* Action research is a systematic inquiry conducted by educators with a vested interest in the teaching and learning process, for the purpose of gathering information about how their school operates, how they teach, and how their students learn.
* Action research is done *by*educators *for*themselves and is typically characterized as systematic inquiry into one’s own practice.
* Action research is a process by which current educational practice can be changed for the better.
* Since action research is largely about examining one’s own practice, reflection is an integral component of the research process.
* Reflection is the act of critically exploring what you are doing, why you decided to do it, and what its effects have been.
* Action research is centered on a process of systematic collection of information, followed by active reflection.
* Many aspects of action research characterize it as a unique type of educational research.
* There are at least five important reasons for the use of action research in educational settings:
  + It helps connect theory to practice.
  + It can result in the improvement of educational practice.
  + It can foster widespread school improvement.
  + It empowers teachers and other educators.
  + It can serve as a mechanism for promoting professional growth.
* Action research may be seen as the epitome of customizable professional development for educators.
* Two types of action research are participatory action research and practical action research.
  + The purpose of participatory action research is to improve the quality of organizations, communities, and family lives by empowering individuals and groups.
  + The purpose of practical action research is to address and solve specific problems in classrooms, schools, or other communities; it focuses on the “how-to” approach to the process of conducting action research.
* Guiding assumptions for the implementation of practical action research include the following:
  + Individual teachers or teams of teachers are capable of determining the nature of an action research investigation.
  + Action researchers are committed to continuous professional development and school improvement through the process of critical reflection.
  + Action researchers are capable of choosing their own area of focus, determining plans for conducting research, and developing action plans based on their findings.
* The action research process is cyclical and consists of four stages:
  + Planning stage
  + Acting stage
  + Developing stage
  + Reflecting stage
* Reconnaissance is unique to action research and is the process of gathering preliminary background information.
* Formal reconnaissance can take three forms: self-reflection, description, and explanation.
  + Self-reflection is a process of reflecting on your own understanding of and values regarding education.
  + The second component of reconnaissance is to formally describe the situation or problem that serves as the focus of action research.
  + The final step is to provide an explanation as to why the problem is occurring, and perhaps to develop a hypothesis about the potential outcome of an action research study.
* An action plan is the ultimate goal of an action research study—the “action” part of action research.
* An action plan is a proposed strategy for implementing the results of an action research project.
* Action planning can occur at the individual educator level, collaborative team level, or school or district level.
* Five possible and common outcomes of action research studies are as follows:
  + A greater understanding of the situation or problem is developed.
  + A new problem is discovered.
  + A plan, program, or instructional method is found to be effective.
  + A plan, program, or instructional method is found to need modification.
  + A plan, program, or instructional method is found to be ineffective.
* Validity of action research is determined by establishing rigor, which refers to the quality, validity, accuracy, and credibility of action research and its findings.
* Techniques used to provide evidence of rigor in action research studies include the following:
  + Repetition of the cycle
  + Prolonged engagement and persistent observation
  + Experience with the action research process
  + Triangulation of data
  + Member checking
  + Peer debriefing
* Some strengths of action research are that it can be conducted by virtually any professional educator or collaborative team of educators, it is focused on the improvement of educational practice, it provides a mechanism for educators to investigate problems in a systematic and scientific manner, and it can aid in the development of communities of professional learners.
* There are no substantial limitations or weaknesses of action research, provided it is used in a suitable context and with an appropriate purpose in mind.