “Students in my district figured out quickly that their grades would not be impacted by COVID-19 work so their motivation was very little to begin with when I started my action research.” Since she was studying engagement, this was additionally problematic for the action research, and she believed that the results would have been very different if conducted face-to-face with students.

Marissa was studying project-based learning and found significant disruption in the research as the district did not hold students accountable for learning or getting online after spring break. “The district sent out a message to families that grades would not be taken, minimal students did the work online, maybe didn’t even log in.” Marissa, though, was preparing for online learning again in the fall stating that she would create project-based learning knowing that online learning could very easily occur again.

Studying new ways to solve word problems in math changed how instruction was delivered and had to be monitored through Google Meet allowing one candidate to monitor through observation of students in the online environment. While still allowing the research to be conducted with only slight alterations, Maria noted that she believed her students “could have performed better if my action research took place in the normal classroom setting.” Maria also came to the realization that she prefers teaching her students face-to-face as opposed to teaching them online.

School/district-sponsored programs were unable to dodge the impacts of the pandemic. Before and after school programs were shut down in most areas (although the researchers know

that some early childhood centers continued to operate later in the spring of 2020). One graduate candidate, Adele, had hoped to carry out her action research in the after-school setting where she worked. Here, Adele details her experiences:

Originally, I was to complete my action research project in spring 2020. My project was about decreasing the time it takes my students to transition in the district's afterschool program I worked at...I was not sure when the district and the afterschool [sic] program would restart. Since I was not teaching at the time, I had no way of conducting my project virtually. The school district was closed for the rest of the school year, conducting classes virtually. The before and after school program remained closed as well. I had originally rescheduled my project for fall, changing only the timeline of the project.

Adele requested and received an incomplete in the course. Fast forward to the spring of 2021, and she was finally able to complete her action research. In the fall of 2020, she became a teacher in a third-grade classroom setting. She documents all of the challenges she has faced in trying to complete her action research as she became a third-grade teacher:

I made a few changes to my project, making it about decreasing transition times in the classroom. Before school started, the district decided to remain closed and to have classes virtually. I had to change my project again, this time about the virtual classroom. Another hiccup in my plan happened in October as the school district decided to reopen four days a week. Once again, I changed my project back to the physical classroom. Two weeks later, the school district closed again, which means I changed my project, again. All these changes back and forth made it difficult to implement my project and collect the data needed.

Longer-term Impact

A research participant studying students' responses to cooperative learning structures within the classroom clearly understands that COVID-19 may have a long-term impact on this topic, but also future research topics. Brenda noted, "I'm not sure if social distancing rules will allow for the structure I want to implement." She continued by saying that if she was able to resume her research in the fall semester, she may not be allowed to have her students move around the room for the structures due to restrictions that could still be in place. Sadly, her prediction about the fall semester proved to be true.

Belinda, who teaches special education in an elementary school setting, had just completed setting up a sensory room for her students to use as a way to focus during learning. Belinda and the school had invested a significant amount of money, time, and effort in the creation of this sensory room. The action research was going to be an important step in determining if the sensory room was serving its intended purpose. She was initiating lessons for her students about how to appropriately use the room and engage in the different sensory activities when COVID-19 disrupted the process. Belinda said, "In the fall I will have to get it approved to create the room again, because I don't know if it will even be allowed from how it sounds like school will be." Just as Middleton (2020) noted "the most vulnerable populations are falling farther behind with online instruction," Belinda, a special education teacher was already worried about what the disruption to school would look like for her students. She wrote, "I believe I will be dealing with more behaviors from before since kids have been out of school for so long."

Discussion and Conclusions

The researchers noted that there were many positive outcomes cited in the survey responses and most of the candidates were not daunted by what occurred. They all learned many

lessons related to teaching and learning, but also for future action research. It is noted that quotations from the surveys are included here to support further discussion of the disrupted action research processes and support for continued future research by the research participants. Katrina wrote, “I definitely want to attempt to complete more action research in the future,” and another noted that as she has continued to read about the topic of her research this would only benefit any future research she conducts. Brendan even said that COVID had “strengthened me as a teacher and researcher” by increasing his capacity for using digital tools. And, Jessica noted, “With the changes to the school year because of COVID, I have found that I feel more confident about my technology skills than I originally thought.”

Earlier, variations in district and school expectations for online learning were discussed as the pandemic disrupted school as we knew it. Teachers, schools, districts, families, and students lacked preparation for learning virtually. Districts and schools continue to grapple with quarantining, students returning to face-to-face learning, teachers shifting between virtual instruction and face-to-face instruction, and students transitioning between these options, as well. One of our researchers noted, “This lack of preparation is continuing into 2021,” when educators have reached exhaustion for learning about online tools, preparing lesson plans in multiple formats, and working diligently to increase attendance during virtual learning. Many teachers noted the lack of professional development for preparing to teach virtually, but also having little stamina left to participate in further learning at this time.

The researchers noted repeating themes in the graduate candidates’ survey responses were ‘adaptation’ and ‘flexibility.’ And, while a global pandemic has remarkable implications for and impact on educational systems, the research participants did not respond with defeatist or negative responses to the questions posed to them.

Adaptations

The candidates learned how quickly they could shift their thinking and adapt what they needed to do to carry out the action research. Sabrina stated, “I learned to be resourceful and think critically about what I used in the classroom. I became more knowledgeable in my use of technology to accomplish my goals.” Ann, while acknowledging lack of preparation for teaching distantly, said that she was able to “quickly assess what was working and what was not. I was able to adapt and change what was needed to improve instruction for my students.” And, Lena, noted the differences in engagement in online learning compared to teaching in person, and how she had to adapt engagement strategies to help her students learn,

The most difficult part of teaching my students during COVID-19 was keeping them engaged. We take for granted having students in our classrooms each and every day, until we don't have that luxury and are required to think outside of the box to engage and educate our students.

Flexibility

As Belinda noted, “...it is okay to shift your thinking even when in the middle of your research,” she understands that flexibility is inherent in action research, but even more critical when faced with extreme situations. Martha said, “If I had refused to adapt to the situation I would not have been able to complete any action research in any meaningful way.” Brenda, who was studying student engagement using cooperating learning, said that when conducting future action research, she would “use my knowledge of adaptability that I learned through this action research to work through changes or challenges to be overcome.”

While conducting action research during COVID-19 presented many hurdles to graduate students completing their final coursework and capstone projects, they continually adapted their

work to finalize the research or figured out methods of resuming the work during the fall 2020 semester understanding that learning could continue remotely. It was interesting to note a response from Crystal, who credited her ability to adapt so quickly to another course within her graduate program. The course, titled *Leading in the Digital Age*, provided her with confidence related to her technology skills and resources she could access to figure out how to navigate student engagement in the online environment. Crystal found herself in the position of advice-giving to her colleagues, noting, “I found myself confident in helping them make changes and decision.”

COVID-19 continued to have an impact on students attempting to complete their action research. During the spring 2021 semester, Callyn’s implementation and data collection had to be altered because she was quarantined due to exposure in her preschool classroom. She noted, I had to quarantine due to exposure to a positive COVID case in the midst of my action research. This made the continuation of my action research difficult, and makes me question the validity of my results. I wish that my research hadn’t been impacted by the need to quarantine because I feel that would have yielded different results. The goal of my research is to use questioning techniques in addition to extension activities to impact my students [sic] ability to comprehend age appropriate text. The very day I identified my low group of students, and devised a plan for targeted small group intervention I had to begin my quarantine.

Implications for Teaching and Learning

The implications for this research are two-fold as it impacts both educators and students. And, consistent themes from the data, flexibility and adaptability, provide multiple implications for teaching and learning. Schutz and Hoffman (2017) noted that “By doing action research that

reveals teaching practices...as complex and situated, teachers can inform conversations in the field” (p. 11). What could be more complicated than teaching during a pandemic? We believe educators have an opportunity to change thinking about processes that impact teaching, learning, and students through lessons learned from the pandemic.

Adaptability

Education is not stagnant; it is fluid. In the profession of education, so much emphasis is put on plans and planning yet, as the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated, we must be ready to adapt and formulate new plans. As educators, we consistently ask students to adapt to new ways of learning, and the research participants in this study were asked to do the same. The significant shifts in delivery of instruction gave teachers at all levels a firsthand reminder of what it must be like to be a student. The research demonstrated educators’ abilities to meet students where they were at regardless of individual circumstances.

Flexibility

As educators, we learned through lack of work completion and student engagement that our online lesson planning had to be more engaging to captivate our learners. Furthermore, we have uncovered some deep-rooted inequities in education systems such as the lack of technology in rural districts versus suburban/urban districts. We can change our language when we discuss what kind of learning *has* taken place over the past year. In a Q&A blog post in *EducationWeek* by Larry Ferlazzo (2021) discussing what has been labeled “learning loss” related to COVID-19, he notes,

Let’s not return to our previous ways of educating students. We have an opportunity to think and plan differently at this moment. To build a system that is responsive to the

needs of the students it purports to serve. A first step in doing so is to listen to our students.

It could be posited that all of these challenges also present opportunities to be flexible. And, these opportunities for flexibility extend to higher education and coursework completed in university settings and for processes like action research. Teaching, learning, and lessons from conducting action research can continue to occur even when school buildings are closed.

Continuing to Conduct Classroom Research

The research participants demonstrated resilience in life and learning to power through the pandemic with little discouragement related to their graduate coursework. Parallels can be drawn between this resilience in the graduate students and students in school settings as they demonstrated learning in ways that had not before been imagined. The research demonstrated, as noted, that flexibility and adaptability are needed when conducting action research. During the most extenuating circumstances, like the pandemic, when access to materials was limited, student motivation waned, and technology was challenging, teaching and learning continued to take place albeit differently. Ferlazzo (2021) noted that educators should not return to previous ways of educating students. The researchers hope that action research will continue to be a viable option for teachers to grow their practice and improve their own learning and the learning of students, even in the face of a pandemic.

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