

## BOOK REVIEW

***Disseminating Your Action Research:  
A Practical Guide to Sharing the Results of Practitioner Research***



Craig A. Mertler (2024).  
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**Reviewed by Irene Simiyu**  
*Kibabii University, Kenya*

ID <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5622-5776>

In recent decades, teacher-research has been gaining recognition as a professional development tool, used to help practitioners examine and better understand their own practices. When teachers improve what they do in their classrooms, the experiences of their learners are likely to be enhanced, leading to a better-suited learning environment. However, researching the classroom does not have to end with the application of the solutions found. In fact, Burns (2010) lists quite a few benefits of teachers sharing their research. Nevertheless, while there is currently a growing number of published teacher-research reports (<https://mentrnet.net/open-access-resources/>), the dissemination of research findings remains a daunting step for many teachers. One reason for this might be that there seem to be few resources focusing specifically on the ways in which teacher-research findings can be disseminated. Beyond scanty knowledge about how research findings can be written up, and how far academic conventions should be followed in the case of practitioner research, the number of outlets where teachers can publish is also scarce (Libia Cárdenas, 2025). Craig A. Mertler's book *Disseminating your Action Research: A practical guide to sharing the results of practitioner research* is, therefore, a timely resource for those who may be wary of sharing the results of their research projects or are unsure about how it can be done. In particular, the book is significant for Global South contexts, where AR is increasingly accepted as 'real' research alongside traditional educational research approaches (Ogudugu, 2023; Severino, 2020).

Before we delve into a more detailed review of the book, there is a terminology issue that is worth raising right at the beginning. Namely, the choice of the author to conflate two terms: Action Research (AR) and practitioner research as meaning almost the same thing. According to Mertler, both of these terms refer to "the identical practice of educational practitioners designing and conducting their own research on self-identified problems for the purposes of seeking improvement and change with respect to the phenomenon being investigated" (p. 10). However, Hanks (2017, 2019) has emphatically pointed out that practitioner research is an umbrella term, encompassing all the different ways for the school community to investigate the classroom. Moreover, the term *practitioner research* invites a much broader audience than just teachers, such as learners, teacher trainers, etc., and thus is able to encompass such inclusive research approaches as Exploratory Practice (Hanks, 2017). Using the two concepts as metonyms creates some confusion as to what the actual focus of Mertler's volume is, and suggests that the choice of terms in the practitioner research field is based on opinions and

personal preferences. Such terminological confusion may lead to a lack of clarity in an academic dialogue. As Hanks (2017) puts it:

the names we give to things are significant. [...] Trying to wrap everything up under one name may seem tidy, but in fact such a move fails to recognise the philosophical differences underpinning these different forms of practitioner research [...] Those who try to conflate one or more of these, [...] might think they are merely being pragmatic, but this loses sight of the distinct identity of each form, and in the end leads to a lack of precision. (p. 28)

Moving onto the contents of Mertler's volume, the author starts the book with an engaging question: "Why should you concern yourself with disseminating the results of practitioner research?" (p. 1). This provides a hint of the book's focus and prepares the reader to expect answers on the forthcoming pages. As Burns (2003) contends, a lot has been written about how to undertake AR but there is not much information about the practical and innovative ways of disseminating classroom research. Mertler's book fills this gap by focusing specifically on the variety and wealth of research dissemination outlets.

The contents of the book are divided into sections with takeaway points, practical guidelines, and examples of good practices that demonstrate how to use the strategies discussed. The sections logically flow into one another to build a compelling argument for sharing practitioner research as a way of informing and influencing others about ways of solving educational challenges.

Section I provides an overview of AR as a methodology and serves as a step-by-step guide on how one can plan and execute an AR project. The author compares AR to traditional education research, pointing out that "action research *is* educational research; however, it is the research that is conducted *by* educators *for* themselves" (p. 8). What is conspicuous in this section, though, is how Mertler appears to mainly draw on his own earlier work, which he references abundantly, while omitting such key works as Burns (2010) or Smith and Rebolledo (2018). Those engaged in teacher-research may also wonder why such pertinent books as Allwright (2009) and Hanks (2017) are not mentioned as reference points. However, what stands out in this section are the numerous benefits for the practitioner. They include the empowerment of educators, which has a ripple effect on the experiences of the learners, as well as professional growth opportunities that arise from continuous learning. A brief example of practitioner research in action included in this section (p. 33) is a useful demonstration of how the outlined research steps can be applied.

Section II discusses the products for disseminating and sharing practitioner research. Mertler gives prominence to written reports (Chapter 3) over other forms of sharing, which highlights the fact that academic writing has been the primary mechanism of presenting research and research findings from time immemorial. However, as Burns (2003) observes, teachers find academic writing daunting because it is hard work and its iterative nature requires a lot of time, which they do not have. To help overcome these challenges, Mertler provides a primer on academic writing, which usefully focuses on the conventions of style, format, and organization. Other formats of research dissemination described in this section include presentations (Chapter 4) and visual ones like posters, infographics and video vignettes (Chapter 5). Importantly, there are ethical implications pertinent to the use of all of these formats, which the author highlights at the end of each chapter. This is important for those practitioners who may not have any training in research and who may find themselves pondering how to share their findings without revealing the identities of the participants. Yet,

even for this dilemma, Mertler offers practical solutions, such as the use of aggregate information to ensure anonymity and getting written consent for sharing videos and pictures.

In Section III, Mertler explores strategies that a teacher-researcher can use to formally or informally share findings from their AR projects. First of all, the author discusses refereed publications and provides useful guidance regarding the process of submitting to such journals (Chapter 6). Next, he turns to face-to-face and virtual conference presentations (Chapter 7), before diving into the plethora of technology-based outlets for sharing research (Chapters 8, 9). The author provides guidelines and best practices in the use of social media spaces like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn and alternative options like vlogs, blogs, podcasts, and personal websites. Of particular interest are such unconventional outlets that are often missing in various resources on practitioner research, such as Tweets, Instagram, Vlogs, Vimeo, Zines, and LinkedIn. In this regard, Mertler provides useful guidelines on how to create and use these platforms.

The last section of the book is aptly labelled: “You can do this (and please do!)”, which is an upbeat invitation for practitioner researchers to follow through and follow up on different ways to engage and disseminate the findings of their AR projects. In Chapter 10, the author revisits the initial question “Why should you concern yourself with disseminating the results of practitioner research?” (p. 1). Here, Mertler is in agreement with scholars like Burns (2010) and Smith (2020) that not sharing results makes research incomplete and potentially takes away the opportunity from other practitioners to learn about existing solutions to educational challenges. Disseminating research results is a means of sustaining professional development through the critical consumption of findings that should lead to more inquiry (Burns, 2003; Smith & Rebolledo, 2018). For the teacher-researcher, therefore, disseminating findings is not an end but a means to ensure AR flourishes through further investigation of classroom practices.

While the book is well-organized, there are a couple of structure and content-related aspects, which are worth pointing out. To begin with, I feel that the overview of AR and the primer on conducting it, found in Section I, would be best left for a general research textbook. This information does not reflect the title and focus of the book, which is disseminating practitioner research. In fact, the information in Section I is more useful for a practitioner researcher starting off on their AR journey than someone who has completed the process and is seeking ideas on how to disseminate their findings. In my view, the book would have best begun with Section II in order to meet the expectations of the reader who picks it off the shelf or in a bookstore.

Secondly, in the Introduction Mertler attempts to outline the difference between disseminating and sharing AR results. In my view, there is a thin line between the two terms and bringing this up might confuse readers of the book who may be required to unconsciously keep checking if the strategy being discussed will result in sharing or disseminating findings. Research findings are pieces of considered information and so *dissemination* seems to be a better term, reflecting the process of getting the findings out there. *Sharing* holds the connotation of a less formal activity. Thus, I believe it would have been best for the author to use *dissemination* throughout the book in order to avoid potential confusion.

Despite the issues mentioned above, Craig A. Mertler’s volume is still a great read. Mertler’s description of the various dissemination strategies is enhanced by the evidence that he has used them himself, making the text inspiring for any reader who may doubt the

practicability of the suggestions made. I highly recommend this book to educational practitioners as well as university-level educators who are seeking practical ways of sharing their research projects or resources for guiding their students.

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### The Reviewer

**Irene Simiyu** is a Kenyan teacher educator in Kibabii University, where she teaches education courses and communication skills. She is a member of [MenTRnet](http://mentrnet.net), a community of teacher-research mentors. Her research interests are in the areas of teacher professional development, teacher learning and Exploratory Action Research. She has mentored teachers in the British

Council project “English Connects Action Research: Learnings from the African Classrooms”.  
Email: [isimiyu@kibu.ac.ke](mailto:isimiyu@kibu.ac.ke)

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author has no conflict of interest to declare. There is no financial interest to report. This submission is my original work.