Research circles can be regarded as a new way for researchers and staff in schools to meet and learn about one another’s knowledge and experience. It is a method of continuing professional development.
WHAT IS THE BENEFIT OF A RESEARCH CIRCLE?
The advantages of the research circle are numerous. As a teacher it offers you valuable continuing professional development: you use the new knowledge in your practical work and can for example bring your results into the classroom. You have the opportunity to reflect, jointly within the group, on the development of the school and your role as a teacher.

For the school it is a tool for carrying out development work more professionally. The circle contributes by putting into words the “quiet knowledge” that exists among the school staff.

PURPOSE
The academic and the practical world meet. There is a connection between the participants’ daily work and the research conducted in the circle. The circle always builds on the participants’ own dilemmas and everyday problems. The researcher introduces theories and research-based methods to the participants and new knowledge emerges over time.

The purpose of the circles is to illustrate questions or problems from the participants’ daily lives from several different perspectives rather than finding a solution to a given problem.

HOW IS THIS DONE?
To start a research circle requires a group of 8-12 teachers or pre-school teachers, led by a researcher from the University. The group meets about once a month for two semesters. The group reflects on the problem and together gains new insights through discussions, literature studies and individual investigations.

Clear rules of play are established together in the group and all knowledge has the same “value”, that is to say it is equal parties who meet. Everyone has their say and everyone’s opinions are welcomed.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?
Employees in school organisations, for example teachers, pre-school teachers, school health care staff, study and careers advisers, heads of school and investigators. Research circles can also be conducted with other professional groups.

EXAMPLES
• Education and languages
• Intercultural learning processes in pre-schools and schools
• Honour problems
• How do we steer the school towards more equality?
• Norm-critical education
• Challenging the notions of pre-school teachers

For more information and contact details:
www.mdh.se/samverkan/koncept/forskningscirklar

This is one of several cooperation concepts at Mälardalen University. Please contact us for more information or visit www.mdh.se.