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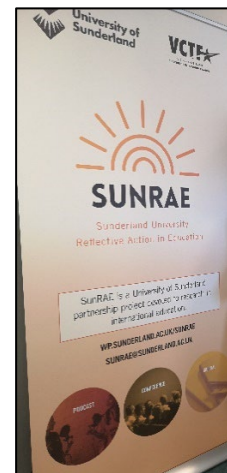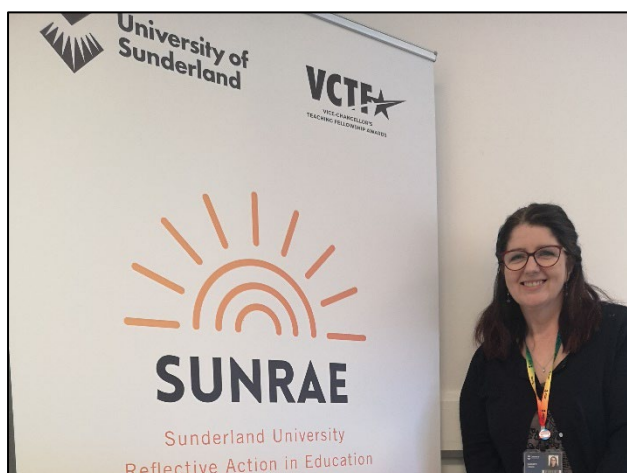# Sunderland Reflective Action in Education Journal (SunRAE)

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Sunderland Reflective Action in Education (SunRAE)

Volume 1, Number 3, Winter 2022 – The Action Research Issue

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the third issue of SunRAE: The 2022 Action Research Issue

Welcome to the third issue of the Sunderland Reflective Action in Education (SunRAE) journal.

This open access journal is the brainchild of the University of Sunderland's International Initial Teacher Training team. The team, working with internationally-based trainee teachers since 1999, had long discussed the fascinating insights into international practice that were shared through the formal assignments built into the master's-level modules within the Postgraduate Certificate in Education programmes. The idea is that trainees and recent graduates can have their PGCE work published through this journal, thereby sharing back their knowledge and allowing others to reflect on the content and context as they themselves consider how to implement change in their setting and reflect on it in a systematic and evidence-informed way.

In the first issue, we released the conference proceedings and posters from the first SunRAE conference held in June 2022. In the second issue, we collated the case studies submitted to the journal, recognising that many of our readers may be looking at these case studies before or while undertaking similar studies in their own school.

In this issue we have collated the articles based on action research assignments that have been submitted to the journal. We hope that these examples are useful and interesting, showing how others have approached action research in ways that may be similar and yet different. The abstracts from each article are presented below to encourage you to read more about the topic.

Atanasiu's article presents '*Low Student Engagement Level in Struggling Learners and Ways to Address It'*, looking at the outcomes of the increased engagement levels in struggling learners in a British international school. Atanasiu addresses the effectiveness of some of the methods targeting 'dips' in students' involvement levels and investigates its triggers. Student engagement has been interlinked with sounder progress levels, improved attendance, and increased learning-related curiosity. The research has shown that improved engagement has the potential to lessen behaviour-related incidents, boost progress in struggling learners, and has a positive impact on the social climate. In this study, a significant improvement in the number of successful tasks performed independently by children, a decrease in behavioural incidents, and improved social integration were present as the result of the strategy applied to increase engagement. Identifying pluming components of engagement (i.e., cognitive, social, behavioural) was discovered to be instrumental for the engagement-booster strategy to be effective.

Ross writes about '*The Impacts of Reward-based Behaviour Systems on First-year Primary School Students in Hong Kong'*, aiming to compare the behaviour of Year 1 students in Hong Kong as more reward-based behaviour systems were applied to the class. These students had mostly been subjected to Zoom classes throughout their education since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, leading to them have only a narrow foundation of how to behave from their short time experiencing face-to-face classes in kindergarten. This project used Lewin's (1946) spiral model for educational action research and as each cycle passed, stricter and more rewarding methods were used to see how the students' behaviour developed over time. Through the action research project, it became clear that as more positive reinforcement was used, students were more likely to respond better than when less positive reinforcement was being used. This also appeared to yield more continuity of positive behaviour, particularly amongst the low-level disruptors.

Connelly's paper asks, *'What impact does the use of differentiation when teaching writing to Key Stage 1 (Primary 3) EAL students effectively support and challenge students to create engaging lessons in a primary school in Hong Kong?'*. In it she undertakes an investigative approach to evaluate the effectiveness of differentiation on KS1 English as an Additional Language (EAL) Primary 3 students during writing lessons in a school in Hong Kong. The action research used the four-stage model of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting over three cycles which allowed for deeper research and intervention implementation. Findings suggest that implementation of scaffolding and group work allowed for progress in pre and post-test results, supporting the constructivist view that students build on previous knowledge and learn from more experienced others. As it was a small-scale research project, there are still knowledge gaps, and it would be recommended to have continuous research to gain optimal results.

Shamseddine focuses on *'The impact of implementing collaborative learning as means of creating an interactive student centred learning environment in a Year 10 chemistry classroom in Egypt'*. This action research, conducted in a Year 10 chemistry classroom at a British international school in Egypt over three cycles aimed to improve the researcher's own skills and knowledge in creating a student-centred learning environment by introducing more collaborative learning activities. The research was needed because the researcher noticed the detachment of pupils at several points in the lesson: the sessions were becoming similar, and students seeming bored even though the researcher made sure they stay engaged and that different parts of the syllabus are covered using sufficient differentiation. Two new strategies were implemented: *think-pair-share* and *peer assessment*. The researcher found the think-pair-share strategy to be useful with the covering new material and peer assessment strategy useful during the revision period.

As always, we encourage you to read with a questioning perspective and to follow up the evidence underpinning the approaches our authors have reported on. As successful or less successful as an approach may seem, each one must be considered in terms of the different contexts that readers may be familiar with. Might there be features of your context that would be conducive or less conducive to such an approach? What has shaped your perspective?

If you would like to submit your assignment to the journal, you will find the process straightforward and supportive. All PGCE / Level 7 research module assignments that have reached the passing standard are likely to make a useful contribution to our expanding knowledge about practitioner research in international schools. Please do consider submitting your assignment!

We hope that you enjoy exploring SunRAE and all it has to offer.

Dr Elizabeth Hidson
On behalf of the International Initial Teacher Training Team
Faculty of Education and Society

SUNRAE

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