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International School Teachers' Views on the Role of Action Research within IB MYP and DP Environments: An Exploration of the Benefits and Constraints

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ABSTRACT

This study examines teachers' perspectives on action research (AR) within an International Baccalaureate (IB) international school context. Participants, representing diverse cultural and disciplinary backgrounds across the Middle Years and Diploma Programmes, shared their experiences through semi-structured interviews. Data were analysed using thematic analysis to explore teachers' understandings of AR, its perceived benefits and constraints, and its role in advancing professional learning in international education. Findings indicate that AR supports inquiry into themes central to international schooling, including interculturalism, inclusion, mobility, and student wellbeing. Teachers valued AR's practical and collaborative character, particularly its capacity to bridge theory and classroom practice. However, structural constraints, including time pressures, leadership transience, uneven research literacy, and limited institutional coordination, restricted sustained engagement. The analysis identifies three interrelated institutional priorities emerging from participants' accounts: leadership coherence, ethical guidance, and long-term sustainability structures. These findings inform the development of a Leadership, Ethics, and Sustainability of Action Research Framework (LESARF), designed to support the embedding of practitioner inquiry within IB and other inquiry-oriented school contexts. Overall, teachers viewed AR as a reflective and solution-oriented practice; its sustained success depends upon distributed leadership, ethical clarity, methodological support, and systemic investment in sustained cultures of inquiry.

1. Introduction

Over the past few decades, action research (AR) has gained prominence as a practice-based mode of inquiry enabling teachers to investigate and improve their professional contexts. As a form of practitioner-led research, AR complements traditional evidence-based approaches, which are often criticised for their limited contextual applicability (Lufungulo et al., 2021). Recent reviews (e.g., Messikh, 2020; Chen, 2022; Larrea et al., 2024) affirm that AR enhances

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teacher learning, collaborative culture, and pedagogical innovation, while also identifying persistent challenges related to methodological rigour, leadership support, and sustainability.

In international school contexts, where inquiry, reflection, and intercultural understanding are core pedagogical values, AR aligns closely with institutional philosophies such as those of the International Baccalaureate (IB). IB programmes emphasise inquiry-based learning, collaboration, and reflection as integral to developing principled, caring, and globally minded learners (IBO, 2017). Teachers are encouraged to engage in similar cycles of inquiry through AR, using reflective and evidence-informed practice to enhance teaching and learning (IBO, 2025a). Despite this philosophical alignment, empirical research examining how AR is experienced, supported, and sustained within IB international school settings remains comparatively limited.

This study is situated within an EU-based international school offering the IB Primary, Middle, and Diploma Years Programmes. The community is linguistically and culturally diverse, with staff and students representing multiple national backgrounds. Within this environment, teachers engage with AR as both a professional learning strategy and a means of contextual innovation; however, the extent to which institutional structures, leadership practices, and ethical guidance enable or constrain sustained inquiry remains underexplored.

Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to examine the experiences and perspectives of Middle Years and Diploma Programme teachers regarding their engagement with AR. Through semi-structured interviews analysed thematically, the study explores teachers' understandings of AR's role within the IB context, its perceived benefits and constraints, and the institutional conditions that may facilitate or hinder its sustainability. In doing so, the research seeks to illuminate the systemic dynamics shaping practitioner inquiry in international schools.

By situating teacher voices within broader discussions of distributed leadership, research ethics, and sustainable professional learning cultures, this study contributes a conceptual framework - the Leadership, Ethics, and Sustainability of Action Research Framework (LESARF) - designed to support the structured embedding of AR within IB and other inquiry-oriented educational settings. Through this integration of empirical findings and theory, the study advances understanding of how practitioner research can move from episodic initiative to sustained institutional practice.

2. Research Context

The present research is situated within an international school characterised by a culturally diverse, highly mobile, and socioeconomically privileged student body representing more than seventy nationalities. The teaching faculty, administrative personnel, and leadership teams likewise reflect a wide range of cultural and professional backgrounds. The institution operates within the IB framework, offering the Primary Years Programme (PYP), the Middle Years Programme (MYP), and the Diploma Programme (DP).

As Van Oord (2007) explains, the IB was originally established to support international schools by providing a curriculum that ensured university recognition while simultaneously promoting global awareness and intercultural understanding through a multicultural educational model. In alignment with this purpose, IB World Schools aim to foster international-mindedness and intercultural understanding through engagement with a globally oriented curriculum and transcultural values (IBO, 2017).

Each IB programme enacts this mission in distinct yet interconnected ways. The PYP emphasises holistic, inquiry-based learning organised around transdisciplinary themes. The MYP advances global engagement through conceptual learning and Global Contexts that

connect disciplinary and interdisciplinary study. The DP prepares students for tertiary education by combining disciplinary depth with cross-disciplinary components such as Theory of Knowledge (TOK), Creativity, Activity, Service (CAS), and the Extended Essay - an independent research investigation. Although the three programmes differ in structure and emphasis, they share a commitment to inquiry-driven learning, global perspectives, and the IB Learner Profile, which provides a unifying pedagogical and philosophical framework across the continuum.

The IB Learner Profile articulates the organisation's vision of international-mindedness through attributes such as being inquirers, thinkers, communicators, risk-takers, caring, balanced, principled, knowledgeable, reflective, and open-minded (IBO, 2017). These attributes are intended to be embodied by all members of the IB community, including the teachers and leaders in this study.

Within this context, practitioner inquiry is positioned as a natural extension of IB philosophy. The IB explicitly endorses action research and provides professional development nano-resources to support schools in designing and implementing practitioner research initiatives (IBO, 2025a). However, while inquiry is philosophically embedded within IB discourse, the extent to which institutional structures, leadership practices, and ethical supports enable sustained action research at the school level remains variable. This contextual dynamic forms the backdrop against which the present study explores teachers' lived experiences of action research.

3. Literature Review

3.1. The Development and Features of Action Research

The concept of action research has evolved from early pragmatic and social-psychological roots into a flexible, cyclical, and participatory mode of inquiry widely used in educational contexts. Its lineage is often traced to John Dewey, whose writings on experiential learning positioned teachers as reflective problem-solvers engaged in community-based inquiry (O'Brien, 2001). Building on this foundation, Kurt Lewin (1946) formally introduced the term *action research*, defining it as a process linking systematic investigation with practical social action. His iterative model - planning, action, and fact-finding - became the cornerstone for later formulations emphasising cyclical, collaborative, and context-responsive processes.

Subsequent theorists extended this conception. Carr and Kemmis (1986) framed action research as emancipatory practice, freeing practitioners from "unseen constraints of assumptions, habit, precedent, coercion, and ideology" (p. 192). In educational settings, action research has thus been interpreted as a mechanism for context-based improvement through systematic inquiry into everyday pedagogical challenges (Cox & Craig, 1997; Coulter, 2002). Contemporary writers continue to position action research as a bridge between theory and practice, foregrounding social justice, inclusivity, and democratic participation (Storms, 2013; Manfra, 2019).

Recent scholarship reaffirms these premises while expanding methodological understanding. Cierpiałowska (2023) demonstrated how the Universal Design for Learning model can structure iterative classroom cycles, fostering learner agency and repositioning teachers as facilitators rather than directors of learning. Similarly, Rabgay and Kidman (2023) observed that while the spiral model remains conceptually useful, action research practice is often "messy" and nonlinear. These studies reinforce Lewin's insight that change processes are emergent and context-bound rather than mechanically linear.

Across the literature, several core features consistently define action research: it is issue-based, cyclical, reflective, collaborative, empowering, and explicitly non-neutral (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Dick, 2000; Reason, 2001). Inquiry typically begins with a locally recognised problem and unfolds through iterative cycles of reflection and action (Hopkins, 1985; Schön, 1983).

Meta-analyses further refine this understanding. Messikh (2020) concluded that teacher-led inquiry enhances professional growth and classroom innovation, though methodological reporting remains uneven.

Casey et al. (2023) responded to longstanding critiques by developing the Quality Action Research Checklist (QuARC), strengthening transparency regarding context, process, relationships, and outcomes. Larrea et al. (2024) extended this discussion by identifying environmental preconditions for sustaining action-research cultures, including institutional trust, distributed leadership, and structural support. Together, these contributions shift attention from individual teacher effort toward organisational conditions that enable or constrain inquiry.

The participatory foundations of action research also challenge assumptions of researcher detachment. Practitioner-researchers are inherently invested in improving their own contexts (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995; O'Brien, 1998). Madsen et al. (2023) conceptualise this involvement as *participatory sense-making*, where knowledge emerges relationally rather than through detached observation. Action research thus represents both an epistemological stance and an ethical commitment to co-constructed change.

3.2. Teacher Dispositions and Professional Identity

To enact these principles, teachers require particular dispositions: inquiry, curiosity, adaptability, and sustained motivation (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Peters, 2004). An inquiry stance involves generating local knowledge, theorising practice, and critically engaging with external research. It also presupposes collaborative participation in communities of inquiry. Curiosity fuels this process (Dadds, 2002), while adaptability enables practitioners to navigate the uncertainty of iterative cycles (Taylor, 2002). Emotional resilience complements intellectual engagement, enabling teachers to persist despite ambiguity and institutional constraint (McLaughlin, 2003; Coleman, 1998).

Studies in teacher education reinforce these dispositions. Lualhati (2024) found that embedding action research in experiential programmes cultivates reflective confidence, though constraints of time and ethics remain. Berikkhanova et al. (2023) similarly reported gains in research competence alongside systemic challenges. Motivation further sustains engagement: Bergmark (2022) distinguishes intrinsic, collegial, and altruistic drivers, while Lynch et al. (2024) highlight the reinforcing role of leadership and community validation. These findings underscore that action research is sustained not only by methodological competence but by relational, motivational, and cultural supports.

3.3. Benefits and Challenges

Recent empirical work strengthens this understanding. Cierpiałowska (2023) showed that iterative AR cycles based on the Universal Design for Learning framework not only developed student skills in creativity, self-organisation, and collaboration but also repositioned teachers as facilitators rather than directors of learning. Similarly, Lynch et al. (2024) documented a multi-school action-research initiative in Australia that improved teaching quality and student outcomes through sustained professional learning communities (PLCs) built around data-informed reflection. Messikh's (2020) systematic review corroborates these findings,

concluding that teacher-led inquiry fosters professional growth and classroom innovation, while also noting variability in research design and reporting.

Traditional research paradigms have nevertheless questioned the methodological validity, reliability, and generalisability of practitioner-led inquiry, particularly in relation to standards of objectivity and replicability (Best & Kahn, 2006; Burns & Hayden, 2002). Casey et al. (2023)'s Quality Action Research Checklist (QuARC) responds to such critiques by offering structured criteria for evaluating context, relational depth, process fidelity, and outcomes. These developments collectively signal a growing methodological maturity in action research, particularly regarding transparency and evidence-based validation.

3.4. Supports for Effective Practice

Leadership, collaboration, and institutional support consistently emerge as decisive enablers. Distributed leadership models embed inquiry within school culture (Hine, 2013; Peters, 2004). Lynch et al. (2024) demonstrate that sustained action-research initiatives require principal endorsement and structural alignment. Collaboration through professional learning communities fosters emotional safety and shared ownership (Yu & Chao, 2022; Chen, 2022). Institutionalisation within policy frameworks legitimises practitioner inquiry and reduces isolation (Berikkhanova et al., 2023; Lualhati, 2024), and tools such as QuARC (Casey et al., 2023) further strengthen rigour by scaffolding reflection and documentation. These supports collectively illustrate that sustainable action research requires coherent leadership structures, ethical reflexivity, and systemic capacity-building.

3.5. Action Research within IB Contexts

Action research aligns closely with the IB's inquiry-oriented philosophy (IBO, 2017). The cyclical process of plan–act–observe–reflect mirrors IB commitments to reflection, agency, and principled action. The IB explicitly endorses practitioner inquiry through professional development resources (IBO, 2025a). Large-scale IB initiatives demonstrate the policy relevance of practitioner-led inquiry (IBO, 2025b). School-level studies similarly show that reflective cycles enhance interdisciplinary coherence and programme development (Lloyd-Peay, 2024; Zeng, 2024). However, IB contexts also present challenges: time pressures, curricular demands, and leadership turnover (Fry et al., 2025). These mirror broader sustainability concerns identified in the literature. While philosophically aligned, the practical embedding of action research within IB schools depends on leadership continuity, ethical clarity, and institutional support.

3.6. Summary

The literature positions action research as a relational, cyclical, and contextually grounded mode of inquiry that enhances professional agency and institutional learning. At the same time, its sustainability depends upon leadership capacity, ethical reflexivity, and organisational support structures. Recent scholarship emphasises rigour, transparency, and whole-system embedding. Taken together, these strands suggest that action research thrives where leadership is distributed, ethics are foregrounded, and institutional systems align with practitioner inquiry. This review therefore provides the conceptual foundation for examining how these dimensions are experienced in practice and how they may inform a structured framework for leadership, ethics, and sustainability in IB contexts.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Research Paradigm and Methodological Orientation

Methodology encompasses the overarching strategy guiding the selection and use of research methods, including the philosophical assumptions underpinning the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This research is situated within a constructivist–interpretivist paradigm, which posits that reality is socially constructed and best understood through the meanings individuals attribute to their experiences. Within this worldview, researcher and participants engage interactively, and knowledge is co-constructed through dialogue (Creswell, 2003).

A qualitative methodological approach was therefore adopted to explore teachers' lived experiences and interpretations of action research within their professional context. Qualitative inquiry seeks to understand the meanings participants assign to phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2016), recognising that these meanings are shaped by cognitive, relational, and contextual factors (Young et al., 2003). Replication is not the aim; instead, the study offers an interpretive account of how action research is understood and enacted within this particular IB setting (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

4.2. Participants and Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling strategy ensured inclusion of diverse perspectives relevant to the study's aims (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Participants were selected based on:

a) experience teaching within MYP and/or DP programmes
b) representation of different subject disciplines
c) diversity of cultural backgrounds
d) gender balance

Of 22 invited educators, 11 teachers and one administrator participated. While a larger sample might have broadened representation, time constraints within a demanding school environment limited participation. The final cohort nevertheless provided substantial depth and disciplinary diversity for interpretive analysis.

Table 1. Research Participants

Participant	Gender	Field/Subject	Program	Years Experience
T1	Female	EAL	MYP	20–30 years
T2	Female	Humanities	MYP/DP	20–30 years
T3	Female	Asian Language	MYP/DP	20–30 years
T4	Female	Science	MYP/DP	10–20 years
T5	Female	English	MYP/DP	10–20 years
T6	Female	European Languages	MYP	5–10 years
T7	Male	Design	MYP	5–10 years
T8	Male	Humanities	MYP/DP	10–20 years
T9	Male	English	MYP	5–10 years
T10	Male	Science	MYP/DP	10–20 years

Participant	Gender	Field/Subject	Program	Years Experience
T11	Male	Mathematics	MYP/DP	5–10 years
T12	Male	Administration	—	10–20 years

4.3. Data Collection Procedures

Semi-structured interviews were selected for their flexibility and depth (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Interviews lasted 30–45 minutes, were conducted on school premises, audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim. The interview protocol was piloted with a colleague to refine clarity and sequencing (Roulston & Choi, 2018; Malmqvist et al., 2019). Questions progressed from general understandings of action research to experiences, contextual applications, perceived challenges, and institutional supports. This structure ensured comparability across interviews while allowing participants to elaborate on issues of personal significance. The interviews sought to explore how teachers conceptualised action research, how they experienced its practical and institutional dimensions, and what structural or leadership factors facilitated or constrained engagement.

4.4. Reflexivity and Positionality

A reflexive and facilitative stance was maintained throughout the study, employing active listening, paraphrasing, and neutral probing (Henderson & Mathew-Byrne, 2016). A reflexive journal documented interpretive decisions, emerging insights, and analytic reflections (Eisenhart, 1998). Reflexivity was examined across personal, interpersonal, methodological, and contextual dimensions (Walsh, 2003), enabling systematic consideration of how professional positioning influenced data generation and interpretation.

The researcher's position as a colleague within the school both enabled and constrained the research process. Familiarity fostered trust and candid dialogue; however, shared institutional context risked assumptions of mutual understanding or responses shaped by collegial norms. Although peer status reduced overt hierarchy, subtle power dynamics and concerns regarding professional relationships may have influenced participants' willingness to express critique. Social desirability bias—particularly in discussions of leadership and institutional culture - was therefore explicitly considered during analysis. Reflexive memoing and iterative re-examination of transcripts were used to interrogate potential bias and ensure that interpretations remained grounded in participants' language rather than researcher assumptions.

It is also possible that certain themes - particularly those concerning leadership coherence, initiative fatigue, and institutional vision - reflect site-specific collegial dynamics within this institution. While participants articulated these concerns independently, insider positioning may have shaped both the willingness to express critique and the interpretive weight attributed to it. Rather than claiming neutrality, the analysis acknowledges this contextual embeddedness as integral to interpretivist inquiry and as part of the knowledge co-construction process.

4.5. Data Analysis

Data were analysed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2013) six-phase framework:

1. Familiarisation with transcripts
2. Generation of initial codes
3. Collation of codes into candidate themes

4. Review of themes against coded extracts and the full dataset
5. Definition and refinement of themes
6. Production of an analytic narrative

4.5.1. The Analytic Pathway

Coding was conducted inductively, allowing patterns to emerge from participants' accounts prior to engagement with explanatory literature in the Discussion. For example:

- Codes such as *"no time," "too many initiatives,"* and *"not another thing"* were grouped into a category concerning workload pressure, contributing to themes related to structural constraints.
- References to *"buy-in," "vision,"* and *"who oversees this?"* were clustered under leadership coherence, informing later themes concerning institutional direction and governance.

Themes were developed through iterative comparison across transcripts, supported by visual maps documenting relationships between codes and higher-order categories. Importantly, the Leadership, Ethics, and Sustainability of Action Research Framework (LESARF) was not imposed deductively during coding. Rather, it was developed in the Discussion phase through synthesis of (a) recurrent data-derived themes concerning leadership, ethics, and sustainability, and (b) conceptual insights from the literature. This analytic movement from data → themes → conceptual synthesis ensured that the framework was grounded in participants' experiences while theoretically informed.

4.5.2. Addressing Single-Researcher Rigour

As a single-researcher study, analytic transparency was strengthened through:

- Maintenance of coding memos documenting interpretive decisions
- Development of theme maps to track analytic progression
- Peer debriefing with a critical friend who reviewed selected transcripts and thematic interpretations
- Informal audit of coding coherence and category boundaries

This process enabled interrogation of potential blind spots and enhanced analytic consistency.

Although the sample was modest, thematic sufficiency was judged when no substantively new conceptual categories emerged across successive transcripts and when variation within established themes stabilised (Fusch & Ness, 2015). While statistical saturation is not applicable within interpretivist inquiry, informational redundancy became evident in later interviews, particularly regarding leadership coherence, workload pressures, and institutional vision. Divergent perspectives were limited, though minor variations in emphasis were retained to preserve analytic nuance. Emphasis was placed on analytic depth and contextual richness rather than numerical sufficiency, consistent with qualitative interpretivist inquiry (Naeem et al., 2023).

4.6. Ensuring Trustworthiness and Rigour

Trustworthiness was addressed using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria:

- **Credibility:** Prolonged engagement, verbatim transcription, and inclusion of representative quotations.
- **Transferability:** Thick contextual description of the IB setting.

- **Dependability:** Systematic documentation of analytic procedures and maintenance of an audit trail.
- **Confirmability:** Reflexive journaling and peer debriefing to interrogate interpretations.

Together, these measures enhanced methodological transparency and analytic accountability.

4.7. Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to principles of respect, beneficence, and nonmaleficence. Institutional approval was obtained prior to data collection. Participants received detailed information sheets and provided written informed consent. Pseudonyms (T1–T12) were used throughout, and identifying details were removed to preserve confidentiality. Given the researcher's collegial relationship with participants, particular care was taken to emphasise voluntariness and to avoid any perception of obligation or evaluative judgement. Interview scheduling, data storage, and reporting procedures were designed to protect anonymity and minimise professional risk.

5. Findings

The following section presents the findings of the study. A number of themes emerged that illuminate participants' understandings of action research (AR), its perceived benefits, its relevance within the IB context, and the structural and cultural factors that may enable or constrain its success. Across the data, AR was framed as both energising and conditional: valued in principle, yet dependent upon institutional coherence, leadership clarity, and protected time.

5.1. Theme 1: Action-Oriented and Practical

Participants consistently characterised action research as active, embedded, and applied. Two closely related dimensions dominated their descriptions: direct involvement and practical utility.

5.1.1. Active Involvement

Active engagement was central to participants' conceptualisations of AR. T1 described it as "getting up and doing something," while T4 emphasised "actively setting up the environment and carrying out the research yourself." T8 framed it as "looking at lived experience over time." These descriptions position AR as practitioner-owned inquiry grounded in classroom realities rather than externally imposed research. Participants' language suggests that they view AR as experiential and iterative, with teachers occupying the dual role of practitioner and investigator.

5.1.2. Practical Application

The applied nature of AR was equally emphasised. T7 referred to it as "practical research - hands-on rather than theoretical," and T6 noted that it involves strategies "you can apply straight away." T8 explained that AR entails "identifying a particular problem and considering the broader implications," with the potential to "promote institutional change - depending on the findings." Taken together, these responses indicate that participants perceive AR as a bridge between reflection and immediate pedagogical action. While institutional change was imagined as possible, it was framed as contingent, revealing an implicit understanding that broader impact depends on structural uptake beyond individual classrooms.

5.2. Theme 2: Benefits: The Motivational Power of Connectivity

Participants associated AR with professional renewal, collaboration, and institutional alignment. The benefits described extended from personal reflection to whole-school cohesion.

5.2.1. (Cross-)Disciplinary Student Development

AR was described as an opportunity to reflect meaningfully on teaching and learning. T3 characterised it as a chance to "stop and reflect and look back," while T5 saw it as examining "what we teach, how we teach, and student learning." T12 viewed it as a mechanism "to develop solutions to various problems that prevent students from learning." Importantly, several participants envisioned AR as cross-disciplinary. T11 suggested that teachers could "see kids in different settings and explore why they do well in some settings and not in others," and T8 observed that AR has "huge benefits for the teacher–student interface, especially when groups of teachers teaching the same levels are involved." This cross-curricular emphasis reflects the interdisciplinary ethos of IB programmes. AR was not imagined merely as isolated teacher reflection but as a collaborative mechanism for examining student experience across contexts.

5.2.2. Teacher Collaboration

Collaboration emerged as a core benefit. T11 stated that AR "would get teachers to share ideas and work collaboratively," and T10 noted that it would involve colleagues "to analyse an issue and raise awareness." T6 emphasised the value of "mixing experienced and younger teachers." Participants framed collaboration as professionally connective rather than administratively mandated. AR was imagined as creating space for shared inquiry, distributed expertise, and mutual learning, potentially strengthening relational trust within the faculty.

5.2.3. Organisational Cohesion

Beyond collaboration, AR was viewed as capable of strengthening whole-school coherence. T2 described its potential to have "a cohesive influence on the school" and "give us some direction." T1 believed it should be "customized for the organization" so that it "feeds it directly." T6 suggested that AR would allow "fragments of the school to be linked more closely." The repeated emphasis on direction, linkage, and coherence suggests that participants saw AR as a potential organising principle - a way of aligning initiatives within a shared framework rather than operating as an additional programme.

5.2.4. Motivational Impact

Participants also described AR as intellectually stimulating. T8 believed it would be "rigorous and stimulating," while T5 felt teachers would develop "a higher sense of worth" and "feel more connected." T10 suggested it would prevent professional learning from "stagnating." However, this motivational potential was conditional. T8 cautioned that AR must not "feel like work" or resemble "yet another committee." This tension reveals a boundary condition: AR is energising when meaningfully integrated into practice but resisted when perceived as bureaucratic overload.

5.3. Theme 3: IB Context: Global Transitions, Power, and Belonging

When discussing AR within the IB context, participants foregrounded intercultural complexity, inclusion, mobility, and institutional fluidity. These themes reflect the distinctive structural and cultural conditions of international schooling.

5.3.1. Intercultural Awareness

The strongest theme was the need for inquiry into interculturalism. T5 emphasised "multiculturalism, intercultural awareness, and social and cultural acceptance." T11 questioned how students with "different learning philosophies adapt to a new learning environment," and T12 stressed the importance of examining "cultural interactions, norms, and stereotyping." Participants repeatedly suggested that these issues need to be made more visible within schools. AR was imagined as a mechanism for surfacing and examining cultural dynamics that often remain implicit.

5.3.2. Inclusive Practice

Participants also questioned curricular representation and epistemic balance. T5 asked whether IB curricula are "focused on one perspective," and T2 expressed concern that teachers may operate from "a Western perspective" even in international settings. T11 worried that this could affect students whose prior educational experiences differ. These reflections suggest that AR was viewed as a tool for interrogating taken-for-granted assumptions within curriculum and pedagogy, particularly in culturally diverse environments.

5.3.3. Issues Around Languages

Language was identified as a persistent concern. T3 emphasised that "research into mother tongue languages is very important," while T6 questioned whether students fully understand "the language of assessment." T11 described language issues as "a sticky wicket." Participants highlighted the complexity of navigating multiple linguistic contexts. AR was positioned as a way of examining potential misalignments between language policy, instructional practice, and student comprehension.

5.3.4. Transitions and Institutional Fluidity

Mobility emerged as a defining feature of the IB context. T9 referred to "the transient nature of the environment," noting that "institutional memory is fleeting." T4 stressed the emotional impact of school transitions on teenagers, and T5 highlighted the experiences of "third culture kids." Transitions were also seen to affect staff and governance. T7 warned against "change for the sake of change," and T9 noted shifting power dynamics in environments where staff turnover is frequent. These reflections reveal that AR in international schools operates within conditions of structural fluidity. Inquiry, therefore, must contend not only with pedagogy but also with continuity, power, and belonging.

The recurrent emphasis on leadership turnover and institutional fluidity suggests that action research sustainability is structurally vulnerable in high-mobility international schools. In such contexts, continuity cannot be assumed; inquiry initiatives may dissipate as personnel change. Participants' repeated calls for coordination and stewardship therefore reflect adaptive recognition of institutional instability rather than mere preference for hierarchical structure.

5.4. Theme 4: Personal Interests: From the Microcosm to the Macrocosm

Participants articulated a wide range of potential inquiry topics spanning individual classrooms to institutional systems. Student wellbeing emerged as a significant concern, including bullying, safety, and boys' self-esteem. Pedagogical interests included visible thinking, differentiation, and assessment practices. At the programme level, participants questioned language offerings and the effectiveness of formal testing. Interest in alumni outcomes reflected a longer-term perspective. T8 asked whether students "give back to society -

according to the philosophy of the IB," linking practitioner inquiry to the ethical mission of the IB. At the whole-school level, participants raised questions about governance, communication, and resource allocation. Collectively, these interests demonstrate that teachers perceive AR as spanning from micro-level instructional concerns to macro-level institutional development. These varied interests collectively reinforce the perception of AR not merely as a classroom strategy but as a mechanism for systemic inquiry spanning instructional, ethical, and organisational domains.

5.5. Theme 5: Constraints: The Need for a North Star

Despite widespread enthusiasm, participants identified significant structural and cultural constraints that could undermine AR's sustainability.

5.5.1. Perceived Value and Legitimacy

T11 observed that educational research does not receive the same respect as research in other professions. T3 worried that colleagues may not view AR as "useful or important." These concerns suggest that institutional legitimacy and professional recognition shape engagement as much as methodological capacity.

5.5.2. Busyness and Initiative Fatigue

Participants described "the madness of everyday teaching" (T4) and a "never-ending stream of initiatives" (T8). T5 summarised this sentiment succinctly: "Oh no - not another thing!" AR was welcomed in principle but feared as an additional burden if not structurally integrated. Without protected time and clear purpose, inquiry risks being perceived as one more demand within an already saturated environment. Collectively, these accounts suggest that resistance to action research was rarely ideological. Rather, it emerged from a broader performative climate characteristic of internationally competitive school environments, where multiple improvement initiatives coexist with accountability expectations and high staff mobility. Within such conditions, practitioner inquiry risks being perceived not as protected reflective space but as an additional layer of obligation. Participants' hesitations therefore reflected structural saturation rather than scepticism toward inquiry itself.

5.5.3. Leadership and Direction

Leadership emerged as pivotal. T1 asserted that AR "needs to be underpinned by a school vision." T8 questioned, "How would this be led, and who would oversee the process?" T11 described initiating research but receiving little sustained follow-up. Participants consistently indicated that permission alone is insufficient. Effective AR requires visible stewardship, structural coordination, and ongoing engagement. The metaphor of a "North Star" captures the perceived need for coherent direction, shared purpose, and sustained commitment.

5.5.4. Overview

Across themes, AR was conceptualised as active, relational, ethically attentive, and aligned with IB values of inquiry and reflection. Participants expressed genuine enthusiasm for its potential to deepen professional learning, strengthen collaboration, and address intercultural and institutional complexities. However, this enthusiasm was conditional. Sustainability depended upon legitimacy, protected time, coherent leadership, and structural clarity. Without these supports, AR risks fragmentation or marginalisation. The findings therefore suggest that

AR in international schools functions not merely as a methodology but as a cultural practice requiring intentional leadership and institutional alignment.

Table 2. Summary of the Key Findings

Theme		Key Insights
1	Action-Oriented and Practical	Action research is active and hands-on, focusing on real-world application and problem-solving. Teachers valued direct involvement and immediate application of strategies
2	Benefits: Motivational Power of Connectivity	Fostered teacher development, collaboration, and school cohesion. Enhanced cross-disciplinary student learning, professional dialogue, shared purpose, and motivation/creativity.
3	IB Context: Global Transitions, Power & Belonging	Highlighted multicultural and transient IB challenges. Emphasized intercultural awareness, inclusivity, language considerations, and impacts of student/staff transitions.
4	Personal Interests: Micro to Macro	Reflected diverse research interests: wellbeing, pedagogy, school development, and IB student impact.
5	Constraints: Need for a North Star	Identified challenges like limited time, support, and recognition. Highlighted need for leadership backing, funding, and professional development.

6. Discussion

The findings illuminate both the promise and the fragility of action research (AR) in international school contexts. Participants expressed sustained enthusiasm for AR's potential to enhance classroom practice, deepen reflection, and foster collaborative learning. Yet this enthusiasm was consistently mediated by structural and institutional conditions. Time pressures, competing initiatives, leadership transience, and unclear coordination limited teachers' capacity to engage in sustained inquiry cycles. These findings reinforce broader scholarship portraying AR as simultaneously empowering and demanding (Messikh, 2020; Larrea et al., 2024). While AR can catalyse professional growth and innovation, its viability depends upon organisational coherence and sustained leadership support - conditions that were unevenly experienced in this setting.

Participants' descriptions of AR as active, applied, and embedded reflect its pragmatic orientation. Teachers valued AR as a means of "doing something" about classroom challenges and bridging theory and practice in real time. This resonates with Messikh's (2020) depiction of AR as iterative and context-responsive, and with Bradbury-Huang's (2010) conceptualisation of AR as relational practice grounded in dialogue and co-creation. The collaborative processes described by participants parallel what Madsen et al. (2023) term participatory sense-making, in which shared interpretation becomes a vehicle for transformation. Within the IB context (IBO, 2017), this alignment is philosophically significant: the cyclical, reflective character of AR mirrors IB's emphasis on inquiry, principled action, and reflective learning. AR therefore appears not as an external innovation but as a pedagogically congruent extension of IB values.

However, philosophical alignment alone did not guarantee institutional integration. Participants' accounts reveal a persistent gap between aspirational endorsement and practical enactment. While AR was viewed as an authentic form of professional development embedded in classroom realities, teachers also described initiative fatigue, unclear leadership pathways, and uneven follow-up. These tensions echo Chen's (2022) findings regarding collaborative

inquiry in professional learning communities, where autonomy and reflection flourish under supportive conditions but diminish amid administrative overload. Similarly, Yu and Chao (2022) highlight the emotional labour required to sustain collaboration - a dynamic visible in participants' caution that AR must not become "yet another committee." In IB schools, where inquiry is institutionally valorised, this gap between discourse and infrastructure becomes particularly salient. AR is rhetorically compatible with IB philosophy, yet structurally vulnerable in high-mobility, high-accountability environments.

Leadership emerged as the most decisive mediating factor. Participants did not merely request permission to conduct AR; they sought vision, coordination, and equitable stewardship. Questions such as "Who oversees this?" and concerns about inconsistent follow-up indicate that sustainability hinges on visible, structured leadership rather than ad hoc encouragement. These findings reinforce Lynch et al.'s (2024) conclusion that whole-school AR initiatives require facilitated structures and continuity. Larrea et al. (2024) similarly argue that inquiry cultures depend upon institutional trust and long-term commitment. In transient international contexts, where administrative turnover disrupts continuity and institutional memory is fragile, leadership coherence becomes especially critical. The IB's formal endorsement of practitioner research (IBO, 2025a) signals institutional intent; however, participants' experiences suggest that policy-level endorsement must be operationalised through local, sustained leadership practice.

Concerns about rigour and professional legitimacy further complicate AR's standing. Participants valued AR's accessibility but questioned whether it would be regarded as "serious" scholarship. These concerns reflect longstanding methodological debates (Best & Kahn, 2006; Burns & Hayden, 2002). Contemporary frameworks such as Casey et al.'s (2023) Quality Action Research Checklist (QuARC) offer structured mechanisms for strengthening coherence and transparency. Importantly, participants' uncertainty about how to formalise reflection suggests that legitimacy is not solely an epistemological issue but also a professional one: teachers require both methodological scaffolding and institutional recognition to perceive AR as credible and valued.

Notably, participants approached AR pragmatically rather than ideologically. Few framed it as explicitly emancipatory; instead, it was viewed as a practical mechanism for improvement within existing structures. This aligns with Madsen et al.'s (2023) observation that AR transformation is often relational and experiential rather than overtly political. In international schools shaped by accountability frameworks, transnational curricula, and high staff mobility, AR may function less as systemic critique and more as adaptive problem-solving. This contextual nuance contributes to understanding how AR is enacted in globally mobile educational settings: its transformative potential is negotiated within organisational fluidity rather than driven by overt reform agendas.

Across themes, three interrelated priorities emerged inductively from the data:

1. The need for coherent and distributed leadership structures to coordinate inquiry;
2. The need for explicit ethical guidance and reflexive support to protect relational trust;
3. The need for sustainable organisational conditions - including time allocation, recognition, and professional learning - to prevent fragmentation.

These priorities were not imposed deductively; they emerged from participants' accounts of both opportunity and constraint. When interpreted through distributed leadership theory (Harris, 2014; Spillane, 2006), relational ethics (Bradbury-Huang, 2010), and research on sustainable inquiry ecosystems (Larrea et al., 2024), these empirically grounded needs coalesce into a coherent conceptual architecture.

The Leadership, Ethics, and Sustainability of Action Research Framework (LESARF) proposed in the subsequent section therefore represents a hybrid construct. Its core strands - leadership coherence, ethical reflexivity, and structural sustainability - are directly derived from patterns within the data. Its structural articulation, however, is informed by established theoretical and empirical scholarship. In this sense, LESARF emerges from the intersection of participants' lived experiences and conceptual resources in the literature, rather than from either domain alone.

Taken together, the discussion suggests that AR in IB international schools operates as both a pedagogical strategy and a professional disposition. It aligns inquiry with reflective action and positions educators as agents of context-sensitive improvement. Yet without institutional recognition, protected time, ethical scaffolding, and leadership continuity, AR risks remaining episodic rather than embedded. As the literature affirms (Chen, 2022; Lynch et al., 2024; Madsen et al., 2023), sustainable practitioner inquiry depends not only on teacher motivation but on the organisational conditions that cultivate and legitimise collaborative reflection.

The implications that follow translate these empirically grounded insights into a structured framework intended to support international schools in embedding action research as a coherent, ethical, and sustainable institutional practice.

7. Implications

Several implications arise from this study. Although situated within a specific IB international school, these insights may inform practice across inquiry-oriented and internationally mobile educational contexts.

7.1. Reframing Action Research as Ethical and Context-Responsive Practice

Participants frequently described AR as practical and action-oriented, yet few articulated its broader transformative or democratic potential. This suggests the need to reframe AR not only as a tool for classroom improvement but as an ethical mode of inquiry capable of addressing intercultural complexity, curricular bias, and institutional power dynamics.

As Messikh (2020) and Bradbury-Huang (2010) argue, AR's significance lies in its capacity to generate collaborative, context-sensitive change. Within IB schools, where global-mindedness and principled action are central values (IBO, 2017), explicitly positioning AR as a vehicle for examining interculturalism, inclusion, and transitions could strengthen its philosophical and ethical coherence. Making this framing explicit may enhance teachers' perception of AR as integral rather than peripheral to the IB mission.

7.2. Building Capacity Through Structured Support

The findings underscore that enthusiasm for AR is insufficient without structural enablement. Participants repeatedly identified time constraints, initiative fatigue, and uncertainty about methodological expectations as barriers. Therefore, building research capacity requires intentional design rather than informal encouragement.

Consistent with Chen (2022) and Lynch et al. (2024), schools should consider:

- Allocating protected professional learning time for inquiry cycles;
- Establishing mentoring or "critical friend" structures;
- Providing accessible methodological guidance tailored to practitioner contexts.

Importantly, capacity-building must address not only technical skills but also continuity. In high-mobility international environments, sustaining inquiry cultures requires structures that survive staff turnover and leadership transition.

7.3. Strengthening Leadership Coherence and Institutional Alignment

Leadership clarity emerged as the most decisive enabling condition. Participants sought not merely permission but visible coordination, follow-up, and equitable access to support. This indicates that AR requires leadership coherence - a shared vision that integrates inquiry into broader school improvement processes.

As Larrea et al. (2024) note, sustainable AR environments depend upon institutional trust and long-term commitment. In IB schools, this may involve:

- Aligning AR initiatives with strategic planning goals;
- Designating coordinators or teams to oversee inquiry processes;
- Ensuring transparent criteria for funding and recognition.

Moving from episodic projects to embedded practice requires leadership that adopts a facilitative rather than purely managerial stance.

7.4. Embedding Ethical Reflexivity and Teacher Agency

Participants' concerns regarding cultural positioning, power dynamics, and recognition highlight the ethical dimensions of practitioner inquiry. Ethical competence must therefore accompany methodological development.

Teachers should be supported in navigating:

- Informed consent and confidentiality;
- Cultural sensitivity and bias awareness;
- Power relations in peer and cross-cultural contexts.

Casey et al. (2023) emphasise that rigour in AR includes relational and ethical accountability. Embedding structured opportunities for reflexive dialogue - for example, within professional learning communities - can strengthen both trust and methodological integrity. In doing so, schools affirm teachers not only as practitioners but as ethical co-constructors of knowledge.

7.5. Enhancing Rigour and Extending Professional Recognition

Concerns about legitimacy indicate that strengthening perceptions of rigour is essential for AR's institutional standing. Adapting frameworks such as the Quality Action Research Checklist (Casey et al., 2023) may help practitioners articulate coherence, transparency, and impact.

External partnerships also offer a pathway to recognition and sustainability. Collaboration with universities or research networks (Berikkhanova et al., 2023) can:

- Provide methodological mentoring;
- Support dissemination and publication;
- Reinforce the scholarly credibility of practitioner research.

Such partnerships extend the influence of teacher inquiry beyond local settings while reinforcing its intellectual legitimacy within schools.

7.6. Overview of Implications

Taken together, these implications suggest that embedding AR in international schools requires more than enthusiasm or policy endorsement. It necessitates deliberate cultivation of ethical clarity, leadership coherence, methodological competence, and structural sustainability.

8. Introducing LESARF

These priorities directly inform the Leadership, Ethics, and Sustainability of Action Research Framework (LESARF) that follows. The framework operationalises the empirically identified needs - leadership vision, ethical reflexivity, and sustainable support - into a structured model intended to guide implementation in IB and comparable contexts.

While distributed leadership, relational ethics, and sustainability scholarship have independently addressed elements of practitioner inquiry, this study contributes by integrating these strands within the specific structural conditions of internationally mobile IB schooling. The contribution of LESARF lies not in proposing entirely new theoretical constructs, but in synthesising empirically derived institutional needs into a coherent, phased implementation architecture responsive to culturally diverse and high-transience environments.

8.1.1. Leadership, Ethics, and Sustainability of Action Research Framework (LESARF)

The Leadership, Ethics, and Sustainability of Action Research Framework (LESARF) is proposed as a structured response to the empirically identified conditions shaping action research (AR) in this study. Three interrelated priorities emerged inductively from participants' accounts:

1. The need for clearer leadership vision, coordination, and equitable stewardship (Theme 5.5);
2. The need for explicit ethical guidance in navigating cultural positioning, power, and confidentiality (Themes 5.3 and 5.5);
3. The need for sustainable institutional conditions - including time, recognition, and continuity - to prevent fragmentation (Themes 5.2 and 5.5).

These data-derived priorities, when interpreted alongside distributed leadership theory (Harris, 2014; Spillane, 2006), relational ethics (Bradbury-Huang, 2010), and research on sustainable inquiry environments (Larrea et al., 2024), converge into a coherent institutional model.

LESARF therefore represents a hybrid construct: empirically grounded in participants' lived experiences while conceptually informed by established scholarship. It proceeds from the premise that AR flourishes when leadership is facilitative rather than supervisory, when ethical reflexivity is embedded rather than assumed, and when sustainability is structurally designed rather than dependent on individual enthusiasm.

The framework integrates three interdependent strands:

1. **Leadership of Action Research (LAR)** – building distributed leadership capacity, structural coherence, and strategic alignment.
2. **Ethics of Action Research (EAR)** – establishing ethical guidance, review processes, and reflexive accountability.
3. **Sustainability of Action Research (SAR)** – embedding collaboration, recognition, and long-term capacity-building.

Together, these strands translate the participatory and relational intent of action research (Messikh, 2020; Bradbury-Huang, 2010) into organisational structures capable of sustaining inquiry in complex, high-mobility international contexts.

8.1.2. From Concept to Practice: A Staged Implementation Approach

To enhance practical applicability and respond to participants' concerns about initiative fatigue and structural ambiguity, LESARF may be implemented through phased integration aligned with school development cycles.

Phase 1: Foundation and Alignment (0–6 months)

Focus: establishing clarity and modest structural grounding.

- Articulate a shared institutional vision for AR aligned with school improvement priorities (LAR).
- Identify or appoint AR coordinators, mentors, or a small steering group (LAR).
- Introduce foundational ethical guidance, including informed consent templates and confidentiality norms (EAR).
- Allocate modest, protected time within professional learning schedules to signal institutional commitment (SAR).

This phase addresses participants' expressed need for direction and transparency without overloading existing systems.

Phase 2: Capacity Building and Pilot Inquiry (6–12 months)

Focus: developing competence and visibility through manageable experimentation.

- Support small-scale pilot AR teams or cross-disciplinary inquiry groups.
- Provide methodological mentoring and introduce adapted rigour frameworks (e.g., structured reflection protocols or quality checklists) (LAR/SAR).
- Embed ethical reflection within staff dialogue and peer review processes (EAR).
- Share pilot findings internally to build legitimacy and collegial recognition (SAR).

This stage operationalises participants' desire for collaboration and recognition while strengthening methodological confidence.

Phase 3: Institutionalisation and Networked Sustainability (Year 2 and beyond)

Focus: embedding inquiry into institutional routines and extending impact.

- Integrate AR into professional growth plans and reflective appraisal conversations (LAR).
- Formalise internal ethical review procedures or advisory committees proportionate to school scale (EAR).
- Develop partnerships with universities or research networks to enhance credibility and dissemination (SAR).
- Recognise practitioner inquiry through internal showcases, publication support, or conference participation.

This phase addresses the risk, identified in the findings, that AR remains episodic without structural anchoring and external validation.

These phases are indicative rather than prescriptive. Schools may adapt pacing, scale, and resource allocation according to context. However, the staged model underscores that

sustainable AR cultures emerge through progressive structural embedding rather than isolated enthusiasm.

8.1.3. Overview of LESARF Strands

The following table summarises the LESARF strands, and identifies the core focus areas, and the associated illustrative applications.

Table 3. Overview of the LESARF Strands

Strand	Core Focus	Key Elements	Application in Schools
Leadership of Action Research (LAR)	Building distributed leadership and inquiry capacity	Shared leadership roles Structured support for inquiry Alignment with school improvement goals	Establish AR teams or mentors Integrate AR into professional learning plans Allocate time and resources for reflection
Ethics of Action Research (EAR)	Ensuring ethical, transparent, and responsible practice	Informed consent and confidentiality Reflexivity and bias awareness Accountability and transparency	Develop ethical review procedures Embed reflective discussions in staff meetings Model ethical inquiry through leadership
Sustainability of Action Research	Embedding AR as a sustainable cultural practice	Institutional trust and collaboration Recognition and dissemination Ongoing capacity building	Share findings within and beyond school Celebrate practitioner inquiry Partner with external networks or universities

8.1.4. Summary

By integrating leadership coherence, ethical clarity, and sustainability structures, LESARF translates participants' expressed concerns into a structured institutional response. The framework does not position AR as an additional initiative layered onto existing workloads. It conceptualises AR as an organising principle for reflective professional practice that aligns teacher agency with institutional direction.

In IB and similarly inquiry-oriented contexts, such alignment may help bridge the gap identified in this study between philosophical commitment to inquiry and the structural realities that enable or constrain its enactment. LESARF therefore offers not a prescriptive blueprint but a scaffold for schools seeking to move from episodic practitioner projects toward ethically grounded and institutionally embedded cultures of inquiry.

9. Conclusion

This study examined teachers' perspectives on action research (AR) within an IB international school and revealed a consistent tension between enthusiasm and structural constraint. Participants viewed AR positively, including those without prior direct experience - recognising its capacity to deepen reflection, strengthen collaboration, and address pedagogical and organisational challenges. In particular, AR was perceived as well suited to exploring

issues central to IB contexts, including interculturalism, inclusion, linguistic diversity, mobility, and global transitions.

At the same time, the findings indicate that AR's sustainability depends less on philosophical alignment and more on institutional conditions. Participants emphasised the necessity of coherent leadership vision, protected time, methodological support, and ethical clarity. Without these structural and cultural supports, AR risks remaining episodic rather than embedded. The study therefore underscores that practitioner inquiry is not self-sustaining; it must be intentionally cultivated within organisational systems.

The Leadership, Ethics, and Sustainability of Action Research Framework (LESARF) proposed in this study represents a structured response to these empirically identified conditions. Rather than presenting AR as an additional initiative, the framework conceptualises it as an organising principle for reflective professional practice. By integrating distributed leadership, relational ethics, and sustainability structures, LESARF translates participants' lived concerns into an institutional model capable of supporting inquiry cultures over time.

The proposed Leadership, Ethics, and Sustainability Framework for Action Research offers a context-responsive heuristic derived from participants' expressed needs. By building distributed leadership capacity, embedding ethical review processes, aligning with external partners, and sustaining reflective evaluation, the framework provides a structured approach to institutionalising inquiry. Its applicability beyond IB international settings remains an empirical question requiring further comparative investigation. Strengthening leadership coherence and ethical capacity may enable international schools to more effectively leverage action research in responding to intercultural complexity, global transitions, and the evolving impact of IB education across diverse and non-Western contexts.

10. Limitations and Delimitations

This study is subject to several limitations. The relatively small sample size and time constraints limited participation and may have narrowed the range of perspectives captured. As Wellington (2000) notes, qualitative sampling inevitably involves compromise between depth and breadth. Participation was voluntary, and it is therefore possible that teachers with a prior interest in inquiry or professional development were more inclined to participate, potentially shaping the orientation and tone of responses. While thematic recurrence suggested sufficient informational richness, the findings should be understood as interpretive patterns rather than representative claims about all IB educators.

The single-site design further restricts the diversity of institutional contexts represented. The findings reflect the specific culture, leadership dynamics, and organisational structures of one IB international school operating within a particular socio-cultural and administrative environment. Although this contextual specificity limits statistical generalisability, the provision of thick description supports analytic transferability to other IB or inquiry-oriented schools that share comparable structures, mobility patterns, and pedagogical commitments. Transferability remains contingent upon contextual similarity and reader judgement rather than universal applicability.

The researcher's positionality as a colleague within the institution also constitutes a methodological limitation. Familiarity facilitated rapport and may have encouraged candid reflection; however, it may also have shaped both the production and interpretation of data. Social desirability bias - particularly in discussions relating to leadership, institutional culture, or professional recognition - cannot be fully excluded. In addition, shared contextual knowledge may have influenced how certain comments were probed, interpreted, or coded.

Reflexive journaling, analytic memoing, and peer debriefing were employed to interrogate these dynamics; nevertheless, complete detachment is neither attainable nor assumed within a constructivist–interpretivist paradigm. Rather than eliminating subjectivity, reflexivity functioned as a mechanism for making interpretive positioning visible and accountable.

Delimitations were intentionally established to maintain coherence and manageability. The study focused specifically on Middle Years Programme (MYP) and Diploma Programme (DP) teachers within one school, excluding other stakeholder groups such as students, parents, and governing board members. While this focus enabled in-depth exploration of practitioner perspectives, it necessarily narrows the scope of interpretation. The Leadership, Ethics, and Sustainability of Action Research Framework (LESARF) therefore remains conceptually grounded in teacher accounts and has not yet been tested across multiple institutional contexts. Future research incorporating multi-site comparisons, longitudinal designs, or additional stakeholder voices may further illuminate the systemic conditions influencing the sustainability of action research in internationally mobile educational environments.

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