

Chapter 10

Action Research

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is about action research. Action research is defined as the comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action and research leading to social action. This chapter highlights the history of action research, definition of action research, characteristics of action research, stages of action research, issues of action research, credibility and validity of action research. In action research, the ultimate objective is in the perceived functionality of chosen actions to produce desirable consequences for an organization.

INTRODUCTION

'Action research' is a well heard phrase in the academia. But till date, very few researchers have discussed the meaning of action research. From an academicians point of view, the exact definition of action research is not clear as researchers have used different conceptualizations for it.

The term action research was introduced by a social psychologist Kurt Lewin in the year 1944, with an aim to link the theory of social science and practice. Since social scientists and the real-world practitioners were working in isolation and there was no meaningful linkage between researcher's world and practitioner's world. While most of the social science researchers built theories without taking into consideration of the real world applicability, practitioners were also engaged

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in executing different action plans without having knowledge about the theoretical research findings. Lewin gave a clear picture of what is meant by action research and how it differed from traditional positivist science (Marrow, 1969). Lewin (1948) characterized action research as a comparative research on the conditions and possessions of a range of forms of social action and research leading to social action. The propinquity of critical social issues forms an essential ingredient of action research (Greenwood & Levin, 2006; McKernan, 1991). Therefore, Lewin argued that in order to comprehend and change certain social practices, social scientists have to include practitioners from the practitioner's world in all phases of inquiry. Bringing these two worlds together and combining the social science research with strategic action resulted in a new area of action research (Andronic, 2010).

Lewin also stated that social researchers should work closely with practitioners of a real world to understand and change particular social practices. Any organizations or institutions, along with trained professional researchers, can use the action research as a strategic tool to diagnose and improve their current organizational problems. Therefore, after reading this chapter, one would be able to understand the following:

- Meaning of action research.
- Important characteristics of action research.
- Difference between traditional research and action research.
- Different stages of conducting an action research.
- Benefits of conducting an action research.
- Major issues related to action research.
- Methods of conducting an action research.

ABOUT: UNDERSTANDING ACTION RESEARCH

The term 'action research' is a combination and the linkages between the two words 'action' and 'research'. The term 'action' refers to researcher's plan of action for a stated real-time problem and the term 'research' refers to the analysis, understanding, and the effectiveness of such implemented action (McNiff, 2016). It is quite possible for a researcher to take certain action without doing any research or to do research without implementing any kind of action, but the unique combination of the two concepts discriminates action research from other traditional research. According to Baskerville (1999), action research has the potential to generate an actionable solution for a complex problem in a given situation. Unlike any other conventional social science research, the ultimate goal of action research is to solve the current practical problem (Altrichter, Feldman, Posch, & Somekh, 2013; Rapoport, 1970) by implementing desired changes and to create a new set of knowledge in the organization.

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