

Chapter-wise Summary

Tarun Mugunthan, 16U130001

‘Action Research: Living Theory’, Jack Whitehead and Jean McNiff, 2006

This book is about the field of action research and is aimed at practitioners, specifically in the field of education, who are keen on making their own enquiries into improving their learnings and explaining how and why they wish to do that. They describe how research done by practitioners (about their own practice), while capable of generating further new and informed practice, is considered to be incapable of generating quality theory, by the research community at large. They give the example of the educational research community in the UK and describe how, while some steps towards formally accepting practitioner research have been taken (as mentioned in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise), practitioners are held back by the lack of established forms of judgement of quality which stand up to the norms of academic rigour. This is owed to the continuing dominance of social sciences as dominant paradigm in educational research.

Chapter 1

In the first chapter the authors describe the current scenario in the field of educational research which serves as the basis for their concerns about the future due its influence on professional educators. They give start with an anecdote about the 2005 seminar on ‘The Future of Educational Research’ held by British Educational Research Association (BERA). The seminar concluded that the educational research should be continued, as it has always has been, to be approached through social science perspective. It also highlighted that while practitioner research provided useful insights about pedagogy and the profession of teaching, it did not have acceptable standards of judgement to produce valid theory. This has been a persistent issue with practitioner research despite many formal acknowledgments as being a valuable form of professional development. The authors say:

“Practitioners need to remedy this situation if they are to participate in public debates about the future of evidence-based educational practices, by showing that their claims to be generating quality theory should be taken seriously.”

They emphasise the need for developing coherent standards of judgement for assessing quality and validity of practitioner research. They provide these standards of judgement along with the appropriate processes to reach the same in this book and define it as their main contribution through this text. They aim to establish these standards in the field of practitioner action research such that it is agreed upon by both the practitioner community and the higher education community.

The authors give us an overview of the ideologies followed in the field of social sciences. Social Sciences adopt a spectator perspective to research(ontology) where the theory generated is about the people who are studied and is owned and published by the researcher who takes the role of the external observer. This perspective is directly borrowed from the natural sciences which is about studying the physical environment. In this approach, scientists assume a value-free, objective perspective in order to study what is ‘out there’ through empirical methods. While providing the different attitudes and methodologies that exist in social sciences, the authors state:

“Whatever their internal differences, however, the social sciences maintain an overall position that takes human behaviour as an object that can be studied from a spectator point of view.”

Describing the epistemology and logic of social science the authors say, some scientists in the field believe that knowledge is something that is ‘out there’ and can be studied from the outside(the etic view). Sometimes they enter the social contexts they are investigating and study them from the inside(the emic view). The difference in status still remains between the researcher and the subjects. In contrast, action researchers abandon their external perspective and study their own practice and relationships with those they are studying. In either case knowledge is considered to be independent of the researcher and hence free from contamination. Knowledge can be organised into laws that are universal and perpetual and is applicable to like-to-like situations where the subjects of inquiry don’t break these laws. Social sciences sometimes use linear logic since there is an assumed

end-point or truth which has to be reached. This logic is forcefully applied in situations where a clear answer is not there and does not regard local contexts hence is imperialistic in nature. There are criticisms of all of the above ideologies within the social sciences however these can be further supported by better establishing alternate scholarly traditions such as action research which is what the authors set out to do in this book.

Given the approaches that social science takes to social research, the implications of it are described in the context of educational research. The educational research community, as is demonstrated in the case of BERA, held the view that educational research should be continued through social science perspectives. As is true to this perspective, educational researchers were external observers who studied and analysed education and the teaching profession of practitioners. They created rigid bodies of knowledge based on this research which they claimed to be applicable universally. This form of knowledge did not include creative imagination of possible futures and values of practitioners. While there were attempts to change this form knowledge generation by shifting epistemological assumptions, it did not sway the dominance of the social science approach due to a lack of an alternative methodology that was credible enough in terms of validity and rigour.

This ideological hegemony of the social sciences in educational research created a system of domination and control. Research done by external researchers, which did not take into account practitioner values, was the only acceptable form of knowledge. This body of knowledge was used by policy makers to make policies about education. These policies were supposed to be followed by practitioners who found themselves having little say in the course of their own profession, often going against their own values in doing so. It is this situation that the authors attempt to change by providing ways of legitimising practitioner research and establishing it as something to be taken seriously by the academic community at large.

There is new form of control, driven by policy, called 'performance management' that decreases the agency of practitioners even further and imposes even more control over their practice as dictated by external researchers. In this system, external researchers are tasked with creating action plans for educators to implement. This gives rise to passive consumerist learning for the practitioners and by nature of the underlying social science theory, ignores the real life vagaries of

practice. This is compared to the assumptions of action research where practitioners have scope to accommodate their own values of humanitarianism, care and compassion and define their learning outcomes within the scope of their practice. They create theory as informed by their practice and change their practice iteratively based on this theory, hence allowing for flexibility in both research and practice.

The authors conclude the chapter by saying that all research is based on some ontological, epistemological and methodological values. They value embodied knowledge and the agency of people to create their own living theory. They reject values of imperialism, domination and control in the domain of research. Their experience of following the systems in place as defined by current educational practice (informed by social science based educational theory) found them going against their own values with regards to education and served as the spark to initiate their research.

Chapter 2

In chapter 2, the authors talk about what kind of research is will effective in influencing the future of education. The address issues of which kind of theory is most appropriate for practitioners to explain their practice and what standards of judgement will lend their claims credibility. In order to answer these questions about theory and research the authors make available to the reader, the underlying concept of the nature of theory which informs this discussion.

The authors describe any theory as being a claim to knowledge. There are different kinds of claims made by different people depending on their organisation of the field and ways of reasoning i.e their logic. Due to this theory generation becomes a political activity since people tend to get their own ideas accepted and claim that their's is the only correct form of theory. This, however, is not the case. Both theories and theorists vary widely. There are three different kinds of theories as defined by the authors: propositional, dialectical and living theories. They describe how both propositional and dialectical forms of theory have had a 2500 yr. old history starting from Aristotle and Plato respectively. Those who believe in propositional theories make statements on the way things are. These tend to be grounded in a quest for certainty. There is a strict

demarcation between what is correct and what is incorrect dictated by either-or forms of logic. The associated mindset is a closed one which blocks further discussion and takes an adversarial position against any claim which is not the same as theirs. Socially, this means that those on the minority side of an argument are dismissed. Dialectical forms of theory are fluid and open and rooted in contradiction. Questions can be answered by other questions and all events and experiences have contradictions. Living theories are unique as they refer to the practice of real-life theorising that is inherent to all people. As humans we do something and reflect upon it to make sense of it. As we practise we gather data and generate evidence to support our claims that we know what we are doing and why we are doing it. The validity of these claims is assessed by critical feedback from others. This allows people to position themselves as living contradictions in the sense that they hold certain values which are often denied within their practise. The kinds of claims of knowledge which are made by living theories are of subjective knowledge of the 'know' and 'know this variety' i.e both knowledge without and with a direct object. Examples of these statements are 'I know this song.' and 'I know.' in response to 'You need to hurry up. These kinds of knowledge differ from those claimed by propositional theories. These only value 'know that' and 'know how' i.e propositional knowledge and procedural knowledge. These constitute objective knowledge. The difference between objective and subjective knowledge which lead to an acceptance of the former and rejection of the latter by the academic community is that while objective forms can be proved simply through empirical evidence, there are not established and accepted ways of validating subjective knowledge. These ways are just being worked out, something which this book plays a role in.

Coming to a discussion on logic, the authors explain the difference between the three kinds of logic which lead to the three kinds of theories described above, they explain how dominant propositional theories use propositional logic which is of a divisive kind: either-or, this-that, up-down, left-right. These necessarily define things through binary divides and in doing so create boundaries that enclose different entities, boundaries which cannot be negotiated. This division by default creates some vertical relations of superiority and inferiority. Meanwhile, dialectical logics are more open with emphasis on continuing discussion rather than arriving at the truth. Things don't have a structural relationship with one another but a

dialectical one. Living logics are those which see potentials in everything and see everything in relation with everything else. Living logic has emergent properties which lead to self-recreation in infinite iterations. Its dictated by free-flow relationships between things which change with time. This kind of logic is dynamic as it continually transforms itself into more evolved forms. This also means that these logics are impermanent and are driven by a commitment to learning in the present and accepting the unknown of the future.

The different forms of theory are represented in different ways given the nature of their content and logic. Propositional logic is presented in the form of written text. The statements within these texts are non-contradictory and follow a logical order. These theories stand on the grounds of whether their statements stand in a logical relationship with one another. It boils down to a set of interconnected statements. Dialectical theories, due to them being rooted in a discourse of contradictions, are presented in forms of case studies and narrative inquiries. These forms of representation have been legitimised by several researchers. Living Theories are special, they are comprised of the lived experiences of people and hence are best represented by a variety of media which appropriately capture them. These include photos, visual narratives, videos and other e-media.

Chapter 3

The authors have shown in the previous chapters how propositional logic and theories which are dominant in educational research done through social science methodologies. They have shown how their values of inclusion and their belief that every person should arrive at knowledge through their own journeys, is disregarded in the status quo. They now tell, through stories, the kind of impact their work in the field of action research has had and how they evaluate and re-evaluate it as they progress, as is the case with living theories.

They give three examples of educational practitioners who have applied action research to generate their own theories. One of these is Caitríona McDonagh. She is a teacher who's responsibility is to teach children with specific learning disability(dyslexia). She states

in her account how her practice as her teacher was contradicting her personal values as a teacher. She believes that these children should not be labelled as deficient because they struggle to read. Other kids struggling in areas like math and art are not labelled deficient and this, as she says, is unfair. She believes judging these children on standardised metrics to decide whether they are deficient or not is not justified and the variation in individual children's strengths and weaknesses should be appreciated and accommodated within their education. The current educational paradigm she found herself working within was inconsistent with these beliefs. Hence she was experiencing a contradiction. She investigated her own practice and asks questions like how she could teach such that her pupils learn more effectively. The labelling of her kids as dyslexic and deficient stems from an established norm outside which they lie. Since norms are socially constructed and politically constituted they need to be scrutinised. According to her, having universal norms against which everyone is judged is an act of injustice. Thus, taking justice as her core value, she pursues her action research and generates new theory based on her practice. She judges her outcomes against her core value by showing the appropriate learning improvement in her kids with her new pedagogy.

Stories of Caitríona and the others show how teachers were able to transform their contradictory experiences into life-enhancing ones. The authors demonstrate how they have influenced practitioners to better their practice. By telling the stories of how they improved it they hope to improve the reader's practice as well. They base this assumption on Todorov's theory that stories have transformational potential, that is, they can influence change.

Chapter 4

The authors take a more pedagogical approach in chapter 4 and start giving practical guidance to the reader assuming that the reader is interested in pursuing their own action research. They discuss data gathering as an important foundation in action research and say that it is used to generate evidence to support and test claims(theories). They describe where data stands with respect quality of judgements and claims to knowledge. There are ways of collecting quality data in action research as demonstrated throughout this chapter.

Data is used to generate evidence so the first step of data gathering starts with asking the question 'Evidence of what?'. In action research the 'what' usually is related to your own learnings and the influence of those learnings on others. They define two foci of data gathering as being 1. Focussed on self and 2. Focussed on others. Within each there is distinction between monitoring the learnings and monitoring the the actions. Diaries and journals are used frequently to gather data about your own learnings. The authors advise us to follow a format for noting our observations: Action(what you did), Reflection(what you learned from what you did) and Possible Significance of the learning. The significance from one action feeds into the next one and thus it forms a loop where learning informs actions and actions inform learning. This is a core paradigm in action research called the action-reflection cycle. Practice generates new theory and new theory informs new practice. This is where it is important to mention that action research is a long term endeavour where researchers go through many such cycles of practice and theory generation/modification. Monitoring your own actions in your practice is where the focus is on what you are doing. This can be achieved by a variety of observation methods ranging from field notes to video clips. You can also ask external observers to focus on your actions and record them while you perform your practice in the field. It is by pitting these observations against the articulated standards of judgements that you claim a valid improvement in your own practice. The other part of data gathering, focussing on others, is done to evaluate your influence on the learning of others. In this process you must take care not to lose your own ontological values and adopt those of others as is done by social scientists. Data must be gathered about how others respond to you and your behaviour. Monitoring the learnings of others has to be done by them as only they can attest to their learnings. This requires your research participants to maintain records of their own learnings in the form of reflective journals, learning portfolios and diaries. You should inform and take their consent to use data about themselves for your research. Similarly you can monitor the actions of others in a public setting as well as ask them to report on the same.

The process of data gathering is a disciplined and focussed exercise. The data you gather must be organised in relation to the claims you make and your larger research objectives. Gathering data in action research is often a long term endeavour spanning years. Given how most action research starts with a contradiction to values in living

experience, the starting point for data gathering must be incidents which demonstrate this contradiction. Thereon, the data you collect will substantiate the claims you make about improving your practice by making it more consistent with your values. These values may never be fully realised even after years and thus the authors suggest you should not aim to reach a conclusion with your research but focus on the present. There are many forms in which data is collected: written, graphic(charts, diagrams and comic strips) and multimedia(photos, audio, video).

Authors then advise us on the ethical considerations related to collecting data. Ethical frameworks include three categories: Access, Safeguarding rights and Assuring good faith. You must obtain required permission to access and work with research participants. Safeguarding the rights of participants is also important. They should be able to stay anonymous, withdraw from the study at any time and request their data to be removed. Good faith must be maintained throughout the entire process with regard for the participants and their will. Finally, intellectual freedom of research participants needs to be protected when making claims of influence over their actions.

Chapter 5

Here there is shift from data gathering to generating evidence using that data. The authors first give practical advice about how to turn data into evidence and then they go on to establish the standards of judgement against which the evidence stands.

There are four processes by which evidence is generated in action research. These are sorting and categorising data, analysing the data for meanings, identifying criteria and standards of judgement and generating evidence. You tend to start thinking about standards of judgement when you sort and categorise data. When you select a piece of data from your records to demonstrate a particular action or situation, you judge that piece by using some unarticulated standards of judgement. Usually the first stage of categorising and sorting data involves making categories like meetings and conversations and then creating subcategories like meetings and conversations with students and parents respectively. This is followed by analysing the data for meanings where you take data and look for what you consider worthwhile. You define meaningful data in terms of your own values

which, as we will see, become your own living standards of judgement. Now you must articulate your standards of judgement. Standards of judgement in action research come from your values. Your values define what you consider as good and your claims are considered in relation to this standard. The values you hold determine what you hold important in life and hence values become ontological standards. Because they articulate the standards in terms of what they claim to know, they become epistemological standards as well. Using this approach the authors aim to move away from the criteria based forms of judgement which is employed in current research. These kinds of standards value only the skill of practitioners (as defined by the criteria) and not their values as educators. Finally, generating evidence by picking from your organised data, those pieces of information that, when measured against your articulated standards of judgement, substantiate your claims.

The authors now detail out their own standards of judgement in relation to their ontological, epistemological, methodological and pedagogical values. Ontological values that the authors hold pertain to how they live their lives. For them, they consider themselves part of a relational and inclusion universe which includes everyone else. Every person is unique and has capacity to make an original contribution and engage with others critically in relation to ideas and practice. They hence encourage practitioner researchers to externalise their embodied knowledge as clearly articulated theories of practice. Their ontological standards of judgement come from these values. These ontological standards lead to epistemological standards. The epistemological values they hold are beliefs that practitioners have the capacity to 1) identify and articulate what they clearly what they are studying, 2) explain the intellectual and practical processes involved in this study, 3) generate evidence via these processes and 4) articulate their claims to knowledge in terms of the standards they use to judge the validity of evidence. Methodological values held by authors bring structure to their enquiries. The structure they use for their own enquiries is:

- What is my concern?
- Why am I concerned?
- What experiences can I describe to show why I am concerned?
- What can I do about it?
- What will I do about it?
- What kind of data will I gather to show the situation as it unfolds?

- How will I explain my educational influences in learning?
- How will I show that any conclusions I come to are reasonably fair and accurate?
- How do I evaluate the evidence-based account of my learning?
- How do I modify my concerns, ideas and practices in the light of my evaluations?

The authors mention that many practitioners have used these questions to structure their enquires but they remain consistent with the values of freedom and independent creation since those who have used these have changed them to suit their own action research practices. The authors encourage practitioners to come up with their own methodologies. By creating methodology the authors embody their values of love of discipline, structure and coherence into methodological standards of judgement. Finally, the authors talk about their pedagogical values. In their pedagogy they direct practitioner action researchers' attention to the fact that their understanding of practice can become their unit of appraisal, and also their understanding of the need to articulate their standards of judgement to test the validity of their claims to knowledge and their own living educational theories.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 deals with the questions of how to establish validity and legitimacy of action research. Validity is about establishing the truth value or trustworthiness of a claim to knowledge. Legitimacy is about getting other people to accept the validity of those claims. Since this is a social process, it involves scrutinising the social order in place which influences what is permitted to count as knowledge.

Validity can be claimed by showing the authenticity of the evidence base in relation to the standards of judgement used and demonstrating the reasonableness of the claim. Establishing validity is grounded in reason. It also involves establishing the authority of the scholarship that leads to the claim. When you make claims then you implicitly also make a claim that you are authorised to make that claim. Both your claim and your authority must be justified for validity.

Establishing legitimacy is a more social process and often has to do with power than rationality. The authors gave the example of Galileo who validated his claims through scientific rationality but whose legitimacy was refused by the irrational prejudice of those religiously inclined authorities who exercised power. Hence, proving legitimacy often involves dealing with power-constituted contexts. In these contexts power can be used to silence those who claim the authority of their knowledge. Often grounded in asymmetrical relationships of power, critics critique work and impose their ideas in an autocratic manner without showing why they are authorised to make such judgements. Statements like “you are wrong because I say so” are made which violate democratic evaluation. Such a culture of domination exists in the current context of educational research where social science traditions inform the future of the field, colonising and subjugating the indigenous knowledge of practitioners. Knowledge generated by practitioners is refused to qualify as theory.

The authors discuss how practitioner action researchers can negotiate legitimation and validation processes in contexts where their standards of judgment are prioritised. The way to do this is through having mediated and structured external scrutiny. Claims to knowledge and validity of the evidence base should be scrutinised by external, impartial but sympathetic viewers who can ask critical questions about data, authentication procedures and evidence generating processes. There, however, need to be rules and criteria to have these discourses in a democratic way without the judges imposing their own biases. Practitioners should be able present their work in a way that shows its methodological rigour and epistemological integrity, and judges should make judgements on the quality of the work in a way that does it justice on its own terms. Processes of democratic evaluation require a set of rules to be agreed upon by both parties. Drawing of Habermas’ criteria of social validity, the authors establish their own criteria. Both practitioners and judges must speak in ways that are:

- comprehensible, in that a form of language is used that is commonly understood by all;
- truthful, in that all recognise these as true accounts and not fabrications;
- sincere, so that all parties can trust what the other says;
- appropriate for the context, while recognising the unspoken cultural norms in which their discourses are embedded.

The criteria form the base of validation procedures for practitioners. There are two accepted forms of validation in action research - personal validation and social validation. Personal validation refers to having conviction in your own claims through internal processes of critical reflection. Social validation usually takes the forms of meetings with critical friends who, while being supportive, raise critical responses to the accounts of the practitioner. They listen carefully to and assess the quality of the claim to knowledge in relation to the evidence produced and the clarity and acceptability of the standards of judgment. When social validation is done in the context of an institution, it becomes institutional validation. This is extremely important for legitimation as the academy is still seen as highest legitimating body for what counts as scholarship. However, in cases of institutional validation, practitioners must claim their authority in articulating their own standards of judgement and not be bound by those defined by institutions. This often means accommodating both sets of standards. In these contexts it is the judges' responsibility to abide by the same criteria as practitioners, these being comprehensibility, truthfulness, sincerity and appropriateness. All those who are involved must agree on the standards of judgement or hold themselves open to reaching an agreement.

Chapter 7 & 8

This chapter deals with the significance of action research done by the authors. They say that research based learning can influence the learning of others. This is done by telling stories about the research done by practitioners. They also focus on the idea of educational influence as they detail their impact.

The authors tell us about the story of their own beginnings as practitioner researchers and describe how, after developing their own theories and learnings, started writing texts to support practitioner research after 2000. In talking about the spread of educational influence they talk about the structure of communication networks between people in the community. They say how these networks, unlike conventional representations of nodes and clusters, actually are seen as communities of common space with interconnected riverine channels which also have variably permeable and deformable boundaries(not fixed ones). This model of networks is

called free flow networks and this is how the authors visualise the nature of educational relationships. They describe how influence is not a solid entity but incorporated within human relationships. People have a choice of whether they want to be influenced or not and they mediate another's influence through this capacity for choice. Learning can hence be seen as a transformation of mediated influence. The kind of learning that influences further learning has to be a matter of influence, and influence happens through free-flow interpersonal and intra- personal relationships which respect the other's capacity for choice in choosing whether or not to be influenced, and to use the learning in ways that are right for them.

The authors have always aimed to influence people's learnings in a way where they can decide for themselves how they wish to conduct their research. They think of 'changing people' as imposition of their own thoughts and hence just offer ideas about what practitioners could do and leading them to resources that would help their research. The authors have created a library of the accounts of practitioners that they have supported and offer these accounts in the public domain as stories. They explain how stories, by nature, have transformational potential since each episode of text contains the potential to generate the next, which turns into a transformation of the previous form. This precisely aligns with the nature of action research itself where episodes of reflection and action transform into each other as the researcher conducts their enquiries. They believe that these stories of research can influence other practitioners in their enquiries. Creating such knowledge bases of accounts of practitioners can be helpful in contributing to both new practice as well as theory. The authors give examples of both.

Finally, they talk about how they have played a role in influencing social formations like institutions and organisations. While it has been typical to think of social formations in terms of the structures, hierarchies and configurations, the authors depart from this limiting notion and reinforce an understanding that these formations are actually organised in terms of relationships and discourses. They then talk about how these relationships and discourses are bound by normative rules which those in power within the social formation try and reinforce to protect the existing order and hence their position of power. They profess that things are the way they should be. However, the fundamental purpose of action research is to ask questions like 'Am I living in the direction of my own values, or someone else's? Who writes my script? How do I realise my values?' In asking these

questions, people become aware of the normative rules and find an opportunity to change things. The author exemplify their contributions to social formation change in a few examples throughout chapter 7 and chapter 8. I leave out the details of the case studies from this summary as they are best read fully to capture their nuances which show the authors' contributions.

Chapter 9

The authors now talk about this book itself as an account of their action research. They say how writing about research is a different but equally important skill as doing research as the quality of research is often judged by the quality of their account. They talk more directly to readers at a personal level in this chapter as they detail out the standards by which us as readers would evaluate this book as an account of action research.

First they articulate the normative standards by which texts are usually evaluated. These criteria come from Habermas' criteria of social validity as writing is a form of communicative action. They ask the readers directly:

- Is this account comprehensible? This includes questions like - Is the language used unambiguous and accessible? Have the authors attempted to mislead through innuendo? Have the authors clarified their own position and spoken to your experiences? Have they channeled their outrage in disciplined ways and not in distorted outbursts of anger and wild language?
- Is this account truthful? This includes questions like - Don't they make unwarranted claims without supporting them with authenticated evidence? Have they clarified the nature of the evidence and proved its authenticity through details? Is this book propaganda which goes against its own value of freedom of thought? Has this book provided support to build intellectual self-defence?
- In this account sincere? Have the authors shown sincerity throughout and respected the views of the researchers working in other traditions while showing disagreement?
- Is the account appropriate? The authors have written a pedagogical text about changing social norms through action research. They do so as they believe that the status quo is a contradiction where their values and those of educational practitioners in general are not

realised through normative theory and practice. They justify the appropriateness of the book in the need to resolve that contradiction and as an appropriate stand to take against the status quo.

Next, the authors want to go beyond the normative and technical evaluation of the text evaluate the quality of the story they tell the readers. To do so they must also qualify themselves to tell these stories. They must hence establish their trustworthiness for us to believe in their claims. The trustworthiness of the authors can be judged by the existence of stories of learning that they help others produce and have validated. The hundreds of practitioners who credit their success in their enquiries into their own practice, to the educational influence of the authors is testimony that to the quality of their influence and the success of their methods of telling stories to extend this influence.

Chapter 10

In the final chapter of the book, the authors start by summarising their work so far starting with the cause for their concerns which they described in chapter 1. They repeat their critique of current educational research practices as furthering values of domination and control where external researchers tell practitioners how to go about their profession. This is partly the fault of practitioners as they have refused so far to focus on establishing themselves seriously as part of academic research community. This however is changing now with many practitioners, supported by the work of the authors, are engaging in more and more action research and generating quality theory on par with the highest academic standards. This is shown by the numerous stories that the authors have presented throughout the text. They end their account with implications that their research leaves for both practitioners as well as academic researchers to consider.

To practitioners, they suggest involvement in a variety of roles. They ask them to think of themselves as educational activists whose responsibility it is to take control of their own lives and professions and not let anyone impose their rules on them. The control over the direction in the field of education needs to be passionately reclaimed by practitioners. They must, by bringing in their values into their enquiries, create better practice and through it, better theory. To be

theorists, practitioners must work hard to learn the skill of research and the theoretical underpinnings of research with a view of demonstrating internal validity and legitimacy. To do so, it is vital for them to articulate standards of judgement to assess the quality of their work. Another related role practitioners should play is that of academic writers who put forth their accounts in ways that demonstrate their claims, rigour and standards of judgement. They should make their scholarly accounts available publicly for scrutiny and validation. They must use their accounts to prove that they have improved their practice and try and spread their stories, just as the authors have done, within the practitioner community to inspire others to do the same. In this way, they should form communities and work together with like minded people who share their values. To academic researchers, they make some suggestions as well. They urge them to take part in practice and accommodate the new forms of epistemologies that they find through it. They must move away from the notion of producing pure and abstract theories that create dominant propositional forms of logic. Researchers should also step down from the spectator position from which they conduct all social science research and participate in the lives of those they study in order to do action research. If not this, they should try and support those who do action research at the least through a readiness to listen and accept their claims as having academic merit. Finally the authors conclude the book by laying out the areas of future work in the field of action research they want to look at and hope to work together to do the same.