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training. The basic assumption underpinning action research is that teachers and principals are 'real' people who know the ground reality — they know what is to be done — much better than an outsider or an 'expert'.

Secondly, the knowledge that is generated through formal research is more academic than practical. And, another benefit associated with this type of study is that it provides the basis for on-going professional development of teachers. The 'reflective' aspect — whereby effects of past and present actions are analyzed — helps teachers realize their 'inner self'. The ability to empathize through reflective practice helps the individual to grow towards professional maturity.

Now the question is that if this research has so many benefits associated with it, how can a teacher initiate it. Being diagnostic and therapeutic in nature, the first step is to identify the problem. The second step is to identify how the problem can be solved or dealt with. Help in this can be taken from colleagues or head-teachers, and from available literature.

In order to discuss the stages involved in this type of study, I share the extract of an action research exercise that I recently conducted. A group of grade nine students showed very poor results in their Chemistry test, with the class average an abysmal 40 per cent.

To find out what was behind this, I gave the class a response form (to be filled out anonymously) in which I asked the students to state the reasons why they had done so badly. To my surprise, almost all students complained that the lectures were overloaded with scientific jargon and that this made it difficult for them to understand and learn the sub-

ject. For a moment, I thought what a typical answer or what a lame excuse. Then I tried to think from the perspective of those who had filled out the form. Was the problem only confined to my method of teaching and to my students? Soon I realized that it was quite common and almost all the other science teachers were experiencing it.

So I consulted my colleagues and tried to get ideas from their experiences but found no solution. I searched the net and found a few good tips that could be tried. Of the many actions taken, one was to help students develop 'cheat-sheets', or quick study guides, before studying for an exam. The sheet was developed by students containing all the information and key words they thought they would need to do well in the exam, and by teaching them to use techniques to learn and master them. In addition, students were given presentation on how to study intelligently and make best use of their time. Hence, in a way, different 'actions' were taken and the effects were closely noted. In just three weeks, the class average rose to 70 per cent. ■