

## Teachers' Perceptions of Action Research as a Tool for Professional Development: The Role of the 'Research for Professional Development' (RPD) Course for In-Service Omani Teachers

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### Abstract:

When talking about the educational field in Oman, teachers' professional development is a considerable concern. A variety of professional development strategies have been introduced to teachers of English and have been put into practice. Action research is one of these strategies. It is introduced to teachers through a voluntary course, Research for Professional Development (RPD), which is a sixteen-session course and lasts for one semester. This course aims to raise teachers' knowledge and skills of action research in order to support them, as research practitioners, to enhance the quality of their work and to show initiatives in their schools. However, as it is relatively new in this context, this study attempted to explore teachers' beliefs on the values of this course with regard to their professional development and the extent to which these teachers adopted this strategy for their ongoing professional development after the course. The study was conducted in the Dakhiliya region of Oman and the data was collected from eight teachers through a semi-structured interview. The findings indicate a conception of the RPD course as a means to enrich Omani teachers' knowledge and skills of AR. The practical side of the course also raises participants' awareness of the possibilities of improving their work and gives them insights to solving their students' problems through systematic inquiries. This study also reveals that, although participants master this tool, very few of them conduct action research after the course and this is due to the lack of time, heavy responsibilities and lack of support. Therefore, this study raises the issue that although providing teachers with knowledge and skills of PD strategies is essential, enabling them to apply these strategies relies heavily on paying attention to their needs.

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