



FAST TRAIN Programs

George Mason University
College of Education and Human Development
FASTTRAIN IB Certificate Program

EDUC 626: Inquiry Into Action – IB Teachers, Learners and Schools
Fall 2011

Instructor: Albert P. DuPont, Ed.D.

Phone: 301-613-7568 (cell)

Email: adupont@masonlive.gmu.edu

Course Days: Fridays and Saturdays, September 12 – November 12

Location: Francis C. Hammond Middle School Campus #2

4646 Seminary Road, Alexandria, VA 22304

Course Description:

This course explores and utilizes the action research and qualitative research process to help educational practitioners plan and complete an action research study related to IB learners, teachers or schools. Furthermore, the course examines the social, cultural and ethical issues of conducting research with students.

Prerequisites: Admission to GSE, enrollment in FASTTRAIN IB certificate program and completion of EDUC 621: Teaching and Learning in the International Baccalaureate Programs or permission of instructor.

Standards:

National Board of Professional Teaching Standards:

Proposition 1: Teachers are committed to students and their learning.

Proposition 2: Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects.

Proposition 3: Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.

Proposition 4: Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.

Proposition 5: Teachers are members of learning communities

ASTL 6: Teachers attend to the needs of culturally, linguistically and cognitively diverse learners.

ASTL 7: Teachers are change agents, teacher leaders, and partners with colleagues and families.

Area of Inquiry 4: Professional Learning:

- n. What is reflective practice and how does it support Program implementation and enhance practice?
- n. How are current standards and practices pertaining to the Program implemented?
- n. What are current innovations and ideas in the area of international education and how can these be applied to enhance the IB program?
- n. What elements of the program authorization, evaluation and curriculum review process are implemented and how do these processes enhance IB programs?
- o. What is the role of collaborative working practice in supporting the Program learning outcomes?
- o. What are the connections between Programs, vertical and horizontal planning that reinforce learner outcomes?
- p. In what ways does IB promote communities of practice?
- p. In what ways does the use of the ITC support building communities of practice?
- p. In what ways can we engage across regional and international boundaries to collaborate on IB research initiatives?
- p. In what ways can we share our findings and experiences to enhance the professional expertise of IB teachers, students and communities?

Technology (ISTE):

IV. Teachers use technology to enhance their productivity and professional practice

Learner Outcomes:

This course is designed to enable students to:

1. evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of research studies within various paradigms, including action research, using measures of rigor;
2. propose and complete an action research project that includes an overview, contextual statement, review of the literature, methodology, data analysis, conclusions, reflections and relationship to practice;
3. make explicit links between theory and practice in their own action research;
4. examine ethical considerations when conducting research with children including their own project;
5. explain the critical importance of considering multiple perspectives using different approaches to inquiry; and,
6. demonstrate leadership in conducting class discussions and presenting their action research projects to others.

Standards:

| Outcomes | NBPTS/ASTL | IB | Technology |
|-----------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| 1 | 4 | N,O,P | |
| 2 | 4 | N,O,P | IV. B |
| 3 | 1 , 4 | N,O,P | IV. B |
| 4 | 5 | N,O,P | V. D |
| 5 | 4 , 5 | N,O,P | |
| 6 | 5 , 6 | N,O,P | |

Course Delivery:

The course is delivered through a variety of on-line, face-to-face, and individualized instructional approaches. Most on-line sessions will be conducted in an asynchronous format, but students will be expected to post their own reflections and assignments and respond to peers' and instructors' postings and feedback by the end of each designated class week (midnight US eastern standard time each Monday). During class meetings there will be large group, small group, and individual activities.

Participants conduct independent research, as well as communicate with each other and the instructor via electronic media. In general, we will engage in four activities during our time together:

1. Mini-lectures, activities, and discussions related to research methods led by the instructor and supported by course text and other selected readings
2. Discussions of the week's readings led by the instructor and course participants
3. Group meetings in which students will concentrate on selected readings and provide feedback and support for each others' writing and research process
4. Individual, small group, and whole group meetings to discuss research efforts

Please note that because you have much to learn from each other, and because teaching is often a collaborative effort, you will frequently work in groups. This will give you a chance to bounce ideas off each other, to be exposed to a variety of perspectives, and to support each other as you continue to hone your teaching and researching skills.

Required Text:

Hendricks, C. (2005). *Improving schools through action research : A comprehensive guide for educators*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Mills, G. (2000/2003). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher*. Upper Saddle River, NJ.: Merrill/Prentice-Hall.

Related Text(s):

Graue, M. E. and D. Walsh (1998). *Studying Children In Context: Theories, Methods and Ethics*. New York: SAGE.

Samaras, A. and A. Freese (2006). Self-Study of Teaching Practices. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Course Requirements:

General

All assignments should be turned in on the due date indicated in the schedule below via Blackboard. The submission deadline for assignments is Sunday evening each week. All projects must be typed, in 12-point font, with one inch margins, double-spaced, in Times New Roman font. Writing quality (including mechanics, organization, and content) is figured into the overall points for each writing assignment, so please proofread carefully. Late papers and projects will not be accepted without penalty, excepting extraordinary circumstances. I am happy to clarify and lend assistance on projects and assignments, but please contact me within a reasonable timeframe. Note: I reserve the right to add, alter, or omit any assignment as necessary during the course of the semester.

A. Blackboard Participation and Assignments (10%): Participants are expected to log onto Blackboard at least twice weekly. The Blackboard URL is <https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp>. Each participant will be responsible for contributing at least one posting to each discussion, accompanied by one image/artifact that is related to the ideas and/or events described in your posting. Please post contributions by the end of the week in which the topic is discussed. Discussion postings should be thorough and thoughtful. Just posting an “I agree/disagree with your comment” or “I think the same” to someone else's thoughts is not considered adequate.

1) Assignment #1 (due September 18)

Part 1: Post a brief biographical sketch introducing yourself to the class. Prepare your sketch in Microsoft Word or another word processing program. Copy and paste this sketch to the Blackboard “Discussion Board.” Also attach a photo of yourself (not larger than 300 pixels by 300 pixels), preferably a close up of you in your work environment.

Part 2: Choose and respond to at least two of the following questions on the Discussion Board and upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe:

- As you understand it, what is the scientific method and what is its purpose?
- When you hear the term “education research” what do you think?
- What has your experience been in reading education research studies, reports or articles? How have they been beneficial?
- Have you conducted or taken part in a research project or study? If so, please describe the experience, including your role.

2) Assignment #2 (due September 22)

Part 1: Please respond to BOTH of the following questions on the Discussion Board, then upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe:

- What problem or issue in your class would you like to make your area of focus? Why?
- Action Research is often criticized because the outcomes are not generalizable. How might you respond to this concern in defending action research as a viable research method?

Be prepared to discuss your area of focus with your peers in class on September 23.

Part 2: Please respond to ONE of the following questions on the Discussion Board, then upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe:

- What steps will you take to insure that your study has met all ethical challenges?
- What is your school's ethics policy regarding the collection of data from students?

3) Assignment #3 (due September 25)

On p. 44, Miles lists the three forms of reconnaissance. During class, you will be given time to conduct reconnaissance for your area of focus. In addition, you will share your area of focus with your peers. Please prepare a written summary of the three critical activities for doing reconnaissance and upload them to the Assignments section on Bb, then upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe.

4) Assignment #4 (due October 2)

Prepare a list of ten to fifteen references (APA style) you have identified so far in your review of the literature that appear to be relevant to your study. References should be from refereed journals, books, and scholarly compilations. Please upload your list of references to the Assignments section of Bb, then upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe.

5) Assignment #5 (due October 9)

On p. 60 Mills lists the nine steps in the "Action Research Plan." Please prepare the action steps and upload them to the Assignments section on Bb, then upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe:

- i) Write an area-of-focus statement
- ii) Define the variables
- iii) Develop a research question
- iv) Describe the intervention or innovations
- v) Describe the membership of the action research group
- vi) Describe negotiations that need to be undertaken

- vii) Develop a timeline
- viii) Develop a statement of resources
- ix) Develop data collection ideas

6) Assignment #6 (due October 13)

Part 1: Please respond to ONE of the following items on the Discussion Board, then upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe:

- On p. 92 Mills defines the term “triangulation.” How will you triangulate the data collection in your study? Why did you choose these sources?
- How will you insure that your study is VALID?
- How will you insure that your data collection techniques are RELIABLE?

Part 2: Evaluate and abstract the references found in Assignment #4. Please upload your list of abstracts to the Assignments section of Bb, then upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe.

7) Assignment #7 (due October 16)

Please respond to BOTH of the following items on the Discussion Board, then upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe:

- Describe how you have addressed the issues of validity, reliability, and generalizability in your action research inquiry. Specifically, how will you know that your planned intervention actually solves your problem?
- Develop a list of propositions about the subject you are investigating. What do each of these propositions tell you about your belief system and biases?

8) Assignment #8 (due October 23)

Please respond to the following question on the Discussion Board, then upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe:

- How will you analyze each data source that you have indicated in your data collection plan (matrix)?

9) Assignment #9 (due October 30)

On p. 158 Mills lists the steps to action. Please prepare an action plan based on your action research findings, present it using the Steps to Action Chart format, and upload them to the Assignments section on Bb, then upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe.

10) Assignment #10 (due November 6)

On p. 182 Mills presents an Outline format for an Action Research Report. Develop an outline for your action research write-up that includes the headings

provided with an accompanying brief descriptive statement that captures what you will include in each section and upload them to the Assignments section on Bb. Be sure to upload one accompanying image or artifact that relates to the ideas or experiences you describe. Please contact your instructor with question or requests for information.

11) Assignment #11 (due November 12)

Each student will present his/her Action Research to the class and outside guests. Each presentation will consist of the following elements: Introduction, Research Questions, Methodology, Findings, and Implications for Practice. Each presenter will provide an executive summary and a brief list of important resources. Following the presentation the presenter will engage in a Question/Answer session with the audience. The presentations will be evaluated on: clarity, understanding of the process of action research, articulation of the implications for practice, communication skills, and use of technology.

12) Assignment #12 (due November 27)

Each student will write a report that includes the following sections: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Analysis (with accompanying samples/examples), Findings & Implications for Practice, and Reflections. (Additional information will be provided). Papers must follow current APA formatting guidelines. Upload the final to the Assignments section on Bb.

B. Readings/Journal Entries (10%): Each student will keep a critical reading log of the assigned chapters. In each entry, the student will briefly summarize the relevant chapter(s) and reflect on salient points in regard to class discussion, other readings, and their action research project. Each entry should address the following points, “Here’s what, So what, Now what” or similar. Students will be invited to share reflections in class or discussion boards.

C. Action Research Plan of Action (10%): See Assignment #5 in Part A.

D. Outline of Action Research Proposal (10%): See Assignment #10 of Part A.

E. Presentation of Action Research (25%): Each student will present his/her Action Research to the class and outside guests. Each presentation will consist of the following elements: Introduction, Research Questions, Methodology, Findings, and Implications for Practice. Each presenter will provide an executive summary and a brief list of important resources. Following the presentation the presenter will engage in a Question/Answer session with the audience. The presentations will be evaluated on: clarity, understanding of the process of action research, articulation of the implications for practice, communication skills, and use of technology.

F. Final Action Research Paper (35%): Each student will write a report that includes the following sections: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Analysis (with accompanying samples/examples), Findings & Implications for Practice, and Reflections. (Additional information will be provided). Papers must follow current APA formatting guidelines.

| <u>Assignment</u> | <u>Percent of Final Grade</u> | <u>Outcomes Addressed</u> |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Bb Participation/Assignments | 10 | 1, 3, 4, 6 |
| Readings/Journal Entries | 10 | 1, 3, 4 |
| Plan of Action | 10 | 2, 3, 4 |
| Outline of AR Proposal | 10 | 2, 3, 4 |
| Presentation of AR* | 25 | 5, 6 |
| Final AR Paper | 35 | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 |

***Designated Performance Based Assessment**

Grading Scale:

100 = A+

97-94 = A

90-93 = A-

85-89 = B+

80-84 = B

70-79 = C (not accepted for Level I or II award recommendation)

below 70 = F (does not meet course requirements)

Technology Resources:

All students are required to have access to a computer with internet access and a current GMU email account.

Relevant Web Sites:

- All students will be enrolled in the online Curriculum Center through the International Baccalaureate Organization.
- All students will have online copy of the complete IB Teacher Award Standards, Level 1.
- International Baccalaureate Organization, ibo.org/
- Practitioner Research as Staff Development, aelweb.vcu.edu

CEHD Course Expectations:

The College of Education and Human Development expects that all students abide by the following:

- Students are expected to exhibit professional behavior and dispositions (see gse.gmu.edu for a list of these dispositions).
- Students must follow the guidelines of the University Honor Code (see gmueu/catalog/apolicies/#TOC_H12 for the full Honor Code).
- Students must agree to abide by the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing (see mail.gmu.edu).

- Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the GMU Disability Center (DRC) and inform the instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester (see gmu.edu/student/drc or call 703.993.2474 to access the DRC).

Online Participation/Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to participate in all online discussions and attend all classes of courses for which they register. Online and class participation is important not only to the individual student, but to the class as whole. Online and class participation is a factor in grading; instructors may use class absence, absence of postings, tardiness in posting or attendance, or cursory postings as de facto evidence of nonparticipation and as a result lower the grade as stated in the course syllabus.

Course Outline

| Week/Class | Topics/Detail | Assignments Due by Stated Date | Readings and Assignments - to be completed by the beginning of class or Sunday evening |
|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--|
| Week of September 12 (Online) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions, course overview, syllabus, requirements • Online introductions • Origin, Types, and Processes for Educational Action Research • Reflective practice: Here's what-So what-Now what? | Assignment #1 | Hendricks, Ch. 1, 2 Mills, Ch. 1, 2 |
| Week of September 19 (Online) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to Action Research • An Exploration of the Historical and Theoretical Foundations of Action Research • Goals and Justifications of Action Research • The Action Research Process • Action Research and School Change and Improvement Process • Ethical Issues and Guidelines • Clarifying a General Idea for Action Research | Assignment #2 | Hendricks, Ch. 4 Mills, Ch. 3, 4 |
| Class #1 September 23 5-9 PM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection in Educational Practice • Different Types of Reflection and Action Research • Deciding on an Area of Focus • Procedures for Doing Reconnaissance • Reviewing Related Literature | - | Hendricks, Ch. 3, 5, 6, 7 Mills, Ch. 5, 6 |

| | | | |
|--|---|---------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizing and Writing the Literature Review | | |
| Class #2 September 24 9AM-3PM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulating Research Questions • Creating an Action Research Plan • Planning and Implementing the Intervention • Qualitative and Quantitative Data Collection Techniques • The Importance of Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability • Guidelines and Techniques for Data Analysis and Interpretation | Assignment #3 | |
| Week of September 26 (Online) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisiting Literature Reviews | Assignment #4 | |
| Week of October 3 (Online) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revisiting Action Research Plan | Assignment #5 | |
| Week of October 10 (Online) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for Data Analysis | Assignment #6 | |
| Class #3 October 14 5-9 PM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for Data Analysis | - | |

| | | | |
|---|---|----------------|--|
| Class # 4 October 15 9AM-3PM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for Data Analysis | Assignment #7 | |
| Week of October 17 (Online) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategies for Data Analysis | Assignment #8 | |
| Week of October 24 (Online) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steps in Action Planning | Assignment #9 | Hendricks, Ch. 8 Mills, Ch. 7, 8, 9 |
| October 28 5-9 PM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steps in Action Planning | - | |
| October 29 9AM-3PM | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Up Action Research • Criteria for Evaluating Action Research | - | |
| Week of October 31 (Online) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Research Report | Assignment #10 | |
| Week of November 7 (Online) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Research Report | Assignment #11 | |

| | | | |
|---|--|----------------|--|
| Class #5 November 11 5-9 PM | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparation for presentations• Peer Review | - | |
| Class #6 November 12 9AM-3PM | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Action Research presentations• Course evaluation and feedback forms | Assignment #12 | |

EDUC 626: Rubric for Action Research Presentation

| Elements | Limited (1-2) | Good (3) | Very Good (4) | Excellent (5) |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| Introduction | Makes the presentation without stating the question or its importance | Describes the question studied however supporting information is not strong | Describes the question studied and provides reason for its importance | Clearly describes the question and provides strong reasons for its importance |
| Reconnaissance/ Literature Review | Little information is shared about current research or studies reviewed | Some information is shared about current research or studies reviewed | Several examples are shared of current research, studies and/or school related information collected | Several examples are shared and connected directly to the question under study |
| Methodology | A description of the methods used is provided however no examples are shared | A description of the methods and a few examples are shared | A clear description of the methods with examples are shared | A clear and concise description of the methods along with salient examples are shared and directly connected to the inquiry |
| Analysis | A brief overview of the analysis is provided | An overview of the analysis is provided with a few examples | A clear description of the analysis is provided along with examples | A clear and concise description of the analysis, along with salient examples are provided and connected directly to the inquiry |
| Findings/Implications | A brief understanding of the findings and | A description of the findings and | A clear description of the findings and | A clear and concise description of the findings and |

| | | | | |
|--------------------|---|---|--|---|
| | implications are shared | implications are shared but do not fully connect to the inquiry | implications are share with some connection to the inquiry | implications along with specific recommendations and connections to the inquiry are shared. |
| Reflections | The presenter does not appear to have reflected on the study. | The presenter gives some evidence of reflection. | The presenter gives clear evidence of reflection. | The presenter gives clear and ample evidence of reflection. |