

**Development Research Methods**  
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**Module No # 01**  
**Lecture No # 05**

**Development Research - Development Work Continuum and Action – Research in Development Studies**

Hello and welcome to NPTEL MOOC's course on development research methods. In today's lesson we will have a short discussion into development research-development work continuum and one of the components of development practice which is called Action Research in Development Studies.

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What we will cover in today's lecture

1. How are research and practice linked in development studies?
2. What is Development Research-Development Work Continuum?
3. What is action research? Significance of action research in development studies

So, what we will cover in today's lecture are the following. First, we will ask how are research and practice linked in development studies and here we will also see the crucial and critical position of decision making within this continuum of development studies and development

work research. We will see what is development research-development work continuum, what is action research and what is the significance of Action Research in Development Studies.

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## Development practice & Development Studies

- As discussed in the first lecture, The *objectives* of practitioners and researchers, and the *time scales* within which they work for their respective research and associated activities, differ.
- The traditional province of a practitioner lies in *action, a tradition of relevance* and that of the Development Studies academic lies in *understanding, a tradition of rigour*.

We have already discussed the very basic differences between development practice and development studies. And since we are looking at the continuum of development studies and development practice, it will also make sense to recapitulate once more what are the basic differences between these two approaches that we commonly find in development studies.

So, as discussed in the first lecture, the objectives of practitioners and researchers differ. The development practitioners are more interested in short-term goals based upon the framework that they have chosen, whether it is the project that they are undergoing, or whether it is the organizational motives that they are trying to forward through a short research study. Whereas, development researchers are more academic oriented and their timescales are long-term rather than short-term like the development practitioners.

So, the objectives of practitioners and researchers differ. And the time scales within which they work for their respective research and associated activities also differ. So, development studies have a more long-term approach and development practitioners have a short-term approach. The traditional province of a practitioner lies in action which is a tradition of relevance and that of the development studies academic lies in understanding or a tradition of rigour.

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Development Practitioner	Development Studies
1. Changing or facilitating change in the world	1. Uncovering the patterns of cause and effect which frame, facilitate, or constrain the changes we may all wish to see
2. Continuous contact with people and situations	2. Independence from institutional agendas and biases
3. A framework (project, programme, organisation) within which findings can be operationalised	3. Access to and knowledge of the wider literature
4. A basic orientation which sees people as subjects of their own development, not as objects for research by outsiders	4. More time and space for reading and reflection
	5. Analytical and formal research skills

So, what are the distinguishing points with respect to practitioners and development studies researchers? Practitioners are often involved in changing or facilitating the change in the world. They are most interested in looking at what are the transformative aspects, whether the questions that they are investigating or the questions that they are studying in collaboration with the subject also entails some kind of a change or transformation in the world that they are pursuing. Development practitioners also have a continuous contact with people and situations and they work within a framework, a project, or a program within which their findings can be operationalized. And their basic orientation is which sees people as subjects of their own development and not as objects for research by outsiders. And this is a point which we will elaborate on when we are looking at some of the underpinning assumptions of development practitioners or development practice.

Development studies on the other hand, is characterized by uncovering the patterns of cause and effect which frame, facilitate, or constrain the changes we may all wish to see. And development studies academic researchers, since they are positioned as academics, they are mostly but not always independent of institutional agendas and biases. We have also seen in the previous classes that because of the trend of sponsored research, and there seems to be a pattern where development studies academics are also not free of biases, because of the sponsorship coming from certain agencies. Development studies researchers in comparison to practitioners also seem

to have access to a knowledge of the wider literature, they have more time and space for reading and reflection. And they are more keen to have analytical and formal research skills than working towards the pursuit of short-term objectives within a given framework.

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### Need for linking research and practice in development studies

- Relationship between research and writing on the one hand, and development policy and practice on the other.
- The criticism that too much of the development literature has been excessively descriptive and insufficiently analytical.
- Need for a robust *theoretical and methodological basis for development research*.
- Need for analytical methods and techniques *to make development practice rigorous and systematic*.

So, let us look at the need for linking research and practice in development studies. Let us explore the relationship between development studies research and writing on the one hand, and development policy and practice on the other. In the recent times, there is a need for innovatory methods and approaches for management of policy, of program and project design, and of monitoring and evaluation associated DS researchers closely with development practice and practice as for many years. And because of these linkages, we now have a range of methods and methodological issues that cater to these aspects of development studies and development practice research. And of course, there is an evolution in terms of how these methods and methodologies are employed within this continuum of development studies - development work context.

Now, one of the criticisms that have been leveled against DS or development studies research and practices that they lack rigour in the sense that too much emphasis is on description and there are very less analytical constructs with regard to the development practice and development studies research continuum. However, the way the methods and methodologies have evolved in

the recent times, the development practice framework also has a number of novel methodologies in place that has a lot of significance.

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Euclid is supposed to have told Ptolemy: "There is no 'royal road' to Geometry". It is not clear that there is any royal road to evaluation of economic or social policies either. A variety of considerations that call for attention are involved, and evaluations have to be done with sensitivity to these concerns. Much of the debate on the alternative approaches to evaluation relates to the priorities in deciding on what should be at the core of our normative concern. (sen, 1999: 85)

Now, this is a quotation which is from Amartya Sen's most celebrated book "Development As Freedom", "Euclid is supposed to have told Ptolemy: "there is no 'royal road' to Geometry". It is not clear that there is any royal road to evaluation of economic or social policies either. A variety of considerations that call for attention are involved and evaluations have to be done with sensitivity to these concerns. Much of the debate on the alternative approaches to evaluation relates to the priorities in deciding on what should be at the core of our normative concern."

So, what Sen is trying to say through this quotation from "Development as Freedom" is that there is no single approach to evaluation studies that can be recommended above all other approaches. And one must note here that evaluation studies are perhaps the main policy related activity in DS which has significant research content. And there is a lot of diversity of practice in the literature and evaluation, which is common and has been acceptable as well.

So, development practitioners need to be just as systematic and rigorous in their preparatory and evaluation studies and reports as academics and independent researchers are in their research. However, it has to be recognized as I have said earlier that the context and the time scale that the development studies researchers and the development practitioners adopt are significantly

different, because in the case of developing practitioners, the timescale is that of a short-term and in the case of development researchers or development studies academic researchers' is a long-term. And therefore, there is a need to be aware of these differences when we are looking at what are the methods and techniques and approaches that should be used within this continuum of development studies or development research work.

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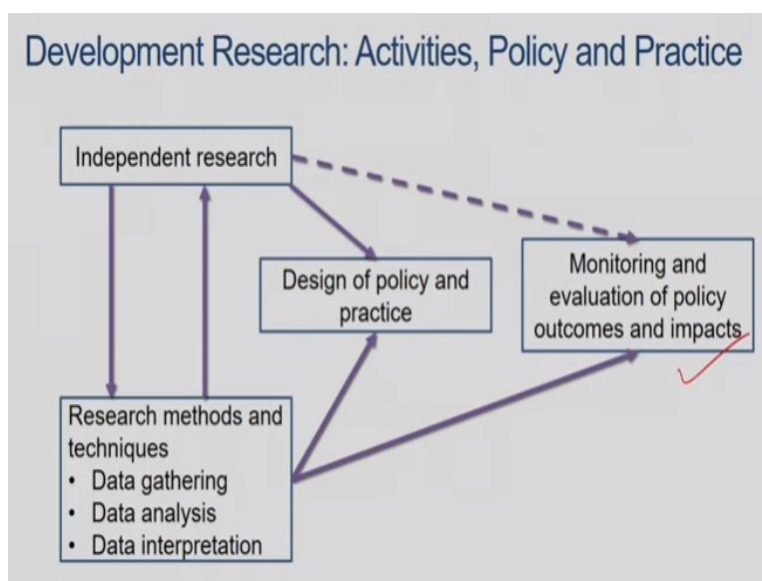
#### Position of research theory and methods in the design of policy, programmes and projects

- Practitioners often perceive a need to achieve 'results' very quickly. This increases the significance of reliable data gathering and analysis.
- The *generation of primary data*, the *critical assembly of secondary data*, and the application of *analytical methods in interpreting data*, in the process of designing and evaluating policy programmes and projects involves a **research related approach**.
- The need for policy-relevant results from research undertaken within a limited timeframe does not reduce the need for a rigorous and systematic approach
- Longer-term research concerning critical view of both data and of analytical methods and techniques (concerns which are often not found in the work of practitioners)

So, what is the position of research theory and methods in the design of policy, programs, and projects? Now, a considerable amount of activity associated with analysis of policy and practice in both industrialized and developing countries involves research related approach. And this includes generation of primary data, critical assembly of secondary data, analytical methods, and interpreting data in the process of designing and evaluating policy, programs, and projects. And many developing countries do not have a comparable wealth of readily available secondary data to that which exists in industrialized countries, making the need for gathering of primary data all the more pressing. So, the fact that development practitioners, that is those who work directly on development policy and practice, often perceive a need to achieve results very quickly increases the significance of reliable data gathering and analysis. Longer-term academic and other independent research include traditional concerns, which are often not found in the work of practitioners.

So, that is a position of research theory, because practitioners often have a perceived need to achieve results very quickly, and that increases the significance of reliable data gathering and analysis. Whereas the longer-term research concerning critical views of both data and of analytical methods and techniques, these are concerns which are not often found in the work of practitioners. These are the two polar extremes within which development studies and development practitioners contend or waive for space.

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Now, let us have a look at this diagram here, which is basically talking about how development practice is informed from the traditional tools and data gathering methodologies that are applied by development studies research. Now design of policy and practice is largely based on findings from independent research, using established research methods and techniques but not creating or modifying these methods and techniques.

On the right-hand side of the diagram, the monitoring and evaluation of policy outcomes and impacts uses the results of independent research as part of its secondary data, and also generates primary data using established research methods and techniques, but not usually creating or modifying these methods and techniques. So, it needs to be recognized that some of the development of research methods and techniques has been instigated by international aid

agencies, but not usually in the course of the direct undertaking of policy design or its monitoring and evaluation.

This diagram also makes a basic distinction between basic, applied, and routine research, where basic research relates to fundamental work on methodology for example, development of qualitative research methods, applied research relates to the application of these principles to practical uses for example, analysis of factors affecting levels of poverty, the depth of poverty and so on, and routine research which are regular activities, for example, collection of statistics for construction of cost of living indices, and so on. So, quite a few methods and techniques are shared between these three levels of research, and the three levels can complement each other iteratively as routine monitoring and evaluation studies of policies, programs, and projects can inform more fundamental and development related research findings.

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### The Development Research-Development Work Continuum

- A cycle of action-reflection cycles
- Approaching development as a result of complex interaction between many influences
- The relationship between research, policy-related research, systematic policy management, and the political process.
- Continuity of development strategies conceptualized within different political philosophies or ideologies without timely monitoring, evaluation and modification can affect development.

Now, let us have a look at the role of political processes within this continuum of development research and development work. This continuum needs to be seen with respect to the roles of development studies researchers and that of the decision-making bodies. Many contributions to development literature have taken the view that development occurs because of government policy interventions whereas, many others have an opposing view that development occurs as a result of complex interactions between different cultures and communities. And there are many

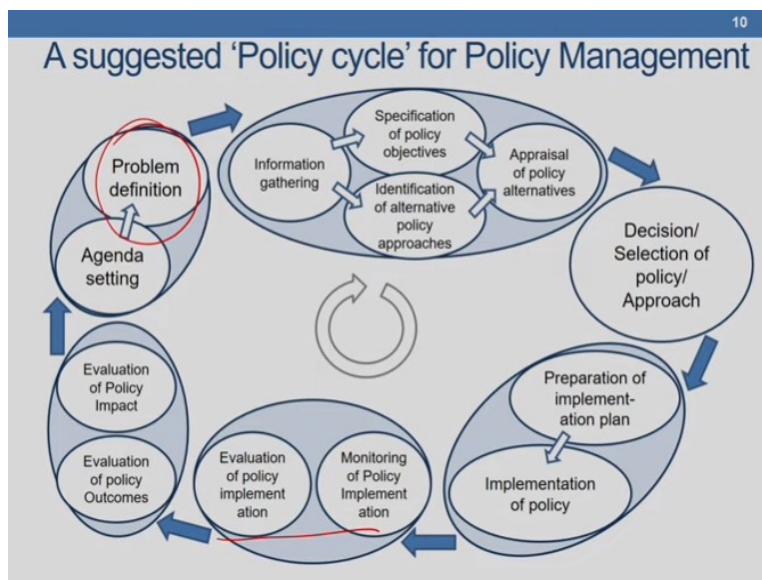


influences, some of which are the result of government action, but also because of the achievement of community related development objectives. Now, between these two bipolar extremes, there lies a range of views within a community or spectrum.

And it is critical to understand the links and networks between research, policy related research, systematic policy management, and the political process. Now, it is inevitable that politicians involved in development policy and practice will wish to determine priorities and to approve policy design, and it is not the function of development studies researchers to establish development priorities or to approve policy interventions. It is therefore necessary to distinguish between the role of DS researchers including practitioners and consultants, and the role of decision makers. So it is impossible to entirely isolate policy related research from the political process. Many researchers today view and possibly rightly so, that despite the practice related orientation of such development studies research, it should be viewed separately from the directly political decision-making processes.

There is a continuity of development strategies, no doubt. However, it needs to be conceptualized within different political philosophies or ideologies, without timely monitoring, evaluation and modification as that can affect development.

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Let us look at a suggested policy cycle for policy management. Now, this figure here provides an example of a comprehensive policy cycle. Much policy related work is iterative with planning activity, moving back and forth between various stages of the cycle. It is easiest to start at the top left hand corner of the diagram with the determination of a problem or of policy agenda. Now, this may consist of an entirely new policy issue coming from outside the system, or it may be internally defined through analysis within the existing policy cycle. The next set of activities in the policy cycle consists of careful definition of the problem, identification of alternative policy approaches. It then leads to information gathering, specification of policy objectives, appraisal of policy alternatives and so on. So, this is followed by decision making, including the definition of the areas where policy decisions are needed. For example, which alternative should be selected? How big should the intervention be? Or what type of phasing and timing should be involved in policy implementation.

The next set of activities includes preparation of an implementation plan and undertaking of the implementation, together with monitoring and evaluation of the implementation. A distinctly separate set of activities is the monitoring and evaluation of the policy outcomes and impacts. Then on the basis of this evaluation, modification of the policy problem or policy agenda may be necessary following which the cycle starts again. So, this diagram is only suggestive rather than comprehensive and the development researchers may wish to refer to many more specialized literature that already exist within this domain.

With this discussion, we looked at what is this continuum between development studies and development work. And how we position decision making processes or political processes within this continuum and how development studies research and development practice work at two polar extremes, and a number of methods and methodologies depending upon the research problem at hand can be worked out within this continuum of development studies and development practice.

Let us now look at one of the approaches that development practitioners usually employ to investigate into the research problem that they have identified, and which is often referred to as action research. Action Research is an upcoming tool or upcoming approach to studying the problems of the subjects in a collaborative manner. And there are certain domains in which action research can be applied or is desirable and there are certain domains in which it is not. So,

let us have a brief look into what is action research, and where is it most desirable and where is it not.

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### Action Research in development

- Action research is about practitioners creating new ideas about how to improve practice, and putting those ideas forward as their personal theories of practice.
- This is different from traditional social science, which is about official researchers producing theory, which practitioners apply to their practice.

Social Science questions	Action Research Questions
What is the relationship between teacher motivation and teacher retention?	How do I influence the quality of teachers' experience in school, so that they decide to stay?
Does management style influence worker productivity?	How do I improve my management style to encourage productivity?
Will a different seating arrangement increase audience participation?	How do I encourage greater audience participation through trying out different seating arrangements?

*Spectator research*

*Action research becomes an insider*

So, action research is a form of inquiry that enables practitioners everywhere to investigate and evaluate their work. The questions that the action researchers ask are what am I doing, what do I need to improve, how do I improve it. And their accounts of practice show how they are trying to improve their own learning and influence the learning of others. So, action research has become increasingly popular around the world as a form of professional learning. It has been particularly developed in education, specifically in teaching and is now being widely used across professions. And one of the attractions of action research is that everyone can do it. So, it is for ordinary practitioners as well as principals, managers and administrators.

Now, what makes action research distinctive is this. It is done by practitioners themselves than a professional researcher, who does research on practitioners as is often the case in traditional forms of social science research. Now, social scientists tend to stand outside the situation and ask questions. So, they are basically asking questions about 'what are those people doing, what are they after, how do we understand and explain what they are doing?'. So in that sense, social scientist stand outside the situation, which is often referred to as spectator research. Whereas action researchers are insider researchers. So they are in the field along with the subjects and

they see themselves as part of the situation they are investigating and they ask individually and collectively ‘is my or our work going as we wish, how do we improve it where necessary?’. If they feel their work is already reasonably satisfactory, they evaluate it to show why they believe this to be the case. And if they feel something needs improving, they work on that aspect, keeping records and producing regular oral and written progress reports about what they are doing.

Some examples of social science questions and AR or action research questions to show the difference between them are as follows. So, in a certain educational setup, the social science questions will read as ‘what is the relationship between teacher motivation and teacher retention?’. So, and we may have a qualitative or quantitative approach to studying this question in the form of finalizing of certain indicators, and we can simply choose to look at the correlation between different indicators. Whereas action research questions would be ‘how do I influence the quality of teacher’s experience in school so that they decide to stay?’. So, action researchers are ultimately aiming at the transformation of the problem that they have identified. It leads to a transformative aspect, unlike the social science question.

Similarly, social science questions would include ‘does management style influence the worker productivity?’ which can be done through a qualitative or quantitative approach whereas action research questions would say, ‘how do I improve my management style to encourage productivity?’. Similarly, ‘will a different seating arrangement increase audience participation?’, action research question will be ‘how do I encourage greater audience participation through trying out different seating arrangements?’. Note the framing of the research questions as ‘how do I influence the quality, how do I improve my management style, and how do I encourage greater audience?’. So, this is where the action researcher becomes an insider, instead of being a spectator research as in the case of social science questions.

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## The Underpinning Assumptions of Action Research

Ontological assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action research is value laden</li> <li>• Action research is morally committed.</li> <li>• Action researchers <u>perceive themselves as in relation with one another in their social contexts</u></li> </ul>
Epistemological assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The object of the enquiry is the 'I'</li> <li>• Knowledge is uncertain</li> <li>• Knowledge creation is a collaborative process</li> </ul>
Methodological assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Action research is done by practitioners who regard themselves as agents.</li> <li>• The methodology is open-ended and developmental.</li> <li>• The aim of the research is to improve learning with social intent.</li> </ul>
Social purposes of action research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It aims to improve practices through improving learning</li> <li>• It aims to promote democratic evaluation of learning and practices.</li> <li>• It aims to create good social orders by influencing the education of social formations.</li> </ul>

Now, given the fact that there is a very basic difference between social science research, the way we have looked at it traditionally and that of action research, it is quite obvious that there are certain underpinning assumptions of action research and some of these assumptions can be categorized as follows. Now, it is also important to see where research traditions differ is how they perceive the positioning of the researcher with respect to the research questions that is being investigated into. And this positioning of the researcher is what is referred to as ontology or ontological commitments. The relationship between the knower and what is known is referred to as epistemological commitments. The processes of generating knowledge is referred to as methodological commitments. And the goals of research in terms of how the knowledge will be used is referred to as social commitments. And it is not only action research that is different from other kinds of research. All research methodologies are essentially different from one another, according to these underpinning assumptions. However, action research seems to have had a gigantic leap from other research methodologies, in that the researcher is placed at the center of the inquiry and accepts the responsibility of showing how they account for themselves.

So, these are the 4 underpinning assumptions as I have just mentioned. So ontological commitments lead to ontological assumptions, epistemological commitments lead to epistemological assumptions and so on. So, what is ontology? Ontology is nothing but the study of being and our ontologies influence how we view ourselves in our relationship with others. And the ontological commitments that underpin action research include the fact that action

research is value laden, they are morally committed, they perceive themselves as in relation with one-another in their social contexts.

Now, positivist forms of research are traditionally value free. The researcher stays out of the research so as to not be contaminated. And reports are written in the third person, for example, the researcher did this, the researcher did that and so on, which is supposed to reduce bias in the claim to objectivity. And some social sciences adopt this perspective, but not all. And action research is done by people who are trying to live in the direction of values and commitments that inspire their lives. So, action researchers often experience themselves as living contradictions, that is, in that they hold a set of values yet, they may not live according to them. So, you may believe in justice, but act in an unjust way. So, you set out to find ways of living in the direction of your values. And this can be difficult because investigating one's practice involves other people who have values of their own, and these may not be commensurate with your own.

So, it is then a case of negotiating meanings and practice which is easy to say but difficult to do. An increasingly important perspective in action research is the development of relational and inclusion values. And the idea of establishing inclusive relationship refers not only to the social world, where we see ourselves in relationship with others, but also to the mental world where we see our ideas are either in cooperation or in conflict to others ideas. And the core idea of transformative capacity enables us to incorporate the insights of others and transform them as we create our theories of practice.

Coming to epistemological assumptions. Epistemology has to do with how we understand knowledge and how we have come to acquire knowledge. So, the epistemological assumptions underpinning action research would include the object of inquiry, and the object of inquiry is the 'I' here. The epistemological assumptions mean that, agree and understand that knowledge is uncertain, knowledge creation is a collaborative process. The object of inquiry refers to the focus of research. In self-studied action research, the focus of research is 'you'. You study yourself and not other people. So, the questions you are asking are of the kind- 'what am I doing? How do I improve it?', not of the kind, 'what are they doing and how do they improve it?'. You aim to show how you hold yourself accountable for what you do.

And this idea of personal accountability has big implications. One is that you cannot accept responsibility for what others do and think. But you must accept full responsibility for what you think. And traditional researchers tend to believe that knowledge is certain, that is in opposition to what action researchers would want to believe. And traditional researchers would like to believe that there is an answer to everything and truth is objective and it can be objectively investigated into. But when you position yourself in the middle of research, and the subject of inquiry is you yourself or I, then your subjective realities also enter into the research problem that you are investigating, and then coming up with a very value free conclusion, objective conclusion of your observed reality becomes very difficult.

So traditional researchers believe that knowledge is certain and true, and it is out there waiting to be discovered. They also believe that knowledge can be discovered using specific methodology such as the scientific method, which aims to predict and control outcomes. And action researchers tend to assume that there is no one answer. They understand that knowledge is uncertain and ambiguous because one question may generate multiple answers, and knowledge is created and not discovered. And this is usually a process of trial and error. They believe every answer is tentative and open to modification. This means that action researchers do not look for fixed outcomes that can be applied everywhere. Instead, they produce their personal theories to show what they are learning and to invite others to learn with them.

Further action researchers believe that knowledge creation is a collaborative process. Although the, 'I' is central, it is never understood as in isolation. The 'I' is in collaboration with the subjects that are being studied. So I position myself as a researcher in the research problem that I am investigating into, but in collaboration with the subjects that I am studying myself. So when I am investigating into the question of how I observe my realities, I am not considering myself in isolation to the subjects that I am studying. We all live and work in social situations, and whatever we do in our professional practices potentially influences someone somewhere. And action research means working with others at all of these stages of the different processes.

The third underpinning assumption of action research is that of methodological assumptions. Now, methodology is referred to the way research is conducted. So, the main methodological assumption of AR include that AR is done by practitioners who regard themselves as agents, the methodology is open ended and developmental. The aim of research is to improve learning with

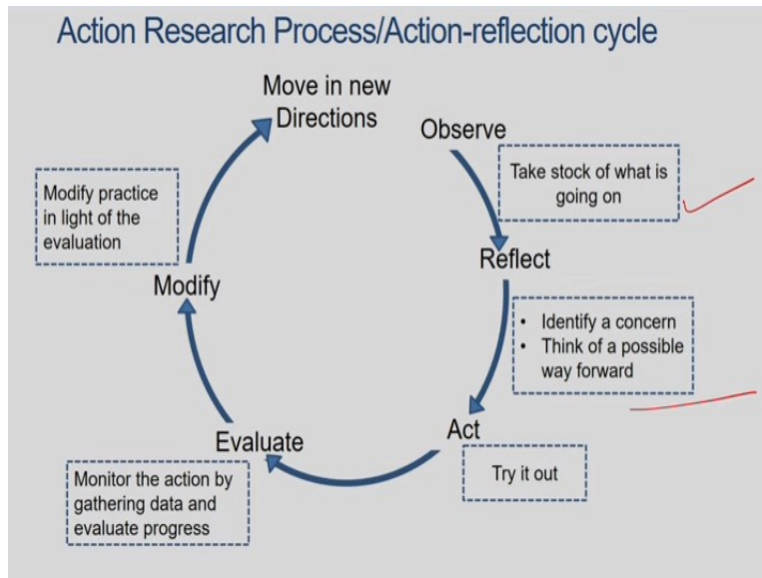
social intent. Now, the idea of agency is that people are able to and should take an active part in decisions about how they and others should live. Amartya Sen says ‘an agent is someone who acts and brings about change and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives. Whether or not we assess these in terms of some external criteria as well’. So, in this sense, agents act as public intellectuals whose job is to interrupt and question the status quo. So why are things as they are? Are they satisfactory? If not, how they can be changed? For action researchers this means they need always to ask questions and not accept final answers. Unlike traditional social science, action inquirers do not aim for closure nor do practitioners expect to find certain answers. The process itself is the methodology. The process of seeking answers, the process of seeking answers to the questions that are being posed itself is the methodology and it is frequently untidy, haphazard, and experimental.

The fourth underpinning assumption of action research is that of ‘what are the social purposes of action research?’. Why are we undertaking action research that becomes one of the assumptions of action research itself. So, the social purpose refers to why we do research in relation to informing and improving its social context. The main social purposes of action research include aiming at improving workplace practices through improving learning, to promote the ongoing democratic evaluation of learning and practices and aiming to create good social orders by influencing the education of social formations.

So, these are some of the underpinning assumptions that enables us to take up action research which also informs which are the ways in which action research should be carried out, and what are the goals that we are pursuing when taking up action research by the development practitioners.

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Let us now look at the action research process and the reflection cycle. Now, action research aims to be a very disciplined systematic process. A notional action plan is can be as follows. You take stock of what is going on, in other words, you are observing the realities along with your collaborators who are the subjects that you are studying. You identify your concern, and you think of a possible way forward, in other words, you reflect. So, you first observe, you reflect, and then you act. So, you try out whatever you think is a possible way forward. After you try out the intervention, you evaluate, you monitor the action by gathering data and evaluating progress, and then you modify. You test the validity of accounts of learning and you modify them in the light of evaluation. So, you are modifying the practice in light of the evaluation and then you move towards new directions.

In India for example, there are very few researchers in the academic space employing the action research or development practice methods to carry out research in development studies although there are a few. And one of the things that they try to do for example, while are undergoing PhD research or MPhil research, the researcher tries to immerse herself inside the field along with the subjects, they become collaborators in research, and they not necessarily in exactly this research process cycle, but they follow this cycle of observe, reflect, act, evaluate, modify, and then move in new directions.

Now, in your action inquiry, you would identify something of concern. You try a different way of doing things, you reflect on what was happening and in light of your reflections, you try a new

way that may or may not be more successful. So, this process of observe, reflect, act, evaluate, modify and move in new directions is generally known as the action-reflection cycle. Although there is no single term that is used in the literature of action research, and because this process tends to be cyclical, it is often referred to as action-reflection cycle. And this process is ongoing because as soon as we reach a provisional point where we feel things are satisfactory, that point itself raises new questions, and it is time to begin again. So, there are many more visual models in the literature that communicate this process that students can depend upon. This is a more simplistic view of how the action-reflection cycle works itself out.

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## Why Do Action Research?

- To contribute to new practices (the action focus of action research). Influencing policy formation and implementation
- To contribute to new theory (the research focus of action research. Influencing thinking and discourses
- Asking the question, 'How can this situation be understood in order to change it?'
- The importance of practitioner knowledge.
  - *Practical sustainability*
  - *Theoretical sustainability*

Now moving on, let us also ask this question about why do action research. Before landing on action research methods, it is pertinent to ask why is practitioner knowledge important or why do action research in the first place? Now apart from the fact that it contributes to new practices and new theory or enabling change, there are two reasons that can be cited. One is of course, it contributes to new practices where the action focus of action research, you are influencing policy formulation and implementation. Second is you are contributing to new theory, influencing thinking and discourses and you are asking the question 'how can this situation be understood in order to change it?'. So, you have a transformative agenda in the action research agenda that you are undertaking. But the importance of practitioner knowledge can be categorized as two heads-one is practical sustainability and theoretical sustainability.

Now, what is sustainability here? Sustainability refers to the idea that living systems have the capacity for interdependent self-renewal, which is indispensable for continuing development. Now, reliance on an external agency means that a system may collapse if the agency is withdrawn, whereas internal capacity means the independent creation of renewable resources for growth. Practitioners' personal theories constitute these renewable resources. For example, Amartya Sen distinguishes between an economic theory of human capability and human capital. He talks about the need to move from seeing capital accumulation in primarily physical terms, to seeing it as a process in which human beings are integrally involved in the production of their own futures. So, through education, learning and skill formation, people can become more productive over time, which contributes greatly to the process of economic expansion.

Similarly, practitioners' theories of practice are also core to sustainable theoretical development in the sense that educational research needs to show its own capacity for self-renewal. So, action research has this self-transforming capacity.

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### When to use action research

- To evaluate whether what you are doing is influencing your own or other people's learning, or to ensure that it is.
- To improve your understanding, develop your learning, Influence other's learning, etc.

### When not to use action research

- To draw comparisons, show statistical correlations, or demonstrate a cause and effect relationship

Lastly, let us know when to do and when not to do action research. The truth is you can use action research for many purposes, but not for all. You can use action research when you want to evaluate whether what you are doing is influencing your own or other people's learning or whether you need to do something different to ensure that it is. Suppose you want to improve

your understanding about your workplace. Now relations are strained in your workplace, how are you going to find out why so that you can do something about it or your students are achieving remarkably high scores? So, then you will turn to find out; is it because of your teaching? Is it because of the extra study hours that the students are putting in or is it because of a new class environment and so on. It is advised to not take-up action research when you want to draw comparisons, show statistical correlations or demonstrate cause and effect relationships.

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- Becker, S., Bryman, A. and Sempik, J. (2006) *Defining 'Quality' in Social Policy Research: Views, Perceptions and a Framework for Discussion*. Suffolk, UK: Social Policy Association
- McNiff, J., & Whitehead, J. (2011). *All you need to know about action research*. Sage Publications.

For a comprehensive literature on the topics covered in this lecture it is also suggested that students go through the reference list of the above cited papers.

So, these are some of the references that I have used for this lesson. And to know more about action research, I would suggest you to go through the reference of McNiff and Whitehead, on 'All You Need to Know About Action Research' which came out in 2011 by Sage Publications. In today's lesson, we studied about how the development research-development work continuum and some of the issues pertaining to methods that may be kept in mind while studying this continuum. We looked at one of the approaches taken up by practitioners that is action research and studied the principal assumptions that guide its methods and a way forward. We also looked at what are the different kinds of methodological considerations that need to be kept in mind when studying or when looking at the development studies-development work continuum. And also, where do decision making processes or political processes figure when we are looking at this continuum of development studies and development practice?

One thing that is very clear, because of the evolution of different methods and techniques that have come up to study different kinds of development problems, and considering the development problems are multi-dimensional in nature, the claim that is made by the traditional or the criticism that is leveled against development practice and development studies research by the traditional researchers with regard to the relaxation of rigour bit of it does not stand anymore. Because development practice and development studies research have time and again proved to be consistent with respect to rigour in research. We will end today's class with this.

See you in the next class. Thank you.