



QUALITY MATTERS

Theme: Action Research in Education

Quality Matters Vol 16, No. 61 March 2022

A Quarterly Newsletter of the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA)

IN THIS ISSUE

From the Editorial Desk.....	1
Research Corner.....	2
Interview.....	7
Campus News.....	12
Tips	14

QUOTE OF THIS ISSUE

No Research without Action, No Action without Research

Kurt Lewin

Learning Is More Effective When It Is an Active Rather Than A Passive Process

Kurt Lewin

If you have comments and suggestions on this issue of the newsletter or want to contribute to the next issue, please contact our office,
Tel: 011-5537999 or 011-5538020 ext. 120,
0911679094
Email: ceiqa@smuc.edu.et

This newsletter is published every three months by the Center for Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance (CEIQA) of St. Mary's University (SMU). The objective of the newsletter is to inform the SMU community as well as the business and industry, government and non-government stakeholders and others who might be interested to know about the activities and accomplishments of the institution in fostering quality education and research in the Ethiopian Higher Education setting.

Tel. 251-11-5537999
P.O.Box: 1211
Email: ceiqa@smuc.edu.et
Web. <http://www.smuc.edu.et>
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK

Dear Reader,

Welcome to Vol.16, No 61

This issue of Quality Matters deals with action research. Action Research is a means of systematic enquiry that scholars particularly teachers and health workers, carry out as researchers of their own practice. Though it can be used almost in all sectors to identify and solve problems or bring changes, it is repeatedly used in education and health sectors. Therefore, this issue of the newsletter tries to reveal some features of action research in education.

Furthermore, to get scholarly view on the issue, Quality Matters has interviewed Dr. Dame Abera Abdi from Addis Ababa University to share his knowledge and experience with readers on the issue.

In addition to this, the newsletter has brought readers some of the major campus news, which occurred in the past three months that focus on a half-day training to the University staff given by Prof. Damtew Tefera from University of KwaZulu-Natal and about the experience sharing visit by a team of CEIQA staff at Addis Ababa Science and Technology University.

Enjoy Reading!



RESEARCH CORNER

Action Research in Education

Tekeste W/Michael, PhD. St. Mary's University

Introduction

There are varieties ways to conduct research. Different research problems or issues require different research approaches (Mills, 2011, p. 5). The selection of research methods depends on the objective of the research. When researchers want to develop new theory or explain natural phenomena, they use a type of conventional research method which best suits their purposes.

However, in the field of education, particularly in classrooms, practitioners often use Action Research. Action research is an interactive method of collecting information that's used to explore topics of teaching, curriculum development and student behavior in the classroom (Gibbs, Patrica, Wilkinson, & Parkinson, 2016).

Action research can be conducted by practitioners; such as teacher researchers, principals, school counselors, or other stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment to gather information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn (Efron & Ravid, 2013; Mills, 2011,p.21) . As the name indicates, action research is composed of two words 'action' and 'research' but this does not mean that research-to-be-followed-by-action or research-on-action, but research as-action' (Kaur, 2021).

Action research is a research strategy that aims for change as a consequence of action intervention and it can be used in almost any setting where a problem involves people, tasks and procedures cries out for solution, or where some change of feature results in a more desirable outcome (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

Regarding the origin of action research, some scholars take "the intellectual root of action research back to the time of Francis Bacon who was the proponent of the idea that science should serve human needs" (Harkavy & Benson, 1998) in (Harkavy, Puckett, & Romer, 2000, .56). Still others linked its origin to John Dewey's (Tomal, 2010).

However, most scholars believe that "Action Research originated in the social sciences after World War II in the 1940s" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p.34) and give the credit to Kurt Lewin who first coined the term Action Research as a legitimate form of science in 1940s (Tsou, 2021).

Nevertheless, the development of action research has not been steady. In this regard, Selender (1997) in Tomal (2010,p.13) noted that "action research declined in the mid-1950s, but during the 1960s and early 1970s, it was again used by practitioners working with consultants. In the mid 1970s, new and expanded views of action research began to appear. Today, many researchers and practitioners continue to promote and apply action research in education. There-



for, in the following sections, some features of action research will be highlighted.

Why Action Research is so important in classroom

It is not deniable that conventional research methods have great contributions in developing education. The present status of education may not be attainable without the efforts of traditional researchers. Every time, they come up with new findings, theories and concepts that can improve the general education system. However, they have their own drawbacks and cannot be flawless. The findings of conventional research methods may not be applicable everywhere and every time to solve all types of problems. Every setting is unique, it has its own particular problems and these problems cannot be solved by the findings of traditional research methods obtained from other distant contexts and situations. For that reason, action research research is preferable to solve immediate or particular problems of setting. In this connection, Mills, (2011) said that traditional research:

concerned itself with generalizability, a term that refers to the applicability of findings to settings and contexts different from the one in which they were obtained; that is, based on the behavior of a small group of individuals, researchers try to explain the behavior of a wider group of people. This view of generalizability, however, is not directly applicable to teacher action research (Mills, 2011, p. 119).

The goal of action research is, on the contrary, to understand what is happening in school or classroom and to determine what might improve things in that context. Therefore, action researchers do not need to worry about the “generalizability of data because they are not seeking to define ultimate truths” (Mills, 2011, p. 110).

Moreover, there are several differences between conventional and action research methods. Efron & Ravid (2013, p.5) have listed out the major differences between them. The table below reveals these major differences which make action research suitable for practitioners:

Traditional Research	Action Research
The purpose of research is to develop theories and discover generalized principles.	The purpose of research is to improve practice
Research is conducted by outside experts.	Research is conducted by insiders who are involved in the context.
Researchers are objective, detached, removed, and unbiased.	Researchers are subjective, involved, and engaged.
Educational researchers conduct research on others.	Action researchers study themselves and their practices
The research questions are predetermined and reflect outsiders' research interests.	Research questions arise from local events, problems, and needs.



Research participants are carefully selected to represent a population of interest.	Participants are a natural part of the inquiry setting.
Generalized rules and practices are applicable in other educational settings.	Every child is unique and every setting is particular
The researchers' findings are implemented by practitioners.	The action researchers' findings are directly applied to their practice.
Educational changes occur top-down in a hierarchical process.	Educational changes occur bottom-up in a democratic process.
There is a separation between theory and action, and between research and practice.	Boundaries among theory, research, and practice are blurred

Source: (Efron & Ravid, 2013)

The Four Stages of Action Research

To conduct action research, practitioners must follow these four stages (Kemmis, s. , & Mc Taggart, 1998)

1. Plan

Action Research planning involves deciding how to respond to a question, issue or 'hunch' and what to try out. Plans outline details of 'doing' — that is, what, who, when, where, and how. It involves designing a framework to guide action.

2. Action

Action happens when the plan is put into place and the hoped for improvement to the social situation occurs. This action will be deliberate and strategic. It is here that participatory Action Research differs from other research methods in that the action or change is happening in reality and not as an experiment 'just to see if it works.'

3. Observe

Good observation requires looking at what is happening and describing it accurately. Its purpose is to provide a sound base for reflection by producing a widely accepted understanding of what actually

happened (Selender, 1997). It involves preserving observations in ways that allow them to be used later for reflection or as evidence. Observing well can be difficult, particularly if you tend to move straight into interpreting and making judgments, but observation is critical if we are able to say something is 'research' and not just our opinion.

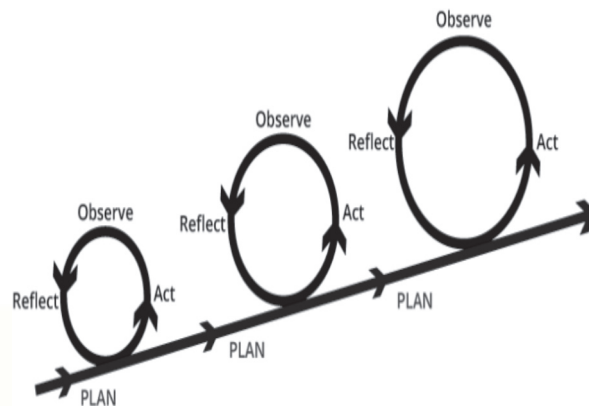
4. Reflect

Reflection is about building a shared understanding of the meaning of what happened. Essentially it is a process of interpretation, in which a variety of information and perspectives is likely to produce different understandings. Reflection informs improvements to practice and affirms or challenges particular ways of doing things.

All these steps are not separated activities. They are interconnected with one another. The figures below reveal their spiral or cyclical development.



OR



The two figures illustrate the spiral model of action research from different perspectives.

Source: <https://extensionaus.com.au/extension-practice/action-research/>

Benefits of Action Research in Education

Action research provides several benefits for educational practitioners devoted to conducting action research. Some of them which are compiled from Creswell (2012), Efron & Ravid (2013) Mertler (2019), and Tomal (2010) are given below. Action research:

- can help teachers and students to learn more about a practice-based topic such as interactive teaching methods;
- can help teachers to engage with others better. It gives teachers and students space to listen to those around them and find out what their perspectives really are. Or fosters democracy (i.e. involvement of many individuals) approach to education;
- can help teachers and students familiar with a popular research approach in higher education practice; in turn this can make some of the literature easier to engage with for their later requirement (Arnold, 2015);
- encourages changes in universities or schools;
- positions teachers and others educators as learners who seek to narrow the gap between

practice and their vision of education;

- fills the gap between theory and practice, and helps practitioners develop new knowledge directly related to their classrooms;
- facilitates teacher empowerment;
- allows teachers to take risks and make changes related to teaching and learning;
- is a means of improving student achievement through more effective teaching and administration of schools;
- helps teachers become more flexible in their thinking, more open to new ideas, and more able to solve new problems;
- influences teachers' thinking skills, sense of efficacy, willingness to communicate with colleagues, and attitudes toward professional development and the process of change;

Challenges in implementing Action Research

In addition to the numerous benefits action research offers, there are several challenges associated with this research methodology. Some of these include:

- Teachers may find that it is a time-consuming



process to conduct research in addition to the demands of their own instructional practice; Action research process needs to be flexible as the research has to work with people. Thus, it can be considered as a time consuming research project.

- because action research is carried out by individuals who are interested parties in the research, the validity of collected and analysed data may be questionably biased (Hine & Lavery, 2014);
- Action research demands the participation of people in the process for mobilization of people and encouraging their participation is a difficult task-It is difficult to work where people are unwilling to participate.
- Different level of motivation and interest of the participant can also adversely affect the process of action research.
- As action research is planned for a specific area and for specific problem thus the cause, effect and outcomes of it may not be generalized to the wider population.
- Gaining confidence in using action research methods requires more time and preparation.

Conclusion

Action research is very important approach for developing students' both teachers' research skills and narrows the gap created between teaching and research, particularly in higher education institutions. Nevertheless it seems that action research has not been given its due attention. Teaching and researching cannot be seen as separate entities.

been given its due attention. Teaching and researching cannot be seen as separate entities.

Particularly, at this moment, when very little significance is given to pedagogical training and non-teaching graduates are assigned to teach in higher education, training fresh employees or giving them awareness raising training on action research is very essential. It can contribute to achieving quality education and research findings.

Works Cited

- Arnold, L. (2015). Action Research for higher Education practitioners: A practical guide; <https://lydiaarnold.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/action-research-introductory-resource.pdf>
- Cohen, L., Morrison, K. (2007). Research Methods in Education 6th edition. New York. Routledge
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research 4th ed. Boston: MA: Pearson.
- Efron, S. E., & Ravid, R. (2013). Action research in education : a practical guide. . New York: Guilford Press.
- Gibbs, P., Patrica, C., Wilkinson, K., & Parkinson, J. (n.d.). Literature Review on the Use of Action Research in Higher Education.
- Harkavy, I., & Benson, L. (1998). De-Platonizing and democratizing education as the bases of service-learning. In R. & R.A, Academic service learning: A pedagogy of action and reflection (pp. PP. 11-20). . San Fransisco: Fransisco: Jossy Bass
- Harkavy, I., Puckett, J., & Romer, D. (2000). Action Research: Bridging Service and Research. Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning , 113-118.



Hine, G., & Lavery, S. D. (2014). The importance of action research in teacher education programs: Three testimonies. *Teaching and Learning Forum* .

Kaur, L. &. (2021). Action Research in Social Science. *Indian Research Journal of Extension Education* , 21. 128-134. 10.15740/HAS/ARJSS/11.2/73-79.

Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (Eds.) (1988). *The action research planner*. Geelong: De-akin University Press.

Mertler, C. A. (2019). *The Wiley Handbook of Action Research in Education*. River Street, Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell.

Mills, E. G. (2011). *Action Research: A Guide for the Teacher Researcher*. Upper Saddle River: NJ: Pearson.

Nasrollahi, M. A., Kirish, P., & Noor, N. M. (2012). Action research in language learning. *Conference Paper in Procedia - So-*

cial and Behavioral Sciences · December 2012 DOI: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.06.916, (pp. 1874-1879).

Nhamo, G. (2012). Participatory Action Research as a Platform for Community Engagement in Higher Education. *JHEA/RESA* Vol. 10, No. 1, 2012, pp.1–21.

Ray, G. L., & Mondal, S. (2011). *Research Methods in Social Science and Education*. Ludhiana: Kalyani Publishers.

Selener, D. (1997). *Participatory Action Research and Social Change*. New York: Cornell University Ithaca.

Tomal, D. R. (2010). *Action Research for Educators Second Edition*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Tsou, C. (2021). Action Research in Higher Education: A Critical Review of the Literature. *Review paper* , 127-134.

INTERVIEW

An interview with Dr. Dame Abera Abdi



Dr. Dame Abera Abdi was born in Arsi Zone of Oromia Regional State in the year 1968 (1960 in E.C.). Dr. Dame Abera is an associate professor of Applied Developmental Psychology and he is currently working at the School of Psychology of Addis Ababa University, College of Education and Behavioral Studies. He has 32 years of experience in research, teaching and academic administrative activities at various levels (starting from a high school through the TTI, CTEs to the University level).



So far he has done and published many research works related to action research, assessment, child development, parenting, father involvement as well as gender issues. In addition, he has served as a consultant to many local and international organizations working on children, girls, women and families as well as Early Grade Reading Assessment EGRA.

Quality Interview

Here is the interview extract: **Dr. Dame Abera Abdi** to share his knowledge and experience on Action Research.

QM: Dr. Dame, thank you very much for your willingness and time to reflect on your knowledge and experience of action research.

To begin with, what is action research?

Dr. Dame: Action research is basically derived from two terms: research and action, where action implies taking practical measures to improve teaching and learning while research implies systematic study of the action and its consequences. Action research is based on the following assumptions:

1. The practitioners work best on problems they have identified for themselves
2. The practitioners become more effective when encouraged to examine and assess their own work and then consider ways of working differently
3. The practitioners help each other by working collaboratively
4. Working with colleagues helps the practitioners in their professional development

Because action research is done by the *practitioner*, it is often referred to as *practitioner based research*; and because it involves the practitioner thinking about and reflecting on their work, it can also be called a form of

self-reflective practice. Thus, the idea of self-reflection is central to action research.

Moreover, the action research space consists of three dimensions, namely: *theoretical orientation, purpose, and reflection*.

The *theoretical dimension* of action research aligns with the *technical, practical, and emancipatory* framework for analyzing curriculum practices. In the technical orientation of action research problems are defined, solutions are sought, and actions are governed by theories, prepositions, and empirical laws. In the practical orientation to action research stress is on solving practical problems, decisions are made through deliberation, and knowledge production comes about through interpretation, detailed description and meaning-making. In the emancipatory orientation to action research stress is on promoting autonomous action, critical inquiry, and organized action to overcome social obstacles.

The *purpose dimension* of action research includes professional understanding, personal skill development, and critique of work conditions. The profes-



sional purpose of action research emphasizes the production of new educational knowledge, and bridging the gap between theory and practice. The personal purpose of engaging in action research enhances greater self-knowledge, fulfillment in one's work, a deeper understanding of one's own practice, and the development of personal relationships through researching together. The political purpose of engaging in action research involves critiquing the nature of teachers' work and work places and the advancement of social agendas.

The reflective dimension of action research mainly focuses on the self-reflective process that is at the centre of action research. Action research and reflective practices are the most effective learning experiences that promote teachers' professional development by perceiving weaknesses in practice.

What Action Research is Not

- Action research is not what usually comes to mind when we hear the word research
- Action research is not a library project where we learn more about a topic that interests us
- It is not problem-solving in the sense of trying to find out what is wrong, but rather a quest for knowledge about how to improve
- Action research is not about doing research on or about people, or finding all available information on a topic looking for the correct answers. It involves people working to improve their skills, techniques, and strategies
- Action research is not about learning why we do

certain things, but rather how we can do things better. It is about how we can change our instruction to impact students.

QM: What are the most common approaches of action research?

Dame: Depending upon the participants involved, there are three approaches to action research: ***The first approach is Individual teacher research***

- Individual teacher research usually focuses on a single issue in the classroom;
- The teacher may be seeking solutions to problems of classroom management, instructional strategies, use of materials, or student learning;
- Teachers may have support of their supervisor or principal, an instructor for a course they are taking, or parents;
- The problem is one that the teacher believes is evident in his or her classroom and one that can be addressed on an individual basis;

The second approach is Collaborative action research

- Collaborative action research may include as few as two teachers or a group of several teachers and others interested in addressing a classroom or department issue;
 - This issue may involve one classroom or a common problem shared by many classrooms;
- These teachers may be supported by individuals outside of the school, such as a university or community partner;



The third approach is university/college/department-wide research

- University-wide research focuses on issues common to all
 - For example, a university may be looking to address its organizational and decision-making structures
- Teams of staff from the college or department work together to narrow the question, gather and analyze the data, and decide on a plan of action
- An example of action research for a department could be to examine students' test scores to identify areas that need improvement, and then determine a plan of action to improve student performance.

QM: What contribute(s) to the success of an action research?

Dame: The existence of the following points significantly contributes to the success of action research in HEIs:

1. Knowledge base - teachers increased level of understanding and awareness of the nature and essence of action research
 2. Reflective practice- the ability of teachers to continuously appraise and look into their professional performance with the view of further improvement
 3. Teachers' professional development - a professional growth opportunity in which teachers develop their skills and knowledge, and improve their practices
 4. Teachers' professional development standard
- criteria around clear expectations for what teachers should know and be able to do to help all students learn
 - 5. Minimizing challenges to action research (the constraints or factors that limit the participation of teachers in action research)
 - 6. Establishing the culture of action research - making action research part of the higher education institution's regular activity and program
 - 7. Creating the need for research and establishing an environment for conducting classroom action research, where this is entirely the responsibility of the university administration or leadership, in which they can:
 - Provide sufficient and consistent opportunities in the university for collaborative action research (studying, analyzing student work, dialoguing collaboratively, and analyzing student data to make instructional decisions)
 - Build a support system for teachers through a coach or a knowledgeable person(s) of the action research process, student learning, and instructional practices
 - Set high expectations for teachers and students
 - Create a professional library housing professional literature, assessment tools, and other instructional resources for teachers
 - Plan several sharing sessions for teachers to present their action research and findings throughout the year
 - Encourage all teachers to participate



QM: What is (are) the difference(s) between action research and conventional research?

Dame: In traditional forms of research, also called conventional or empirical research, researchers do research on other people, while in action research, researchers do research on themselves.

- Empirical researchers enquire into other people's lives, while action researchers enquire into their own practices
- The traditional forms of professional research often take the form of training, while action research is an enquiry conducted by the self into the self
- In traditional forms of research, the usual procedure is that an acknowledged expert offers advice to professionals, while action research is a form of self-evaluation. It is used widely in professional contexts such as appraisal, mentoring and self-assessment

QM: What are the most important stages/steps/ in implementing action research?

Dame: The basic Steps/Phases/cycles of action research include:

- Identifying a classroom problem or area of practice to be investigated
- Developing an action plan (formulating research question/hypothesis, imagining a solution)
- Collecting, analyzing and interpreting data
- Taking actions based on data (Implementing an action plan/implementing the solution)
- Reflection (Evaluating the solution, changing the

practice in light of the evaluation, using and sharing results)

This action research cycle can now turn into new action research cycles, as new areas of investigation emerge. It is possible to imagine a series of cycles to show the processes of developing practice. The processes can be shown as a spiral of cycles, where one issue forms the basis of another and, as one question is addressed, the answer to it generates new questions.

QM: What is the role of action research in reflective teaching?

Dame: The key characteristics of action research are that it is practical, reflective, and recursive.

Teacher researchers study practical issues that will have immediate benefits for teachers, students and institutions. It involves self-reflective research by the teacher researcher, who turns the lens on his or her own classroom, school, or practices. The reflective dimension of action research mainly focuses on the self-reflective process that is at the centre of action research. Action research and reflective practices are the most effective learning experiences that promote teachers' professional development by perceiving weaknesses in practice.

Action research is recursive in that issues and concerns are explored in an ongoing way by the teacher researcher. The process spirals back and forth among reflection, data collection, and action.

QM: What is the rationale for implementing action research in higher education?



Dame: Action research can be conducted to:

- Enhance personal growth
- Enhance professional development
- Empower teachers as classroom practitioners
- Enhance social change
- Enhance collaboration through participation
- Improve classroom practices (teaching pedagogy, assessment, classroom management)
- Improve student learning, engagement, and achievement
- Acquire skills and knowledge

QM: Do you think that action research has got its due attention in our HEIs?

Dame: As we all know, action research has been given adequate attention in schools (where every school teacher is expected to conduct –CPD each year- in which action research is one component) as well as in Teacher Education Colleges or Institutions (where action research is given as a course & conducting action research is a requirement for every instructor in his/her performance evaluation).

However, the same attention was not given to action research in the context of HEIs. As to my understanding, action research is a requirement for any staff member who is engaged in a Higher Diploma Program (HDP) to be licensed or certified as a qualified teacher for the level in the context of HEIs. Once the HDP is completed, no one is encouraged or interested to conduct action research to regularly inform his/her classroom practices. For one thing, there is no legislation that enforces or no guideline or manual is developed

to support the teaching staff to engage in action research. What all this tells us is that action research did not get due attention in the higher learning institutions, particularly in the context of public HEIs.

QM: What are the challenges and opportunities for implementing action research in higher education institutions?

Dame: Research and theory show that lack of adequate resources and organizational structures; lack of adequate support from instructional leaders (principals and supervisors); high teachers' work load; lack of teachers' adequate knowledge, skills, and commitment; and lack of establishing the culture of reflective practice in schools are the major challenges of teachers to involve in action research.

QM: Thank you so much for your interesting and valuable responses.

Campus NEWS

A Half-day Training Held

Prof. Damtew Tefera from the University of KwaZulu-Natal gave a half-day training on scholarly publications to St. Mary's University Staff members on January 13, 2022. Present at the event was Dr. Wondosen Tamirat, the President of St. Mary's, who introduced Prof. Damtew Tefera to the participants and invited him to begin his training.

Prof. Damtew started the training by inviting the participants to introduce themselves and share their ex-



periences on scholarly publications. In his speech, he said that teaching is giving out but publication is critical; it is a path to becoming professor and strongly reminded the trainees to consider it and participate in scholarly publications if they haven't any so far.

Then he defined what of scholarly publication and pinpointed the types of Journal such as print and online journals, and mentioned that journal/e-journals, including books/e-books are major sources of scholarly communication. However, according to Prof. Damtew, conference proceedings are usually not counted as research publications.

He also recommended the University community to take risk and publish articles on reputable journals even-if their paper is rejected at the beginning because according to him rejected papers doesn't neces-

sarily mean they are poor quality papers. He advised the participants not to lose hope; or to give up as well. They have to try several times even if they fail at the beginning. He also mentioned that 70% of papers submitted to well reputable journals are not accepted.

Seeing this fact, he advised the participants to make several efforts to publish articles. However he warned the participants to protect themselves from predatory journals which are working in the name of reputable journals. To protect themselves from these and other fake publishers participants were advised to consult Scopus which is responsible for abstract and citation database. Furthermore, The impact factor (IF) is a measure of the frequency with which the average article in a journal has been cited in a particular year. It is used to measure the importance or rank of a journal by calculating the times its articles are cited.



Participants of the training



Experience Sharing Conducted

Three staff members of the Center Educational Improvement and Quality Assurance had experience sharing visit to ASTU, on February 22, 2022.

The team was welcomed by Dr. Adugna Temesgen, Director of the Institutional Quality Assurance and Enhancement (DIQAE) of AASTU.

First, Ato Shegaw, the Director of CEIQA, introduced his colleagues to Dr. Adugna, and explained the purpose of their coming to AASTU.

Following this, Dr. Adugna Temesgen, Director of the Institutional Quality Assurance and Enhancement (DIQAE) of AASTU started his explanation. According to him, AASTU was established in September, 2004 and currently the university has 84 modern technological laboratories 50% of which are active and functioning properly.

Furthermore, Dr. Adugna briefly discussed the major activities of his office in particular and the University in general. Some of them include: Preparing the Self-Assessment Document (SED) of AASTU, well established Curriculum Review Committee, Student Evaluation of Instructors, awareness training to the staff on Quality Issues, the presence of awareness raising sessions, the participation of students in academic decision making sessions, the participation of the staff in quality assurance activities. etc.

The experience sharing visit was mutual and amidst his explanation, Ato Shegaw the director of CEIQA, has shared his Institution's internal quality assurance activities and duties, and by this his counterpart Dr. Adugna was highly impressed by what he heard from Ato Shegaw and requested him to have similar experience sharing session to St. Mary's University. In addition to this Dr. Adugna requested Ato Shegaw to invite Dr. Wondowsen, the president of SMU, to share his experience to AASTU's staff.

All in all the experience sharing the team had at AASTU was very fruitful, particularly; the team had the best opportunity to brief the best experience of SMU to AASTU which is one of the major achievements of the visit. Dr. Adugna was highly impressed by SMU experience and he was very much astonished by what he heard from Ato Shegaw and he repeatedly pleaded Ato Shegaw to come back to AASTU with the President, Dr. Wondowsen and share their marvelous experience to their University.

Tips

Bridging cultural gaps: a tool universities can use (taken from University World News)

By Darla Deardorff and Orla Quinlan 29 March 2022

The year 2022 marks the end of the International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures, which implies that international security and social inclusion



cannot be attained sustainably without a commitment to such principles as human dignity, conviviality and solidarity, the cornerstones of human coexistence in all faiths and secular ideologies.

Against the current global challenges of violent extremism, divisive political populism, mounting migration and displacement, and the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the imperative to reach out, understand and promote dialogue among people with different cultural backgrounds and beliefs has intensified. This is all the more crucial when wars rage, including most recently in Ukraine.

Role of higher education

Higher education institutions have an important role to play in this regard through their research, teaching and learning and their community engagement as well as through ensuring their own institutional cultures promote open-mindedness, respect and understanding of cultural diversity.

On 8 March, UNESCO made an announcement at the Global Forum of the World Council on Intercultural and Global Competence, attended by researchers and education practitioners from all over the world, about their plan to create a global community of practice for practitioners of UNESCO Story Circles.

Story Circles are an intercultural methodology that helps participants develop and practise the key intercultural competences needed to engage in dialogue and bridge divides.

The methodology follows the UNESCO Conceptual and Operational Framework on Intercultural Competence which provides a comprehensive overview of the importance of developing the capacities to manage growing cultural diversity.

Story Circles can be a powerful tool for building intercultural competence and understanding in higher education contexts, among others. For example, Story Circles are used in formal learning such as in classrooms where they are written into the curriculum itself and in building a sense of community among students through virtual learning.

In informal learning in higher education, Story Circles have been used in student orientations, in staff workshops and in residential halls.

Other ways in which Story Circles can be used in higher education to develop intercultural competency include helping diverse research teams to work together more easily. Story Circles can also be used among staff and students who participate in community engagement programmes, and among staff from different backgrounds who need to understand each other in order to work together more collaboratively.

Storytelling traditions

Story Circles involve the sharing of personal experiences within gatherings of four or more people. They are inspired by the ancient tradition of storytelling found in many cultures, across the globe and through the ages.



The innovative adaptation of Story Circles draws on this tried and tested method in a deliberate, purposeful and structured way for the specific goal of developing intercultural competencies which include respect for others, listening for understanding, curiosity, self and other awareness, reflection, sharing, empathy and relationship-building.

More information and support materials to run Story Circles can be found in the open access Manual for Developing Intercultural Competencies, which is available in more than five languages.

Story Circles only work where the goals to enhance intercultural competencies are clear to participants who are willing to respect others, be curious, respectful and empathetic, trust, be vulnerable and commit to confidentiality.

At the end of a successful Story Circle, participants will be able to immediately use some of the skills they practised in Story Circles in their daily lives – for example, by committing to listening for understanding in their conversations and interactions with others (instead of more typically listening for response or judgement); being more open-minded when connecting to others; being more aware of their own stereotypes and biases; being more curious about different perspectives; and being slower to make snap judgements.

Participants learn that everyone they encounter every day has a story to share and that we share similarities in spite of the differences that divide us. At their best, Story Circles can be completely transformative for

the individuals involved, as participants recognise the shared humanity of all.

Story Circles would not, however, be an appropriate tool in situations where participants are unwilling, where there is not a common language that can be understood by all participants, where there is perceived inequality among participants, where participants are not open and willing to hear perspectives different from their own or where an organiser is wanting to convince others of a particular viewpoint or position.

There has to be an open and willing intention to learn from each other.

Towards a more peaceful world

UNESCO has successfully piloted UNESCO Story Circles around the world and this intercultural methodology is now used in a wide variety of settings, including within communities, schools, universities and civil society organisations. Used both in-person as well as virtually, this methodology is scalable to large groups of several hundred and has been used to train United Nations staff, educators and community citizens around the world.

The recent inaugural Global Forum on Intercultural and Global Competence, at which UNESCO presented, was organised by the World Council on Intercultural and Global Competence, a global non-profit non-governmental organisation dedicated to connecting researchers and practitioners across disciplines, sectors, languages and countries to advance

the knowledge, research and praxis of intercultural competence globally in the pursuit of a more peaceful world.

The World Council promotes concrete methodologies for developing intercultural and global competence, including Story Circles. Its worldwide members are interested in researching various aspects of intercultural and global competence and translating such research into real-world application through grant-funded projects, toolkits and other resources.

The World Council is open to all who have an interest in promoting intercultural competencies and collaborates with other organisations around the world with complementary missions to help bridge divides and build a more peaceful world.

Darla K Deardorff is executive director of the Association of International Education Administrators, the founding president of the World Council on Intercultural and Global Competence and the author of the UNESCO Manual for Developing Intercultural Competencies, along with 10 other books and 60+ book chapters. Orla Quinlan is an executive of the International Education Association of South Africa and was its president from 2019-20. She is a member of the World Council on Intercultural and Global Competence, is trained in Story Circles and is the director of internationalisation at Rhodes University, South Africa.

Follow University World News on Facebook



A team of CEIQA sharing AASTU's Internal Quality Assurance Experience

Virtual links on Quality Assurance

Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE) www.anqahe.org

Asian Pacific Quality Network (<http://www.apqn.org>)

ASEAN Quality Assurance Network (AQAN) www.mqa.gov.my/oqan/

Association of African University (www.aau.org)

Association of Quality Assurance Agencies of the Islamic World (AQAAIW)

www.mqa.gov.my/aqaalw/index01.cfm

Caribbean Area Network for Quality Assurance in Tertiary Education (CANQATE) www.canqate.org Central

and Eastern Europe Network of Quality Assurance in Higher Education (CEENQA)

www.ceenetwork.hu

Central Asian Network for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (CANQA) www.canqa.net

Center for International Research on Higher Education (<http://bc.org/avp/soe/cihe>)

Ethiopian Ministry of Education (<http://www.moe.gov.et>)

Eurasian Quality Assurance Network (EAQAN) www.eaqan.org

European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (<http://www.enqa.eu>)

European Quality Assurance Network for Informatics Education (EQANIE) www.eqanie.eu

Higher Education Relevance and Quality Agency (www.higher.edu.et)

Institute of International Education (www.iie.org)

International center of Excellence in Tourism and Hospitality Education (THE-ICE) www.the-ice.org Interna-

tional Council for Open and Distance Learning (www.icde.org)

International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (<http://www.eric.ed.gov>)

International Network for Higher Education in Africa (NHEA) (<http://www.be.edu>)

International Network for Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education (INQAAHE)

<http://www.inqaahe.org>

Program for Research on Private Higher Education (PROPHE)(www.allbany.edu/eaps/prophe)

Quality and Standards Authority of Ethiopia (<http://www.qsae.org>)

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (UK) (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk>) Talloires network (www.talloires-network.tufts.edu)



St. Mary's University

Programs Offered



Undergraduate Degree Programs (Regular/Extension)

- ◆ Accounting & Finance
- ◆ Management
- ◆ Marketing Management
- ◆ Tourism & Hospitality Management
- ◆ Computing Science

Undergraduate Degree Programs (College of Open and Distance Learning)

- ◆ Accounting
- ◆ Management
- ◆ Marketing Management
- ◆ Financial Economics
- ◆ Rural Development
- ◆ Agricultural Extension
- ◆ Agri-Business Management
- ◆ Cooperative (Accounting & Auditing)
- ◆ Cooperative (Business Management)
- ◆ Educational Planning & Management
- ◆ Economics
- ◆ Sociology
- ◆ Public Administration and Development Management
- ◆ Agricultural Economics
- ◆ Banking and Finance
- ◆ Logistics and Supply Chain Management

Graduate Programs Offered in Partnership with Open University of Tanzania (OUT)

- ◆ Master of Project Management
- ◆ Master of Arts in International Cooperation & Development
- ◆ Master of Science in Economics
- ◆ Master of Human Resource Management

Postgraduate Programs (Regular)

- ◆ MSc in Quality and Productivity Management
- ◆ MA in Social Work
- ◆ MA in Development Management
- ◆ Master of Business Administration (MBA)
- ◆ MBA with HRM Concentration
- ◆ MSc. in Agricultural Economics
- ◆ MA in Project Management
- ◆ MBA in Accounting and Finance
- ◆ MA in Marketing Management
- ◆ MA in Development Economics
- ◆ MSc. in Computer Science
- ◆ MA in Higher Education
- ◆ MA in Sociology

Graduate Programs Offered in Partnership with Universita Cattolica del Sacro Coure, Italy

- ◆ MBA in Impact Entrepreneurship

Graduate Programs Offered in Partnership with IGNOU (Distance)

- ◆ MBA (Master of Business Administration)
- ◆ MSW (Master of Arts in Social Work)
- ◆ MEC (Master of Arts in Economics)
- ◆ MPA (Master of Arts in Public Administration)
- ◆ MARD (Master of Arts in Rural Development)
- ◆ MSO (Master of Arts in Sociology)
- ◆ MPS (Master of Arts in Political Science)
- ◆ MCOM (Master of Commerce)

Short Term Training

- ◆ Business & Computer Science areas
- ◆ Higher Education areas

Services through SMU's Testing Center

- ◆ TOEFL (Internet-based test)
- ◆ GRE (Internet-based test)
- ◆ Praxis Exam
- ◆ CISI Exams
- ◆ Recruitment tests

Address:

Tel: +251 11 554 6669 (Graduate Studies)
+251 11 553 8017 (Undergraduate Regular/Ext.)
+251 11 550 4762/63 (Undergraduate Distance)
+251 11 550 3140 (International Program)

Fax: +251 11 558 0559