CIEP 488: Action Research to Improve Teaching & Learning  
Fall 2014 Syllabus  
Tuesdays, August 26-December 16, 2014  
4:15-6:45pm in Corboy Law Center, Room 301

Professor Elizabeth Ferrell  
Roosevelt High School (CPS)  
Smaller Learning Communities Coach/English teacher

Modes of contact:  
eferre2@luc.edu  
Work: 773-534-5007  
Cell: 203-912-7916

Required texts:  


Suggested text for Ed.D. students thinking about using AR for their dissertation:  

Additional Assigned readings will be provided by the instructor through Sakai (see course calendar for reading assignments)

Course Description:  
Action research provides educators, administrators, and community leaders a method to study localized problems that results in solutions and action plans to address these issues. As defined by Herr & Anderson (2005),

> Action research is inquiry that is done by or with insiders to an organization or community, but never to or on them...Action research is orientated to some action or cycle of actions that organizational or community members have taken, are taking, or wish to take to address a particular problematic situation (pp. 3-4).

It can also be defined as a way for practitioners to improve the teaching and learning in their own classrooms: “The purpose of action research is for practitioners to investigate and improve their practices” (Hendricks, 2013, p. 3). All throughout the action research process, reflection is critical: why a problem exists/how it came to be, who key stakeholders are and how they can be involved in solution generation, how a solution will affect the context, and what improvements can be made to the solution moving forward. The reflective aspect of action research helps individuals become aware of their own practices and helps them look for solutions to issues in their organization, building, or classroom.

Through carefully chosen readings and assignments, this course will provide candidates with the knowledge and skills needed to use action research as a basis to make curricular and instructional decisions both school-wide and at the classroom level. Additionally, the course will help candidates learn how to develop an action research project to address a school or classroom problem and increase the dialogue within a learning context. One key
goal of this course is to prepare students to use their action research plans in their final practicum courses, and to potentially inform their dissertation studies.

**Social Justice Foundation:**
Action research has its foundations in solving social problems. Action research places the individuals within an organization, school, and community in the role of the researcher in order to define a problem, study possible solutions, identify or create an intervention to the problem, and study the effectiveness of the solution within their specific context. The emphasis is placed on empowering members of the context being studied to use data (both qualitative and quantitative) as the foundation for examining a problem and solution, and determining a subsequent course of action.

**Diversity:**
Action research is a unique form of research that emphasizes both the specific context and collaborative relationships within an organization. Through this course, we will discuss these aspects of action research with particular attention being paid to the idea that multiple perspectives within an organization provide a stronger foundation for defining problems, and developing actions to solve these problems.

**Conceptual Framework:**
Our Conceptual Framework – through its components of service, skills, knowledge, and ethics – guides the curricula of School of Education programs in the preparation of “professionals in service of social justice.” These dimensions of the conceptual framework also serve as the foundation to the School of Education Conceptual Framework standards – standards that are explicitly embedded in major benchmarks across all SOE programs.

This course emphasizes the following framework standard:
- **CF7:** Candidates demonstrate how moral and ethical decisions shape actions directed toward service to others.

**Dispositions:**
Each course in the School of Education focuses on one or more professional dispositions. Students are offered opportunities to receive feedback on their dispositional growth in the areas of **professionalism, fairness** and/or **the belief that all students can learn**. The specific disposition or dispositions for each course are listed below, and the descriptions for the expected behaviors for each disposition can be found on the rubric posted in LiveText for this course.
- **Fairness** and **professionalism** are critical components of action research, as the researcher needs to prioritize the needs of the context as opposed to his/her own desired outcomes, and also needs to find ways to collaborate with stakeholders so that they understand the work being done and can voice their concerns and confirmations of understanding with ease.

**Academic Honesty**
Academic honesty is an expression of interpersonal justice, responsibility and care, applicable to Loyola University faculty, students, and staff, which demands that the pursuit of knowledge in the university community be carried out with sincerity and integrity. The School of Education’s Policy on Academic Integrity can be found at: http://www.luc.edu/education/academics_policies_integrity.shtml.
IDEA Objectives for online course evaluation:
Of the 12 IDEA objectives, those most essential to CIEP 488 include:

1. Learning fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories
2. Learning to apply course material (to improve thinking, problem solving, and decisions)
11. Learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view

Important IDEA objectives:
1. Gaining factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, trends)
4. Developing specific skills, competencies, and points of view needed by professionals in the field most closely related to this course
8. Developing skill in expressing oneself orally or in writing
12. Acquiring an interest in learning more by asking questions and seeking answers
9. Learning how to find and use resources for answering questions or solving problems
10. Developing a clearer understanding of, and commitment to, personal values

Minor IDEA objectives:
5. Acquiring skills in working with others as a member of a team
6. Developing creative capacities (writing, inventing, designing, performing in art, music, drama, etc.)
7. Gaining a broader understanding and appreciation of intellectual/cultural activity (music, science, literature, etc.)

Accessibility
Students who have disabilities which they believe entitle them to accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act should register with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSWD) office. To request accommodations, students must schedule an appointment with an SSWD coordinator. Students should contact SSWD at least four weeks before their first semester or term at Loyola. Returning students should schedule an appointment within the first two weeks of the semester or term. The University policy on accommodations and participation in courses is available at: http://www.luc.edu/sswd/

Harassment (Bias Reporting)
It is unacceptable and a violation of university policy to harass, discriminate against or abuse any person because of his or her race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, age or any other characteristic protected by applicable law. Such behavior threatens to destroy the environment of tolerance and mutual respect that must prevail for this university to fulfill its educational and health care mission. For this reason, every incident of harassment, discrimination or abuse undermines the aspirations and attacks the ideals of our community. The university qualifies these incidents as incidents of bias.

In order to uphold our mission of being Chicago's Jesuit Catholic University-- a diverse community seeking God in all things and working to expand knowledge in the service of humanity through learning, justice and faith, any incident(s) of bias must be reported and
appropriately addressed. Therefore, the Bias Response (BR) Team was created to assist members of the Loyola University Chicago community in bringing incidents of bias to the attention of the university. If you believe you are subject to such bias, you should notify the Bias Response Team at this link: http://webapps.luc.edu/biasreporting/

**Technology**

For this course, students will be expected to use web-based technology to do the following: access information about assignments on Sakai, submit assignments before their due date and time on Sakai and Live Text, use the LUC Libraries and other internet search tools to perform research. Additionally, it is expected that assignments will be typed and that course presentations will be created in programs such as PowerPoint or Prezi.

**Electronic Communication Policies and Guidelines**

The School of Education faculty, students, and staff respect each other’s rights, privacy and access to electronic resources, services, and communications while in the pursuit of academic and professional growth, networking and research. All members of the university community are expected to demonstrate the highest standards of integrity, communication, and responsibility while accessing and utilizing technology, information resources, and computing facilities. A link to the Loyola University Chicago and School of Education official policies and guidelines can be found at:

http://www.luc.edu/media/lucedu/education/pdfs/SOE_Cyberbullying_Policy.pdf

**Course Goals:**

- Describe the how action research differs from other forms of educational research
- Investigate the role action research plays in creating knowledge democracies within organizations
- Use different forms of data to identify organizational problems
- Develop an action research plan
  - Write applicable research questions and sub-questions
  - Determine appropriate data collection methods and analysis procedures to answer research questions
  - Discuss potential obstacles to the plan and determine levels of collaboration with stakeholders to conduct the action research
- Conduct qualitative data analysis
- Conduct quantitative data analysis
- Discuss the application of action research as an instructional strategy
- Reflect on the experience of designing an action research plan, and the effects it might have on a real context
Assignments
For each assignment, a rubric will be provided and reviewed in class. Assignment components and due dates are subject to change as the instructor sees fit in order to meet students’ needs.

1. Description of the Context: Due September 14, 2014 (5 points)
   Each candidate will write a description of their professional context. The following must be included (minimum 3 pages):
   a. Introduction of the Context
      i. What is the purpose of the educational organization in which you work?
      ii. What are its demographics?
      iii. Who are the stakeholders, and what role does each group play?
   b. Typical Day
      i. Describe typical occurrences for a day at your educational organization (general).
      ii. Walk the reader through your daily routine (specific to you).
   c. Problems & Concerns
      i. Describe any problems/issues that impede stakeholders from realizing the purpose of the organization (e.g. what inhibits teaching and learning at your school?). Give each problem its own paragraph so as to elaborate on why you think that the problem exists, the ways in which it negatively affects the organization, and the implications of addressing each issue.
      ii. Note: The problems described in this paper will hopefully inform future assignments, and eventually your practicum next semester.

2. Problem Identification & Foundation: Due October 5, 2014* (10 points)
   Each candidate will select one problem within their school/organization that will serve as the foundation for their action research plan. Papers should include the following:
   a. Definition of the problem as it relates to their professional context and the relevant stakeholders.
   b. A cause-and-effect fishbone diagram of the problem, thus identifying their assumptions and the potential causes of the problem.
   c. A narrative explanation of the fishbone diagram along with suggested data or evidence they will need to collect to verify the problem must be included.
   d. Reflection on what the writer learned about their context and the selected problem through the assignment.
   *Rough drafts (paper copies) due September 30, 2014 for use during class time.

3. Literature Review of the Problem and Potential Solutions: November 2, 2014 (25 Points)
   Each candidate will provide a narrative discussion of the data or evidence they collected to substantiate the potential causes of the problem. Candidates will conduct a review of the literature that relates to their identified problem, and literature that might inform them of the potential actions that could be taken to address the problem within their own context. Minimum: 10 sources
   Note: A research assistance day will be offered on October 21, 2014. Rough drafts should be brought to class on this day as well.
   Candidates will read the Belmont report and the article *Action Research in Education: Addressing Gaps in Ethical Principles and Practices*, and write 4-5 page essay discussing research ethics as they apply to action research; specifically, candidates will discuss how they will apply ethical research practices to their action research plan. (via Livetext)

5. **Outline of Action Research Plan: Due November 25, 2014 (10 points)**
   Each candidate will present a working outline for an action research project that is relevant to addressing a problem in each person’s context. Outlines should include:
   a. A description of the problem
   b. Evidence explaining the cause of the problem
   c. Possible interventions to address the problem
   d. Working research questions for the first action research cycle
   e. Proposed intervention & data collection strategy
   f. Requested feedback from the class

   Each candidate will develop an intervention/action plan to address the problem (or a contributing factor to the problem) identified and substantiated in the Problem Identification and Literature Review assignments. Action Research Plans must include the following:
   a. A description of the problem
   b. Evidence explaining the cause of the problem
   c. Possible interventions to address the problem
   d. Research questions for the first action research cycle
   e. A description of the intervention
   f. Justification for the selection/creation of that intervention
   g. A timeline for implementing the intervention, with key activities and data collected in each stage
   h. Expected outcomes from this intervention, with accompanying justifications for each based on previous experience and the literature
   i. Reflection on the development of this Action Research Plan, including the alterations you made from Day 1 to Day 15 of class. Also reflect upon what you learned about: your chosen topic, the action research process, yourself as a researcher, and remaining questions/queries you have about course topics.

Note: Although the research will not necessarily be conducted this term, the Action Research Plans should be detailed enough to allow students to carry out their plans if approved by their organizations next term. Candidates are encouraged to pilot some aspect of their interventions in this course as a part of their normal professional experiences.
7. Participation: (10 points)
Class participation is based on:
- **Attendance** of all classes, being on time, prepared, and staying the duration of class.
- **Completion of reading assignments** before coming to class, and contributing insights and ideas pertaining to the reading during class discussions and activities.
- **Active presence** during class activities and discussions which includes sharing discerning comments, relevant examples, thought-provoking questions, and appropriate responses to the comments/questions of others. Such participation also requires students to be sensitive to their level of participation in relation to others in the class.
- **Completing Weekly Reflective Log entries** - Candidates should keep a weekly reflective log during this course. The purpose of the log is to help candidates develop the practice of reflection required for action research. Candidates may choose to allow fellow classmates to view their log, or limit access to the instructor. Candidates are encouraged to reflect not only on their action research topic and projects, but also on how the action research assignments are shaping their identities as researchers and practitioners. Well-kept reflection journals will greatly assist candidates as they write the Reflection section of their final Action Research Plans.

**Grading Scale (Percentages)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-93</td>
<td>A-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83-85</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>B-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;60</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Course calendar on next page** – subject to change with the needs of the class
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Class Focus &amp; Activities</th>
<th>Assigned Reading for following class</th>
<th>Assignments Due for following class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8/26/14</td>
<td>Introductions Overview of Action Research Syllabus &amp; Course Expectations</td>
<td>Pine, 1-42&lt;br&gt;Stringer, 1-35&lt;br&gt;“The new paradigm wars: Is there room for rigorous practitioner knowledge in schools and universities?”</td>
<td>Journal p. 34&lt;br&gt;Reflection/Action prompts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/2/14</td>
<td>Paradigm of Action Research “Practicing Participatory Action Research” (Kidd &amp; Kral, 2005)</td>
<td>Pine, 42-79; 278-299&lt;br&gt;Stringer, 36-71&lt;br&gt;Description of the Context due 9/14 – see sample on Sakai</td>
<td>Description of the Context due 9/14&lt;br&gt;Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/16/14</td>
<td>Types of action research (examples)</td>
<td>Stringer, 73-98&lt;br&gt;Pine 178-211&lt;br&gt;Rough draft of Problem Identification &amp; Foundation due 9/30 (bring paper copy to class)</td>
<td>Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/23/14</td>
<td>Tools for conducting action research</td>
<td>Stringer, 99-134&lt;br&gt;H &amp; A, 72-84&lt;br&gt;Read sample Problem Identification &amp; Foundation assignment on Sakai</td>
<td>Rough draft of Problem Identification &amp; Foundation due 9/30 (bring paper copy to class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9/30/14</td>
<td>Using the literature in action research Conferencing about rough drafts Literature Review search (Please bring a laptop if possible)</td>
<td>Submit final draft of Problem Identification &amp; Foundation&lt;br&gt;Final draft of Problem Identification &amp; Foundation due 10/5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/7/14</td>
<td>Action research questions Hendricks 70-74 Tools for data collection Hendricks 88-122 Samples</td>
<td>James, Milenkiewicz, &amp; Bucknam, 69-78;104-118&lt;br&gt;Stringer 135-165; 247-257; 264-276&lt;br&gt;McNiff &amp; Whitehead 155-174</td>
<td>Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/14/14</td>
<td>Qualitative data analysis James, Milenkiewicz, &amp; Bucknam, 69-78</td>
<td>Herr &amp; Anderson, 29-48&lt;br&gt;Pine 110-175&lt;br&gt;Rough draft of Lit. Review due 10/21</td>
<td>Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Task Description</td>
<td>Literature Cited</td>
<td>Due Date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/21/14</td>
<td>Literature Review peer review &amp; article search assistance</td>
<td></td>
<td>Literature Review due 11/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/28/14</td>
<td>Collaborative action research and knowledge democracies</td>
<td>J, M, &amp; B, 159-176</td>
<td>Literature Review due 11/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Literature Review troubleshooting</td>
<td>Pine, 212-233; 234-263</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>McNiff &amp; Whitehead 175-186</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/4/14</td>
<td>Quantitative data analysis</td>
<td>Stringer 166-209</td>
<td>Ethics in Action Research due 11/16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H&amp;A, 84</td>
<td>Pine 80-91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>James, Milenkiewicz, &amp; Bucknam, 104-118</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/11/14</td>
<td>Veteran's Day</td>
<td></td>
<td>Presentation of Action Research Plan Outlines due 11/25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*** Ethics in Action Research due 11/16 <em>(The Belmont Report is a hefty read, correlates with CITI course)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/18/14</td>
<td>Validity and action Research</td>
<td>Work on Presentations</td>
<td>Presentation of Action Research Plan Outlines due 11/25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sample presentation of AR Outline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/25/14</td>
<td>Presentation of Action Research Plan Outlines in class</td>
<td>Stringer, 210-229</td>
<td>Work on final plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peer &amp; Professor Feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/2/14</td>
<td>Communicating Action Research</td>
<td>Work on final plan!</td>
<td>Work on final plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/9/14</td>
<td>Peer review of Action Research Plans</td>
<td>Work on final plan!</td>
<td>Final Action Research Plans due 12/14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Course evaluations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/16/14</td>
<td>Action Research Plan Implementation – Spring 2015</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>