Action Research Methodology, Constructivism and Communication

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Introduction

Action research methodology, how action research methodology was used in practice and the possible benefits of action research methodology were researched because the student had a graduation requirement to develop a literature review (Goldwasser, 2004; Hansen and Brady, 2011; LaMaster and Knop, 2004; Kemmis, 2010; Diana, 2011; Hampshire, 2000). The definition of constructivism, the Problem Based Learning (PBL) approach, and the Communities of Practice (CoP) approach were reviewed because the constructivism learning theory was the appropriate choice for the student to improve communication in the workplace ("Constructivism," 2013; Sutinem, 2008; MacPhail, Tannehill & Goc, 2013; Chikotas, 2008; Hmelo-Silver, 2009; Hansen, 2004; Wenger, 2006; Valatais, Ahktar-Danesh, Brooks, Binks & Semogas, 2011). Communication, team building and collaboration in the 21st century were reviewed because they met student needs and expectations (Brezuleanu, Brezuleanu & Ignat, 2011; Morrealle & Pearson, 2008; Owen, 2013; Bughin, 2012; Navickienė & Pevcevičiūtė, 2009; Tseng & Yeh, 2013; Ales, Rodrigues, Snyder & Conklin, 2011; Charles & Dickens, 2012). This literature review examined the authors’ action research methodology, the Constructivism learning theory and collaboration in the 21st century.

Action Research: Methodology

The methodology of action research involved a systematic process of inquiry, included interaction between human subjects and was designed to bridge the gap between theory, research and practice which enabled teachers to value the collaborative, creative process (Goldwasser, 2004; Hansen and Brady, 2011). Goldwasser (2004) believed action research was a step-by-step investigational process, which involved collecting information about an issue or situation,
examining those results, and thereby developing a course of action for affecting positive modification. In most cases, action research involved communication and collaboration with human subjects and once the analysis was complete, results were conveyed through a written report or presentation to key stakeholders and decision makers which summarized how changes answered questions and solved problems (Hansen and Brady, 2011).

Action research methodology was implemented through actual practice situations via gathering of student, teaching assistant and instructor data and through exploring new ways of approaching situations because these strategies allowed refinement of new methods over time (LaMaster and Knop, 2004; Kemmis, 2010). LaMaster and Knop (2004) highlighted that data from student focus group interviews, descriptive student surveys, student feedback, student work and an instructor journal were collected from students, teaching assistants, and the instructor in order to explore the issues involved with online courses. Action research aimed to explore new ways of doing things, new ways of thinking and new ways of relating to one another and the world because action research involved action and transforming the practices of people (Kemmis, 2010).

Some of the possible benefits of action research methodology included more effective instruction, personal and professional growth and improved clinical processes (Diana, 2011; Hampshire, 2000). Assessing and reflecting on one’s teaching in a methodical way had resulted in more effective instruction because teachers grew personally and professionally through action research (Diana, 2011). Recent authors in action research in the UK had shown that hospitals could improve clinical care, teamwork, communication and administration because it encouraged teams to audit their work and identify their educational needs (Hampshire, 2000).
Constructivism

The constructivism learning theory was an active process based on the constructive activities of individuals and collaborative groups because the learner was an information constructor ("Constructivism," 2013; Sutinem, 2008; MacPhail, Tannehill & Goc, 2013). Constructivism had been defined as an active contextualized progression of constructing knowledge rather than attaining it and therefore, that knowledge was built based on personal experiences and hypotheses of the environment ("Constructivism," 2013). Sutinen (2008) discussed how experience, meaning, language and thinking were based on the imaginative and constructive actions of individuals because the communal nature of education involved the growth of the developing person associated with his or her experiences. Constructivist strategies such as problem solving and interactive community discussions significantly assisted teacher educators in their understanding and formation of knowledge about curriculum alignment and helped direct the teacher educators in revising program components and their own practice (MacPhail et al, 2013).

The Problem Based Learning (PBL) approach involved simulating real life scenarios, learning how to work collaboratively and reflecting on the learning process because teachers required an alternate teaching strategy to assess results in the classroom (Chikotas, 2008; Hmelo-Silver, 2009; Hansen, 2004). According to Chikotas (2008) PBL was knowledge based on mirroring real life situations, henceforth, this training approach had expounded the ability of advanced practice nurses to have been self directed and have attained outcomes beneficial to patient health care. Hmelo-Silver (2009) highlighted that PBL was an instructional approach that helped students develop flexible understanding and lifelong learning skills because students
worked in collaborative groups to identify what they need to learn to solve a problem. Hansen (2004) discovered that flipping the responsibility of the course assessment to the student instead of the teacher in a PBL curriculum, resulted in the students becoming more motivated and the students had learned how to reflect their own learning process and how to have taken responsibility for their own learning.

Communities of Practice (CoP) were groups of people who had a passion for something they did and had interacted regularly with each other to get better at that passion (Wenger, 2006; Valatais, Ahktar-Danesh, Brooks, Binks & Semogas, 2011). According to Wenger (2006), Communities of Practice are everywhere and we are usually involved in them because they are at work, home, or in our civic and leisure interests. Community health nurses in Canada that dealt with the homeless developed an online community of practice as a place to share stories, validated practice and adapted best practices according to their work context and concluded that this community of practice was very valuable to nurses with limited peer support and access to information resources (Valatais, et al, 2011).

Communication

Communication was the way an individual sent and received information, communicated points of connection and was fundamentally important to his or her future success because it developed the whole person by enhancing relationships with oneself, others and society (Brezuleanu, Brezuleanu & Ignat, 2011; Morrealle & Pearson, 2008; Owen, 2013). The concept of communication was defined as a process of transmission and reception of information, ideas and opinions from one individual to another as well as from a social group to another; therefore individuals needed to be able to identify and communicate points of connection; shared goals, priorities, and values that transcended their differences and enabled them to build relationships
and work together effectively (Brezuleanu, et al, 2011; Owen, 2013). Furthermore, communication proficiency was critical to one’s career because communication skills were fundamental in career success and upward mobility in multiple professions (Morrealle & Pearson, 2008).

Communication skills through team interaction, motivation, and social technology was critically important because the success of employment greatly depends on the ability to work in a group or team (Bughin, 2012; Navickienė & Pevcevičiūtė, 2009; Tseng & Yeh, 2013). Navickienė & Pevcevičiūtė (2009) found that communication skills and the ability to interact effectively could be learned through the group or team model via specified roles and individual responsibilities which created the need for particular kinds of communication that clarified tasks, solved problems and provided input to the group. Social technologies, such as Chat Rooms, could improve communication within and across companies and could raise the productivity of interaction between workers by 20 to 25 percent due to more company information becoming readily accessible and easily searchable rather than sequestered as inbox emails (Bughin, 2012). A proactive and positive teamwork environment could motivate team members, committing themselves to the purposes of maximizing their own and others' contributions and successes because students who enjoyed working in the group setting had a good relationship with and trusted their team members (Tseng & Yeh, 2013).

21st century collaboration involved consistent communication and access to Web 2.0 technologies (Ales, Rodrigues, Snyder & Conklin, 2011; Charles & Dickens, 2012). Frequent, open and consistent communication was a key component to successful collaborations because this framework to success via formal and informal channels created the trust and respect necessary for collaborations to work (Ales, et al, 2011). Web 2.0 collaborative technologies such
as blogs, vlogs, podcasts, wikis, and social networks altered the way students learned, researched, worked, and socialized because they provided private forums for real-time interactions, document sharing, and production, as well as opportunities for questions to be asked and answered (Charles & Dickens, 2012).

**Conclusion**

The methodology of action research involved a systematic process of inquiry, was implemented through actual practice situations and included possible benefits which included more effective instruction, personal and professional growth and improved clinical processes. The constructivism learning theory was defined as an active process based on the constructive activities of individuals and collaborative groups and their experiences and included the Problem Based Learning (PBL) and the Communities of Practice (CoP) approaches. Communication was the way individuals send and receive information, and enhanced team building through interaction, motivation, and social technology. Collaboration involved consistent communication and access to Web 2.0 technologies.
References


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