Editorial

Sarimah Shaik-Abdullah,¹ Yoon Sook Jhee² & Mohd Syafiq Aiman Mat Noor³

¹School of Education, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Kedah, Malaysia
²Faculty of Education, Languages, Psychology & Music, SEGi University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
³School of Education, University of Leeds, West Yorkshire, United Kingdom

We are truly honoured to serve as editors for the inaugural issue of the Malaysian Journal of Action Research. Our journal not only aims to showcase the invaluable contributions of Malaysian action researchers but to also warmly welcomes international perspectives. By doing so, we aim to underscore the significant impact of action research on the broader engagement on teacher development and pedagogical innovation. This inaugural issue features a diverse range of contributions, from university academics as well as dedicated school practitioners, hailing not only from Malaysia but also from Ireland. These nine articles span various action research philosophies and methodologies, including keynotes, conversations, interviews, classroom-based action research, and reflective practice. Four articles are written in Bahasa Melayu, thus showcasing the rich tapestry of perspectives specific to the Malaysian context, and neighbouring countries.

The first article is written by an invited author, David Coghlan, based on his keynote presentation at ICAR 2022. David describes in depth the evolution of his insider action research framework. He emphasises the importance of the theorising process during this journey, advocating the need for attention to both internal and external data. His central concept, ‘interiority’, refers to the conscious process of self-awareness in our learning journey. His personal experiences led him to challenge traditional views of action research that depict researchers as external agents, emphasising instead the role of insider researchers who lead change from within their organisations. David’s work is a refreshing take on scholarship that emphasises the transformative power of personal inquiry and offers valuable insights for academics and practitioners alike. His narrative serves as an invitation for others to embark on their journey of discovery in the world of research and scholarship.

In the second article, we (Sarimah Shaik-Abdullah and Mohd Syafiq Aiman Mat Noor) engage in a dialogue with Jack Whitehead about Living Educational Theory (LET) research. Whitehead presents LET and underlines the role of educators as the instigators of their research. He introduces the concept of ‘living contradiction’ in LET, explaining how differences between one’s values and practices can initiate a process of reflection aimed at achieving consistency. This concept promotes growth and highlights the influence of LET. He also discusses the use of LET in specific cultural contexts, focusing on the Malaysian education system. He notes its potential to contribute to societal progress and manage power dynamics in research. The dialogue ends with a call to action from Jack, emphasising growth, inclusivity, and flourishing. Through this dialogue, we provide insight into LET research, emphasising its potential to shape education and extend its reach.

In the third article, we (Mohd Syafiq Aiman Mat Noor and Yoon Sook Jhee) and Muhammad Zulfadhli Kamarudin, also drew inspiration from
Kathryn Herr and Gary Anderson’s keynote presentation at ICAR 2022. Kathryn and Gary describe the dynamic nature of action research as a transformative methodology that stretches across a broad spectrum of disciplines and approaches, and covers various positions, from full insider to complete outsider. They also underscore the pivotal role of credibility, trustworthiness, and validity in action research, emphasising its robustness amidst widespread scepticism. They acknowledge the hurdles that action researchers encounter, such as its marginalisation within academic and organisational environments. Nevertheless, they passionately advocate for its undeniable value in tackling real-world dilemmas, amplifying marginalised voices, and propelling substantial change. Their discussion emerge as a compelling call to action. Despite the challenges, the capacity for action research to effectuate positive transformation amplifies its perpetual relevance. Kathryn and Gary’s inspiring words encourage academics, practitioners, and community members to harness the power of this dynamic approach, thereby fostering a more inclusive and equitable terrain of knowledge and practice.

The fourth article, written by Mohd Syafiq Aiman Mat Noor and his co-authors, explore action research through the captivating lens of cooking ‘rendang’. Drawing on their personal and professional experiences in the Malaysian context, they highlight commonalities between rendang and action research, focusing on three shared tenets: contextuality, continuity and quality. In their comparison, they demonstrate how the cultural richness and unique preparation methods of rendang mirror the complexity, adaptability, and meticulousness inherent in action research methodologies. By shedding light on the importance of context, iterative learning, and a commitment to quality, they emphasise the need for researchers to view action research as a journey of continuous improvement and exploration. Mohd Syafiq Aiman and his co-authors also highlight the potential for action research to have impacts that extend beyond the immediate participants and influence larger communities and sectors. Thus, the preparation of rendang serves as a potent metaphor for understanding the intricate world of action research.

Selvamalar Selvarajan provides a profound exploration of the challenges involved in English language instruction in the fifth article. She presents three vignettes from the Malaysian polytechnic education context, vividly depicting dilemmas related to student proficiency, motivation for English learning, and the dynamics of online student engagement. The narrative highlights the need for a balance between creating a ‘fun’ learning environment and achieving academic objectives. She emphasises the importance of adaptability, encouraging educators to consider innovative teaching methods to better engage students. Despite the challenges posed by the online learning environment, the narrative highlights the transformative potential of these dilemmas. Selvamalar advocates for continuous reflection and adaptation in teaching methodologies to cater for evolving learning needs and contexts. The narrative serves as a testament to the dynamic, ever-evolving nature of teaching.

As mentioned earlier, this issue includes contributions from authors who have submitted their articles in Bahasa Melayu. Among the four contributions written in Bahasa Melayu is the sixth article by Julianah Ahmad and Mohd Syafiq Aiman Mat Noor explore the challenges deaf pupils face and suggest instructional strategies to facilitate their learning using a classroom-based action research methodology. They introduce the concept of ‘funds of identity’, which incorporates pupils’ lived experiences into learning. This approach aims to create meaningful learning materials, thus improving deaf pupils’ reading experiences into learning. This approach aims to create meaningful learning materials, thus improving deaf pupils’ reading skills. The authors emphasise empathy in teaching and advocate for materials reflective of pupils’ abilities and interests. They highlight the effectiveness of face-to-face and group learning settings over individual and virtual settings for deaf pupils. Julianah and Mohd Syafiq Aiman Mat Noor suggest further exploration of a wider range of identity funds to improve educational materials for deaf pupils. The article provides insights into the unique needs of deaf pupils and presents strategies for a more effective learning environment.
In the seventh article, Nor Naimmah Othman and her co-authors explore the ‘sight word’ approach in special education, focusing on pupils with Down Syndrome. The study is rooted in a classroom-based action research methodology, emphasising the need for individualised teaching strategies. The authors present the unique challenges that pupils with Down Syndrome face and discuss how the sight word approach can aid them. Through the presentation of three vignettes, they illustrate the process by which the sight word approach can support students with Down Syndrome in developing their reading skills. Naimmah and her co-authors stress the importance of patience, creativity, and understanding pupils’ needs. The research contributes to special education practices and discusses the role of action research in education. Through their approach, they demonstrate the need to refine teaching methods to cater to the diverse needs of pupils. The improvements observed in the pupils’ learning experiences validate their approach.

The eight article in this issue, penned by Daniel Lu Yew Ching and his co-author, explores the integration of mobile learning (M-Learning) into a communication skills course during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their study highlights the role of M-Learning in maintaining educational continuity among a peer-mentoring group (guidance and counselling). They present a classroom-based action research study in a secondary school context in Sarawak, Malaysia, detailing the use of a WhatsApp group, Google Forms, and TikTok as part of the course. The action research process was adapted in their study, so that it consisted of three main phases: reflection, action, and assessment. Daniel and his co-author argue that the flexible nature of M-Learning enhances the educational experience and promotes communication skills and peer mentorship. This study emphasises the potential of M-Learning as an engaging platform for education, particularly in challenging times, and invites educators to explore innovative digital strategies.

Zainoriza Zainun shares her personal journey as a Special Education Teacher in Perak, Malaysia during the period of Home-based Teaching and Learning (PdPR) in the final article of this issue. Throughout this experience, she encountered various dilemmas, particularly when it came to parents’ involvement as facilitators and intermediaries in assessing their children’s skill tasks. It became evident to her that effective and consistent communication, as well as nurturing relationships among pupils, parents, and teachers, play a pivotal role in implementing meaningful PdPR. Furthermore, the creation of a comprehensive PdPR manual for parents is indispensable, emphasising the importance of consulting them regarding their roles and responsibilities in supporting their children’s assignments at home. This valuable experience serves as a profound lesson for teachers who will be implementing PdPR and assigning homework to their pupils in the future.

This issue presents a wide array of articles that explore various facets of action research, teaching, and learning. From innovative frameworks, philosophies and methodologies in action research to tackling challenges in language instruction, special education, and guidance and counselling, each article offers valuable insights and practical strategies applicable to educators, researchers and practitioners. The inclusion of contributions in Bahasa Melayu further enriches the discourse, underscoring the importance of cultural context in educational practices within Malaysia. These articles serve as a reminder of education’s transformative potential, emphasising the need for personalised approaches and ongoing reflection and adaptation. Overall, this issue stands as a testament to the continuous pursuit of knowledge and improvement in education, with the hope of contributing to the advancement of action research scholarship in Malaysia and beyond.

**ORCID**

Sarimah Shaik-Abdullah
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1995-4328
Yoon Sook Jhee
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0412-4732
Mohd Syafiq Aiman Mat Noor
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4123-7357