Kathy Short, 2018

Writing a Report
of Action Research/Teacher Research

INTRODUCTION

What was the focus of my study? What was the basis of my interest in this topic or focus? What was I trying to learn about and understand? What is my purpose for this study?

What factors in my own history and experiences led me to be interested in this inquiry?

Based on my purpose for the study, what are my specific research questions for this study? (provide a one paragraph overview of study purpose and context, ending with the questions)

THEORETICAL FRAME AND VIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

What is the background/context for this topic or focus in the broader field and why is that background important to understand? What is the context of previous work that has been done on this topic? To what else does the topic relate?

How can I situate my study within related professional literature? What is the theoretical framework that I bring to this study? What are the areas of research and specific research studies that relate to my study?   What are related professional references (research, theory, and/or practice) that inform me?

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

Where was the study conducted and the data gathered?

What is the specific context in which the study was conducted (e.g. school population, the classroom environment, curriculum, etc.)? May include a description of the school, the physical layout of the classroom, the curriculum or specific curricular engagement that was studied. What did I do in the classroom setting to create a context from which I collected data? Were there certain engagements that I did with my students? Describe the curricular engagements so that the data gathered from those engagements will make sense and have a context.

Or if the context is a university course, need to describe the university, the course description and goals, and the types of experiences in class sessions as well as the students in the course. If the context is the state or a school district/region, then need to describe that.

Who were the participants in this research? How did I select the participants? What is my relationship to the people involved? Describe these participants.

Did I need to gain permission ("informed consent") from parents, guardians, or other

"gatekeepers"?   If so, how did I gain this consent? How did I assure participants that they are protected from harm and that they will not be exposed to risks?

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

What is my general approach to research design (teacher research, experimental, case study, qualitative, etc.)? How and why did I choose this approach?

What important kinds of data did I collect? What specific methods of data collection did I use (e.g. field notes, teaching journal, interviewing, taping, collecting artifacts, etc.)? For each method, include a specific description for that method (usually a paragraph for each method). For each method, indicate -- What is the nature of this data source? What did I do? What did the data look like? How did I collect it? When? How often? What did I do with it?

How did I analyze the data? What did I do to organize and analyze data as I collected it? What kind of more intensive analysis did I do once the data was collected?

How did I establish trustworthiness for the study?

What was my research time line?

FINDINGS

What did I learn? What are the major findings of the study? What examples from the study support each of these findings?

A common way to organize findings is by themes or categories that were generated from the data. Typically, each category/theme becomes a subheading and begins with a general description to define the category. This is followed by examples from the research to show the range of types of responses that went into that category -- actual quotes from participant responses, journals, field notes, artifacts, etc are included and interpreted by the researcher. These categories might also be broken into smaller subcategories.

Other possible ways to organize the data include chronology (in the order events happened), life history (used for case study with the life history organized around analytical points to be made), composite (present findings as a composite picture such as "the day in the life of...."), critical events (significant events that reflect the major themes from the data), or portraits (of individuals or institutions).

In this section you are reporting the findings of the study and so must stay close to the data in the statements that you make. Don't make broad statements/interpretations that extend beyond the participants in the research. Do include "thick" description - lots of specific examples of participants' talk, actions, etc. You need to show that you have the data to support the statements that you are making and so others understand what is in your categories.

Bring in related professional literature that helps you discuss and understand your data.

DISCUSSION/IMPLICATIONS

So what? What did you gain from doing this study, beyond having a story to tell about this set of participants? What sense do you make of this study? What are the significant understandings you are taking away from this study? How do these understandings connect to the professional literature you used to frame the study?

What are the possible implications of these findings for your own participants, other students, teachers, researchers, policy makers? What are you taking away for yourself and for others?

Whose interests were served by this research? Who benefitted? What is the study's potential significance for classrooms or our local context? for education or society as a whole? Who might care about this study?

What new questions emerged from this study? How will you continue this inquiry?

CONCLUSIONS

Summary of study and concluding remarks that highlight thoughts you want to leave the reader with - the major insights or wonderings you are taking from the study.

REFERENCES

Complete bibliographic information for all citations in report.

APPENDICES

Copies of research permission form, written surveys, interview questions, etc (forms used in the research or as part of the curricular engagement).