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THE ROLE OF ACTION RESEARCH IN BUILDING  
SELF-SUSTAINING SYSTEMS

by

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## THE ROLE OF ACTION RESEARCH IN BUILDING SELF-SUSTAINING SYSTEMS

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The concept of action research emerged out of disillusionment with research contributing to the improvement of a practice, or resulting in social action. The gap between research and action, between theory and practice, concerned some social scientists in USA.

Kurt Lewin was one such concerned person. His experiments of involving the persons implementing the results of research, or the change programme, were the beginning of the movement of action research.

Corey (1953, p.7) traces "at least two somewhat independent sources" for the expression action research and the operations it implies. "One is the activities and writings of Collier during the period (1933-45) when he was Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Collier represented a group that was emphasising the importance of social planning and he insisted that 'research and then more research is essential to the programme'. He used the expression action research and was convinced that 'since the findings of research must be carried into effect by the administrator and the layman, and must be criticised by them through their experience, the administrator and the layman must themselves participate creatively in the research, impelled as it is from their own area of need.' The second source is Lewin and his students, many of whom have attempted to study human relations scientifically and to improve the quality of human relations as a consequence of their enquiries." Thus the concept of

action research originated in the need of improving human relations

Lewin and his associates had a great impact on research methodology in the field of human relations. Lewin (1946) drew attention to the need of using action research for the solution of the problems of minority. The need of action research was also emphasised in a special number of a journal by various authorities (Krech, 1946). Various studies were undertaken on prejudices with this approach, the need for which was emphasised by Lippitt (1956). An interesting study was reported by Bellow (1947). There were controversies over the way in which action research was applied to prejudice studies (Citron et al, 1950; Marcuse, 1951). Chion, Cook and Harding (1948b) drew attention to the potentialities of action research, "a field of intense theoretical interest as well as tremendous practical social value". They (1948a) also drew attention to the use of action research in social therapy. Curle (1949) analysing the process of psychological interaction, stressed the need of working towards the development of personality through the medium of society and cited illustration of how certain conditions experienced by a community could be altered. Attention was drawn to the utility of action research in the improvement of race relations (Freeman, 1951) and solutions of social problems (Simey, 1953). Withall (1953) reviewed the various studies in the area of the intercultural relations. Lippitt, Watson and Jeans (1958) reviewed the various studies undertaken for planned change and ingeniously worked out the details of planned change as a process of

action research. Their work has been used in various forms for developing models of planned change.

The concept of action research has been clarified through the various studies undertaken in the field of social relations and education. Action research has been defined in terms of the relationship of research with field practices. Corey (1953, p.6) who has been a very committed pioneer in the use of action research in education, defines action research as "the process by which practitioners attempt to study their problems scientifically in order to guide, correct, and evaluate their decision and actions". According to Foshay and Goodson (1953, p.411) "Cooperative action research is an approach to making what we do consistent with what we believe. It is an attempt to deduce what is necessary to improve a real situation through a systematic examination of the situation itself." Blum (1955) worked out a theoretical rationale of action research. Chin and Benne (1969) include action research in the normative-reeducative out of their three strategies of change. As Lee (1974) suggests, the normative-reeducative model assumes that clients are free to act but unwilling to use offered methods due to traditional values; agents need to communicate new values to them. Pareek and Khanna (1961) have extensively reviewed the use of action research in education.

Attempts have been made and are being made to relate research more effectively to field practices. Various expressions, in meaning, similar to that of action research have been used by various authors.

Some of these expressions are field experimentation (Mackenzie, 1947), operational research (Smith, 1952), research action (Wrightstone, 1949), co-operative study (Hanson, 1959). Wiles (1963) reported a number of other terms being used like evaluative research, service research, evaluative process and in-service training.

The traditional concept of action research follows Lewin's 3-stage model of social change: unfreezing-moving-refreezing. The action research process consists (with some variations) of the following eight steps: (1) dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs, (2) identification of a problem area, (3) identification of a specific problem to be solved through action, (4) formulation of several hypotheses, and their preliminary testing, (5) choice of a hypothesis, (6) design of action to test and implement the hypothesis, (7) evaluation of the effect of action, (8) generalisations. These are essentially the various steps of problem solving. The psychological processes underlying such steps, or stages in change, have been discussed by Singh and Pareek (1968) in connection with the use of action research in the adoption of improved agricultural practices in India.

#### Traditionalist Criticisms of Action Research

While the traditional concept of action research move towards linking research with action, and has made very useful contributions in this regard, it has been criticised, not surprisingly, both by those who look for more rigour in research, and by those who expect more vigour of action.

Doubts have been raised from time to time regarding the validity of treating action research as research. Perhaps the main criticism against action research comes from those persons who occupy high position of research and who think that research is the monopoly of the highly trained and well placed individuals who are acquainted with the technology of research. Such persons sometimes feel that research is vulgarised by its association with field practices. It has been argued in one critique on action research that the characteristics of scientific approach involved in research are not found in action research. Four such characteristics have been enumerated; going beyond the solution of the practical problems, <sup>con</sup>in/contrast to which action research is only concerned with the solution of practical problems; insistence on controlled experimentation, in contrast to which action research does not involve much of control leading to broader generalizations, in contrast to which action research has no validity outside a school or a situation; and setting of scientific experimentation against an existing body of generalisations in contrast to which action research does not have a chance to create a theoretical system (Hicks, 1954). This line of argumentation comes from those who value only what is known as basic or fundamental research. The chief characteristic of research is the use of an objective method of approach in problem solving with systematic steps in that process. Action research, as has been made clear by Corey (1953), may be a good research or may be a bad research, depending upon whether the

criteria to be kept in view while judging the qualities of the research are satisfied. A research cannot be defined because of its bearings on practical solutions of some problems.

Kerlinger (1959) typifies the attitude of "research monopolists." He denounces in strong terms the emphasis of action research on practicality "as the major emphasis of the educator in the university practically is narrowing, crippling and blinding and generally bad" (p.284). He asserts that action research "can and does lead to a negation of science and education" and further that "fundamental research is impeded to the extent that workers in educational research concentrate on action research" (p.288). Seven reasons have been advanced for suggesting that action research is definitely baneful. It is alleged that action research unduly restricts research objectives and in so doing conceals the real scientific problems that lie beneath superficial practical problems; a very strong social pressure on the staff making practicality as a social norm; unscientific bias because the educational worker has a spurious sense of adequacy; channellizing many talented workers into practical efforts diverting them from more valuable basic research; monopolising most of the funds outside the university sources, leaving no money for more fundamental research; and leading to lack of confidence in students who undertake the programmes of action research.

Eichner and Schmidt (1974) conceding that traditional sociology has not worked toward long-range planned, coordinated research for the



solution of certain social problems, do not find action research filling this gap. According to them action research lacks both precision and logic. Applying the scientific research logic and the social technology of critical rationalism, action research was found to be "contradictory, incapable of living upto its promises..."

Moller (1974) finds two difficulties in action research in an institution. The researcher first must explain how he chooses his theoretical framework, in so far as what he sees and the information he obtains will depend far more than is often admitted on the type of questions he asks. Secondly, he must try to clarify the way in which he adapts his original intentions in the light of the practical difficulties that occur in the actual research situations, and how he interprets the evidence he finally decides is relevant.

#### Radicalist Criticism of the Traditional Model of Action Research

The main role of action research is to maximise praxis. The criticisms of the traditional concepts and process of action research grow out of both the biases of the critics as well as lack of proper linkages between theory and practice, between research process and action process, and between the role of the researcher, and action role. Those involved in social action, like revolutionaries and architects of new social systems during and after revolution, intuitively use the process of research in their work. The process of research consists primarily in using a theoretical framework in the beginning to prepare a strategy of change, designing methods of testing to what extent change

is achieved through attempted action, reviewing the action steps in the light of feedback received, and testing and reformulating the conceptual framework in the light of action results. This feedback loop (action-to-theory) strengthens praxis as much as the tactics-formulation (theory-to-action). While this may be done intuitively by a few visionaries and revolutionaries, the role of action research is to spread the use of research model (strategy formulation based on a conceptual framework which is tested and, if necessary, adjusted in the light of the feedback received from action more widely by various persons concerned.

Praxis has been conceived mainly as the bond between theory and practice. Marxist philosophy and action has developed praxis in this sense. However, new developments make it necessary to reformulate the concept of praxis. In fact, this has been done by post-European communist movements. Probably for the first time Mao-Tse-Tung paid attention, in addition to the structure, to the "process", to some aspects of the super-structure. The concept of cultural revolution gave a new dimension to praxis - that of integration of process with structure. Probably in Cuba, and certainly in Viet Nam the same emphasis on the process was given. Thus praxis can be defined as integration of three elements - theory (ideology), action (practice), and human processes (concern for the person). The model of action research used in this paper takes these three aspects in account.

### A 3-Dimensional Grid Model of Action Research

In order to understand and increase the efficacy of action research, three dimensions may be regarded as basic. These relate to the concern the researcher has for three major aspects: people who are involved in change, action to be taken for change, and the research process of bringing about change and recording results of change. All these three dimensions seem to be equally important. Unless a researcher is concerned with the people with whom he works, he may not be able to bring about their involvement. Similarly, without being concerned about action to be taken in the community, his role may be passive. In the absence of the concern for research, systematic use of interventions, their testing in various ways, and learning from the feedback of the results of action may not be possible. It may, therefore, not be useful to discuss which of the 3 dimensions is more important, but attempts may be made to maximise the concern of the research worker for all the three dimensions. The three dimensions are shown in Figure 1. Based on the low and high concern on each dimension, we get eight types of action research. It may be worthwhile to consider how action research can move towards model 8. The eight models of action research emerging from this general paradigm appear in Table 1. The three dimensions are discussed below.

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Figure 1 and Table 1 about here

## 1. Research

Research is the main basis to make action more scientific. Concern for research should cover both concern for research process and technology, as well as concern for the theoretical framework. Let us take the latter first.

The weakest aspect of action research so far is the lack of concern for and serious attention by researchers to the conceptual aspects of research. The conceptual aspect should not be confined only to limited social theories, but should cover the broader ideology underlying planning of an action. No action research can be value-free. However, the framework should grow out of a larger understanding of the relationship of man to the society and to the historical forces. Proper understanding of historical perspective is very important. There has been a recent debate on historical causation. While von Wright (1971) argues that if a practical inference scheme is adopted as an explanation model for actions, then it follows that historical explanations are non casual. Weinryb (1974) points out three main errors in von Wright's position by pointing out that he blurs the three important distinctions: (1) between acting with an intention and acting intentionally; (2) between intention to perform an action and intention to bring about a consequence of it; and (3) between verification of intention descriptions in general and of a description of a specific intention. According to Weinryb, the conclusion of his practical inference scheme cannot be the appropriate historical explanandum, and the explaining procedure that he suggests is shown to be ultimately circular.

The ideology should be concerned with the concept of the society and the world. In such a position, the value stand has to be taken mainly on the dimension of exploitation. If a researcher does not deliberately take a stand in favour of the exploited, he unintentionally works for the exploiting class of the society. Any social system, certainly in the larger society, has the main dominating power with which the researcher has to reckon with. One of the major thrusts of action research should be both to redistribute power, and as a corollary to help in increasing power of various kinds amongst the exploited, neglected, or weaker sections of the social system. The understanding of forces of the system, therefore, becomes extremely important for the action researcher.

Equally important is his concept of man. If man is seen as lacking initiative, dependent, incapable of action etc., both the model of research as well as action will tend to provide help and increase dependency to the client system on the researcher. One weakness of action researchers is their lack of trust in the client system, and the growing dichotomy between the researcher (who by implication knows the answers to the problem), and the client (who by implication lacks certain values and does not know the solutions to the problem). In order to make research effective, the partnership between the researcher and the client is necessary. This can grow out of a proper understanding of the societal forces, as well as a conscious choice of the concept of man on the part of the researcher. This will help to set the proper perspective for research.

In addition to the theoretical and ideological clarity, the researchers should have concern to make the process of research scientific, and innovative. His acquaintance with research technology will help him to choose the proper methods, and make research both simple as well as innovative. Simple methodology of research does not mean that it is less scientific. In fact, research innovativeness lies in making the research process as simple and yet highly scientific as possible. New methods of collecting data, for example, various indicators of behaviour of people in the social system, would be needed to make research innovative to feed into the action research model.

## 2. Action

Concern for action is the core of action research. This concern is reflected both in the involvement of the researcher in action itself as well as the involvement of the community and members of the client system in the process of research. Regarding the first, the researcher may play a very passive role as an observer conducting action research. This is the one extreme. On the other hand, on the other extreme, he may take active part in bringing about change; this may be an activist role which many researchers are playing. It may be necessary for the researcher to move towards the second end of the continuum, i.e. active participation in bringing about change. Regarding the involvement of the community in research process, action research differs from the other kind of research mainly on this dimension. It may be extremely

useful for the action researcher to develop methods of increasing the involvement of the members of the community in the process of research. Experience has shown that high quality work can be done even by illiterate people. In one action research concerned with food and population in some villages in India, an accidental finding was that illiterate farmers did a good professional job in helping to collect census information. Such a role is necessary for the success of action research.

### 3. People

Concern for people is equally important. Action research not only tries to solve a problem by using scientific methods, but its success lies in building necessary skills amongst people concerned with problems so that they may be able to solve their own problems later also. Concern for people may be reflected both in the general attitude of the researcher in having genuine respect for persons with whom he works, as well as in his attempts to help people acquire and develop various skills. At the personal level concern for people will be reflected in a **sustained** programme to develop skills leading to personal and inter-personal competencies. At the systems level, this concern is reflected in institution building process. Institution building, as discussed elsewhere (Pareek 1977), emphasises effectiveness of systems and organisational health for organic growth of the systems. Instead of treating the systems in a disjointed way, institution building emphasises collaboration and mutuality. As discussed elsewhere (Pareek 1977) institution building requires a

movement from efficiency to effectiveness, from uniformity to creativity, from a grand plan to experimentation, from centralism to decentralism, and from control and ownership of systems to owning up and dispossession of organisations and systems. Such values can be practiced, if the necessary skills in institution building are properly understood and used by the researcher.

#### Action Research for Developing Self-Renewing Systems

In my view there should be two primary foci of action research. In the first place, it should develop organisations and systems (collectives), with capabilities of solving problems, and redesigning themselves to cope with new developments. Secondly, it should focus on redistribution of power in the systems, so that all parts of the system can exercise more power or influence on decisions.

In order to develop self-renewing systems, attention should be paid to the development of process skills amongst the members of the system, ofcourse in addition to the changes in the basic structure. The process skills relate to various aspects of improving the working of groups and of the total institution. The concept of process is becoming increasingly important in understanding and planning effectiveness of teams and systems. It is necessary to pay attention not only to work which is being planned for change, but also to various individuals, small teams and larger collectives who work in order to achieve various goals. The concept of process in this sense has both conceptual or theoretical component, as well as the component of values or



**ideology.** For example, the process for institution building would emphasise the value of collaboration rather than dysfunctional competition or working mainly for individual gain. Attention to such relevant process may help in planning the effectiveness of individuals and groups. In addition to the process of groups, attention should also be given to the process of individuals in the context of interpersonal work or their membership of the various groups. For example, it may be useful for an individual to understand how his one particular action may reflect his need for competition or aggression. The understanding of the process, therefore, both for the individual as he works in a group, and of the group itself is important in the planning of self-renewing systems. The various dimensions which have been found to be useful in this regard in relation to building of self-renewing systems are as follows:

1. Self-awareness

It is important for an individual to understand his own personal strengths and weaknesses in terms of the dynamics of his behaviour in the context of collectivity. Such self-awareness can be promoted through various process mechanisms. There is enough knowledge now about the ways of helping a person to become aware of such processes. The following three are some of the more known and used models of helping self-awareness:

4. Exploration through confrontation and empathy: The well known T-Group (Training Group) or L-Group (Learning Group) technique is a good example of this model. The individual is helped to become aware of his strengths and weaknesses through self-confrontation as well as empathic confrontation by other members of the group, who give him feedback about his behaviour and its effect on others. The well known communist method of self-criticism is very close to this model. The main difference, however, is that in self-criticism the major emphasis is on the individual's total behaviour in relation to an ideological framework, while in the T-Group the major emphasis is on the individual's impact on others. Help provided by other members in the group in exploring various dimensions of his relation to the collective is extremely important in increasing self-awareness. In one programme of two rival trade unions of an industry, both the unions had great doubts about the method used with their groups in the beginning. However, at the end of the programme not only did they see the value of the process help in self-awareness, but the traditional rivalry between the two groups was resolved, and the total effectiveness of the trade union movement was greatly strengthened. Both the trade unions decided to get such process help in future to work through various problems. Such help may be of special value to the leaders who often are quite insensitive to the process aspects of group work.

b. Feedback on conducting meetings: When a leader conducts a meeting or a teacher teaches in a classroom, he may not be aware of the impact his behaviour is making on the members. For example, an enthusiastic leader in his charisma may make the various members dependant, and may not be able to help the group develop enough power to function as a group. Some techniques have been tried to help the leaders or the teachers to analyse their usual styles of interaction in terms of the impact they make on their followers or their students. For example, in many cases, the usual pattern of interaction was found to be what is known as 'direct' influence on the members - i.e. telling them what is to be done, criticising them, ordering them, punishing them in various ways for non-conformity etc. Such a style of influence has been found to lead to dependence of the followers. On the other hand, those who are in the leadership role may be able to develop more initiative in the group and may help the group acquire more power through what may be called 'indirect' influence. Such leaders use a different style of interaction. They build on ideas given by various members, encourage them to come up with other alternatives, help them to analyse situation, appreciate their points of view, bring out into focus contributions even from the least significant members of the group, share their feelings of joy, depression etc. with others, and recognising such feelings amongst other members and so on. Various researches have shown that the latter style of interaction ('indirect' influence) produces groups which are much powerful and dynamic in

taking action. Some researches have been done with teachers to help them understand their behaviour and plan to change it if they so desire (Pareek and Rao, 1977).

c. Understanding and influencing fantasy: Self-awareness can also be promoted by helping an individual to understand the significance of his fantasy which may be reflected in his dreams, or more significantly in his day-dreams, or in artistic creation he may produce like stories, poems and other writings. This technique was tried out in India in a large-scale experiment on changing behaviour of entrepreneurs and developing entrepreneurship in the community (McClelland and Winter, 1967).

Varga has reported in this volume some work on recent application of this technique and has suggested some explanations of change occurring as a result of helping people to analyse and change the fantasies. The main rationale behind this approach is that people's obsession with some ideas is reflected in their fantasies. For example, their day-dreams are continuously influenced by such obsessions. If we can analyse the fantasies we can find out the dominant need or motivation in the individual. In case a particular motivation is low, the fantasy can be influenced with an increase in that motivation. For example, if the analysis of the fantasy suggests that an individual has a high need for personal control and power, he can be helped to confront this fact and further help can be given to him to saturate his fantasies with more imagery of social power, using groups to

achieve social goals. In India a programme with student leaders (Mehta, Pareek and Sharma, 1976) indicated great potential of such a technique to help the student leaders change from their self-image of helpless, angry, young people to that of potential revolutionaries to be able to bring about some definite change in the society.

## 2. Development of Collective Attitudes and Skills

In addition to self-awareness, development of attitudes and skills to make the collectives effective would be very important. There are several aspects of this process.

a. Collaboration: One of the important aspects of collective work is collaboration amongst people to be able to achieve some results.

Collaboration can be developed in groups, and amongst members of a group through special techniques of simulating behaviour through games etc. Collaborative skills are important for social action, and require some understanding of this process. Experimental evidence indicates that for collaboration, various factors are important like a sense of purpose, superordinate goals, perception of power in both oneself and others, a minimum level of trust amongst those who are likely to collaborate and continuous communication to clear any misunderstandings (Pareek, 1977).

b. Dispossession: With the feudal background, there is a tendency for people who establish (or play a crucial role in establishing) an institution to get so involved with that institution that they almost begin to own it. Those who are highly involved in the organisation

emand - and are given - the reward in terms of their ownership of the system in proportion to their involvement. The result is that these people do not allow the institute or the organisation to grow beyond a point. If they continue to own the institute, the institute cannot grow beyond what their original thoughts were. There is also a tendency for such people to continue to hold up its original form, which seemed to respond to a need at the time it was established. But in due course of time, the environmental conditions and the needs might change. The "owners" of the institute may find it difficult to see this and experiment with the new procedures and roles the institute. For self-renewing processes, it is important that collective leadership is developed in the system, and the roles are interchanged periodically, so that no one individual is seen as indispensable.

c. Decentralisation: It is important that decisions are taken at various levels in an organisation so that people who are involved in the implementation of the decisions for social action are also involved in the process of taking decision. The development of decentralised machinery of decision making in such a large country like China has exploded the myth of the need for centralised planning on which most models of national planning were based in the past. Decentralisation of power and decision making helps in strengthening the system and building organisations which are self-sustaining with enough inner strength to continue and adapt themselves for more effectiveness.

d. Experimentation: One major characteristic of self-renewing system is the willingness to look at the current forces and learn from the experience to become more effective in the process. This is possible if the experimenting with various aspects of working of the organisation is given value. One main characteristic of effective revolutionaries has been their experimental attitude to try out alternative ways of developing strategies and then stabilising some strategies. The tendency to examine the strategy one is using, and then to try an alternative one if it seems to be promising is likely to help the systems to develop self-renewing properties.

e. Linkages: Organisations do not exist by themselves. Necessary linkages with other organisations, both local, national and international may help in learning from others experiences, and using those experiences for developing one's own effectiveness. It may also help in sharing such experiences for mutual benefit. Self-renewing process may therefore, greatly aided by such linkages. Ofcourse, the responsibility of developing effective strategies will be of the local groups, but linkages may help in both getting necessary support as well as in making some adjustments through learning from experience.

It may be useful to pay attention to two major processes, those concerned with the individuals, and those concerned with the groups from time to time. If some time is devoted formally to the analysis of process in meetings of the collectives, this may help in reviewing various process aspects, and taking necessary action to strengthen the self-renewing process.

### Implications for Training of Action Researchers

What we have discussed about developing self-renewing systems has some implications in the training of action research workers. Action research is both a science and an art. It requires an understanding of various theories, strategies and processes. The following three dimensions may be important for the training of action research workers:

#### 1. Training in ideology and historical process

The most important aspect of training certainly is the ideological one. The action research worker should clearly understand the historical process which has led to a particular state of affairs, so that he can appreciate it in a context rather than trying to understand it in isolation. Ideology provides such a context. There can be no substitute for such rigorous training for the action researcher to develop some meaningful understanding of the social processes.

#### 2. Research Methodology

Often enthusiastic activists lack necessary research skills. A minimum knowledge of research process and research methodology may be helpful in both collecting relevant and valid data, and analysing, interpreting and drawing meaningful conclusion from the data. Training in research methodology should emphasise much more innovative and creative aspects of research rather than traditional, mechanical methodology.



### 3. Process work

Equally important is training in process work, skills of analysing dynamics of individuals and groups working together for common goals. Processes are important not only for small groups but also for larger groups like communities. One group in the Indian Society for Applied Behavioural Science, which is primarily devoted to training and process work, is actively concerned with developing community processes so that with the process of conscientisation can be accelerated and people can be helped to develop greater power and use it more effectively. Certainly new researches and experiments are needed both to understand the community process and develop ways of helping people become effective in such processes.

#### Action research in India

A large number of action research projects have been carried out and are being tried out in several parts of the country. Staff College for Educational Administrators and Planners has prepared a list and has given descriptions of 19 such experiments in a recent monograph. The various experiments described in that monograph deal with action research through technological change, through education, through programmes of change in health and agriculture, through the use of science at the village level and through a total development of tribal and rural areas. A number of systematic and well planned action research projects were sponsored by the Ford Foundation and some other agencies. These failed to make much impact. However, some recent researches being tried out by some young people seem to be more

successful. Most of these action research projects lack action orientation. The impact of action research has not been very noticeable. Some projects started by voluntary workers have succeeded, but their continuing effectiveness has rather been limited. Several aspects of these action research projects require attention to develop strategies for making them more effective for social change.

Action research varies from systematic attention to data collection to more emphasis on action in the community. These also vary from micro to macro systems. The following types of action research have been done more widely in India.

1. Action research on problems of individuals working in systems

Action research has been widely practised in education systems in helping teachers and headmasters understand their problems, analyse them and search solutions which they themselves could try, and evaluate their attempt. This type of action research was widely tried out in many schools in various parts of the country.

2. Action research on the total organisational change

Organisation Development (OD) has been used in many Indian organisations, mainly the industrial organisation. OD envisages total organisational change by involving the top level peoples also through collective diagnosis, understanding the problems, designing interventions, implementing action, reviewing results and replanning. However, one weakness of OD is that it does not deal with basic problems of power so directly. It focusses more on processes, and tries to develop organisational health of the system.

### 3. Action research on problems of the community

Action research in specific areas of community problems have been done and reported. The area in which such research has been widely and intensively done is the area of health. Health-cum-sanitary development attracted attention of some action researchers. This was done in several parts of the country, using a common design, with variations according to the conditions of the community.

### 4. Action research on total community change

Action research focussed on the total change in the community has been less rigorous as far as the research methodology is concerned; but has tried out more effective models of change. These attempts have been of various kinds.

a. Using techno-managerial interventions: Some experiments have helped the communities increase their managerial effectiveness in solving problems, and in introducing new technology, e.g. in farming, animal husbandry, irrigation and introducing technological areas which were new to the communities.

b. Educational interventions: The primary emphasis in some areas has been to use education, especially adult education as an intervention of total social change. Education has included developing new skills, and helping people understand various dimensions of the community dynamics.

c. Economic interventions: Attempts have been made to increase income of people in the community in the hope that change in

the economic conditions would result in the total social change. Both agriculture and non-traditional sources of income-supplementation have been tried out.

d. Social interventions: In India where discrimination against some underprivileged classes has been traditional, some attempts have been made to change attitudes of people in accepting the underprivileged people to participate in the community life, e.g. going to the temple, using wells and other community facilities, integrated housing, etc. These have focussed on changing attitudes of people and reducing their prejudices against each other.

e. Political interventions: Some actions attempts have been made by politicising communities, especially the underprivileged, resulting in conflict and confrontation, which in some cases has shown results, and in some cases, have been merely put down by the authorities. Some vivid descriptions of such attempts of confrontation are available. Such attempts are being currently made in some areas.

In summary, action research can help in building self-renewing systems by paying attention to the various skills at the level of the system and the individual members of the concerned system. Watson (1967) has suggested the following self-renewing steps: Sensing, screening, diagnosing, inventing, weighing, deciding, introducing, operating, evaluating, and revising. An action research project should not only monitor the action by employing scientific procedures of problem solving, but should also pay necessary attention to the

personal and interpersonal, and institutional skills. For example, the members of a system should jointly discuss ways of collecting necessary information from time to time to understand the dynamics (relationship of theory and practice). They may also openly discuss why the level of collaboration is high or low in the system. They may discuss the most effective ways of diagnosing the problems, and other processes involved in action research. In short, if the members of a system develop mechanisms of analysing and working on the institutional processes, as a regular routine, we may advance toward establishing self-renewing systems.

Table 1

## Eight Models of Action Research

<u>People</u>	<u>Concern for Action</u>	<u>Research</u>	<u>Action Research Model</u>
1. Low	Low	Low	1. Indifferent
2. High	Low	Low	2. Missionary
3. High	High	Low	3. Activist
4. High	Low	High	4. Process Research
5. Low	Low	High	5. Sterile Research
6. Low	High	High	6. Project Research
7. Low	High	Low	7. Don Quixote
8. High	High	High	8. Committed research

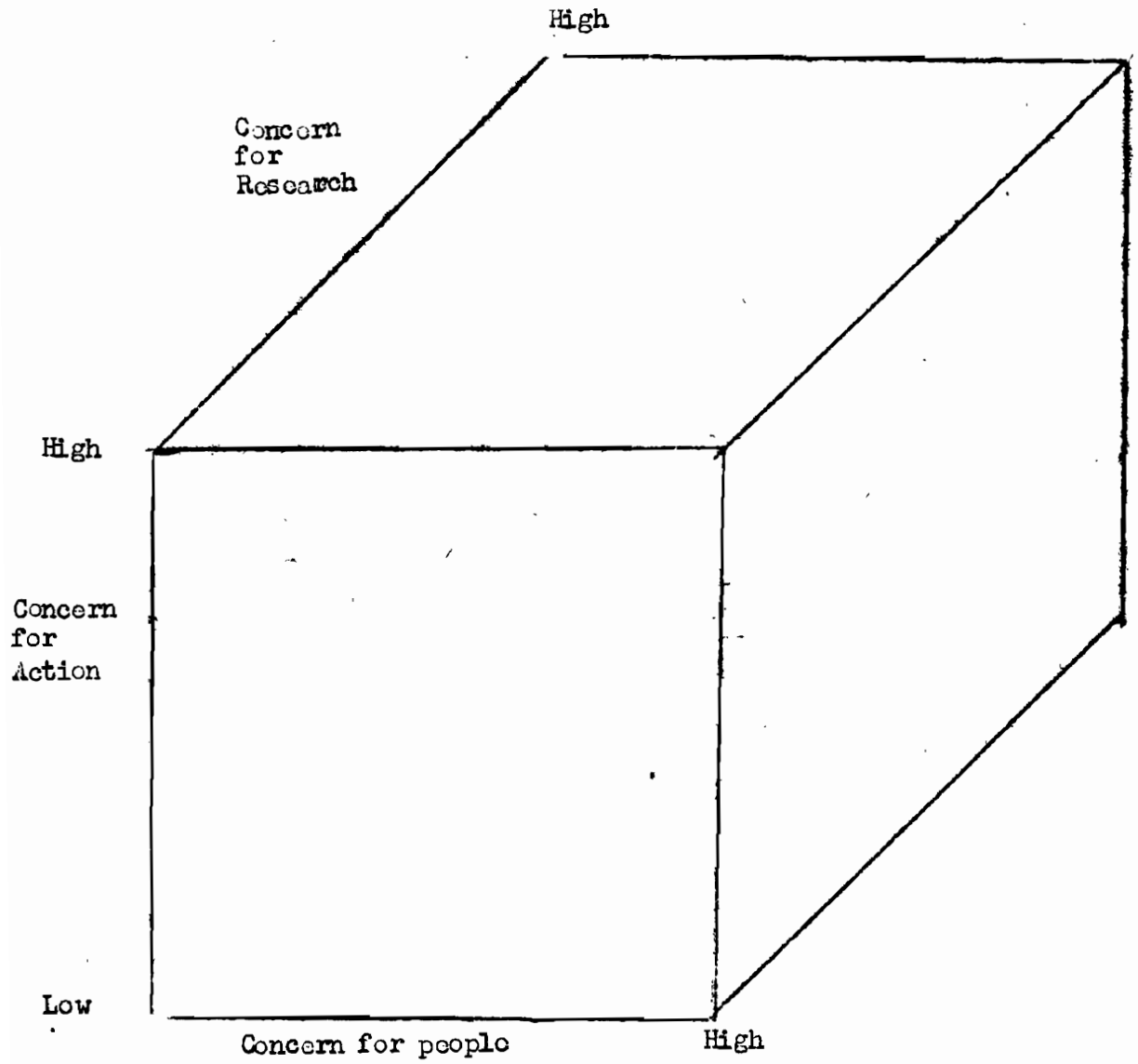


Figure 1

3-Dimensional Grid of Action Research

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