Pedagogy Matters: Episode 7 Transcript

Hello and welcome to the latest episode of the Pedagogy Matters podcast. The purpose of this podcast is to bring to the fore some key topics of conversation in relation to learning and teaching to discuss the breakdown aspects of practice and provide snippets, advice and guidance as to how we can integrate these into our daily practice today, I'm delighted to be joined by Christine Calder, academic Development Leader Dundee and Angus College, and today's topic is focused on action research. Christine, welcome. How are you? I'm alright, thanks, given everything that's going on, I think we're all just battling today. How are you doing? Good thanks.

Will consider 11 months in in the appears to be an element of a vending site. Now hopefully it's positive. But yeah, it's really interesting that account chickens too soon. So today we're talking about another topic which is very dear to your heart in terms of action research. So I think it's probably start with, I guess. How did you get into it? And kind of what it what is action research mean to you, Christine? I think, um, one of these things is I moved into the world of professional learning, back merger time when a lot of the colleges in Scotland merged, and. Started the day of more and more and professional learning and deeper into professional learning, which is part of my job is

a large part of my job. I came across the term action research and be me. I was like, I wonder why that is and started to nosey around start to read a little bit about it and and and actually over the years got in touch with couple of people down in England who were incredibly strong with action research and have research networks. I am going so ultimately that's kind of read it. Kicked off from but actually. I went down, was lucky enough to go down to to Manchester to actually go to one of the research meet and speak to lots and lots of practitioners who use action research regularly annually just to push their own professional

layer and then actually get the

benefits out there for themselves.

But for the students,

for their colleagues and so on.

lt's just.

It was a piece of the jigsaw that

was kinda messing in my opinion,

and that there's a lot of people

maybe doing something similar

in their own practice,

but maybe not with the framework etc.

That's needed behind action research to

give it a little bit more rigor much.

I know we'll talk about and then

we went to a, but yeah, it's just.

I find it so inspirational that I

started to use it myself and I thought well,

family is going to have to promote it.

I l better dip my touring as well and

it has transformed my own teaching practice.

I'm over the last few years and

and just purely by word of mouth and speaking to people around the college. Others have sort of trial to as well and it has had great benefits. Yes, and you know. I mean tell you to very much inspired by it. I think it's just start with what actually is action research. What is it? What does it mean? What are those two words mean? I think that's the thing. It's like there's two words there, and it's also known under 100 and one other terms as well, so you might find people talking about practical inquiry or practitioner inquiry, and again, just to be clear, if we talk about practitioner is not necessarily talking about schools, it's something with an education setting that practices the craft of teaching in some way,

shape or form.

So lecture I might be called

teacher research.

And again, the word teachers

interchangeable and evidence informed.

Will talk about whatever we're doing.

We want it to be evidence informed and

it's the same kind of thing we design.

Every things come from the action.

Research is 1 one major

place that it can come from,

but for me the key thing is the

word action is personal to me.

Therefore the action happens in my classroom.

It's an area and as a classroom,

but I will say this though it

could be my gym polka dots,

yet like transporting fitness,

it could be a workshop.

It could be any practical

area studio and so on so.

But the actual action happens in the classroom, and yeah. It's about the craft of teaching, so it's very, very personal to me. And then the research side is in there and I often find that researchers are scary, but for a lot of people, absolutely it doesn't need to be. So we started calling. Let me search with a little RA or started to run and talk about action research. We talk about a do you want to enhance your teaching? Do you want to experiment with your teaching and start to call it by something slightly different to get away from this term research? And actually all the research, but is.

You know,

trying something written about about it and then trialing it by any is a little bit fancier in the background if you like, but it definitely involves that experimentation with something around the craft of teaching. So just those two words can be broken right down into the basics, and I think in all fairness, anybody doing it might, after one or two runs at it, go. Yeah, it's quite a grand title action research, but actually it's we've all done it in some way, shape or form already and then. Put it under the term of action research. We just give it a bit of a framework that can people can follow to give a little bit more rigor behind it.

Nothing that's really interesting is, again, you're absolutely right there in terms of when he returned research. I think, wow, that's big. That's scary. It's gonna take a lot of time. A lot of information or resource. But actually, really, it's around and within limbs terms. Look at elements of this trial and error, but that's how people do with part of the practice, but maybe formalizing that a little bit to have a real purpose to try and have dinner and overarching impact. And I think that then leads onto the way, so why? Why do you believe that this is important? Or why does a sector and other colleagues believe that this is important thing to do? I think it's growing in the sector for us.

I do think it's growing.

I think it's got police to grow as well I.

For me.

I'm a lecturer at heart.

There was a PE teacher and then I

moved into the Lake during world and

I love the teaching element of it and.

The world's been so bonkers for the

last while so much out of our control.

And it's that sort of a.

What can you actually can control?

I can control what happens in the classroom,

so therefore it's a reflection on me

as a professional and I want it to be

the best it possibly can before me.

For my career,

I could be in this career for 3540 years

and it's quite a lot of time on it.

You never want to stagnate,

you want to keep going.

You want to keep yourself enthused an

otherwise? What's the point as well? If you're going to be in the job that long, you gotta keep yourself current, but also for the benefit the student. So no matter how many students come through your doors. You want experience to be inspirational to them. You want the experience to really grab them and for them to get there. The joy of coming to college and the joy out of actually, you know, learning about this subject that you love. So I think that's part of it. In the background is maintaining that enthusiasm yourself and again at that idea of professionalism and the. You know professional identity side of things. So as a lecturer I absolutely am. I love the job.

I love being with the classes.

I l love learning,

teaching and I love the subject matter and.

Stuff that's fantastic about the job as such,

but actually in order to feel

that I am involved in it,

I'm not having so many things,

so many policy etc.

Applied to me in order for me

to be part of that,

that whole scape or for the

whole scope of further education.

The college world have to be involved in it.

And this is one way for me to get

involved in it rather than just

have somebody coming along soon.

Or you must do XY zed.

Actually even reading some stuff,

reading some literature,

reading some whether it's blogs.

Whether it's.

Bigger pieces of research,

but actually being able to go

to know something.

I recognize that in my teaching

and my workshop,

or a recognized that and the

way I am with my students,

or actually having the ability

to go not disagree with that.

And it's OK to disagree with

stuff that you've read to go.

I disagree with it,

but the main thing is the reasons why.

What have you seen that

makes you disagree with it,

and that's fantastic that

critical passwords but critical

stance on the literature or

whatever you're reading about is

absolutely key to action research.

I'm on for me is key to

being a professional lecture. We're absolutely allowed to be critical and by critical within the positive and the negative of what you see in what you're reading and that as long as we are engaging without literature and actually taking away that, that stands, that that agreement or questioning it a little bit, and then we can take it interaction research if we think there's something wrong there, something we can adapt. This is our own individual way, maybe starting to just. Put it out there when we get to the end of the research, that will actually I disagreed with something I've trialed, something I've come up with a great result and put it out there for other people.

Maybe to read about or to talk about and. That's how that's how change happens, and we think there's there were 5000 lecturers. And in colleges in Scotland, that's a lot of people. If we even harness a few people doing that throughout Scotland, that's a voice. That's a college voice that's electrovoice making an impact in the absolute right. There. I'm looking at drawback to a couple of things. You said no. So fundamentally, it's to improve your own practice and improve the learning of your learners. And I think another point you mentioned around, you know it's a mad world analogy is quite a bit. There's a lot of noise out there.

You know around what is effective teaching,

especially in the online

world around breakout rooms,

quizzes,

forms,

this of which is some

really effective practice,

and I think just a drawback

in the purpose action.

Research what you're seeing there is to

test things to find out what works for you,

and then to share that more

broadly to go through a process

of trial and error to reflect,

to try and inform yourself,

and trying to inform others.

And you're absolutely right,

going back about 5 or 6 minutes,

you talk more as a real drive in a real

clamor for evidence informed practice.

And I'm gonna sit to the average

lecture who might not have really been in this world before. You know, as a term of sport, run marginal gains, how can you improve your practice by 1% of the time and this may just be an example of how you may well do that across certain topics around reading the researcher or trying to improve elements of your questioning islands of your modeling or effective instruction. I think it's fair to say that action research is just the method of semi formalizing or formalizing that air of interest for yourself or under the sink, and understanding what worked for them. And using that to inform your future practice is at the end of the waterway. So now for the easy question, Christine, how do you do it?

It's a really important, so I'm not thinking right. I've got a lot of great ideas. I want to test. Test my teacher now. This action research. How do I do it? Well, I think this is never made a broadcast. This is like we've been here for couple of days or no. In all seriousness, I would say family is wanting to do. I would read a fair bit about and there's lots of good things on YouTube. Jean Mcniff is a amazing with action. Research is just lovely as well. Maybe I did meet her once and there's there's plenty out there and there's plenty of frameworks out there, but the one that read a fair bit now and the one that kind of child is that first and foremost.

We are professionals and we knew our teaching. Better than anybody else. Somebody walking in the classroom? Get snippet your line manager. Here's what each lecturer has to say about their own craft, their own teaching. But actually we we don't control of it, so we know where there are issues with like this off. So the first thing is probably to identify a problem, and that might again always based outside, always based on your own personal teaching. I so that is very meaningful to you and the students get their forget the benefits as well. So identify problem something that maybe needs improving. I'm kind of run through the example

'cause I was thinking of it beforehand, so Dad went away or back and. I taught anatomy and the students often came in with a bit of our fixed mindset around anatomy and I can't do that. It wasn't good at it's cool, and so on, and there's lots closed book exams in anatomy, maybe 5-6 weeks worth. Close book exam, 5-6 weeks more teaching closed book exam and it kind of struck me afterwards. Speaking to the students quite often they were like I knew that answer. I just couldn't get it out. I knew that and I've spoken to them before the exam. Support them after, but something just wasn't clicking for them and so for me that was a problem. I so read up a little bit more

about a whole host around retrieval practice and how to help, or how I thought could be possible to help the students. Getting a better place before the exam. I didn't think there's gonna be too much would change around my own teaching as such a. I just thought there's something I could do to help them. Had spoken to the students beforehand in previous years, Cutlass for many, many years and in previous years and they very much wanted fairly directed way of teaching. They didn't want to go down cooperative learning and they wanted to be told because it's too big a deal in their their words that they got this wrong. So they wanted to be reassured that somebody knew what they were talking about was

standing in front of them taking them.

Do that, which is fair enough.

They so readily,

but about sort of retrieval practice and so on spoke to the students actually wanted them involved in this, 'cause they were doing their own research unit. So nice to get them come along in the journey with what I was thinking of doing, and we agreed that actually let's just do something straight before the exam. Charming doesn't get a good name, and it's not coming because all the teaching and all this other stuff was done well beforehand. But actually what we did is give them 45 minutes half their space to do a quiz. Simple as that before the exam. It would take them through areas that we knew that they struggled with in the exam, but also some of the commonplace side of things I and that was that was with my reading right now through my literature getting bit critical about it going actually common gets a bad name, but this doesn't necessarily coming. This is just looking over. Notes right before the exam I. Then took it back into my own hands and started to look at my objectives to go. What do I really want to get from this? And again, that the whole idea of getting clear objectives was absolutely crucial. 'cause he goes down the rabbit hole and you come over something completely different than you started with. So be clear with yourself. Of course you can be flexible, but if you start to change objectives at that point,

I'd go back to the start again to think about what actually is the problem and have a read or watch YouTube and so on about the right areas. So next stage was clear objectives. And it really was about what I'm trying to find out. Drilling right down into what it was. It was the real real crux of the problem. I keep it as simple as possible. Next stage was the evidence was going to be helpful. What can I start to use in terms of evidence that would allow me to improve practice but a ethics and I'll get back to the ethics in a repair. But the evidence that I could use to also see if there has been any improvement or not for me. I was looking at that stage to still have previous years results of these exams

and also be looking at this current year.

So that was a little bit of the

quantitative data that I could use,

but actually.

RIM for students.

So we could really,

really,

really rich qualitative data

if they want to talk about it.

I know there are other ways

to get qualitative data too,

so that case that's the next stage was

this gathering that evidence actually

trialing it and seeing how it goes?

Picking up all that qualitative

and quantitative data?

And again, it's not.

It's not like Master research

is not PhD research,

it can be quite like touch,

and that's OK.

I'd probably say that's really crucial about this is absolutely OK. 'cause this is done alongside and. During your day to day Job doesn't have to be massive 'cause we've gone through the process anyway. I am. And then it's evaluate. So for me, when I started to look at the differences between after we got gotten here. So the differences between previous years results and this year's results were particularly brought in a quest beforehand that it was quite amazing. Quite amazing that all the students about this is. We also had two previous years results in there very similar, and then this year, for instance, percentage wise it went from 25% on a full reset down to 1%.

So it was quite for me that was an absolute gobsmacking. My goodness something has worked here again. That yes, there are variables that absolutely are variables, but regardless, it was like something really, really nice has happened here. An actually the remediation rates went down as well from 23% down to 19%. So in all fairness, I was like it was a wow. This is this is really positive and again they probably the last stage for me would be. Implementing changes absolutely for me. There's no that was two years ago that that we piece of action research. Brought up, shared it with some colleagues, but actually I implemented those changes and have not gone back since, and that's a key.

But you know, it's so she first was bottom. Proving your own practice for your own. I think we said towards start with kind of of the podcast, but it's interesting points there and obviously. It's important that as as lecturers as teachers, we do this anyway. We consciously think. How can we teach better? How can we? Have an impact on certain metrics. Obviously within our gift this time which we can do, so I guess drawing from what you're saying, then the process of action research really just formalizing that and making a more conscious, more explicit. And it's interesting. He said then terms of at the start. Think about the why and the how wonder what. So what do you want to find out? Again with teaching you can be as much as you want it to be, but really important drawback to something quite tangible that you can measure. Distance travel isn't in some respects, ideally exam grades. And yes, as you alluded to rightly. There's a lot of different variables that could influence us, but I guess the more you do this, the more then this becomes more accurate. To understand the impact of these things that happen. And then there was interest rate. You said that towards the end in terms of then shared the strategy great might not work for all, but it's useful for other people to know. Actually, he isn't here

somehow worked for me.

This is how This is why there's evidence

that that that's really important to us.

Being reflective practitioners.

I think it's really interesting,

and then I know a lot

of people business well.

How do you draw us together?

So what do you do?

What is the Action research report?

Look? Lakers aura set.

We are one of the themes, so don't you?

Thoughts are on that.

Let's say there's this.

There's 101 ways to do it,

and something that always talking

about him to be share practice.

How do we share this good practice and?

Back down to a Ashton college.

It was an England and they had this

whole EFI research mean fantastic

where lots of practitioners from different areas came together for a day and actually just showed each other what they had done. There was a couple of key speakers and so on, and there is well, it was really really enjoyable day and I think for me it's purely because it was all about learning and teaching. Actual learning and teaching stuff that you could come away with and go. Oh, I'm going to try that. I think that's built into me and it was just like. That might not be from me, but my God was interesting to hear that person's experience. So there's a few different ways some people got on the presentation, and all those brought along a poster where they just condensed all that

information and they put the posters up and will be available for a chat. There was a lovely little speed dating session set up as well, where you kind of had the headers and you could go and speak to people as and when you want it. So let's say there's there's loads and loads of ways for me. I wrote it up into a kind of poster presentation that I gave to people if they wanted to look at it. Gonna give it a couple of colleagues who actually were about like this. It didn't race. Then I'm going to try that and not maybe think it was like six months later I call it came back when I tried exactly what you did and it worked for me and I'm going to keep with it. And again they didn't have to go through

the kind of the same process I did, but they just they just creamed off the benefit there and they saw the positive results from that. As we say it don't work in every Department. Our students are very different, but it's certainly something that. It's not. I think that's one thing for me about action research is. I forget the ethics right? There's going to be benefits all over the place and there will be no detriment. And that's something that I would see it as you head through the process. So there are various frameworks we can follow out there, but I would say guitar. Most college will probably have a group of people who are interested in research and active research

group and some that have got really research expertise in there. Get him involved, get them to think about. The ethical side of it, so I think I think thinking about when we look at bigger research and action research is there's a power dynamic. We're doing it in our classroom with their students, who would ultimately assessing social definite power bonds that we've got to talk about their eye and therefore the ethics are quite crucial. So focusing on ourselves first and foremost helps there definitely helps her, but there is a beat up to British Educational Research Association have ethical guidelines for. All educators until their kids starting point to have a wheel account and get your head around eye and this sort

of who needs to know in your college and who needs to kind of prove it. Not necessarily saying that they'll get mad like if you go to University today, PhD, there must have a approval process, not like that, but more than likely most colleges will have a a bit of a proposal paperwork. Nothing too lengthy, just what are you doing? Why you do not want your reasons? What ethical process will be taken into account? Have there been any issues that you think you might encounter and what are you going to do to make sure this? Not detrimental to the students to colleagues and so on I guess. Important point to note there on the ethical practice that considerations because yeah, that's a real pertinent

point in relation to this, and I know from speaking lectures in my experience in the past in different colleges, there's often a cynicism towards this innocent in all actuality not, but perception of. Well it's gonna take me more time to do. It's going to you know why would I use this? Actually, as a practitioner, roles involved in our practice anyway and surely makes sense. I've tried and tested method that works for others that informs your practice and I'm going to be really going to lower the tone right now and use a tick tock analogy. Now my daughter enjoys Tik T.O.K as is most young people do, but I guess it's a view of you see is really quick 1520 second videos where the perfected a recipe or perfected

in a really unhealthy breakfast.

I'm not gonna say that action research,

but it's similar sort of principles

by someone's got out and tried

different methods.

Then you'll go pick it up and

use in your practice.

That's exactly what this is,

but really, to help make us.

More effective, better teachers.

And it's a really interesting point is again,

as a practitioner,

I didn't really get involved

as much as I should have,

but I think it was more because

it wasn't as prevalent.

And I know in Scotland you're heavily

involved with in a research network receipts.

I don't wanna talk a little

bit about that now as well.

In terms of Ken,

so if you don't make it any better, what can is and what that means and kind of what it's all about really will be really helpful. Sure, well myself and a couple of colleagues, so that's a Patrick O'Donnell from Perth College and Kevin Brosnan from University Sterling I I've been working on this for a couple of years. To be fair, there's been a massive gap in the market. In terms of literature we talked about in terms of anything that really can't influence what we do in colleges. In Scotland I there's been conversations all over the place about what policies have been written specifically for colleges, and quite often we find that we are. Ultimately. Following a policy that was maybe

written for schools or maybe written for a particular area that not necessarily for colleges because each college is so unique and so different and so he's got some conversation started about. Well, actually, where is the evidence in the background around colleges? Where is all this literature? We it's not really anywhere or it may be totally interspersed in various journals are behind paywalls that actually the average college lecturer and manager can access. So who's going to do something about it? OK, well nobody. Unless we do so there's the whole action research side of things coming in. Again, it's about over practice over sector,

so let's actually maybe try and do something about it. So Karen was created. So colleges, action inquiry, research network with a lovely arckanum much easier. I but say yes, so it was created and spent on me while talking to people and thinking about how this could best benefit the college community. So ultimately what we've got is a Journal and it left a little get launched at the end of this week. So it should be out there for a when pedagogy matters, goes live and. Couple of Meanwhile couple drivers behind it was. Everyone goes through or if you're going to the college and you're not qualified lecturer for the line and teacher, you're going to go through your teaching

qualification and further education and. I've been involved in helping to deliver that for seven years, six years now, and some of the essays some of the work that goes on and it is based on inquiry is based very much on in action research and in some cases, but the work that comes out is amazing and who gets to read it. Nobody just gets popped in a draw an actually we owe it to everybody in this sector to actually make these kind of things available. If the person wants to share it. So that was one big reason behind here and there are people doing Masters and PHD's and. You name it, the the work is so specific to the Scottish sector.

We're not the biggest sector out there, so because it's so specific and into that niche area. Actually to get a big publication to look at you, it's gonna prove an issue, but the work is fantastic, but it's maybe not going to get published in an International Journal because it's so niche market for Scotland and a curriculum or our particular citing regional areas one so forth. So Kim would be an ideal area there. So what we've done is created. This network at the moment we're starting with this Journal, which as I say, launches at the end of the week and we've got a whole host of. Different types of article in there and that we've got one and one that's

going to be incredibly popular is something as simple as it is about crosswords in chemistry and the use of them, and it is about that practice will benefit students. And as I had a sneaky peek at it beforehand and it's just, yeah, it can rock practitioners world. But Karen itself isn't just for practitioners, it's for the whole college sector. So there are elements in there around for this particular edition around, say, libraries. I'm about after I think I've talked my head about reflective practice and so on, and again, that's something that's a key, and in particular is this looking at? So we're looking at a variety of different types of articles,

so it doesn't all have all have to be research based articles that are. Different few different ways. I'll do better plug a few different ways to get involved. And ultimately, that are things like reflective articles are fantastic and particularly people who may be transitioning from different roll to roll or coming into the sector, or maybe even moving out of the sector. Anything that's really affects the Scottish college sector. I were looking at things like book reviews as well. So one thing talking about literature is that what ones are really key to us? What ones are really relevant doing about anybody else? I don't have time to read all the books. I would like to read, but therefore

if somethings recommend and one.

And through a bit of a critical book review,

l will.

That would be really relevant for me.

FOB or in my possession.

I'm good.

I know who that would benefit a

group of people who are doing the

qfe or some of my colleagues.

I can make that immediate sort

of recommendation.

So yeah,

there's 101 ways people could

get involved with care.

So few questions on that, Christine.

And so Ken.

So this is going to live at

the end of February.

General, how do I find this?

I'm Alexa.

How do I find out where I go?

You can go to

karenjournal.wordpress.com right? Simple as that and it's there to be honest it's like now. So at any point empty can access that and it will just be updated as and when we can. And also one of the other things is we've got a week Twitter account. It's been fairly inactive, but we expect it to be more active and it is at Kia. Journal and also, we'll look into share this in the room with kind of the release of this episode. And then how do people get involved? So they want to get involved with you and the rest of the current team. One of them is the contact via the website and I was like, well,

because it's all been done in our own time.

It's all been weekends and evenings just to get this off the ground. What we've got at the moment is just a generic email address that one of the three of us will pick up at the moment, and we hope that Karen is going to grow over the next while and. People really are keen and getting involved. Definitely give us a shout whether that's as an author, whether that's as a somebody would like to maybe get involved in actually helping to drive it forward in the sector. Or maybe the people have great ideas about what could fit in, and they've got people that want to recommend or introduced the care. Yeah, just give us a shout. No, that's great.

And obviously from CDN perspective

will be supporting this moving forward. Maybe do a virtual bridge is well coated, bit more in depth as well as looking at different events when trying draw people together. That kind of support. The sharing of practice in love completely conversations about that as well trying for me. It's a topic that's very dear to my heart right now because it's around supporting lectures to improve and ultimately supporting learners to enhance their learning experience even more so you know, it's a really fantastic little worth at that. You and the rest of them are involved with the next phase is a lot more. And which is a lot more questions right now as well because of the recent changes. And obviously I'm sure some this

is aware that the serial numbers of Research Center where we've been looking at elements of this more broadly across the piece, but obviously from a learning and teaching perspective it there's certainly a lot to be interested in there as well. Now sounds fantastic Christine. So no doubt this will get lots of interest and we can really take this forward there as well. But Christine thank you very much for your time, and we really, really interesting topic, and I'm sure our listeners have learned a lot there, and even it's just kind of encouragement. To pick up one Journal or can it get involved in research? Fantastic, that's what so ever. So thankful tratame, Christine.

Thanks very much, Johnny.

And there we go.