

What is Action Learning & Action research?

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Preface

In this workshop incomplete handouts will be used to enable the participants to own and contextualise the propositional knowledge. This strategy is expected to produce practical knowledge from the dialectical relationship between the proposed and the practical knowledge of the audience. The propositional knowledge is outlined below. The participants of this programme are expected to add and share their own examples, interpretations to produce personal practical knowledge at the end of the session.

1. Action research is learning from and for action to produce shared practical knowledge using reflective thinking. The key words are learning from action, shared practical knowledge and reflective thinking.
2. Learning can occur at various levels and action research has many forms (See my own learning experiences in my paper 'How can I persuade you to use action research'? The key words are variety in levels and forms.
3. It is based on the belief that research (knowledge production) is not the sole responsibility of universities. Thoughtful people have always learnt and improved themselves this way.
4. Ultimately it is an inquiry into 'what, how and why' of what do to improve ourselves, the work we do and the contexts.
5. The outcome of such an inquiry is the accounts of our personal learning and the influences of our learning on their stakeholders. Professor Whitehead calls these accounts living educational theories.
6. I use Whitehead (1989) to explain action research. He wrote: Action research answers the question: '**How do I improve what I am doing?**' It is not so difficult to answer this question as most professionals do it frequently to be accountable to other stakeholders in their work. It took me a long time to understand the deeper meanings of each word used in this question (See my paper on 'My experiences of learning Living Educational Theory form of action research). The key terms used in making this kind of inquiry are I/self, task, context, standards of judgement, living educational theories. I understand these terms as follows:
7. For me **I/self** is our knowledge in memory of past experiences of acting in various roles and contexts. Usually this knowledge is fragmented and implicit in nature. Our actions are our response to challenges from the various contexts. Most of our actions are based on this kind knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs of our selves, our contexts and our roles. Living educational theory form of action research is an inquiry into the growth of our personal self/I as a result of learning from our actions to produce explicit and valid knowledge. My EdD thesis, Punia, 2004 is produced to explicate and share my professional self/.. This study explains growth of my character and technical competence based on Covey 1992, 2004 used to generate trust amongst

colleagues to influence them to learn from what they were doing under my leadership as an international consultant.

8. **Task** is the role we perform and actions we take to perform these roles efficiently and effectively in various contexts. I believe we do not fully understand the nature of human action yet. However, we do know that useful action has to meet personal and social needs and it is always collaborative in nature. Success depends largely on matching self with needs (Covey 2004). That is why action inquiry includes improvements in task performance, people development in various contexts as an integrated process.

9. In my view we do not understand the nature of **context** fully. Generally context includes understanding of the cultural, political, economical and historical influences on our work. Context tends to have positive and constraining effects on our action. Negotiating through a particular context is an important skill. I/self and the context have a complex relationship. I believe they co-create each other.

10. **Standards of judgement** are the criteria we use in assessing the quality of our work and of our lives. They include our beliefs of our place in the world, the nature of human knowledge and our values. Generally they remain implicit to us. Action research makes them explicit so that we can understand them fully and share them with others.

11. According to Whitehead (1989), the originator of living educational theory form of action research, **Living Educational theories** are the accounts of our learning from life and helping others to learn in order to improve the quality of human life on this planet. Unlike traditional theories living theories are continuously changing as a result of learning. They are educational for other stakeholders. Unlike the theories of education derived from animal learning, they are learning theories of professional educators.

12. The outcomes of such an inquiry will be elaborated in a separate session on the 'Why of Action research'. For organisation development they improve the quality of work, the workers and the context as an integrated process necessary for sustained growth.

A few Question to ponder over(Group Discussion)

1. Action research is what committed people do naturally?
2. Action research is the development of an inquiring mind?
3. Action research is nothing but Total Quality Management?

Case Records (Group work)

1. Punia R S (1974), **A systematic approach to teaching aids/media/ ICT** : AVA News, Hong Kong Education Department.
2. Punia R S (1985), **Staff Development in FIT: An unusual Case**, FIT Journal.

Reading Material(Individual Work)

1. McNiff J. (1995, 1997, 2002), **Action Research for Professional Development concise advice for new action researchers.**

2. Punia RS (2006), **Action Research in Organisation Development: A Concise Guide.**
3. Whitehead J (1989) Creating a living educational theory from the questions of the kind, How do I improve my practice? Cambridge Journal of Education, Vol. 19, No1, pp.41-52.

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