Chapter 4
Action Research–Learning Approach for Social and Organizational Development

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ABSTRACT

Education and research play a decisive role in the creation, dissemination, and use of knowledge. They form an important foundation for innovation at all levels. In recent years, a key strategy of most countries has been the promotion of industrial innovation and the governments focus turning to research in the university sector to deliver this innovation. Further, an increase in competition, and the fact that knowledge creation requires time, more organizations prefer acquiring it rather than internally developing. Hence, the chapter addresses a simple question— do action learning and research lead to organizational development? Truly said, research and teaching are synergistic too. Thus, adopting a grounded theory approach and in-depth literature review, the aim of this chapter is to investigate and cultivate a deeper understanding of action learning and research, establish a connection between knowledge and practice and show how this makes organizational development possible apart from proposing a framework for adoption of action research.

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INTRODUCTION

There is great move towards placing the student in the driver’s seat for learning and various forms to do so is discussed, student centred, learner centred, and project based etc. Brookfield (1985) argues that teachers’ role is to “facilitate” the acquisition of knowledge, not “transmit” it. All these forms are a hope that it will transform learning into practice easily. The scale has no doubt titled in favour of learning, just as all aspire to be thin, but have not changed what is cooked and served. As a result, the issue is what should teachers do to maximize learning outcomes? How to create students with lifelong learning attitude? Should research be only for the ivory tower? Is there not a dire need to bring better connectivity between learning, research and workplace or organizations per se? Behind all the policies and practices used to facilitate, learning ought to be based on some theoretical or empirical rationale. The justification ought to be substantive than doing something because it has always been done that way. Institutions and teachers world over, continue to paddle and operating from an eclectic, idiosyncratic knowledge base grounded almost exclusively on personal experience. It is as if the two closely related territories of research and practice are separate planets, unknown and seemingly inaccessible to one another (Baporikar, 2015b). It is of concern, that if continued to feed the interest in learning with nothing more than rhetoric, it will not flourish and neither grow into better instructional practice. Similarly, if students do not acquire research skills and move on path of self-directed learning or discovery then they will not develop lifelong learning attitude (Baporikar, 2016). Further if research remains the prerogative of the professorial and that too done in ivory towers then research will not make the impact on organizations and society worse it will not benefit the humankind at large. Then, who should build the bridges necessary to connect research and practice? Yet, most of time, those who do the research tend to be faculty who daily face passive students who are taking required courses. Worse still they adopt research methods, which are based on collection of data and analysis rather than adopt exploratory or real time situation analysis. However, if not researchers, should the task be left to practitioners untrained in the relevant disciplines? As it stands now, the task is the responsibility of no one, and so few in the academy try to connect research and practice. Hence, there are those few of us, who do build the bridges with no blueprints to follow and few rewards to honour our work. However, we keep building because it seems so clear to us that these territories are beneficially connected in theory and practice. Moreover, knowledge in all of its forms is one of the most important factors for individual fulfilment and success in society.

Education and research play a decisive role in the creation, dissemination and use of knowledge. They form an important foundation for innovation at all levels, which in turn drives the economic, social and cultural development of a country.
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