

The Compressed Action Research we explored in the first two classes has been very helpful in exemplifying the methods of action research that will be used to develop larger projects this semester. Although the topic- figuring out snack time arrangements for class- may seem mundane, using such a seeming simple subject allowed us to focus on the steps of the process itself.

In the beginning of his book, Schmuck talks about reflection as a “solitary conversation” that involves thinking about one’s own needs, behaviors, and goals. The first steps in section one of our Compressed Action Research project was to consider our own questions about the problem. My group did not do this, choosing instead to brainstorm our ideas as a group, since we’d be sharing our individual ideas in the end anyway. This did not work to our benefit; the ideas of an individual were usurped, however unintentionally, by a groupthink mentality. From this experience, I learned that I need to be more vocal in expressing my ideas when those ideas are in opposition to the group mentality. I need to find the balance between flexibility and assertiveness in group work.

Schmuck also discussed the ways in which one must reflect on the past, present, and future when examining a problem. This idea surfaced in many of the surveys people made for data gathering. Questions concerned how snack time had been conducted in previous classes and what perceived impact that method had on students; the present relevance and importance snack time has for students; and how students would like to see snack time done in the future. Our

in-class project also focused on the outcomes of these various components and challenged us to think about how these methods actually affected the classroom environment, not just about our personal assumptions/feelings about snack time. This approach also forced us to be “the scientist and the subject”, since we were examining situation in which we are directly involved.

Seven problem-solving steps are described in the book. Most of these steps were covered in the Condensed Action Research project, although we may have varied our method of completing some steps. Our specific problem was how to arrange “break time and provision of class refreshments in a way that enhances the educational experience,” and we made inquiries to illuminate the background of the issue. We did assessment by getting background information and talking with others about what they thought we needed to know about the problem. We didn’t really use the force field analysis in this exercise, though that component may be helpful in recognizing what obstacles could prevent us from reaching our objectives. Brainstorming was used to come up with potential survey questions, and our plan of action was to conduct surveys to gather data. Conducting a test of our surveys enabled the anticipation of obstacles, as we were then able to identify wording and formatting issues that hindered response to the questions. Had it been necessary to further pursue our work on this particular project, we could have revised our surveys to make them more effective, and then taken action by surveying those people we wanted to collect information from. After collecting the completed surveys, we would have reviewed the information and evaluated the results. This process for developing

the surveys is one epicycle in the larger process of solving the snack time problem.