Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt

Action Leadership

Towards a Participatory Paradigm

Springer

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I dedicate this book to the disadvantaged and oppressed, i.e. those with little hope and spirit, whether poor or rich, and to those who help these people attain empowerment, confidence and self-worth.

Learning does not mean to fill a barrel, but to ignite a flame.

(Heraclitus, sixth century BC)

Foreword

In Chapter 2 of this book there appears a characterization of action research. As Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt says, 'It is a working definition'. Unlike most definitions, it is not couched in a way that assumes a universal audience. It begins 'If yours is a situation in which. . .'. So it invites readers to recognize how far they are already engaged in a process and how much further they might want to take it. This working definition was an old friend of mine. Reading it again in this book I was suddenly transported back over 20 years to a Symposium in Brisbane organized by Ortrun. I had been lucky enough to be among the participants there, and so part of the process of producing what was then, literally, a 'working definition'.

The Symposium was an eye-opener for me. Ortrun had organized the Symposium in a way that I have since come to recognize as a hallmark of her style of working. She had planned that a group of academics from various parts of the world should come together and discuss approaches to action research for a couple of days. On the third day we were to be joined by representatives of various local businesses, big and small. They would be interested to find out what action research could do for their own practical purposes.

We academics argued passionately for 2 days with each other (and with the planned programme), questioning everything and agreeing, it seemed, on little. Towards the end of the second day we realized that the following day we were to meet the business representatives and that we needed, collectively, to present them with something more than 2 days worth of academic argument. Very quickly, it became apparent that while we retained our differences, it was not difficult to agree on a 'working definition'. I think it took us much less than an hour to do so. And on the next day, I, for one, was astonished to find just how constructive and productive were those discussions with the representatives from that (to me) unfamiliar world of business. Since then, members of the Symposium, including myself, have used the definition in their own work for their own purposes. Even now, so long after the original Symposium, Ortrun shows in this book that it remains both relevant and useful.

What happened at that Symposium is typical of the way Ortrun is able to be *of* academia but also to reach *beyond* it. She makes her work relevant to a range of government and business organizations, all the while remaining interested in, and

attuned to, recent academic theorizing. Particularly significant from my perspective as somebody with a close interest in social justice issues is the way she has kept her academic and ethical integrity. Unlike some academics who work closely with big business and big government, she keeps her focus firmly on justice, including on those whom Fanon called 'the wretched of the earth'. Furthermore, she is able to combine attention to relatively abstract theory with attention to the details of organizing and managing workshops in a range of institutional cultures.

This is an educational book. It draws on a wide range of academic theory in order to show how theory and practice are inseparable. In doing so, it goes beyond simply arguing the case by giving practical and real examples that can illuminate for others how they might themselves transform practices in their own contexts.

Edinburgh, UK   Morwenna Griffiths

Acknowledgements

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About the Author

Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt is director of OZI (Ortrun Zuber International P/L) specializing in action learning and action research, qualitative research methods, leadership development programmes and postgraduate research supervision. She is also adjunct professor at Griffith University (Brisbane), professor extraordinaire at the Tshwane University of Technology in Pretoria, South Africa, and regional president (Australasia) of GULL – Global University for Lifelong Learning. After completing her under- and postgraduate studies in Germany, she has lived in Australia for almost 40 years and was awarded a PhD in comparative literature (University of Queensland, 1976), a PhD in higher education (Deakin University, 1986), a DLitt (Doctor of Letters) in management education (International Management Centres, 1993) and an honorary doctor of professional studies (GULL, 2008).

In her professional life, she has actively pursued development of higher education; management education; and professional, leadership, organization and community development. She has continued to publish extensively and nurture a new generation of action research practitioners. She has accepted many invitations to conduct programmes, seminars and workshops in universities, business schools and communities around the world. Countries include Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Africa, Colombia, Germany, Austria, Holland, Sweden and England.

After retirement from academia in 1997, she has continued to research, teach, coach and write. Her love of learning and helping others to learn, understand, be able to act responsively and take initiative inspires her to continue creating knowledge and insight with others to improve the lives of many in this world of continuous change. E-mail: ortrun@mac.com

Reviewers' Comments

In this book, Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt's lifelong contribution through integrating diverse perspectives reaches its high point in the synthesis represented by the participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) paradigm. She introduces the concept of action leadership as a way of being in the world that is congruent with this paradigm. Action leadership is fundamentally other-centredness based on an enlightened consciousness, enduring compassion and focused action that seeks to create a better world, whether in organizations, higher education or the community. The Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL) is presented as an outstanding exemplar for this paradigm (PALAR) and this way of being (action leadership).

Ron Passfield, PhD, Organizational Consultant and Freelance Social Media Manager, Brisbane, Australia.

Over a lifetime of diverse practice and teaching experiences, Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt has developed a uniquely broad and synthetic perspective linking participatory action learning and action research in a seamless approach that she calls PALAR. The present book, enriched by cases drawn from direct experience and anchored in the major philosophical and methodological positions that have inspired her work, provides a wonderful introduction to this complex subject both for those new to action learning and action research and for experienced practitioners. Written clearly and honestly, the book represents reflective practice at its best.

Davydd J. Greenwood, PhD, Goldwin Smith Professor of Anthropology, Cornell University, USA.

Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt could not have found a better motto for her book: 'Learning does not mean to fill a barrel, but to ignite a flame'. She presents an optimistic view of a networked democratic society that facilitates the active participation of all in shaping the world in which they live. The recent fiasco of neo-liberal ideology in the industrialized world provides a strong legitimation for this book. Here Ortrun synthesizes traditions of action research, action learning and participatory action research for the professional development of those who are primarily responsible for providing frame conditions for such a society: of academics in higher education and

of managers and leaders in public and private fields. How this can work is vividly described in case studies referring to community development in developing countries. Her eclectic paradigm (Participatory Action Learning and Action Research) provides an excellent theoretical basis for a more inclusive and emancipatory view of learning and leadership.
Peter Posch, PhD, Professor Emeritus of Education and Consultant to the Institute of Instructional and School Development, Alpen-Adria-University Klagenfurt, Austria.

Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt's decades of research and thinking on action learning and action research are here in action leadership, a facilitative leadership based on collaboration, inquiry and empirical data. Defining learning as 'the ability to ignite a flame', Zuber-Skerritt does just that in her new book, which offers not only a most comprehensive coverage of this field but also case studies to exemplify the theoretical concepts. This book is for all scholar-practitioners, and in particular those passionate leaders who want to develop thought leadership capacity in the workplace, who seek continual innovation and creativity through in-depth reflection on practice and who understand that learning for all, particularly students, should be participatory and focused on lifelong skills of learning and creating new knowledge.
Jan Robertson, PhD, Academic Consultant and Senior Associate, NZ Coaching and Mentoring Centre, New Zealand.

I have admired Ortrun's work since the 1980s. And now, after so many distinguished contributions, she counters the global resurgence of technocratic efficiency and intensification of measurable outcomes with the gift of a timely and inspirational book in which she argues for a more humane, organistic and optimistic approach to human affairs. Modelling action leadership for all, she explores an interdependent relationship between personal and organizational development and between self-referential and collaborative modes of being. While many may feel they are about to be engulfed by the firestorm of rational self-interest raging within a ruthlessly competitive social order, she ignites the backfires of hope with a network of cooperative action plans. In developmental and interventionist ways, she empowers participants to understand and transform their groups and worlds. Her mindful and soulful book will help even (academic) managers to become more caring leaders capable of lifelong learning. By becoming more self-aware and generous, may we all become more self-managing and so benefit from self-supervision and other concern.
C.T. Patrick Diamond, PhD Professor Emeritus, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, Canada.

Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt has again blazed new trails for us action researchers, as she has throughout her distinguished career. This time she inaugurates the new concept of participatory action learning and action research (PALAR), a unique blend of action learning and action research dedicated towards emancipatory ends that can lead to a transformation in both the development and the application of actionable

knowledge. She then attaches PALAR to some of the enlightened views of leadership that have recently begun to tie it to the activities, not the attributes, of people as they are engaged, especially in dialogue about their own practice. She develops this path-breaking work all the while applying it to the contexts of higher education, management learning and community development.
Joe Raelin, PhD, Professor and the Knowles Chair of Practice-Oriented Education and Director, Center for Work and Learning, Northeastern University, USA.

It was a pleasure to read this book. Zuber-Skerritt draws upon her extensive wisdom, passion, experience and previous works to create a holistic and interconnected view of participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) that elevates it to greater heights than just a process for improvement. As she states, it is a way of life and being that sets and resets our moral compass. This is a book that will be read and enjoyed by students, teachers, philosophers, community workers and leaders from all sectors. It is practical whilst deeply theorised in a way that enables it to be read easily. I will be strongly recommending this book as a core text for my postgraduate students but I will also be using it to remind me to reset my own moral compass. It is a gem.
Eileen Piggot-Irvine, PhD, Associate Professor and Director of the New Zealand Action Research and Review Centre (NZARRC), Unitec, Auckland, New Zealand.

Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt's new book is a masterpiece. Her reflected educational experience, her broad theoretical knowledge of teaching, learning and organizational change processes, her involvement and role in the action learning and action research community, her creativity and, last but not least, her clear ethical position are the ingredients of this book – a highlight in Ortrun's oeuvre. I strongly recommend this book to students, scholars and practitioners, for here they will gain a deep understanding of the new participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) paradigm, its meaning and its transformation into practice, and of action leadership as an outcome of the integrated PALAR approach.
Stephan Laske, PhD, Professor, Institute for Organization and Learning, School of Management. University of Innsbruck, Austria.

In this latest work, Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt places yet another important milestone along a lifetime's journey of inquiry and discovery – a journey which naturally mirrors her subject: action learning and action research. From the perspective of our institute, and fully aware of the decades-long duration of her contribution, we note with delight that she has solidly straddled the paradigms of the twenty-first century in relation to ambition, drive, leadership and success. For Ortrun has spent all that time in her ELEMENT. Renowned educator and author Dr Ken Robinson would say her life's work, and particularly her ascendance to the summit of her field, is due to the fact that she is engaging in a labour of love. Others would note that she has certainly put in the required 10,000 h for mastery of any field or subject. Finally, Daniel Pink, whose DRIVE remains at the top of the best-seller list and stands as a primary guide for twenty-first-century leadership, would cite not only her mastery of

her field but also the purpose with which she applies the principles of participatory action learning and action research to the disadvantaged, thus reaching well beyond the realms of recognition and reward.
Bruce Stinson, Chairman, the Alphaeight Institute, Hong Kong.

Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt has many years of experience applying action learning and action research to the development and facilitation of project-based learning programmes. In this eclectic and ground-breaking book, she applies her experience to the development of valuable concepts, models and processes for project-based leadership development.
Bob Dick, DLitt, Adjunct Professor, Southern Cross University and University of South Australia, Australia.

Ortrun has written a remarkably insightful book that has profound implications and potential solutions for problems in the world at large. While the academic and scientific world is so often a competitive environment, she proposes an educational process that is an open and collaborative means of providing education to humanity. It is not an elitist view of education, but rather an inclusive and humanitarian process that opens the door to many who may not otherwise have educational opportunities. It is compelling in its style and impressive in content, with many case studies, philosophies and practical applications.
Abi O'Neill, Program Director, Mt Eliza Business School, Executive Education, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia.

List of Acronyms

AL	action learning
AR	action research
ALAR	action learning and action research
ALARA	Action Learning Action Research Association (since 2008; formerly called ALARPM)
ALARPM	Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management Association
ALD	action leadership development
AusAID	The Australian Government agency responsible for managing Australia's overseas aid programme
CALT	Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching, Griffith University, Brisbane, 1975–1991
CD	community development
CEO	chief executive officer
DBA	doctor of business administration
DET	doctoral explication thesis
DEMIQ	departmental excellence in managing institutional quality
DEUE	departmental excellence in university education
DF	diary format (learning cycle)
DMgt	professional doctor of management
DPhil	professional doctor of philosophy
EBD	entrepreneurial business development
EBSCO	Elton Bryson Stephens' Company – Information and Publishing Services
EDTC	Entrepreneurial Development Training Centre Ltd, Papua New Guinea
GMQ	graduate management qualification
Grad Dip Mgt	graduate diploma of management
GSM	Graduate School of Management
GULL	Global University for Lifelong Learning
GU	Griffith University
HRM	human resource management

IMC	International Management Centres
IMCA	International Management Centres Association
LD	leadership development
LDP	leadership development programme
MBA	master of business administration
NESB	non-English-speaking background
NGO	non-governmental organization
OD	organization development
PALAR	participatory action learning and action research
PAR	participatory action research
PD	professional development
PLS	personal learning statement
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PV	personal viability
QUAL	Queensland University Action Learning Programme
R&D	research and development
ROI	return on investment
RO	return on outcomes (form)
SAL	systems approach to leadership
SEAL	senior executive action learning
SPIRT	Strategic Partnership with Industry – Research and Training
ISSS	International Seminar Support Scheme (AusAID)
SU	semester unit
SWOT	strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNMISET	United Nations Mission in Support of East Timor
UQ	University of Queensland

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Chapter 1
From Action Learning and Action Research to Action Leadership

A single spark can start a prairie fire.
Ancient Chinese saying

Chapter Overview

This chapter introduces the purpose of and rationale for this book, and its approach, educational features, structure and contents. It briefly explains the main concepts of learning, teaching, action learning (AL), action research (AR), professional development (PD), action leadership development (ALD) and problem solving – concepts that are developed in subsequent chapters. I highlight the importance of self-directed learning and development to the very diverse constituencies in the fields of action research, and leadership and organization development. I introduce new integrated concepts of 'action leadership' and 'participatory action learning and action research' (PALAR) that are the central focus of this book. The latter is a methodology for professional, leadership, organization and community development. I argue that PALAR is a proven methodology for responding effectively to complex issues in rapidly changing contexts, especially at present while we face shared unprecedented challenges as a consequence of economic, political, technological, social and ecological changes and natural disasters. I outline the contents of each chapter and point to the uniting thread of storyline and dialectics throughout the chapters. The concept and structure of the book are illustrated in Figs. 1.1 and 1.2.

Introduction

Now in my seventies, I look back to the joyful discovery of action learning and action research as crucial to my life and career. Together and separately, action learning and action research gave me new and participatory approaches to my work: the professional development of academics in higher education and of managers and leaders in industry, business, government and communities. My contribution

to the field was initially integrative and empowering. In the 'First World Congress on Action Learning and Action Research' in Brisbane in 1990, my colleagues and I brought together the separate fields of action learning (AL, represented by Reg Revans) and action research (AR, represented by Kurt Lewin) into the dynamic paradigm of ALAR (Zuber-Skerritt, 2009). In this book I continue this integration into a more participatory paradigm which I call 'participatory action learning and action research' or briefly, PALAR. This is not totally new. Orlando Fals Borda formulated the concept of participatory action research (PAR) that in this book I integrate with action learning into PALAR. Therefore, PALAR is not simply AL plus AR plus PAR, but a synthesis of all these concepts and traditions into a new emerging paradigm of PALAR in theory and practice (i.e. praxis) for personal, professional, action leadership and organization or community development.

What does PALAR have to do with action leadership, the title of this book? And why does this deserve a book? I have discovered that new integrations like PALAR not only enrich a field but also light new fires of personal and professional endeavour. They reposition our viewing lens so that we appreciate, question and seek answers from new angles. New integrations can therefore be instrumental in developing not just new knowledge but also the paradigm within which we work and the methodologies we use within the paradigm. For many years, ALAR has been a passion that has enriched my life through participation with like-minded colleagues and seekers of the same outcomes and ways of achieving them. Unfortunately, the fathers of my field – Reg Revans, Kurt Lewin and Orlando Fals Borda – have all passed away. Now it is for us to further develop the rich inheritance from them, incorporating participation more prominently within the existing ALAR paradigm.

In this book I suggest further exciting developments for the ALAR community to consider and develop further. These are born from the coming together of years of experience, discussion, action and reflection about the concept and practice of leadership, particularly through my involvement as facilitator of professional and leadership development workshops in many countries around the world. Leadership is discussed so often in our talks about ALAR and, I believe, warrants our careful consideration. It is particularly important to ALAR in practice, yet it also can be problematic for an approach like ALAR that advocates equality and shared participation. This is because leadership is hostage to a broad range of interpretations in theory and practice, from 'command and order', through the charismatic, to primus inter pares (first among equals). The ALAR paradigm understands and fosters leadership as the last of these, that is, primus inter pares. In this book I suggest that we need and should conceptualize what I call *action leadership*, rooted in, and proceeding from, the democratic notion of primus inter pares.

I am fortunate to still be involved in the ALAR world. My passion here is also a calling. I still work with an action learning and action research community that is now worldwide. This community embraces the elite and the dispossessed, the rich and the poor, the old and the young. We have our differences – the necessary fuel for vibrant ideas and action – but we are united by an empowering approach to the lives of others as well as our own. This book extends action learning and action research through the participatory methodology PALAR to advance the paradigm of action leadership. Action leadership in this sense deserves to be a study in its own right, as

an outcome of our integrated PALAR approach. This book therefore begins a further integration: participatory action learning and action research towards action leadership. In providing kindling for the action leadership paradigm, this book brings us to a synthesis that is necessarily temporary, in the process of stimulating discourse and action towards further development of this new paradigm.

In these times of unprecedented, rapid change, professional and leadership development is a significant issue in all workplaces, organizations and communities for dealing effectively with the complexity of a global society in the twenty-first century. This book argues that the present time of radical change calls for profound rethinking of ways to improve how people and organizations learn, and thus their capacity to engage constructively with the complex issues challenging society at all levels. It calls for a new paradigm of learning, teaching, research (development and supervision), and professional and leadership development, based on democratic values and worldviews. It also calls for a democratic, global dialogue space and a dialectic, holistic approach to thinking and learning, as demonstrated throughout the chapters in this book. Achieving this dialogue space requires guidance that comes through action leadership, which re-conceptualizes thinking, learning and dialogue and over time further develops both the paradigm and practice of leadership.

The book is itself a demonstration of dialectic – a system of reasoning that comes to truth through the exchange of opposing ideas – which threads through the chapters. Here the dialectics concern positions for and against participatory action learning and action research in Chapter 2; theory and practice in Chapter 3; method(ology) in Chapter 4; traditional (academic) learning and experiential learning in Chapter 5; management and organization development, alongside rigour and relevance in Chapter 6; and humanitarian aid and development of lifelong learning in Chapter 7. I hope that my discussion and synthesis of opposing ideas will become part of the continuing dialectic carried forward by readers, as they generate discourse towards, and eventually in, the new, evolving paradigm of action leadership.

But my intention in this book is, of course, not *just* for the advancement of a new, evolving paradigm and new methodology. Through this book, I seek to develop more holistic ways of appreciating the world and individual and collective responsibilities within it, more critical and deeper thinking skills and knowledge, and more effective leadership, towards an explicit end. Greenwood offers valuable insight here as context for this book. His recent studies (Greenwood, 2009a, b) argue that the real issue in education is Taylorism[1] and its bedfellow neo-liberalism, which threaten and undermine positive social change through action research. He explains how the worldwide conservative turn in the twenty-first century is intensifying, not decreasing, in many contexts, even though it produces human disasters. Greenwood (2009b: 3) describes neo-liberalism as an approach to political economy and economic policy that has the following core principles:

> The rule of the 'free' market, the reduction of governmental expenditures for welfare and social services, the deregulation of as many aspects of the economy as possible, the privatisation of as many state-owned or public enterprises as possible and the destruction of the concept of the 'public good' and its substitution with individual responsibility and individual consequences.

Greenwood argues that this ideology actively opposes the ideals of education concerning the pursuit of human development for multiple purposes that serve the common interest, including social capacity building and citizen skills, linking or integrating teaching and research and contributing to local, regional, national and international repositories of useful knowledge. Neo-liberal approaches reject these diverse dimensions because these dimensions seek to enable all citizens to think critically so that they understand both the sources of their present circumstances – for many, impoverishment and disempowerment – and ways to overcome their problems. Overcoming impoverishment, disempowerment and, fundamentally, enforced ignorance, is inevitably a major threat to the very powerful neo-liberal elite that is sustained by this impoverishment and disempowerment.

Internationally, the need for more effective approaches to learning, teaching, research, and professional and leadership development has long been recognized. Alternative approaches move from the rigid disciplinary and hierarchical structures characteristic of the traditional and neo-liberal modes of producing, using and applying knowledge towards approaches to research and development that are more humanist and society/community relevant. These approaches are more interdisciplinary, problem based, client/learner centred, practice oriented and participatory than traditional and neo-liberal approaches, drawing in stakeholders to help identify and address the problem. These alternative approaches consequently help to cultivate new understandings and practice of leadership in the form of primus inter pares.

Today, rapid economic, political, technological, social and ecological changes and natural disasters of floods, droughts and earthquakes dramatically reshape the lives of many. It is therefore crucial that the type of research and development is fast, innovative and pro-active rather than reactive to most effectively address the complex problems that these contemporary changes produce and maximize the opportunities they enable. However, many professionals and practitioners in their particular fields find it hard to act effectively and efficiently in the face of new challenges because they lack problem-solving 'know-how'. They are expert in their field but their experience of life and of learning has not equipped them with problem-solving capacity.

I argue that in order to effect practical and sustainable transformational change to address complex problems we need new models and frameworks. These can be learnt, experienced, applied or self-developed in complex life situations, especially within workplaces and organizations. We also need supportive environments where our fellow human beings both allow and encourage risk, experimentation, learning from mistakes, trial and error and entrepreneurial innovations.

We need to explore further possibilities for 'true democracy' through active participation. We need to create multiple relationships locally and globally with social spaces where we can engage with, and come to value and respect, one another and the group as a whole despite our differences in culture, religion, race, class, sexual orientation, age, life experience, endowment and world view. I argue that participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) presents effective ways to achieve such outcomes. I also argue that creating a synergy between ancient (e.g. Greek and

Indigenous) and contemporary dialogue and practices provides great potential for enabling us in the twenty-first century to share our collective wisdom in the interest of the collective 'good'.

Definition of Terms

In the international literature, some of these new and emerging practical theories are called 'reflective practice', 'appreciative inquiry', 'action learning' and various types of 'action research', especially participatory, critical or emancipatory, rather than merely technical and practical action research (see Chapter 2). For mutual understanding of terms, here I briefly define the fundamental concepts of learning, teaching, action learning, action research, and professional and leadership development. I also explain these terms further where they are contextualized throughout the book.

Learning in this century must mean more than an accumulation of knowledge. It must be recognized as part of the process of solving problems and thinking creatively and analytically. It needs to be holistic, integrating auditory, visual and kinaesthetic learning styles. This means not just listening to teachers and reading written materials, but using all senses. It involves seeing and drawing pictures, diagrams and mind maps, and pursuing whatever other expressive paths are useful for developing concepts, identifying their inter-relationships and uncovering what needs to be known. These processes all entail critical thinking and questioning 'outside the box'. Holistic, dialectic thinking can best be learnt outside the classroom/lecture hall – in context, contradictions and processes of change.

Teaching therefore cannot be simply the transmission of information and content, which after all may not be digested and absorbed by the learner. Teaching must be the enabling and facilitating of holistic learning. In my teacher education in Germany in the 1960s we referred to the claim by Heraclitus (sixth century BC), *Lernen heisst nicht, ein Fass zu füllen, sondern eine Flamme anzuzünden*: learning does not mean to fill a barrel, but to ignite a flame. Educators need to foster among students a pleasure in discovering new insights and thinking for themselves, to enhance students' creative problem-solving skills and to develop other capabilities such as generic, transferable and lifelong skills. They need to be role models and to motivate student learning through innovative, creative activities and action learning rather than rote learning processes. As such, they are process managers and facilitators of learning rather than instructors.

Action learning (AL) means learning from and with each other in small groups or 'sets' from action and concrete experience in the workplace or community situation. It involves critical reflection on this experience, as well as taking action as a result of this learning. It is a process by which groups of people address actual workplace issues or major real-life problems in complex situations and conditions.

Action research (AR) is similarly a cyclical iterative process of action and reflection on and in action. There is no separation between, but instead integration of, theory and practice, research and development. The aims are to improve work

practices through collaborative inquiry following a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting and to gain a better understanding of the change and development processes.

The main *difference* between action learning and action research is the same as that between learning and research generally. Both include learning, searching, problem solving, inquiry and reflection on action. However, action research is more systematic, rigorous, scrutinizable, verifiable, always made public (e.g. in publications, oral or written reports) and grounded in a certain methodology and rigorous research methods of collecting, analysing and verifying data. Raelin and Coghlan (2006) suggest another difference: while action learning focuses more on the here-and-now and thus is most committed to second-person learning, that is, what can be learnt by the set members as they work, action research is also committed to third-person learning by extending the reach of knowledge created to those outside the immediate research context.

Participatory action research (PAR) is a special form of action research, mainly for community development. It is a democratic or non-coercive process whereby all relevant parties (participants) are involved in actively examining together current action in order to improve or change it. They determine the purpose and outcomes of their own inquiry that is active co-research with or without a specialist researcher or 'animator' (Wadsworth, 1998).

Participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) is a new integrative concept introduced in this book. This PALAR concept synthesizes the previously known concepts of collaborative action learning and participatory action research (PAR). Although the emphasis in some sections of the chapters is on action learning or lifelong learning and in others on action research or participatory action research, the links between the two are always assumed and implicitly or explicitly expressed. Thus, the concept of PALAR is inclusive, holistic and always participative and collective. It is the central focus and essential methodology for action leadership in this book. However, PALAR is not just a methodology or technology of procedures that can be easily applied to any practice, although such strategies might be helpful, especially to newcomers to the field. Rather, PALAR is a way of thinking, feeling, living and being that is influenced by our values, worldviews and paradigms of learning, teaching and research and, in turn, that influences our behaviour, strategies, methods and therefore capacity for improving practice.

Professional development (PD) generally means attaining knowledge and skills for both personal and professional development and career advancement. It encompasses all types of facilitated formal and informal learning opportunities, situated in practice and ideally incorporating feedback and evaluation. Approaches to PD include consultation, coaching, mentoring, reflective supervision, workshops and pre- and post-service programmes, e.g. for teachers or managers. Professional development here means active development from 'inside out' by the participants themselves through reflection on their practice, character and values (through PALAR), rather than through application of theory 'from the outside in'. Thus research and development discussed in this book are *with* and *by* people as 'participants', rather than *on* and *for* people as 'subjects' in the research.

Leadership development is professional development at its peak. Leadership has been defined by numerous scholars for many decades, moving from trait theories and behavioural theories to contingency theories and on to transactional and transformational theories. In this book, leadership is defined as the ability to ignite a fire and influence others towards the achievement of common goals that contribute to a commonly agreed purpose, such as professional, organizational and community development and improvement of practice and of life generally. This process requires leadership attributes such as wisdom, knowledge, higher order skills, character and beliefs and values consistent with those of PALAR.

Action leadership in the PALAR paradigm is actively creative, innovative, collaborative, shared and self-developed in partnership with others. It involves taking responsibility for, not control over, people through networking, and orchestrating human energy towards a holistic vision and an outcome that best serves the common interest. A good PALAR process is one in which action leadership can emerge from anywhere in the group; and leaders and followers are often changing places if all are to learn. Action leaders are passionate; they inspire and help with an idea to cascade to other people like a spark taking flame, as depicted in the ancient Chinese saying that launches this chapter: 'A single spark can start a prairie fire'.

Problem solving is a central concept and practice in action learning, action research and action leadership. Several authors of action research object to this term because they consider it as technical application of facts and figures in a mechanistic manner or in a negative sense as a model of deficiency, inadequacy, imperfection, weakness or fault that needs to be remedied. I use problem solving in this book in a positive sense, as posing fresh, open-ended questions that have not just one answer (yes or no) but a range of possible solutions to complex, problematic social and organizational situations, always with the aim to achieve best outcomes for the common good. I consciously and intentionally adhere to and advocate this positive meaning of problem solving in the tradition of action learning and participatory action research.

In this sense, problem solving is like 'appreciative inquiry' (Cooperrider et al., 2008) into open-ended questions and social and organizational issues. In PALAR programmes we identify and use our strengths rather than focus on weaknesses; we build positive relationships and human systems around what works best for the collective and gives life and empowerment to individuals, groups and whole organizations or communities. We do not ignore, deny or shy away from what has not worked but use it as a valuable source of learning. We accept and encourage trial and error and learning from mistakes, as well as from success. We reflect on what has worked and what has not, and why.

Purpose and Aims

The purpose of this book is to explain the development of a new, evolving approach to improving professional and leadership performance in higher education, as well as in industry, government and communities. Recent literature in higher education,

management education, organization and community development points to *action learning* and *action research* as the appropriate methods to develop professional competencies and leadership in organizations and communities (Zuber-Skerritt, 1991, 2009; Dotlich and Noel, 1998; Cherry, 1999; Donnenberg, 1999; Marquardt, 1999, 2000; Reason and Bradbury, 2001, 2006, 2008; McGill and Brockbank, 2004; Greenwood and Levin, 2007; Pedler, 2008; Piggot-Irvine, 2009; Coffey, 2010). In this book I take forward the earlier scholarship to unify these approaches through the PALAR methodology, aiming to begin developing action leadership as a paradigm unto itself. As such, the new paradigm will offer a new way of understanding learning/research processes. In this tradition, action leadership is likely to be a useful concept.

From my German scholarly background, I distinguish between *Naturwissenschaften* – the natural sciences, the ways of knowing the natural world – and *Geisteswissenschaften* – the human sciences, the ways of knowing the human mind and spirit. This book's discussion is located in the latter, that is, the human, social and related sciences, e.g. education, health sciences, nursing, social work and various endeavours of social change and human development: personal, professional, leadership, community and organizational development. This field of inquiry aims to understand behaviour, thinking, emotions, values, opinions, philosophies, beliefs, assumptions, visions, strategies, cultures and so forth. It is concerned with people not only as individuals, but especially in groups, communities and organizations.

PALAR in the fields of human and social inquiry aims to improve practice not just at a technical and practical level but also at a deeper critical/emancipatory level – by the practitioners themselves, in collaboration with each other and often with facilitators, specialist educationalists or social researchers. The assumption is that practitioners can learn and gain, even create, knowledge from concrete experience by observing and reflecting on that experience, conceptualizing the results, then testing the concepts in new situations, gaining new concrete experience and going through new cycles of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984) or action learning.

PALAR is not an exact science for creating 'objective' knowledge per se. It is more of an art, exploring the meaning, best practice, and quality of life and work for the people involved in the research and for others with similar knowledge needs in present and future, so that they may learn and use that learning to help solve their problems. The art of PALAR involves not only the mind and intellect (IQ, intelligence, rationality) but also feelings (EQ, emotionality), and values, beliefs (SQ, spirituality). Here humankind is regarded holistically; PALAR is a holistic approach to development and inquiry, that is, to action and research. What Whitley and Cooperrider (2009: 1) say about *appreciative inquiry* and the experience of *wholeness* is also true for participative action learning and action research:

> We have watched over and over again, tension turn to enthusiasm, cynicism to collaboration and apathy to inspired action. . . . It evokes trust. . . . It lets people see and experience a purpose greater than their own or their department's. You get the sense that you are connected to a goodness that comes from the power of the whole. You realize you really need one another. It satisfies the human need to be part of a larger community. It taps into our tribal consciousness. . . . People transcend the 'I' and become a 'We'.

Godin (2008) in his book, *Tribes: We Need You to Lead*, identifies 'passion' as the key to leadership and to belonging to a 'tribe', that is, a group of people with similar interests, ideas and goals who are connected to one another, to a leader and to an idea. People are tribal; there are millions of tribes around us, across the globe; and we all belong to one or many 'tribes', even if we do not realize it. We need in schools, universities, organizations and communities, action leaders who are passionate about learning and development and who can ignite a fire in those around them so that they become action learners and action leaders themselves.

On the other hand, there are neo-liberal forces at work. What Denzin (2009) says about the history of qualitative research in the last two decades, and why it is now – in a time of global uncertainty – under fire from conservative governments and academics is also true about action research. That is why I was tempted to title this book *Action Research Under Fire: Toward a New Paradigm for Professional and Leadership Development*. Action research has been, and still is, under attack from Taylorist and positivist academics and governments that argue from, and work within, an exclusive, scientific paradigm of prediction and control. Action research in the alternative phenomenological paradigm of development and change needs to be strengthened by open and dialectical dialogue and by new innovative practices. This book aims to contribute to this discussion and to demonstrate why and how participatory action learning and action research uniquely facilitate professional development and action leadership in times of rapid change.

I return to this issue in Chapter 4 where I argue that we need a paradigm, methodology and quality criteria different from those favoured by the positivist research paradigm. The alternatives are based on the human/social sciences with purposes and goals different from those of the natural sciences.

Approach

The field of leadership development is very broad, and much of the literature is not very useful for individuals, organizations, institutions and communities in actual everyday work situations. In this book, action leadership is built around the principles of participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) that conceive organizations as learning organizations, and individuals as autonomous lifelong learners and action learners/researchers who learn from their own concrete experience and from individual and collective reflection on this experience.

Many action research readers equate leadership with hierarchy, status, position and non-AR traditional strategies of learning and training/instruction, an equation that is incorrect, but rather common. This book aims to delink AL and AR from that understanding and instead link PALAR with professional and organization development towards action leadership. This will help to broaden the reach of PALAR into considerably wider organizational circles in the English-speaking world and to make it readable, familiar and relevant not only to academics and students but also to human resource professionals, policy-makers, consultants and facilitators of community and organization development.

The unique feature and significance of this book lie in its openness to the development of action leadership for all who are capable and willing to become true leaders of people and organizations, rather than leaders by appointment and position in a hierarchical organizational structure. The message is: We can all be or become leaders in our field/work/community if we are willing, passionate and open to learn about and actually live the newly established paradigm, i.e. the paradigm, praxis and processes of PALAR, as discussed and illustrated with examples and stories in this book.

Theories of developing a learning organization have been discussed at length by Senge (1990) and in the international journal *The Learning Organization* (since 1994). This book reaches beyond that ambit to explore a new, evolving paradigm of research and development and the integration of theory with practice. Importantly, we explore how concepts, principles and personal and organizational theories can be created collaboratively within a learning environment so they become purposeful, meaningful and relevant to the people involved and more effective and enduring for achieving long-term organizational and personal well-being.

Since PALAR is particularly useful to address complex problems in rapidly changing contexts, the unprecedented challenges now facing people from all walks of life as a consequence of technological, environmental, economic, social and political change underscore the importance and timeliness of this book. Climate change and natural disasters (e.g. floods, droughts, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, rising seas), global financial crises, escalating food shortages and human poverty present not just challenges but also opportunities. Responding most effectively, in ways that are sensitive to the needs of all involved, is a huge challenge, as the December 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Denmark so amply attests. Effective, sensitive response requires a shift away from positivist approaches to knowledge production and management to learner-centred knowledge creation and innovation. It demands a collective response and thus an increasingly sophisticated learner-centred approach to leading and working in a 'learning organization' or in another learning environment. It requires independent and creative thinking, systemic thinking, lifelong action learning and participatory action research within the workplace/group. The approach discussed in this book is applicable to problem-solving situations worldwide, but it has particular utility in locations of economic underdevelopment where relative poverty of education and infrastructure to sustain productive, resourceful communities restricts human potential.

Readership

This book is aimed at an expansive readership ranging across those who are interested in participative approaches to professional development, action learning, action research and action leadership and beyond. It will interest people who are already leaders, who aspire to become leaders or who seek to nurture colleagues into leadership positions. It will also interest people responsible for research and development, including staff development in management and higher education,

community projects and other areas that call for effective problem solving in collective situations. Today most part-time and even full-time adult students experience life in the workplace through part-time or full-time employment. And with an ever more active civil society in most parts of the world, citizens are engaging with each other, with organizations and with government and other bodies to address shared concerns locally, nationally and internationally. These are prime conditions for action leadership through PALAR. PALAR methodology by nature is problem- and project-oriented, addressing real-life issues of people who choose to work collaboratively towards shared goals while developing their learning, insights, knowledge, people skills and personal relationships through involvement in a PALAR project.

Models

Most recently Coffey (2010) has presented a variety of models and examples of SSM (Soft Systems Methodology) for leadership and organizational development, showing how to create sustained high performance in a complex and uncertain environment. The models I present in the form of diagrams in this book are not final and static statements of theory or practice (as in the models of control engineering and management using straight lines and square boxes). They are working diagrams that are part of my learning process (using circles, cycles and arrows) and result from my attempts to indicate holistic, dialectic thinking figuratively, while inviting the reader to debate, adapt and develop these models further. They are simple representations and illustrations of the ideas that I express in words, text and discourse throughout this volume. As Flood (2001: 138) points out:

> With soft systems thinking, however, models must never be taken as representations of reality. Each model is employed like 'a pair of spectacles' through which we can 'look at and interpret reality'. ... system models are likely to be particularly useful in achieving meaningful understanding.

Models, illustrated in diagrams, powerfully supplement text and enhance meaning and understanding, especially for visual-type learners. Models may also encapsulate new progressive ideas or theories that are easier to grasp in pictorial or metaphorical representations. Figure 1.1 is a model of this book showing the six key concepts/arguments, each developed in one of the subsequent chapters. The first three chapters in the upper circle (Chapters 2, 3 and 4) explain the *conceptual framework* and main arguments that (1) action leadership can be developed through PALAR, (2) theory and practice are dialectically related and integrated in action leadership and (3) action leadership is located in the emerging non-positivist, phenomenological paradigm of research and development. The next three chapters in the lower circle (Chapters 5, 6 and 7) discuss some *applications* in higher education (HE), in management education for organization development (OD) and in community development (CD) through the development of lifelong learning.

Fig. 1.1 Model of this book
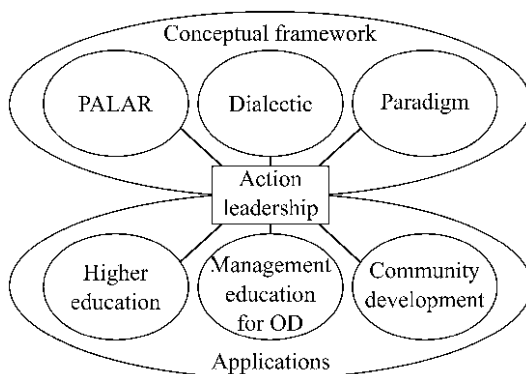
This model is repeated in essence at the beginning of each chapter with that particular chapter highlighted to orient the reader to the chapter's position in this book.

Storyline

Let me begin with myself and in the first person. A personal storyline runs through this book's discussion of action leadership through PALAR. It is a story of my own inter-cultural journeys over 40 years of professional development. My journeys and their stepping stones span from secondary teacher education to higher education and from academic staff development to management education and professional development of senior executives – all linked to organization development and change – and finally to community development and developing lifelong learning in economically developed and developing countries. In my university career, my roles have been an academic (teaching undergraduates and postgraduates); then an academic staff developer; and consultant in industry, government and private business schools in Australia and many other countries, including New Zealand, Fiji, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Africa, Austria, Germany, Holland, Sweden and England.

I talk about and reflect upon the many programmes, courses and workshops I conducted on action learning and action research and professional, leadership and organization development with participants from diverse backgrounds, fields and countries. I have developed and evaluated materials, models, frameworks, strategies, processes and methods that I tried out to maximize participants' in situ and future learning, development and growth. Inevitably, perhaps, each group worked differently, even when using the same course materials. Yet there were also similarities, based on participants' evaluation of what worked for them and what did not. Over the years I have published my accounts of experiences, insights and reflections in academic papers and books, and I review these writings critically and advance them in this book.

Philosophically, my thinking about action research was initially influenced by the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, foremost by Habermas (1974, 1978) whose work I found much more accessible in the English translation than in the German original I had read first. In the early 1980s I joined Stephen Kemmis and the Deakin University action research group and their view that action research is essentially research by practitioners. Based on Habermas' (1978) theory of knowledge-constitutive interests, we distinguished empirical–analytical (or positivist), hermeneutic (or interpretive) and critical approaches to research theory and practice. Kemmis (2001: 92) explains the relationships:

> Each had its own basic *raison d'être* in terms of the interests that guided its quest for knowledge: a *technical* or *instrumental* (or means–ends) interest in the case of *empirical–analytical* research – that is an interest in getting things done effectively; a *practical* interest in the case of *interpretive* research – that is an interest in wise and prudent decision-making in practical situations; and an *emancipatory* interest in the case of *critical* research – that is, an interest in emancipating people from determination by habit, custom, illusion and coercion which sometimes frame and constrain social and educational practice, and which sometimes produce effects contrary to those expected or desired by participants and other parties interested in or affected by particular social or educational practices.

In the 1980s when I was associated with the Deakin University action research group, I was an academic staff developer in the Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching at Griffith University in Brisbane and the first in Australia to introduce action research in higher education. I conducted projects with colleagues in the School of 'Modern Asian Studies' and its later incarnation 'Asian and International Studies' on various issues of teaching, student learning and curriculum development. Although initially we experienced 'paradigm wars' with our positivist colleagues, the helpful results of our projects in terms of improved university practice (of teaching, students' learning and curriculum review) and educational theory (publications in internationally refereed journals) meant that we were gradually and increasingly respected and promoted in our careers. More importantly, we enjoyed our collaborative work and supportive relationships that lasted over many years, even till today – 30 years on – when we meet as retirees. Through the processes of PALAR we grew not only intellectually as critical action researchers, but psychologically in terms of self-confidence and empowerment. We also grew ethically and spiritually in terms of collaborative reflection, synergy, fairness, and through a shift from egocentric to collaborative individualism. We reflected together and built on individual strengths of each and everyone of the group rather than diminishing individuals to comply with majority rule and hence normative mediocrity. In this way, we became action leaders of many people – students and colleagues alike.

Scholars and practitioners may adopt or adapt the praxis discussed in this book. They may also use it to help create/develop new practical theories and innovations in the new, non-positivist paradigm of professional and action leadership development through collaborative and participatory action learning and action research (PALAR), upholding openness, trust, networking and learning from reflection and discussion, as discussed in Chapter 2 and throughout the book.

Book Content

Part I provides the conceptual framework for participatory action learning and action research (Chapter 2), a philosophical explication of the dialectical relationship between theory and practice in PALAR (Chapter 3), and a theoretical framework and models for PALAR focusing on paradigm and methodology (Chapter 4). Part II deals with issues of professional and action leadership development through PALAR, in the fields of higher education (Chapter 5), management education for organization development (Chapter 6) and community development and the development of lifelong learning (Chapter 7). A visual representation of the book structure is provided in Fig. 1.2.

Part I may seem to be theoretical, but it is a summation and extension of my own work in integrating action learning and action research. Part II may seem practical,

Chapter 1

Introduction

Part I
Conceptual Framework
for PALAR

Chapter 2
PALAR Concepts, Models
and Values

Chapter 3
PALAR: Dialectic of
Theory and Practice

Chapter 4
PALAR Paradigm and
Methodology

Part II
PALAR Applications

Chapter 5

Higher Education

Chapter 6
Management Education
for OD

Chapter 7

Community Development

Chapter 8

Conclusions
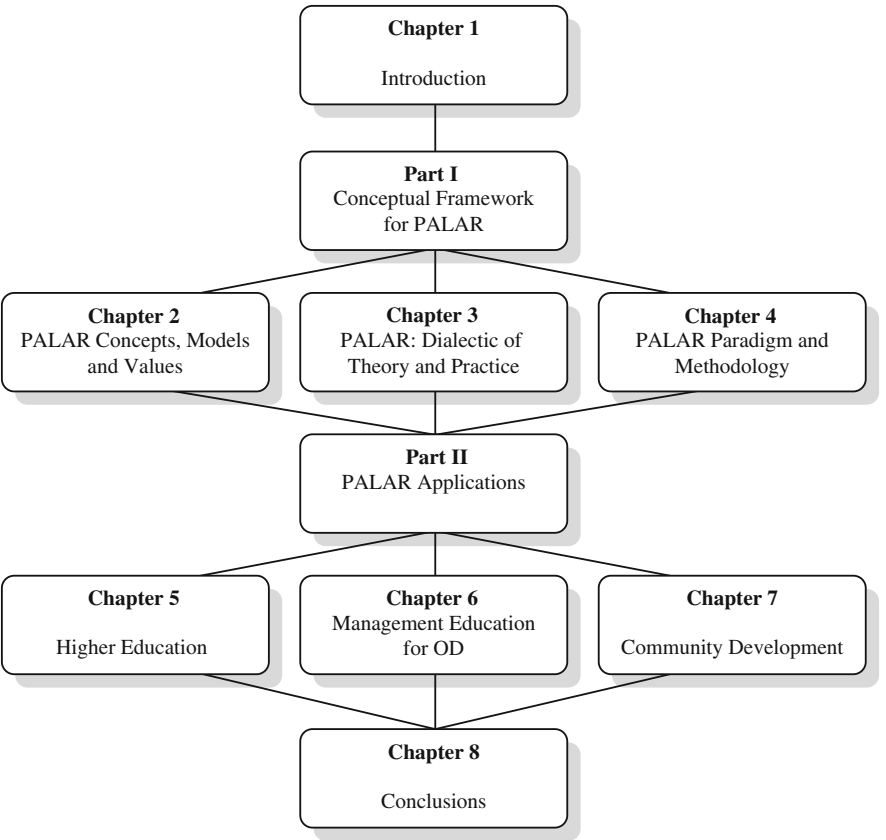
Fig. 1.2 The structure of this book

but it is a result of my own reflections on PALAR communities and my practice within them. Therefore, theory and practice are integrated and synthesized in this book. I have been inspired by two questions: How do we light the fire that first illuminated my life and work? How do we kindle it over time?

Here are brief outlines of each chapter, repeated as abstracts and advance organizers at the beginning of each chapter to focus the reader's attention on the essence of what they are about to read.

Chapter 2: PALAR Concepts, Models and Values

This chapter focuses first on action learning (AL) concepts, features, terminology, programmes and projects, and then on definitions of action research (AR) and participatory action research (PAR) to enhance both conceptual and practical understanding. I discuss essential characteristics, requirements and quality criteria of action research and the dialectical relationship between participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) as an integrated concept. I present various models of PALAR and discuss the values and worldviews inherent in a PALAR culture, and the reasons for success or failure of PALAR programmes and projects in various fields and countries. Here I argue that the value of PALAR includes its contribution to practical improvement in the workplace, concept/theory building, professional learning and growth, action leadership development, and community and organizational development/change.

Chapter 3: PALAR: Dialectic of Theory and Practice

In this chapter I argue that the traditional dichotomy and separation between 'theory' – the principles, models and method of the particular discipline – and 'practice' – that applies the theories – is problematic. Instead, I take an integrated, holistic approach to the theory and practice of learning, teaching, professional and leadership development and argue for a dialectical relationship between theory and practice and for alternative modes of theorizing and knowledge creation. This argument for a theory/practice dialectic is very topical in times of uncertainty and has been revived in recent literature (Marsh, 2010) with or without reference to classical, seminal works. These seminal works include those of Greek philosophers, the concepts of 'dialectic', 'praxis', 'Indigeneity' (Harris and Wasilewski, 2004) and of the 'mediating discourse' (Gustavsen, 2001). The chapter concludes that the art of PALAR requires a synthesis of theory and practice, an integration of knowledge *and* wisdom, mind *and* heart, of practical 'know-how' *and* creative dialectic thinking, and of research *and* development in partnership between research/scholarship and practice/policy development.

Chapter 4: *PALAR Paradigm and Methodology*

This chapter continues the argument for a dialectical integration of practice improvement *and* theory/knowledge advancement through participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) methodology. I explain an alternative to the traditional, positivist paradigm of learning and knowledge creation developed in terms of ontology (our assumptions about the nature of being/reality), epistemology (our assumptions about the nature of knowledge and knowing) and methodology (our consequent approach to problem solving and inquiry strategy). The chapter is based on (1) my perspective, drawing on more than 30 years of professional experience using action learning and action research and (2) my theoretical framework that includes selected aspects and principles taken from several existing theories, including grounded theory, action theory, critical educational theory, systems theory, personal construct theory and experiential learning theory. This framework explains why PALAR can be so powerful and successful in organizational change programmes. It therefore underscores the utility of PALAR for professional and action leadership development in the present time of rapid change and unpredictability. The chapter also synthesizes a thesis and an antithesis to produce a dialectic methodology.

Chapter 5: *Higher Education*

This chapter focuses on PALAR applications in higher education (HE), turning first to professional development (PD) – improving learning, teaching and academic staff development – and then to action leadership development (ALD). Practical improvements in HE have been slow due to the low priority that universities give to pre- and in-service training and professional development of university teachers. This chapter therefore explains the need for positive change and how to achieve it. The arguments in this chapter are informed by the theoretical framework, presented in the previous chapters of Part I.

   The section on PD focuses on the relevance to higher education of Leontiev's theory of action and of one of my PD models of action research (CRASP). Examples illustrate how principles of learning – by both students and academic staff – can be interpreted using Leontiev's theoretical framework, the CRASP model and other theories. The resulting dynamic model of HE may be applied, adapted or extended by readers according to their own purposes.

   The section on ALD focuses on the main principles of action leadership, characteristics of a respected action leader and three levels of leadership in higher education. The chapter contributes to a new paradigm and model of self-developed action leadership in higher education in the light of Covey's 'principle-centred leadership' (Covey, 1992), Maxwell's 'indispensable qualities of a leader' (Maxwell, 1999) and the action learning concept of 'failing forward' (Maxwell, 2000), that is, turning mistakes into stepping stones for success.

Chapter 6: Management Education for Organization Development

This chapter concerns PALAR applications of professional and action leadership development of managers, senior executives and organizations in industry, government and within communities. I explain how this development can be achieved in a way similar to that in higher education, applying and generating appropriate principles, processes and practices using participatory action learning and action research (PALAR). I argue that emancipatory action research is 'best practice' for organizational as well as educational change, fostering both organizational learning and the development of the 'learning organization' (Senge, 1990).

In management education, examples of an MBA undertaken by action learning and of a professional doctorate by explication illustrate how the traditional methods of management education can be improved or replaced by action leadership development of experienced managers and executives through using PALAR.

I finally develop and discuss a new conceptual model for organizational change and management development, created step by step by combining action research with adaptations of the field theory of Lewin (1951) and a model of managerial interventions for organizational change (Beer et al., 1990).

Chapter 7: Community Development

This chapter focuses on PALAR applications of community development through developing action leadership and lifelong learning. I argue that beyond education and development through formal institutions, participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) are practicable and especially suitable to the development of lifelong learning and action leadership for individuals, groups and whole communities, especially in developing countries and in natural-crisis situations. This knowledge claim is substantiated by examples of community development in many parts of the world – from both the literature and my own experience. The new concept of PALAR is important in this chapter because both action learning and action research need to be participatory in the three areas discussed: (1) community development, (2) action leadership development and (3) development of lifelong learning. This chapter introduces a new approach to development that serves all three areas. The new system using this approach, designed and offered by the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL), is explained and illustrated by examples from many parts of the world, including two case studies – of recovery efforts in Haiti and of Samoan migrants in Australia. Only about 3 years old (at the time of writing), GULL has spread like a breath of fresh air across the world.

Chapter 8: Action Leadership Within a Participatory Paradigm

This chapter draws conclusions from all previous chapters in this book into a coherent argument that in this twenty-first century, marked in its early years by global

neo-liberalism and managerialism we need a shift in mindset towards a participatory paradigm of action learning, action research and action leadership to improve human and social conditions for ourselves, others and future generations. I argue that participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) is an effective approach to facilitating the collaborative learning and shared democratic leadership required for individuals, groups and whole organizations and communities. This argument is evidenced by my own, my colleagues' and other authors' experience and research and is summarized in two new models, one for the advancement of PALAR praxis and project development and the other for action leadership towards a participatory paradigm – the title of this book. I also suggest a new genre for PALAR writing as developed in this book.

Limitations and Contributions

This book is unlikely to attract committed positivist researchers as readers and to convince them of the value of PALAR for change and development. However, it will provide practical, conceptual and theoretical ideas for PALAR readers to consider and enhance their own praxis of action leadership and professional, organization or community development. In other words, the book is useful for the converted and receptive readers, but unlikely so for the intransigent, traditional academics who think and work in the scientific, positivist paradigm. Beyond hope, however, we can take the most effective, creative action that we can to encourage more people in this world to become active, passionate and open to considering multiple paradigms for multiple purposes and goals. We can then turn the fire of paradigm wars into continuous dialogue to raise ever more new paradigms from the ashes. We will then be better able to direct our attention to lighting 'the prairie fire', with a single or even multiple sparks.

   This book is written in a new genre, combining elements of academic writing and storytelling, a style of factual research reporting and narrative. In the academic tradition, research is usually reported in the third person, in the passive voice and in a scientific language (jargon at worst) aimed at a specialist audience of scholars in a particular discipline or field. In the tradition of action learning and action research, authors usually write reports, papers and books in the first person, in the active voice and in clear, everyday language for a general audience of scholars *and* practitioners. In universities, academics and postgraduates using action research are often in a dilemma from wanting to be true to action research and having to comply with academic standards and requirements because their work and theses might be assessed by positivist researchers or traditional academics who are intolerant of first person style and narrative. Therefore we have to develop and argue for a new genre of writing that is acceptable to all interested readers, that is, academics, practitioners and anyone else who is interested in alternative ways of thinking, learning, researching, solving problems and leading others. Through this book I seek to make a contribution to this new genre.

Chapter Summary

To conclude this chapter, I reaffirm that PALAR is especially important and useful under conditions of hardship and disaster. Since our world is likely to experience more and more of these in the decades ahead, I highlight the contribution PALAR can make to action leadership and professional development now and in the future. As every chapter in this book, this chapter ends with questions for readers to consider as discussion starters.

Discussion Starters

1. What are your expectations of this book?
2. What would you like to learn about most from this book – in theory and practice?
3. Are there issues you have already identified that you wish to explore, agree or disagree with?

Note

1. Taylorism, or scientific management, is a theory of management based on empirical scientific studies of human efficiency to improve labour productivity, and its application involves strong managerial control over employees at work. Its core ideas were developed by American Frederick Winslow Taylor in the 1880s and 1890s.

Part I
Conceptual Framework for PALAR

The first part of this book clarifies the philosophical and methodological assumptions that underpin the practice of action leadership and professional development through participatory action learning and action research (PALAR). This includes the fundamental concepts, models and values of action learning, action research and action leadership (Chapter 2), the dialectical relationship between theory and practice (Chapter 3) and the emerging non-positivist PALAR paradigm and methodology (Chapter 4).

Chapter 2
PALAR Concepts, Models and Values

SUCCESS is when I add value to MYSELF.
SIGNIFICANCE is when I add value to OTHERS.
John C. Maxwell (2004: 9)

Chapter Overview

This chapter focuses first on action learning (AL) concepts, features, terminology, programmes and projects and then on definitions of action research (AR) and participatory action research (PAR) to enhance both conceptual and practical understanding. I discuss essential characteristics, requirements and quality criteria of action research and the dialectical relationship between participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) as an integrated concept. I present various models of PALAR and discuss the values and worldviews inherent in a PALAR culture, and the reasons for success or failure of PALAR programmes and projects in various fields and countries. Here I argue that the value of PALAR includes its contribution to practical improvement in the workplace, concept/theory building, professional learning and growth, action leadership development, and community and organizational development/change.

Introduction

This chapter reviews the concepts of action learning and action research with reference to (1) classic texts (Lewin, 1948, 1951; Revans, 1982); (2) texts that are

likely to become classics, such as recent works from the UK, Germany, Austria, Australia, South Africa, North and South America; and (3) themes and trends in the international literature (Dick, 2004, 2006, 2009). It explains why values and worldviews are important influences in a culture of participatory action learning and action research (PALAR); and vice versa why a PALAR culture and programmes/projects are effective ways of constructive, innovative and creative problem solving and of developing professionals, leaders and their organizations in this time of unprecedented change.

Let us turn first to an overview of action learning for readers who are new to the concept, principles and features of AL. This is also useful for action learners who are familiar with one or several kinds of action learning and are interested in understanding alternative conceptualizations and experiences of PALAR for action leadership – a central concern of the book as a whole.

Action Learning

The person who coined the term *action learning* in the 1930s was arguably Reg Revans who lived in the UK. I invited him at the age of 83 to be a keynote speaker at our First World Congress on 'Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management' (ALARPM)[1] in Brisbane in 1990 when he summarized his life's work on video (Revans, 1991a) and in print (Revans, 1991b). Whenever I show this video (now on DVD) in a workshop, participants' feedback is always positive. They appreciate his thoughts, insights and stories and many declare, 'now I understand the philosophy of action learning!'. They are stimulated to discuss his basic concepts and the implications of these concepts for their own learning and professional work practice.

Revans introduced the formula $L = P + Q$, i.e. *L*earning equals *P*rogrammed knowledge and *Q*uestioning insight. Programmed knowledge is typically taught at school and university, in class, lectures and books. But Revans argues that this knowledge is not sufficient for a rounded learning experience and for holistic development. It needs to be supplemented by asking fresh questions to generate further insight and knowledge. In Revans' (1982: 16) own words:

> P is the concern of the traditional academy; Q is the field of action learning. . . . On the whole, however, programmed knowledge, P, already set out in books or known to expert authorities, is quite insufficient for keeping on top of a world like ours today, racked by change of every kind. Programmed knowledge must not only be expanded; it must be supplemented by questioning insight, the capacity to identify useful and fresh lines of enquiry. This we may denote by Q, so that learning means not only supplementing P but developing Q as well.

To date, while many articles and books have been published on the subject of action learning, there is no single definition of the term that is generally accepted. Yet, there is an agreed understanding of the nature of action learning. Whenever I ask participants in my action learning programmes or workshops to identify the main characteristics of this concept, they always come up with common elements, such

as 'learning by doing', 'experiential learning', 'learning at work', 'learning to learn', 'lifelong learning', 'being open', 'sharing ideas', 'collaborating', 'synergy' and similar concepts. So the learner is involved in a process of active learning from and with others – a fairly simple concept from everyday life. In the following discussion I give some examples of my and other writers' definitions of action learning.

Concepts and Characteristics of Action Learning

In a recent interview with the President of the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL), Richard Teare, I asked how he would define or describe action learning. He has extensive experience and knowledge in designing and conducting action learning programmes (1) for managers and executives in business, industry, government and education for over 25 years; and (2) more recently, for the poorest and disadvantaged in rural communities and developing countries. Among other things, he explained (Zuber-Skerritt, 2009: 181):

> Action learning occurs when people learn from each other, create their own resources, identify their own problems and form their own solutions. This process works all the world over, in any culture, language and tradition. . . . every learner is able to identify personal and life transforming outcomes. These commonly include enhanced self-confidence, self-belief, renewal, enthusiasm for learning, a new sense of direction and purpose for career and life – along with new skills, insights and the sense of being equipped for the future.

In an earlier paper I have reviewed the literature on the concept of action learning (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002b).[2] Here I give some typical *verbatim* quotations from key proponents of AL. These quotations distil the essence of action learning. First, to quote Revans (1980: 309) again: '. . . action learning is about real people tackling real problems in real time, observing the impartial discipline of the business setting and looking after a lot of people'. A frequently cited definition of AL is by Pedler (1997: xxii–xiii):

> Action Learning is an approach to the development of people in organisations which takes the task as the vehicle for learning. It is based on the premise that there is no learning without action and no sober and deliberate action without learning. On the whole our education system has not been based upon this principle. The method has been pioneered in work organisations and has three main components – *people*, who accept the responsibility for taking action on a particular issue; *problems* or the tasks that people set themselves; and *a set* of six or so colleagues who support and challenge each other to make progress on problems. Action on a problem changes both the problem and the person acting upon it. It proceeds particularly by questioning taken-for-granted knowledge.

Marquardt (2001: 45) sees the effectiveness of action learning in organizations: 'Action learning has quickly emerged in many Western countries as one of the most powerful and effective tools to enable organisations to solve problems, develop leaders, build teams, and create learning organisations'. In his video presentation, Marquardt (2009) succinctly and clearly summarizes his work on action learning and again concludes that there is no better way to solve complex problems, to build high-performing teams, to develop leaders and system thinkers, and to

develop learning organizations than action learning; and that great questions develop great leaders and great leaders ask great questions. His rules in AL workshops or projects are that (1) statements are only allowed in response to questions and (2) the coach has authority to intervene whenever he/she identifies learning opportunities. I can recommend this video talk available on http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4GMaUInMfw&feature=related (accessed 20.02.2011).

One of the most comprehensive reference books on action learning is Donnenberg's handbook in German (Donnenberg, 1999) with original German contributions and translated chapters by Revans, Pedler and others. The cover of the book reveals a useful explanation of the nature and importance of AL. Here I translate it into English:

> Accumulated information and knowledge consist of solutions to yesterday's problems. In today's rapidly changing world we must rely on our learning through experience here and now. Therefore there is a growing need in organizations to improve the possibility of workplace learning and organizational initiatives. The effectiveness of this learning is still to be developed. ... Action learning means action oriented learning in organizations, learning to solve real, not simulated, problems, and cooperative learning with work and business partners in the concrete work context/environment.

Finally, I summarize AL in one of my definitions (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002b: 114–115):

> Action learning, in brief, is learning from concrete experience and critical reflection on that experience – through group discussion, trial and error, discovery and learning from and with each other. It is a process by which groups of people (whether managers, academics, teachers, students, or 'learners' generally) address actual workplace issues or problems, in complex situations and conditions. The solutions they develop may require changes to be made in the organisation, and these solutions often pose challenges to senior management. But the benefits are great because people actually own their own problems and their own solutions. Therefore, action learners are more likely to act on their solutions and are more engaged and motivated to implement the desired changes, than if solutions were devised by senior management on the basis of 'expert' recommendations and advice. In action learning the learner becomes expert on the problem or learning task and how to solve or conduct it.

In contrast to action learning, the traditional view of learning has assumed that knowledge must be transmitted and received in the form of information, theories and research findings before learners can apply the knowledge to their own purposes. It is a fairly recent insight in education and higher education that learners at any level can acquire knowledge through their own active search and research, following a problem-solving process similar to that undertaken by specialist researchers, rather than being taught and passively absorbing the results of research produced by specialists. Action learning recognizes the possibility for learners to generate knowledge.

I explain further the epistemological assumptions underpinning the concept of action learning in the next two chapters. Here, having clarified the concepts of action learning, it is clear that AL is an appropriate approach to addressing issues – in our workplaces, organizations and communities or any segments of society where

people share a common goal and work towards it. We now ask the questions of how to conduct an AL programme or project and what are the essential features.

Action Learning Programmes and Projects

We distinguish between an action learning *programme* and an action learning *project*. A programme consists of several projects. A *programme* may be a postgraduate degree programme, an in-company or a cross-organization programme or a combination of these. A *project* is usually an individual or team project conducted in an organization, using an action learning team in the workplace, and it may or may not be part of a postgraduate degree for the individual team members. There are at least three different kinds of action learning that I have been involved in and that are facilitated and supported by an action learning group or 'set':

- An AL set with individual projects, and each participant working on a different topic/problem;
- A collaborative team project, and all members working on the same topic/problem of mutual concern;
- An AL programme with several AL team projects that are all related to an overall theme, but with each team working on a specific issue/concern/problem.

Before explaining each of the three types, it may be useful to clarify the terminology used in action learning.

Terminology

We have already established that a group of action learners is called a *set*. The members of a set are called *participants*, rather than trainees, because they actively participate in solving the problem(s) in their workplace in real time; and they are usually managers, leaders or others who advise, support and constructively criticize each other. If the action learners are formally enrolled in a postgraduate degree programme, we call them *associates*, rather than students, because they are autonomous and self-directed learners, senior managers or executives.

Each set has a *mentor* or coach and a *set advisor*. A set advisor's task is to facilitate the learning process of the set and to appoint *tutors* or *consultants* as required. In addition, each project and programme needs a *sponsor* who supports the set(s) or team(s) financially and morally. The sponsor is often called the *client* whose interests need to be met financially not only in terms of ROI (return on investment) but also in terms of professional and organizational capacity building and transformational learning/change. The parties responsible for meeting the client's needs are the *design team* and the *convenor* of the programme who work within the institution of higher education, business school or any organization that offers the degree programme. We now consider the three main types of action learning sets and their projects.

An Action Learning Set with Individual Projects

The first kind is illustrated in Fig. 2.1, showing the set of action learners supported by each other, by the client or sponsor and by the set advisor, but each working on their own project and usually coming from different organizations. The advantage of being in a set as opposed to working in isolation is obvious. Many heads work better than one. The participants learn to work collaboratively, an important workplace capability in a learning organization in the twenty-first century. They learn from and with each other, giving and receiving help, advice and critique as necessary. They rarely fall behind schedule because of the commitment they have made to their set at the beginning, and hence, the group pressure and support that result.

With the help of the set advisor, the action learners build an effective, winning team and a team/project *vision* that is powerful, is motivating and sustains energy throughout the project duration. In our experience, a vision drawn as a picture can be more powerful than a mission statement written in words. Whenever in difficulty, a team might revisit or revise its vision. A typical example is an MBA or doctoral set of associates, each pursuing their own project and dissertation or thesis, but meeting regularly as a set to present their progress reports, asking and responding to pertinent questions about their own and others' projects, and sharing information, resources, tips, advice and help.

I remember a senior executive in such an MBA by action learning set (let us call him John) who had the highest job position and the responsibility of managing a multi-million dollar budget. But John also had the lowest academic qualification among all of his colleagues, some of whom had a PhD in science or engineering, but no experience in management. When John wanted to quit the MBA after 6 months because he had difficulties with some academic tasks and felt academically inferior to other set members, the set would not let him withdraw. They encouraged and helped him greatly, even went to his home and talked to his family until they and he agreed to proceed. In the end, he came up with the best grade possible (high distinction) and was elected to give the graduation speech, one that brought me to tears. His principal point was that he could never have achieved what he did without the help and persistence of his set.
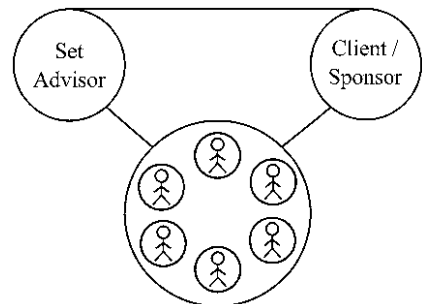
Fig. 2.1 Action learning set with individual projects

Action Learning Team Project

The second kind of action learning is conducting a collaborative team project with all members working on the same topic/problem of mutual concern and of importance to the organization and the sponsor. As already mentioned, the set advisor's role is to facilitate the action learning process and to appoint tutors or consultants as required. Figure 2.2 is a visual representation of the elements in this type of action learning. Eddy Rickenbacher, the American fighter ace in World War I and head of Eastern Airlines, is known to have said about teams: 'There is something more powerful than anybody – and that is everybody'.

To facilitate the process of team project design, we – the design team of the Queensland University Action Learning (QUAL) programme – developed a process model of strategic planning in the early 1990s. It was described in detail with guidelines for activities in a workbook (Passfield, 2004) that has been and still is widely used by academics, postgraduates and senior managers in many countries. I describe this model (called 'figure eight') and a generic model for designing action learning programmes with action research projects in the section on PALAR models below.

Action Learning Programme with Several Team Projects

The third and more complex type of action learning is a programme that is typically sponsored by a chief executive officer (CEO) of an organization and convened by an experienced, senior leader in the field. The sponsor needs to be convinced of the value, significance and urgency of the programme, to own the idea and to want a solution. The convenor keeps the sponsor informed and organizes, conducts and facilitates the regular (in our case monthly) meetings of all teams in the programme. In these meetings, the teams present their project reports, ask questions,
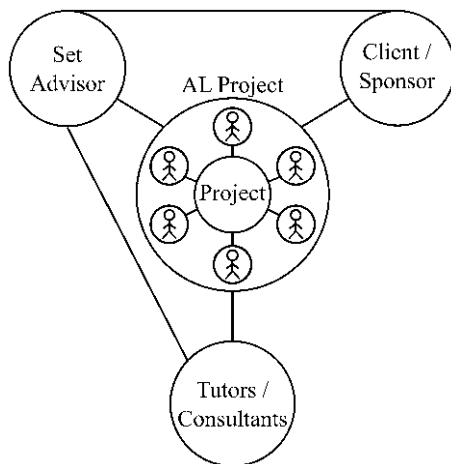
Fig. 2.2 Project team working together on one topic/problem/task
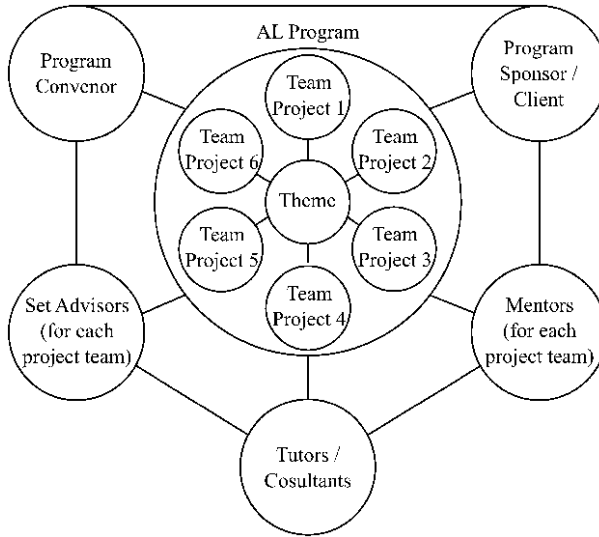
Fig. 2.3 Action learning programme with several team projects

seek and give advice. There are also presentations/inputs from selected consultants as required and relevant to all teams in the whole programme. Figure 2.3 is a visual representation of an AL programme with several team projects, a programme sponsor, a programme convenor, and for each project team a set advisor, mentor and tutors/consultants, the last of these being appointed by the set advisors as required.

So each team has a set advisor and a mentor and access to a specialist tutor or consultant through their set advisor, but a mentor might look after more than one team. Apart from the programme meetings, each project team decides on the frequency and scheduling of their own set meetings in order to achieve the proposed results. They learn how to design, plan, conduct and evaluate their project in the so-called *start-up workshop* of the AL programme, lasting about 3 days to a week, depending on the geographical situation and the participants' backgrounds, experience and research skills.

For example, in the 1-year Queensland University Action Learning (QUAL) Programme (see Chapter 5, this volume), we had a 3-day residential start-up workshop on the Gold Coast, away from the office, family and other distractions. Participants were mainly senior administrators, academics and researchers, all living in Brisbane and meeting once a month. In the Australia–South Africa Links Programme we had a 1-week residential start-up workshop, because the participants were mainly academic staff developers from six historically disadvantaged 'technikons' (now universities of technology) with little or no research experience. Another reason was geographical distance, as explained later.

Objectives

The objectives of a start-up workshop and of an action learning programme generally are

- team and vision building;
- developing collaborative and networking skills;
- developing clarity about project focus and problem definition;
- strategic project planning (see Fig. 2.5), including (1) *context analysis* with stakeholder analysis; SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the project); resource analysis (what resources are available, required and to be obtained, if necessary); revisiting the team vision; and (2) *planning for improved practice* with stages, steps and timeline, using a matrix of what needs to be done, why, how, by whom and by when;
- commitment to personal and group reflection and learning, and input into each other's projects; and
- evaluation not only of the project outcomes but also of the learning process.

I developed a model explaining in detail the structure, process and procedures of such an action learning programme with project teams (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002b) that proved to be useful in several programmes and countries. In brief, the programme consists of at least a *start-up workshop*, as described above, and a *concluding workshop*, when all teams finalize their projects and prepare a written report and an oral presentation for *celebration day*. This day is the highlight of the programme, because each team presents the results of their project (in 10 min) to an audience consisting of all other participants in the programme, senior management and colleagues from their own and other institutions, as well as family and friends. If possible, there is also a *midway workshop*, the agenda of which is determined by participants' requests for specific expert input, process management, etc. For example, in the case of the Australia–South Africa Links Programme, the 22 South African participants came to Australia for a 1-week residential midway workshop, followed by attendance at the World Congress on Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management (ALARPM), where they had the opportunity to present and discuss their work in progress. The convenor and ten Australian mentors attended a 1-week residential concluding workshop in South Africa. In between these three residential workshops, all participants met about once a month with their South African convenor who facilitated the programme meetings. They also met in their AL sets regularly at agreed times.

Outcomes

Outcomes of action learning programmes include the life-transforming outcomes mentioned in Richard Teare's quote above. These have been confirmed in our action learning programmes in Australia. However, the evaluations of our programmes (e.g. Passfield, 1996) identified additional learning outcomes, including

- improved strategic thinking ability;
- understanding the change and group processes;
- improved understanding between sections of the organization;
- ideas for future projects and programmes;
- a concrete outcome beneficial to the organization; and
- high proven returns on investment (ROI).

The last outcome is important not only generally but especially for business and industry. There is an abundance of evidence of ROI in the literature (e.g. Dotlich and Noel, 1998). The results of our own research, e.g. an evaluation of MBA and DBA programmes (Master and Doctor of Business Administration) conducted on behalf of the International Management Centre (IMC), Pacific Region, over 5 years and using an action learning approach, showed that all participating parties highly valued action learning as an appropriate and effective approach to management education and professional, leadership and organization development. In addition, there were testimonies on ROI. Here are two typical *verbatim* comments from senior managers in an MBA action learning set of 8 engineers in one company in the La Trobe Valley in Victoria (Zuber-Skerritt and Howell, 1993: 23–24):

- The cost–benefit of the project I did was something in the order of $3 million, and it averaged out at over $1 million each for other group members, e.g. the HRM paper was based on the reorganization of this manager's own section which saved $1.2 million in capital outlay;
- The first two projects completed netted a tenfold return over and above the return needed to satisfy company requirements. The MBA group [members] were used as change agents.

The last comment 'to satisfy company requirements' needs explanation. IMC at the time guaranteed companies a return on investment equal to or more than the programme fees they paid in sponsorship. Otherwise, IMC would have returned the fees.

The projects in an action learning programme are often action research projects. Next we consider the meaning and key features of action research.

Action Research

It is generally claimed, but also disputed, that the father of action research is Kurt Lewin, a German Jew who migrated to America via the UK where he substantially influenced the philosophy and practice of the TAOS Institute (http://www.taosinstitute.net/ – accessed 20.02.2011). Its mission is to create promising futures through social construction. Lewin also influenced the work of David Kolb, especially the notion of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984). Action learning and action research are often used as synonyms for experiential learning. The

underlying assumption of learning through questioning insight and action is the belief that managers and other professionals can learn and gain and create knowledge and theory on the basis of their concrete experience. They do so through observation and reflecting on that experience, by forming abstract conceptualizations and generalizations, and by testing the implications of these concepts in new situations. The last step will lead to new concrete experience and hence to the beginning of a new cycle. Thus, the process of learning and coming to know is not linear (input – process – output) nor always predictable and unidirectional, but rather cyclical, continuing, recursive, explorative, creative, flexible, ongoing and lifelong.

This book argues that since AR is characterized by creativity and flexibility, its greatest utility in the workplace is for dealing with complex social and organizational issues/problems in unprecedented situations. This is a key reason why AR has gained intellectual and institutional traction in times of swift social, economic and technological change. As noted above, there is not one neat, widely accepted definition of AR. Since by its very nature AR is flexible and evolving, I would argue that AR should not be pinned down but instead should be both clarified for communication and kept open for development. Action research is cyclical and collaborative. It integrates theory and practice, research and action (development). However, it is more systematic than action learning, more rigorous in its approach, and results are always made public (in an organization report, journal article, book chapter, edited or authored book or electronic publication). This ensures that the action research results can be accessed, scrutinized and made use of by peers, as in any other kind of research. Like action learning, action research typically constitutes a spiral of cycles, each cycle consisting of four phases:

- *Planning*, including problem and context analysis and the design of a strategic plan to improve the *status quo*;
- *Acting* or implementing the strategic plan;
- *Observing*, i.e. systematic monitoring, obtaining feedback, evaluating; and
- *Reflecting* on the results of the evaluation collaboratively, critically and self-critically.

On the basis of this reflection (in phase 4), action researchers might revise the original plan and proceed through the next cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting, until the desired outcomes have been achieved in the given timeframe. Figure 2.4 is a typical representation of this process.

Thus the concept of action research is neither linear nor merely theory-oriented as in traditional research where researchers start with a theory or hypothesis – testing the hypothesis by reducing/restricting the social phenomena to confined and defined variables – confirming *or* refuting the hypothesis as right *or* wrong. Rather, action research is cyclical, problem-centred, action-oriented, non-positivist and dialectical (i.e. findings might be both right *and* wrong depending on the perspective and especially the values and worldviews that shape it). The aim of action research is not theory building for its own sake or for the prediction or control of

Fig. 2.4 The spiral of action
research cycles
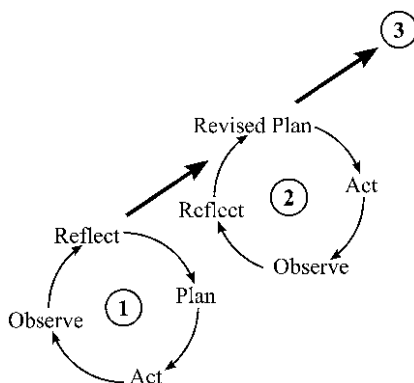
human behaviour, but for the improvement and understanding of social practices,
processes, conditions and to change them if they impede the desired improvement.
In addition, I agree with Griffiths (2009), who maintains that concerns for social
justice can and should be in all action research, though without requiring every
action research project to be one that is concerned explicitly or primarily with social
justice.

Concepts and Characteristics of Action Research

Like action learning, action research is conceived differently by different scholars.
There have also been many misconceptions and misuses of action research. Here
I have selected a variety of definitions of action research from the international
literature to enhance both conceptual and practical understanding of the kind of
action research that is central to the focus and message of this book.

Several outstanding recent works on action research can be recommended to
anyone searching for the meaning of action research in theory and practice: *The
Handbook of Action Research* in three editions (Reason and Bradbury, 2001, 2006,
2008); the books by Greenwood (1999) and Greenwood and Levin (2007); Cherry
(1999); Stringer (2007); Altrichter et al. (2008); Berg and Eikland (2008); McIntyre
(2008); Raelin (2008); McNiff and Whitehead (2009); Gray (2009); Noffke and
Somekh (2009) and the literature reviews by Dick (2004, 2006, 2009).

Dick's definition (2001: 21) captures the basic features:

> Action research (AR) is true to label. It pursues both action (change) and research
> (understanding) outcomes. It achieves change through its participative approach, often in
> conjunction with other change processes. The research is achieved by being responsive to
> the situation and by searching strenuously for disconfirming evidence. At the heart of AR is
> a cycle that alternates action and critical reflection. Action and research enhance each other.

Table 2.1 represents a working definition of action research, first developed by
the participants in the 'First International Symposium on Action Research in Higher

Table 2.1   Working definition of action research (Altrichter et al., 1991: 8)

If yours is a situation in which
- people reflect on and improve (or develop) their *own* work and their *own* situations
- by tightly inter-linking their reflection and action
- also making their experience public, not only to other participants but also to other persons interested in and concerned about the work and the situation, i.e. their (public) theories and practices of the work and the situation

and if yours is a situation in which there is increasingly

- data gathering by participants themselves (or with the help of others) in relation to their own questions
- participation (in problem posing and in answering questions) in decision making
- power sharing and the relative suspension of hierarchical ways of working towards industrial democracy
- collaboration among members of the group as a 'critical community'
- self-reflection, self-evaluation and self-management by autonomous and responsible persons and groups
- learning progressively (and publicly) by doing and by making mistakes in a 'self-reflective spiral' of planning, acting, observing, reflecting, re-planning, etc.
- reflection that supports the idea of the '(self-)reflective practitioner'

then
yours is a situation in which ACTION RESEARCH is occurring

Education, Government and Industry' in Brisbane in March 1989. After extensive discussion, all participants from the three sectors of society agreed on the working definition that still serves as a classic definition (Table 2.1).

Before the 1989 symposium, in the mid-1980s I developed a model and definition of action research, called CRASP, which many scholars, especially postgraduates, have cited since its publication in 1992 (Table 2.2).

Definitions in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 lack an important element, i.e. a focus on democratic principles and community development, which we have included since the Second ALARPM World Congress in 1992 with Orlando Fals Borda as our keynote speaker.

Table 2.2   The CRASP model of action research (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992b: 15, 1992c: 2)

Action research is

Critical (and self-critical) collaborative inquiry by
Reflective practitioners, being
Accountable and making the results of their inquiry public,
Self-evaluating their practice, and engaged in
Participative problem solving and continuing professional development

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Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Like Reg Revans, 'the father of action learning', and Kurt Lewin, the 'father of action research', Orlando Fals Borda is arguably the originator of PAR (Participatory Action Research). I first met Orlando in Brisbane in 1992, then in Bath in 1994 when we had invited him as a keynote speaker to the ALARPM congresses. The last time we met was in his hometown Bogota (Colombia, South America) in 2006, 1 year before his death, on the occasion of the 'International Symposium on Action Research and Education in Context: A Tribute to the Life and Work of Professor Orlando Fals Borda' when I was an invited keynote speaker and contributor to his *Festschrift* (Zuber-Skerritt, 2007a). Orlando had become a dear friend to me and a role model to us all. One of his greatest achievements was in 1996 when Orlando convened the Eighth PAR Conference combined with the Fourth ALARPM World Congress in Cartagena, Colombia, with over 1,850 delegates. Since then three further combined ALARPM/PAR World Congresses have been held in Australia (2000), South Africa (2003) and the Netherlands (2006); the last again in Australia: Melbourne, 6–9 September 2010 (www.alara.net.au – accessed 20.02.2011). For testimonial of his influence on many scholars in Australia and worldwide, see Chapter 7 of this volume.

Fals Borda (2006: 357) repeated his lifelong plea for northern and southern scholars to converge, 'as colleagues and soul fellows, for the quest of meaning' in order to fulfil our 'political, objective and non-neutral duty of fostering the democratic and spiritual dimensions through more satisfying life systems'. This plea was explained in detail and published previously (Fals Borda and Mora-Osejo, 2003). Based on over 30 years of personal observation and participation, Fals Borda (2006: 358) concluded that

> . . . we need new educational, cultural, political, social and economic movements in which greater account is taken of grassroots groups, the excluded, the voiceless, and the victims of dominant systems. . . . To prove our worth as resolute, thinking, feeling, experiential investigators we need to become fully involved in these fundamental transformations.

Reg Revans, Kurt Lewin and Orlando Fals Borda and their associates have been pioneers, activists and catalysts in AL, AR and PAR, respectively. They have profoundly influenced many professionals and activists in developed countries who are eager to work with the poor and oppressed and who are motivated to use this methodology to contribute to this aim in community development in their own countries.

My own experience with professional and leadership development and learning partnerships between Australasian and South African leaders in higher and management education has proven to me that professionals as activists can join with and help people in developing countries by animating and facilitating learner/leader-centred development to address pressing issues, change attitudes and improve praxis (see below). The multiplier effect of professional and leadership development through participatory action research programmes, discussed in Chapter 7 in this book, facilitates knowledge for self-liberation, empowerment and real change

to achieve better quality of life for all in society. As Reason and Bradbury (2001: 1) put it:

> Action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowledge in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.

Orlando and his Latin American, Bangladeshi and Indian associates had been influenced by Paolo Freire's praxis of critical consciousness or 'conscientization' (Freire, 1972), that is, a process of critical self-inquiry and self-learning and of thus developing the confidence and capability to find answers to questions on one's own. It is worth noting, and as an example of synchronicity, that these ideas were developed at about the same time by Freire and Revans separately and independently from each other. These ideas are still influencing scholars today. For example, Bryden-Miller and Maguire (2009: 80) define PAR:

> PAR is a systematic approach to personal, organizational and structural transformation, and an intentionally and transparently political endeavor that places human self-determination, the development of critical consciousness, and positive social change as central goals of social science research.

I discuss PAR in more detail in Chapter 7, particularly concerning community development with examples in developing countries.

Action Science

Action science, like action research, is defined in different ways. In this book its meaning is based on (1) the original meaning by its founders (Argyris et al., 1985: 232): 'Action science is an inquiry into social practice, broadly defined, and it is interested in producing knowledge in the service of such practice'; and (2) Victor Friedman's interpretation of action science based on his personal experience through 15 years of experimentation and interpretation (Friedman, 2001: 159) as

> . . . a form of social practice which integrates both the production and use of knowledge for the purpose of promoting learning with and among individuals and systems whose work is characterized by uniqueness, uncertainty and instability.

Based on a case study, Friedman (2001: 168) identifies four main features of action science:

- Creating a community of inquiry within a community of practice;
- Building theories in practice;
- Combining interpretation with 'rigorous' testing; and
- Creating alternatives to the *status quo* and informing change in light of values freely chosen by social actors.

It is obvious from the above comments that the focus of action science is more on rigorous research and knowledge production for the benefit of social practice than on action and reflection on action; and it is not necessarily collaborative and participatory. Yet, action research can learn from action science in terms of research requirements and quality criteria.

Action Research Requirements and Quality Criteria

Apart from the notions of self-learning and using participatory, democratic processes, another important feature of action research is the notion of *quality*. AR has often been criticized for being 'shoddy' or informal research by practitioners with little or no training in research and writing. Practitioners are usually more interested in *action*, development and social change than in *research*. Therefore, collaboration between practitioners or local stakeholders and social science or educational researchers is more likely to satisfy both rigorous scientific requirements and democratic social change. This AR characteristic of quality is well described in a definition by Greenwood and Levin (2007: 1):

> AR is a set of self-consciously collaborative and democratic strategies for generating knowledge and designing action in which trained experts in social and other forms of research and local stakeholders work together. The research focus is chosen collaboratively among the local stakeholders and the action researchers, and the relationships among the participants are organized as joint learning processes. AR centres on doing 'with' rather than doing 'for' stakeholders and credits local stakeholders with the richness of experience and reflective possibilities that long experience living in complex situations brings with it.

My own experience has been with academics in various disciplines who were interested in transformational change in their practice, e.g. students' learning, teaching and curriculum design. This experience suggests that quality AR can be learnt and gradually developed. At the beginning of an AR intervention, my colleagues used to make it quite clear that, although they were interested in seeing the educational research results published, this would be my role as an educational researcher. They believed that, as practising teachers, they would not know how to use qualitative research methods and write for educational journals. So I started to take a leading role in conducting the research (e.g. interviews, think tanks, focus groups and other group techniques) but involving them gradually and increasingly in the process until they became confident themselves in collecting, analysing and interpreting qualitative data collaboratively as a team. We reflected on the results over coffee or lunch, on what worked and what did not and why. We conceptualized and arrived at practical theories worth passing on to other practitioners. I would write the first draft of a paper for them to improve, but in the next AR projects, they, in turn, would write the first draft and the rest of us would add to it. In this way these practitioners who were specialist researchers in their respective disciplines became educational action researchers. This experience reminded us of the saying, 'Every person is a researcher and every researcher is a person'.

Admittedly, it is easier for academics than most other professionals to grow into action researchers because of their experience in research. But I know from experience that senior managers in industry and government, even those without a university degree, are also able to learn how to conduct action research and publish it. They may take a little longer to achieve high-quality results, but they may proceed at impressive pace, depending upon the persons and their circumstances. Development is not just the prerogative of the young. We can all be inveterate learner inquirers if we are willing to use our minds for inquiry.

The Concept of PALAR: Integrating Action Learning (AL) with Participatory Action Research (PAR)

So far we have considered action learning and (participatory) action research as separate fields with different traditions, origins, histories and applications. Action learning was originally applied mainly to management and organization development in industry, hospitals, coalmines and banks (Revans, 1991a, b). As pointed out earlier, there are several forms of action learning. Pedler et al. (2005) lay out the common ingredients that delineate Revans' classical concepts and practice of action learning, and Simpson and Bourner (2007) clarify what action learning is *not*.

Action research grew out of social work in communities (Lewin, 1952). It was then applied to education (Stenhouse, 1975), especially teacher education (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, Elliott, 1991, O'Hanlon, 1996, Altrichter et al., 2008) and higher education (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992b, c, Passfield, 1996, Roche, 1999, Piggot-Irvine, 2001), and to agricultural extension (Bawden, 1991, Bunning, 1993), community development (Fals Borda and Rahman, 1991, Fals Borda, 1998, Senge and Scharmer, 2001, Rahman, 2008), health and social care (Winter and Munn-Giddings, 2001), and other fields.

We have also seen a distinction and difference between action *learning* and action *research* in that action research has to meet the formal research requirements of rigour and validity. However, the similarities outweigh the differences, as I have demonstrated in my recent book (Zuber-Skerritt, 2009) in which I have developed the similarities into a linked, integrated concept of ALAR as a new field and as a worldview and framework for our democratic, holistic and systemic way of working, living and being.

Raelin (2009) identifies the common elements of action learning and the various modes of action research that he calls 'action modalities', especially action research, action science, developmental action inquiry, cooperative inquiry and participatory (critical) research. Raelin (2009: 17) defines the common theme as follows: 'each modality subscribes to the view that planned engagement and collective reflection on experience can expand and even create knowledge while at the same time serving to improve practice'. He then offers ten additional specific elements that form

the foundation for a conceptual unification of the action modalities. These action modalities

1. are dialectic rather than didactic or classroom-based;
2. develop contextualized and useful theory rather than test de-contextualized and impartial theory;
3. invite learners to be active participants, leading often to change in the self and in the system in question;
4. endorse reflection-in-action rather than reflection-on-action;
5. emphasize meta-competence over competence;
6. tend to facilitate learning rather than teach it;
7. espouse the development of double-loop learning (questioning, being able to change governing values) rather than just single-loop learning (operational);
8. welcome the contribution to tacit knowledge and to learning;
9. are practice-based learning outcomes rather than academic outcomes; and
10. are comfortable with tentativeness rather than certainty.

The present book includes the above theme and the ten common action modalities, and it extends the concept of ALAR in my previous book to include the notion of participation and emancipation into the new concept of PALAR in its parallel simplicity and complexity in this book. PALAR is more – and more powerful – than simply a methodology; it is a way of living, working and being. It integrates theory and practice into praxis, as explained in Chapter 3 that follows, and it is based on certain philosophical and methodological assumptions about learning and knowledge creation, discussed in Chapter 4. In the following section we consider some PALAR models and values, before turning to the discussion of success and failure of PALAR programmes and projects.

PALAR Models

Building conceptual models is of benefit to both the model builder and the customer/reader. The builder has to reflect on the events, project results and learning outcomes; distil the significant facts into the most essential elements; simplify and generalize and visualize; and draw the model with the essentials and the relationships between and among them. To the reader, a picture can indeed tell more than a thousand words, as the saying goes. In particular, visual learners are aided by diagrams, graphs and other visual representations. Figures 1.1 and 1.2 and 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6 in this book are examples.

I have defined a model (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002a) as the representation of a concept or system in a two- or three-dimensional diagram. This representation should be as clear to others as it is to the model constructor. Model building is a process of establishing patterns and relationships. It is a simple representation of a theory or message in the form of a concept map or diagram. Thus, it is 'minessence', that is,

the essence of a message or theory in minimum form – whether in language and/or graphics. Models may be built on the basis of quantitative or qualitative data. The models presented in this chapter are mainly based on qualitative data from many case studies related to PALAR programmes. They have been tested in many workshops and programmes in Australia, South Africa and Europe, where participants found them useful for understanding the design, essence and processes of a PALAR programme.

However, it is in the nature of PALAR that the models need to be generic, flexible and adaptable. Even if they need to be replaced by new ones, a model is still useful as a starting point or guide for newcomers to the field and also as a reminder to experienced facilitators or as re-enforced evidence for their practice. The process of model building involves the following activities:

- Looking for core categories, issues or problems in the data;
- Identifying sub-categories;
- Patterning the relationships;
- Drawing various shapes (e.g. circles, spirals, square or round boxes);
- Drawing lines and arrows between concepts and labelling the relationships; and
- Experimenting, obtaining feedback from others and revising until the best way of representing the data, results or conclusions gradually emerges.

The following generic model for designing an action learning programme, including action research projects, within an organization has emerged from this process.

A Generic Model for PALAR Programmes

Figure 2.5 presents the eight main components of a structured action learning programme that uses collaborative action research as a methodology for addressing a major organizational problem, issue or concern.

In all phases of this model there is a cyclical process of *planning* (including situation and problem analysis), *taking action* (or implementing the plan), *observing* (watching and evaluating the action), *reflecting* (on the ongoing process of planning, acting**,** observing and evaluating) and as a result, revising the plan for a new cycle of action research. The following briefly describes each of the eight major phases in the model (Fig. 2.5).

Problem Definition and Needs Analysis

The first step is to identify the most serious concerns that a group of people in an organization share. Next is to explore and decide upon what projects might be feasible for the group to work on to address their concerns. Thus, the group identifies what Kurt Lewin termed a 'thematic concern', so that the team(s) can be selected and the project(s) can be defined. A team project is typically work based and with

Fig. 2.5 A generic model for
PALAR programmes
(Zuber-Skerritt, 2002a: 144)
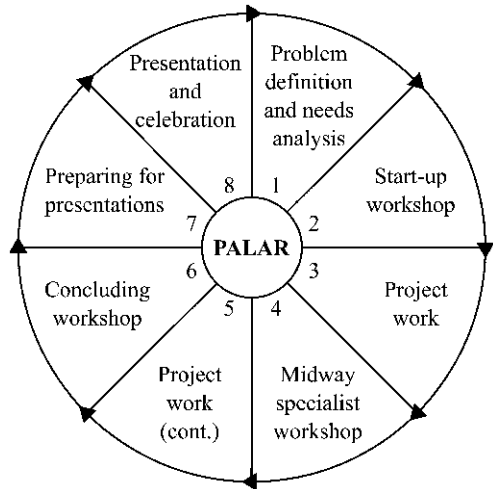
significance and benefit not only for the individuals involved but for the whole
organization or a section of an organization/community.

It helps in running the programme to provide background reading and resources
before the participants begin the programme. This enables participants to have a
common information base and a shared understanding of the project's key issues
and its paradigms of learning and research.

Start-Up Workshop

As the name of this workshop indicates, this is where group or teamwork begins.
Ideally, this workshop should be *residential*, away from the usual workplace and
family or other home commitments. The workshop location should be in a pleasant
environment conducive to open discussion that promotes learning from and with
each other. Learning situations are both formal through specified sessions and infor-
mal over coffee, meals, drinks at the bar or any shared activity. Key areas to be
covered naturally depend on the organization and the project topics it has chosen on
the basis of the needs analysis carried out in the first phase. Key areas include

- vision-building and team-building;
- introduction to action learning, action research and process management;
- project design, management and evaluation;
- qualitative research methods;
- using information technology, library resources, electronic databases and biblio-
  graphic packages, such as 'Endnote';
- starting the process of project planning, following the 'figure eight' process
  model.

In Fig. 2.6 we see this process model developed by the design team of the Queensland University Action Learning (QUAL) programme described by Passfield (2004). His consulting firm (SCOPE) has published this workbook for teams that wish to use the process model for their project planning. The workbook has been used widely in PALAR programmes in Australia, South Africa, Austria, Germany, Hong Kong and Singapore. It is available free online (http://www.tedi.uq.edu.au/ActionLearning/Resources/PlanningTools/ – accessed 20.02.2011 via http://www.tedi.uq.edu.au/ActionLearning/information/).

The model consists of three major components (vision, context and practice) and several stages and cycles. The cycles are not in spiral form as in the action research model (Fig. 2.4), but in two iterative cycles forming a figure eight; hence the name of the model. The major components are listed below:

1. *Vision*. We have used various team- and vision-building exercises and questionnaires, such as TMS (a team management system) designed by Margerison and McCann (1985) and AVI (a values instrument available at http://www.minessence.net/AValuesInventory/AboutTheAVI.aspx – accessed 20.02.2011. We have used these instruments as a basis for discussing individual differences in learning and management styles, but we have also facilitated group sessions in which each team brainstormed, discussed and formulated a vision statement or preferably they drew a picture of what and where they envisaged their project to be in about 3 years time. Each team vision was then presented to the whole group for questioning and further discussion.

2. *Context.* An analysis of the organizational and environmental context includes stakeholder analysis (internal and external stakeholders, those interested in and affected by the implementation of the project, and those with high or low influence/impact on the success of the project); SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) and its implications for the team project; discussion of possible constraints; and an inventory and discussion of the existing resources and additional resources necessary for the project.

3. *Vision revisited.* After their context analysis, the teams revise their vision, because it might have changed and can be made more realistic in light of the above discussions.

   It is important that enough time is spent on the above three stages before planning for improved practice begins. A key reason for failure of some PALAR programmes is that the teams start their projects by straight away identifying aims and objectives and how to achieve them, without considering the contextual factors and human relationships first.

4. *Practice.* Planning for improved practice includes an analysis of the situation and the organizational problem or 'thematic concern' which must be shared and 'owned' by everyone in the project team, followed by discussion of and agreement on the aims, objectives, desired outcomes, outcome measures, action plan (using a matrix of what has to be done, by whom, how, by when) and evaluation strategies and methods to be used.

This process of vision-building, context analysis, revised vision and planning for improved practice is repeated several times during the project implementation.

Project Work

This is the action part of the project. It includes data collection, analysis, feedback to participants in the research and collaborative interpretation of results. It also includes an ongoing literature review and monthly action learning meetings to monitor the progress of, and to support, project teams in their work and provide help when they need it.

Midway Workshop with Specialist Input

By about halfway through the programme, the workshop teams will be able to develop a fuller picture of what most teams need to complete the project. So it is cost effective and sensible to bring the teams together at this midway stage. This creates the opportunity for participants to

- request specialist input as needed;
- share problems and concerns, ask questions, explore answers and solutions;
- discuss 'hot' issues and cutting-edge developments;

- hear from key speakers for focused learning, thought and discussion;
- reflect and self-assess in the light of other participants' experiences and contributions to the workshop.

Project Work (Continued)

This is the stage for further action and reflection as part of the fieldwork. By this stage the participants should be bringing their action in the field – their fieldwork – towards conclusion. This means, for example,

- interpreting results in the light of the literature review;
- model and theory building (grounded theory and personal construct theory) and making tacit knowledge explicit; and
- reflecting on personal and organizational learning.

Concluding Workshop

This workshop may be residential or at the regular workplace/organization venue. Its purpose is to enable project teams to present and discuss their findings in first draft form and to reflect on their learning, as well as share their problems and possible solutions. The following discussion topics or activities might be included for participants to develop skills related to the project work:

- Writing for different purposes and readerships;
- Publishing reports, articles (in international, refereed journals), monographs and/or books;
- Writing a dissertation (optional); and
- Skills for presenting to different audiences and media, e.g. for radio and television interviews, the difference between oral and written presentations, the use of OHTs, PowerPoint and other audio-visual techniques, video productions, etc.

Preparing for Presentations

Oral and written presentations are vehicles for individual and team learning, reflection and conceptualization. Written reports also document the processes of organizational learning, development, change, innovation and achievement. In unstructured action learning sessions, opportunities for skill development in public presentation and accountability procedures are often missing. Without them the learning becomes transitory or unnoticed; it is not appreciated and not duly rewarded. If, however, participants make the effort to commit their thoughts and findings to writing and public scrutiny, action learning becomes action research. This effort is of great value to the participants themselves because they derive further insights and enrichment from

the task of formally writing their ideas, experiences and reflections. In this way they grow and develop as professionals. The written works may also add value to the reputation or legacy of their organization. This written work may be in the form of a

- report for the organization's executive and/or library;
- newsletter article;
- conference paper;
- published refereed paper in a national or international journal;
- dissertation or thesis for a higher degree, e.g. a graduate certificate, diploma, master's or doctoral degree.

Final Presentation and Celebration

The culmination of a PALAR programme is always the *presentation day*. Relevant organization(s), stakeholders and the wider community, the media and press are invited to witness this event and receive brief reports from project teams that outline the teams' aims, objectives, achievements, improved performance, learning outcomes for themselves and their organization, and future action plans. At the end of the presentations, we always have a celebration party as a reward for the completed work, normally with dinner or refreshments and music. I shall never forget the happy celebration party of the Australia–South Africa Links Programme when we all joined in singing African songs and dancing to African music, drums and exotic rhythms.

Values in a PALAR Culture

Values are the foundation of our *Weltanschauung* or worldviews that determine our behaviour, strategies and actions. Values are the glue that holds groups, communities, organizations and nations together. Values cement our culture and tradition. They may create

- war or peace;
- hostility or harmony;
- oppression or empowerment of people;
- competition or collaboration;
- secrecy or openness;
- coercion or caring;
- suspicion or trust;
- destructive or constructive criticism;
- negative or positive outlook/vision.

The reader may add to the list, but it is obvious that the second option in each pair of opposites in the above list is values pertaining to a PALAR culture.

Core Values

A typical example of a PALAR culture is that of the international Action Learning Action Research Association (ALARA), whose core values are

- inclusion;
- collaboration;
- reflection;
- appreciation of diversity;
- questioning mindset and paradigms.

Within this framework I developed a model of core values and strategies for personal knowledge management (Zuber-Skerritt, 2005a). The model may serve as a practical guide for application in situations where personal knowledge can contribute usefully to problem solving and effective leadership and organizational management for the betterment of the organization and all individuals who comprise it.

The model includes seven core values and principles underpinning a successful PALAR culture and seven matching actions or strategies for personal knowledge management. As arranged in Table 2.3, the values/principles form the acronym ACTIONS and the actions/strategies form the acronym REFLECT. They are explained in detail in the original paper, but here they are briefly outlined and reprinted in Table 2.3.

First, *Advancement* **and** *Reflection*

Advancement of learning and knowledge is the primary goal of our PALAR programmes, as well as improving something in our work practice, for example, learning and teaching, management and leadership, organizational learning and change, community development and so forth. Reflection on our actions and on the processes and outcomes of learning is crucial for developing concepts, principles and theories and for advancing our learning and knowledge in the field.

Table 2.3 Matching values and strategies (Zuber-Skerritt, 2005a: 60)

	Values/principles	Actions/strategies/examples
1.	**A**dvancement	**R**eflection
2.	**C**ollaboration	**E**ffective use of methods & processes
3.	**T**rust	**F**eedback from 'critical friends'
4.	**I**magination/vision	**L**eadership development
5.	**O**penness	**E**xploration of new opportunities
6.	**N**on-positivist beliefs	**C**oaching
7.	**S**uccess/significance	**T**eam results

Second, *Collaboration* and *Effective Use of Processes and Methods*

The concepts of collaboration, team spirit and 'symmetrical communication' proceed from our understanding that difference is a positive quality. These concepts involve our acceptance that everyone is unique and equal and has capacity to contribute as best they can to solving a problem, leading to systemic development and synergy of results. Synergy is 'the value that comes when the whole adds up to more than the sum of its parts' (Kanter, 1990: 58). Or as I read somewhere, none of us is as strong as all of us. Collaboration and teamwork in PALAR require effective use of emancipatory processes and methods of team building, leadership development and self-development.

Third, *Trust* and *Feedback*

Mutual trust, honesty and respect among participants can be exercised through various methods and instruments that lead to knowledge of oneself, including one's strengths and limitations, and respect for others and their differences. In this environment of trust and respect, feedback from critical friends can be discussed openly and constructively with them and within the project team, enabling insight and practical improvement immediately and continuously, rather than at the end of the project.

Fourth, *Imagination* and *Leadership Development*

Imagination, intuition and a vision for excellence are leadership qualities that need to be developed among all participants from the very beginning of the project, e.g. in or even before the start-up workshop, so that the project results are of the highest quality possible. Leadership development is based on multiple intelligences: IQ (Intelligence Quotient representing a person's reasoning ability) as well as EQ (Emotional Intelligence – a person's ability to acknowledge, control and manage his/her feelings, e.g. of anger) and SQ (Spiritual Intelligence – a person's perceptions, intuitions and cognitions related to spirituality).

Fifth, *Openness* and *Exploration of New Opportunities*

Openness means making oneself open to new ways of seeing, questioning, learning, appreciating and valuing. When we are open to others and to ourselves, we can identify and explore new opportunities and assess constructively the critique we receive from others. Openness enables us to acknowledge our ignorance, failure or narrow mindedness, as well as our strengths and abilities, and to constructively use processes of self-reflection and reflection on and in action.

Sixth, *Non-positivist Beliefs* and *Coaching*

Non-positivist assumptions and beliefs allow for the development of grounded theory, that is, theory based on data collected from multiple sources, including

practitioners. These beliefs are often unconscious and implicit, but they can be made explicit to ourselves and others through coaching and asking probing questions. Important developmental strategies include modelling, demonstrating non-positivist thinking and mentoring people in actual practice, pointing out discrepancies, logical inconsistencies and inappropriate use of language. In this way, leaders gradually develop a deeper understanding of epistemology (i.e. the origin and nature of knowledge), of the action research paradigm and of their own values, beliefs and worldviews that are fundamental to personal knowledge.

Seventh and Finally, *Success/Significance* and *Team Results*

Success, like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder. Here we take success to be determined by project participants and stakeholders. The success of action leadership is evident in the results of team projects. The intended outcomes of any action leadership development programme are to achieve satisfaction in project work as well as in the learning and development outcomes for all participants, teams and the organizations involved. Maxwell (2004: 9) distinguishes between success and significance: 'SUCCESS is when I add value to MYSELF. SIGNIFICANCE is when I add value to OTHERS'. Significant success is a likely outcome if participants are guided through the principles and actions discussed in 1–6 above.

To sum up, action leaders may ask themselves questions about values as prompted in the following anonymous acronym of *LIVE*:

*L*ove	What do *I* love?
*I*nner gifts/talents	What are *mine*?
*V*alues	What do *I* value most?
*E*nvironments	What brings out the best in *me*?

This self-centred perspective of learning to live and lead needs as its complement an other-centred approach to learning and leadership, and that turns the acronym 'LIVE' into *LOVE*:

*L*ove	What do *we* love as a team?
*O*ur inner gifts/talents	What are *our* strengths/gifts/talents as a team?
*V*alues	What do *we* value most?
*E*nvironments	What brings out the best in *us*?

These are the questions effective action leaders need to ask and discuss with their teams. When we consider the nature of participatory action learning and action research programmes, it becomes clear that having the above seven core values among all participants is crucial in shaping both the process and the outcome of these learning programmes. It is interesting in this context to consider a classic theory of action that explains espoused and governing values that determine our actions and attitudes towards change.

Espoused and Governing Values

Although, or perhaps because, this book concerns action leadership development through PALAR, it is useful here to briefly refer to the classic, fundamental, general theory of action by Argyris and Schön (1974) and Argyris (1982) because this theory has strongly influenced action research scholars internationally ever since. It postulates that we all hold certain assumptions, values, beliefs and feelings that influence our strategy, behaviour and action.

Argyris and Schön (1974) distinguish between *espoused theory* (what we say we believe – our publicly proclaimed values and strategies) and *theory-in-use* (what we actually do – our unconscious strategies over which we have little or no control). These authors point out that there is often a discrepancy between the two theories, that is, we do not practise what we preach. For example, if a lecturer believes in experiential learning, action learning and lifelong learning, but teaches students by lecturing and assesses them by multiple choice questions, his/her espoused theory and theory-in-use are not aligned.

Argyris and Schön (1974) also point out that effectiveness depends on bringing our actual behaviour and espoused values into congruence and thus increasing the consistency of our often-unconscious (theory-in-use) behaviour and our conscious (espoused) values and motivations. When we become aware of inconsistencies between or within our behaviour and ideas, this feeling of dissonance can provide the motivation for change and for increasing our effectiveness. However, it is not easy to bring about this change in ourselves or in others because of our *governing values*, that is, a mix of values, beliefs, feelings and motives that we are habituated into and we therefore wish to satisfy and defend.

Model 1 and Model 2 Values and Strategies

Argyris and Schön (1974) developed two models of theory-in-use that I summarize in Table 2.4.

The openness and cooperation that are characteristic of action learners/researchers, whose actions are informed by model 2, encourage them to reflect on the causal role of their governing values, subsequent change (as appropriate) and personal effectiveness. They are capable of 'double-loop' learning and problem solving. In contrast, people, whose actions are informed by model 1 and who do not question and change their governing values when necessary, are only capable of routine 'single-loop' learning that does not require them to change their governing values.

For systemic changes to be sustainable, power and effective action leadership are influential factors, but these changes have to be negotiated democratically through critical and informed debate. Therefore effective action leaders in organizations must constantly develop their skills, democratic values and strategies of the model 2 theory-in-use – for themselves and for the people they lead. Based on this theory

Table 2.4 Summary of governing values and strategies in Argyris and Schön's (1974) model 1 and model 2

Model 1	Model 2
Defining goals in private with a minimum of consultation; withholding critical information	Producing valid information, especially with respect to goals and personal relationships
Unilateral decision making; control of tasks and people; advocacy without inquiry or consulting others; defensiveness	Cooperative decision making; joint control of tasks and people; openness to innovation, change and self-development; collaborating, rather than competing with others; and sharing power in solving common problems
Being rational and avoiding expression of feelings; protecting self and others from being hurt	Advocating personal positions and inviting others to contest and dispute these with data
Maximizing winning and minimizing losing	Win/win style

of action and values, we can now begin to draw our conclusions about action leadership and values by developing a pen portrait of a leader with model 1 or model 2 values, as shown in Table 2.5. Let us assume that both leaders work in a similar position as CEO in a large company.

The task and aims of professional and leadership development are to facilitate a shift from model 1 to model 2 values, strategies and behaviours and from technical to critical thinking, from routine 'single-loop' to non-routine 'double-loop' learning and problem solving. This shift is often difficult and complex, but it can be achieved through PALAR, as I argue in this book and in my previous book (Zuber-Skerritt, 2009).

Table 2.5 Pen portrait of a leader with model 1 or model 2 values

Model 1 Leader
Monica is perceived as the leader by position at the top of the hierarchy. She keeps to herself, is authoritative, secretive, competitive and sees her role and responsibility as making important decisions herself and ensuring that they are implemented. She has the savvy of a politician in that she can manipulate, lobby and persuade people to her point of view. She never shows her feelings in public because she wants to be seen as rational with 'a hard head'. She tries to avoid personal confrontations, but she is loyal and protective of her employees and herself.

Model 2 Leader
Susan's win–win style favours democratic leadership by 'walking around'. She is perceived to be open, fair and cooperative. In forum meetings, she presents her ideas, always backed up by cogent information and facts. She invites comments and critical debate, but she asks her colleagues to substantiate their opinions, to be concise and to the point. She aims at consensus and at joint decision making. While respecting her colleagues' privacy, she is willing to listen and help in difficult situations with empathy, 'a hard head and a soft heart'. She encourages innovations, professional and self-development and allows for mistakes.

Success and Failure: Managed Change

Berg and Östergren (1979) identified four decisive factors influencing success or failure of an innovation: power, leadership, ownership and gain/loss. These are confirmed by our experience and research in professional, action leadership and organizational development.

Power and the support of top management are most important for the innovation to be accepted, maintained and institutionalized if proven effective on evidence-based research. If the underpinning research and development are not supported by top management or threaten its governing values, the results of the action research are unlikely to be implemented effectively or at all, no matter how significant these innovative results may be for organizational change. The group or culture will not be revitalized.

Leadership in various forms is important for the success and sustainability of the innovation/change project. In our case, projects were successful (1) when the formal leaders (e.g. CEO, deans and course convenors) were model 2 leaders or at least understood and were sympathetic to action learning; and when they owned the idea and were supportive or actively involved in the project; (2) when the secondary leaders (e.g. organizational members such as academics and student representatives) felt they shared responsibility for and were committed to solving the problem at hand; and (3) when the innovation leader or change agent worked collaboratively with the formal and secondary leaders, using action research and democratic leadership processes.

Ownership of the problem to be addressed was decisive for the success or failure of a project. When problem ownership was mainly with the innovation leader or change agent and she/he was an outside researcher/consultant tasked with evaluating a problematic situation, conducting research *on* the 'subjects', rather than *with* the 'participants' in the research, and producing recommendations for improvement or change, in actual practice these recommendations were not implemented by the formal and secondary leaders who paid but lip service to them.

Gain/loss is a construct that explains the reactions of individuals or groups to an innovative inquiry. In our projects participants were likely to spend more time on problem solving and evaluative activities if they could see an immediate, positive gainful impact on improving their own practice or situation, rather than only on future practices, people or projects.

Other factors also influence the success or failure of an innovation, intervention or change programme. For example, the design of the programme needs to be developed by professional team members who know the important elements of a programme, including vision and team building, capacity building and transformational learning in workshops and regular meetings, and the facilitation of participatory action learning and action research and so forth. If any of these elements/activities are missing, the success of the whole programme/project is compromised.

What Makes PALAR Programmes Successful?

I am always impressed by how much time, effort and energy action learning teams spend to make their project and final presentation a great success. I believe it is because an action learning programme fulfils the basic human needs set out in the classic theory of (Glasser, 1984). Glasser streams these needs into four categories: success/worth; fun/enjoyment; freedom/choice and belonging/respect/love. I believe it is participants' quest to satisfy these basic needs that generates the momentum, personal commitment and ultimately then the success of participatory action learning and action research programmes. Let us consider how participation satisfies these four types of needs.

Success/Worth

The project teams come up with tangible results and success from completing the project. Team members are recognized publicly and acknowledged by their colleagues, top management and a large audience. This gives recognition of participants' contributions and achievements, which enhances feelings of self-worth and worth to the workplace/organization.

Fun/Enjoyment

Project teams work hard. But because team members are sharing and learning together in a collegiate spirit and with a shared goal, they enjoy the experience, especially in the start-up, midway and concluding workshops. Monthly meetings and particularly the final presentation are usually the site of considerable enthusiasm, energy and excitement.

Freedom/Choice

Project teams are free to select their topics and many other aspects of their project. The structure of projects encourages creativity and innovation throughout, but especially when participants explore alternative solutions. From the start, participants are free to choose whether or not they will participate in the programme.

Belonging/Respect/Love

Team members form alliances and networks. They are united by shared goals and by actually working in close proximity to each other. Gradually, they develop and share a common language and culture, they work in the same paradigm of learning and research, and they usually come to respect and like or at least appreciate each other.

What Makes PALAR Programmes Unsuccessful?

We might deduce from the previous section that PALAR programmes are likely to be unsuccessful if the participants' basic human needs are not met. Indeed, from our experience and observation it is true to say that participants (and their organizations) fail to learn and develop if they perceive:

- The project is too large or difficult for them to bring to a successful completion, or if they feel inadequate (e.g. to make a public presentation or to write a report); this means no self-worth/success.
- Additional work and collaboration (required by the programme) are too demanding, time consuming, strenuous and should be avoided; this means no fun/enjoyment.
- Their participation in the programme is delegated from above and enforced by senior management (like committee work), rather than voluntary; this means no freedom/choice.
- Action learning and action research are unknown, vague or 'soft' methodologies and not 'scientific' and 'rigorous' enough for them to become involved; this means no respect for, love of, or belonging to an action learning community/culture.

Other Potential Pitfalls and How to Avoid Them

I agree with Marquardt (1999: 13), who has identified seven factors that can make action learning ineffective for problem solving and organizational learning:

1. Inappropriate choice of project;
2. Lack of support from top management;
3. Lack of time;
4. Poor mix of participants;
5. Lack of commitment by participants;
6. All action and no learning;
7. Incompetent set advisor.

His advice on how to avoid these pitfalls, in summary, is for organizations and teams to make sure that they are in a position to

1. select a project that lies within the participants' authority and scope of responsibility in the organization. This is highly significant, not only to the team members, but primarily to the organization as a whole;
2. have both moral and financial support of top management;
3. allocate sufficient time for project completion and for reflection and learning during the meetings;

4. form a 'winning' team of participants to cover all necessary attributes and skills;
5. own the problem and be committed to the programme's success;
6. emphasize learning, not just action, and maximize long-term organizational benefits; and
7. use only trained set advisors.

From this discussion of what makes participatory action learning and action research programmes successful or not, we see how individual participants and teams are instrumental in shaping the process and outcomes of these programmes. We may conclude that PALAR programmes are able to develop in participants core values that determine their action learning culture.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the concepts of action learning (AL), action research (AR) and participatory action research (PAR), their origins, their integration in PALAR, and models, values and reasons for success or failure. I conclude this chapter by affirming my credo that PALAR is an effective methodology for personal, professional, leadership, organization and community development and is a way of living, working and being.

As a CEO of an Australian shoe company with over 50 shops testified to me after his MBA degree by action learning (Barry Williams in a personal communication):

> Kinney Shoes Company has adopted the action learning approach to organization development. It has changed the way we think and work as a team. Direct results include improved staff morale, increased productivity and higher profits. We have become a learning organization.

Here I have presented generic models that use PALAR as the methodology to address a major issue in a workplace/organization (Figs. 2.5 and 2.6). These models offer a useful guide for designing and conducting PALAR programmes since design is crucial to the programme's successful outcome. I have also discussed here the core values that I believe underpin participatory action learning and action research because I recognize this is particularly important for those who conduct or participate in programmes, aimed at major transformation, change or innovation in an organization.

As to research ethics, I agree with Bryden-Miller (2008) that the established codes of conduct and the principles of 'respect for people', 'beneficence' and 'justice' in the ethics of traditional research are not only reflected in the shared values of action researchers, but are more fully embodied and extended in AR and PAR. These shared values are predominantly linked to our commitment to our co-researchers' participation in democratic processes, collaboration in improvement of life situations, mutual respect and acceptance of diversity and difference in knowledge, skills and talents, and engagement in morally committed action. If conducted

properly, action research more than fulfils the ethical requirements of a formal ethics committee.

A well-designed and well-structured PALAR programme becomes successful because it develops these core values among participants. Process of PALAR programmes helps to satisfy participants' basic human needs and contributes significantly to the participants' professional and action leadership development. Successful PALAR programmes also contribute to organization development and innovation through addressing a major shared issue or thematic concern.

Successful PALAR programmes have much to offer in the workplace because these programmes are flexible, creative and inspiring. The process models discussed in this chapter are particularly useful towards this end. However, I encourage the readers of this book to create and develop their own models representing their particular theoretical framework, concepts and systems of action learning and action research programmes. Model building generally – that is, adapting, refining or modifying existing models and creating new models – is important, especially for postgraduate research students who are required to make an original contribution to knowledge in their field; and abstract concepts and generalizations are often easier to represent in the form of graphic design, such as mind maps, flow charts and diagrams.

In the next chapter we turn to the concepts, integration and synthesis of theory and practice in PALAR.

Discussion Starters

1. What is *your* understanding of action learning, action research, professional development and action leadership development?
2. Try to write down and/or draw mind maps of these concepts and processes.
3. What PALAR projects or programmes can you envisage to plan and implement in your workplace? What might be the thematic concerns, and who might share these concerns and be willing to participate in a project, perhaps with some encouragement?

Notes

1. Now called ALARA – Action Learning Action Research Association (www.alara.net.au – accessed 20.02.2011).
2. The senior managing editor, Emerald journals, gave me permission to revise texts of my journal articles for this book and to reprint tables and figures with due acknowledgement of the original sources (e-mail of 18 January 2010 from Nancy Rolph: nrolph@emeraldinsight.com).

Chapter 3
PALAR: Dialectic of Theory and Practice

There is nothing as practical as a good theory.
Kurt Lewin
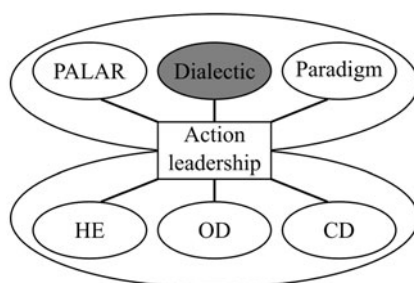
Chapter Overview

In this chapter I argue that the traditional dichotomy and separation between 'theory' – the principles, models and method of the particular discipline – and 'practice' – that applies the theories – is problematic. Instead, we take an integrated, holistic approach to the theory and practice of learning, teaching, professional and leadership development and argue for a dialectical relationship between theory and practice and for alternative modes of theorizing and knowledge creation. This argument for a theory/practice dialectic is very topical in times of uncertainty and has been revived in recent literature (Marsh, 2010) with or without reference to classical, seminal works. These seminal works include those of Greek philosophers, the concepts of 'dialectic', 'praxis', 'Indigeneity' (Harris and Wasilewski, 2004), and of the 'mediating discourse' (Gustavsen, 2001). The chapter concludes that the art of PALAR requires a synthesis of theory and practice, an integration of knowledge *and* wisdom, mind *and* heart, of practical 'know-how' *and* creative dialectic thinking, and of research *and* development in partnership between research/scholarship and practice/policy development. In this way the discussion in this chapter moves toward connecting the world of theory, research and scholarship with the world of practice.

Introduction

Chapter 2 introduced the concepts of action learning, action research and action leadership and the evolving notion of PALAR. This chapter introduces the concepts of the 'dialectic' and 'praxis' and argues for a synthesis of theory and practice that is characteristic of the PALAR paradigm and methodology to be discussed in Chapter 4. This chapter (and also subsequent chapters) shows PALAR as an evolution and resolution and highlights its contribution along the lines of Kuhn's (1970) theory that a new paradigm emerges as a resolution of the problems that were not resolved by previous paradigms.

The distinction and relationship between theory and practice in the history of science have long been debated. In universities today, it is still common in any academic discipline to distinguish between two areas, that which deals with the conceptual frameworks, principles, models and methods of the particular discipline (theory) and that which applies them (practice). Many academics segregate knowledge from practice and separate thought from action. This is what Toulmin and Gustavsen (1996) describe as the 'Cartesian wrong turn' in the social sciences and humanities. It is the root of the social and moral irrelevance of academic work. Practice in higher education usually means the application of educational theory; but it may also be understood as the whole action or process of university learning, teaching and staff development; or the skills gained from this process and experience. In industry and government, too, divisions are often made between people in charge of policy-making/decisions and those who are responsible for carrying out these decisions; and the former are usually more highly respected, paid and positioned in the hierarchy than the latter.

The theory and practice dichotomy in itself is problematic. In action leadership we take an integrated approach to theory and practice. We adopt a meta-theoretical perspective on alternative modes of theorizing, regarding not only the theory of a field but also the practice and the relationship between theory and practice. Our discussion refers to both recent and classical seminal works and acknowledges the urgency of the challenge.

For example, the publisher of Emerald journals, a leading outlet for management research with many titles currently included in *Journal Citation Reports,* has identified this issue as an urgent problem to address the crisis troubling much of the world economy as the first decade of the twenty-first century closes. Its chief executive suggests as follows: As researchers and publishers in management we need to ask ourselves: Are we helping to make a better-managed world? Are we creating and disseminating research that people can use? Its journal and book series editors have therefore been invited to provide ideas and suggestions for a new framework to evaluate the impact of research on actual practice. According to Rebecca Marsh, the Publishing Director, Emerald Group Publishing Limited (Marsh, 2010: 117):

> Hardly any day goes by when an article or viewpoint is not brought to our attention that highlights the need to review how research can be more effectively connected to real-world activity and policy setting. This debate has not emerged as a result of the current economic

crisis, but it has certainly been brought into sharper focus by it. We are challenged to consider the role of research in contributing to the failures in our financial system and leadership or, at the very least, in its inability to direct business, economies, and societies away from it. So the question remains: do we batten down the hatches and hope this particular squall passes overhead so that we can return to the processes and systems we know, or should we use this as an opportunity to find a better solution to an age-old and, unfortunately, increasing problem of disconnection between the world of research and scholarship and the world of practice and policy formation?

This chapter is my response to this call. I sent a copy of my first draft to Rebecca Marsh who responded to it by e-mail (5 May 2010) and gave me her permission (e-mail of 7 May 2010) to cite her comments in this chapter.

First, I briefly explain the term 'dialectic' and second the concept of 'praxis'. Third, I discuss PALAR as a synthesis of theory and practice: the integration of different kinds of knowledge, the concept of 'Indigeneity', the integration of knowledge and action, and practical theories.

Dialectic

Dialectic is often described in the Hegelian sense, that is, as the opposition of a 'thesis' against its 'antithesis' until a reconciliation is achieved in the form of a new 'synthesis'. The thesis represents an original tendency; the antithesis is an opposing tendency; and the synthesis is constituted by their unification in a new movement. This formula may seem mechanistic. However, dialectic thinking, according to Carr and Kemmis (1986: 36–37) is explained as follows:

> . . . an open and questioning form of thinking which demands reflection back and forth between elements like part and whole, knowledge and action, process and product, subject and object. . . . In the process, contradictions may be discovered . . . new constructive thinking and new constructive action are required to transcend the contradictory state of affairs . . . In the dialectical approach, the elements are regarded as mutually constitutive, not separate and distinct. Contradiction can thus be distinguished from paradox: to speak of a contradiction is to imply that a new resolution can be achieved, while to speak of a paradox is to suggest that two incompatible ideas remain inertly opposed to one another.

The history of philosophy reveals various definitions of dialectical reasoning. For example, in ancient Greek philosophy it was understood as a search for knowledge through question and answer (Socrates, 470–399 BC). Kant (1724–1804) refers to dialectical logic (the logic of reasoning) as distinct from analytic logic (the logic of understanding). Hegel's conception of the dialectic was revised by Marx (1818–1883) who re-founded it on materialist premises. Since the time of Marx, users of dialectical reasoning have aimed to overcome simple dualism, such as the conceptual separation of theory versus practice, individual versus society, and the like, by adopting the principle of the unity or complementarity of opposites. According to Kemmis and Fitzclarence (1986: 55):

> Dialectical reasoning attempts to understand the dynamic, interactive, mutually-constitutive relationships between theory and practice, seeing both theory and practice as socially constructed and historically developed, rather than seeing either as exclusively determining the other. And similarly, dialectical reasoning is employed in studying how schooling is shaped by the state *and* how the state is shaped by schooling as one whole set of problems, not as a one-way determination in either direction (schooling determines the nature of the state, or the state determines the nature of schooling).

Dialectical reasoning is based on the principles of (1) context, (2) contradiction and (3) change. Here I explain these principles very briefly.

First, as to the principle of *context*, it has become more and more difficult for both non-scientists and scientists to grasp the context of the world, i.e. to have a holistic view of the relationships and interrelationships of phenomena and of disciplines. For example, the use of isolated, disconnected, incoherent and tendentious research has contributed to environmental problems ranging from radioactivity and pollution to global warming and media scares. Many attempts have been made to solve these problems, but more often as responses to catastrophes than as preventative or even alternative measures. A change of attitude is needed towards holistic, ecological thinking, towards communication, collaboration and understanding the principles of context and contradiction. We need to be mindful of the need to remain alert to unexpected, unanticipated and undesirable consequences of the research/action process.

Second, there are logical and dialectical *contradictions*. Logical contradictions are statements of truth that are mutually exclusive. A dialectical contradiction is like two sides of a coin that are mutually constitutive, neither separate nor excluding each other.

Third, the idea of *flow* or *change* in the Greek philosophical sense negates all static and deterministic thinking, all unilateral, dogmatic thinking. I remember my father (PhD in Greek philosophy and theology) frequently referring to the Greek idea of *panta rhei*, 'everything flows', or as Plato put it, *panta chōrei*, 'everything changes'. He would quote Heraclitus (535–475 BC): 'You cannot step twice into the same river'. This idea of flow focuses on thinking as a process, change and action. And change is brought about through a dialectical process of thesis, antithesis and synthesis.

It is an important role/task of the university to develop holistic, dialectic thinking (in context and contradiction) in order to bring about continuous improvement and progress. The aim is to overcome a 'black and white' view of the world, i.e. a view that the world entails logical contradictions that exclude each other, such as good *or* bad. Instead, dialectical contradictions, such as good *and* bad, which stipulate and permeate each other, are a driving force for positive change and reform.

Thus, there is a dialectical relationship between theory developed on the basis of practice and practice being improved by theory. In critical theory this dialectic between theory and practice is called *praxis* (Habermas, 1974).

Praxis

Kemmis (2010: 9) defines praxis as follows:

'Praxis' has two principal meanings. According to the first, following the usage of Aristotle, praxis is 'action that is *morally-committed, and oriented and informed by traditions in a field'* (Kemmis and Smith, 2008: 4). According to the second, following the usage of Hegel and Marx, 'praxis' can be understood as 'history-making action'. . . . Marx articulated his historical materialism, arguing that social formations, ideas, theories and consciousness emerge from human and collective social praxis, and that social action (praxis) makes history. In much Anglo–American–Australian usage today, the technical term 'praxis' is used in the Aristotelian sense; in much of Europe, by contrast, 'praxis' is used in the post-Marxian sense.

I argue that in praxis, human beings are neither totally free subjects nor passive agents. They are producers and products of social reality. Educational theory may be formed and developed from the concrete reality of the classroom experiences with their socio-historical relations that exist and have evolved in society. Theory and practice may be integrated by the teacher as a 'reflective practitioner' (Schön, 1983) and as a personal theorist or 'personal scientist' (Kelly, 1955). What Carr and Kemmis (1986: 124) claim for educational research in general is particularly appropriate for PALAR:

Indeed, if educational research is wholly committed to the investigation of educational problems, then it will be based on a realisation that the only genuine source of educational theories and knowledge is the practical experiences out of which these problems are generated, and that the proper concern of educational research is with formulating theories that are grounded in the realities of educational practice.

Figure 3.1 visually depicts the overlap, integration and synthesis of theory and practice as praxis in and through PALAR.

Challenging the scholar/practitioner or colonizer/colonized dichotomy, praxis-related research focuses on changes in social practice rather than contributions to knowledge, as in the manner of conventional 'outside-in' scientific research. Or put differently, Kemmis (2010: 17) explains:

. . . 'praxis-related research' aims to change things in praxis: developing an inquiry culture in a field setting, developing a critical approach among participants, empowering participants to take action, building their sense of solidarity, drawing on and developing their
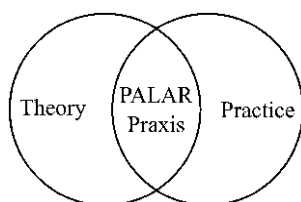
Fig. 3.1 PALAR praxis: A synthesis of theory and practice

life experiences, opening communicative space between them, and so on, all of which can contribute to changes in currently established modes of praxis.

However, this kind of praxis-related research involves practitioners *and* researchers but produces *different* kinds of outcomes for practitioners on the one hand and for researchers and the academy on the other. As a result, it is not *knowledge in action* or *theory in practice* and hence not knowledge *in play in the doing*, but knowledge and theory *about* praxis rather than *in* praxis. I agree with Kemmis (2010: 9) who argues that practice is only researchable 'from within' or 'inside-out' and that research for praxis is only useful if it is conducted not by external specialist researchers 'on the sidelines' but by those whose own individual and collective praxis is both their proper work and, at the same time, the focus of their critical investigation – like traditional land owners reclaiming their custodianship and cultural authority. The next section focuses on PALAR as a synthesis of theory and practice and on the integration of different kinds of knowledge, including Indigenous knowledge.

PALAR: A Synthesis of Theory and Practice

In industrial and post-industrial societies it has generally been assumed that theories are developed by scholars on the Olympian heights and applied by practitioners on the swampy lowlands – with apologies to Schön (1983). With increasing specialization and division of labour, there has been an acceptance of, and reliance on, technology and its application by technicians. Frequently, the same division applies to higher education. On the one hand, the role of educational researchers has been to pursue truth in their field, as in other disciplines, and to develop educational theories for practitioners – academics – to put into practice. On the other hand, these theories have been taken for granted, and it has been expected that university teachers will apply these theories to their teaching practice in a rather technical manner, without seriously questioning or challenging the researchers' assumptions or methods. Thus, lecturers have adopted 'lecturing techniques' to improve their teaching and presentations. They are reduced to acting as mere functionaries, always delivering someone else's mail. Similarly, students have adopted 'study techniques' to improve their learning. Both staff and students have used educational theory as educational 'technology', which might solve some superficial problems through the development of technical skills, but which cannot solve more complex, existential problems at a very specific level – especially those of greatest personal relevance.

In this chapter I argue that the common assumptions made about theory and practice as distinct and separate entities, about theory as being non-practical, and practice as being non-theoretical, are totally misguided. Instead, I view theory and practice as defined by Carr and Kemmis (1986: 112–113):

> The notion of 'theory' can be used in various ways. It can, for example, be used to refer to the products of theoretical enquiries like psychology or sociology and, when used in this

way, it is usually presented in the form of general laws, causal explanations, and the like. On the other hand, it can refer to the general theoretical framework that structures the activities through which these theories are produced. Used in this sense, it denotes the underlying 'paradigm' in terms of which a particular theoretical enterprise is practiced. ... 'theories' arise out of activities. ... Now just as all theories are the product of some practical activity, so all practical activities are guided by some theory. ... A 'practice', then, is not some kind of thoughtless behaviour which exists separately from 'theory' and to which theory can be 'applied'. Furthermore, all practices, like all observations, have 'theory' embedded in them and this is just as true for the practice of 'theoretical' pursuits as it is for those of 'practical' pursuits like teaching.

The first kind of theory may be referred to as 'grand theory' and the second as 'grounded theory', i.e. theory grounded in practice and experience. This chapter is concerned with the latter, because learning, teaching, and professional and leadership development are not just theoretical but also practical activities. The purpose of this research and the research problems to be solved should, therefore, be practical, as well. If you want to understand something, try to change it (Lewin, 1951).

Practical problems cannot be resolved by pure theory (as theoretical problems can), but by adopting some course of action, i.e. by doing something. Problems in research and development usually arise when there is a mismatch between expectations or understandings about practical situations and the practical reality itself, or in other words, when theory and practice are not congruent. Therefore, the criteria by which to assess action research is not theoretical sophistication (e.g. grand theory, as in other sciences), but its utility for improving practice and its success in doing so. Put differently, action research is valuable if it helps the people involved to improve their practice and understanding and offers lessons that others may find useful. This claim can best be realized when theory is generated by, or in collaboration with, practitioners as 'personal theory' (Kelly, 1955; Polanyi, 1958), or personal, practical knowledge, as I explain in Chapter 5.

Knowledge Integration

The model in Fig. 3.1 can be extended by another model showing the integration of four kinds of knowledge relevant to and overlapping in PALAR (Fig. 3.2):

- *Theoretical* (or propositional or scientific) knowledge, i.e. knowledge of what exists, such as existing theories of education, or a set of principles/concepts developed by expert researchers and expected to be applied by practitioners as a basis for action and practice;
- *Practical* knowledge, i.e. 'know-how' or knowledge of how to do things and how to act;
- *Experiential or existential* knowledge, i.e. knowledge gained from experience and reflection on this experience and impacting on values, attitudes, personality and thus, on existential knowledge; and

Fig. 3.2 The integration of four kinds of knowledge in PALAR
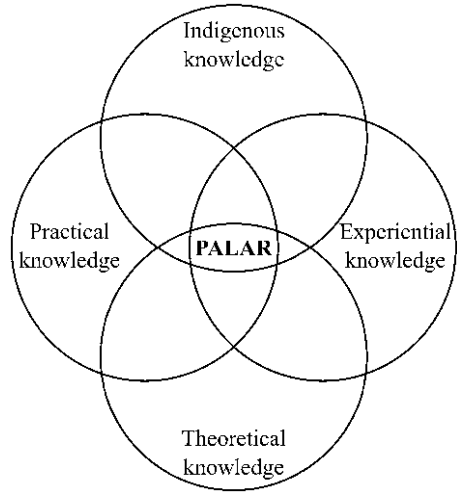
- *Indigenous* knowledge, i.e. lived knowledge that centres on the soul, spirit, myths and dreams. Although Indigenous peoples' way of knowledge creation, transmission and use is widely unknown to Euro-American and Australasian societies, if we want to help Indigenous people to use PALAR in order to learn about and improve their life situation, we need to understand Indigenous ways of knowledge, and in doing so, we ourselves benefit, learn and grow spiritually and as holistic human beings.

   There are of course other kinds of knowledge, for example, embodied knowledge or *knowledge in the blood*, the title of a book by Jansen (2009) that we discuss in Chapter 7. This knowledge is action oriented and consists of contextual practices. It is more of a social acquisition, since how individuals interact in and interpret their environment creates this non-explicit type of knowledge. Here we focus on the above four kinds of knowledge that exist not in separation from each other but in integration; they can be developed and integrated in and through PALAR. The highest level of integrated knowledge is wisdom, the ability to have good, moral judgement based on knowledge and experience. Being wise means being socially responsible and open to learning and to asking fresh questions. As mentioned in the previous chapter, it was Reg Revans (1991a, b) who distinguished between cleverness and wisdom, programmed knowledge and questioning insight. He pointed out that being clever and knowledgeable is necessary, but not sufficient, for an integrated, holistic approach to learning, development and growth. We need to pose fresh questions to ourselves and to others whom we wish to help learn and solve their own problems. For example, if we want to help Indigenous people to help themselves in solving a particular problem, we can use PALAR processes and ask them to find out *themselves*

1. what they and their tribe elders know about the situation from their *Indigenous knowledge*, based synergistically on their oral traditions, culture, history, unwritten laws, dreamtime, myths and religious or moral rituals;
2. what they and others within and outside their community already know about similar situations and phenomena in the world, e.g. knowledge gained from books, websites, formal education and so forth, that is, existing *theoretical knowledge*;
3. what could be done based on their *practical knowledge* and experience so far that could be applied and tried out in this new situation;
4. what they have learnt (after reflection on the new action in 3 above) and what the turning points were in these events that made a difference in their life, personality and in who they are now, i.e. their *existential knowledge*.

And for those of us who are educated in Western schools/cultures, we can learn much from Indigenous people, their values and worldviews as explored in the concept of 'Indigeneity' – a concept I find congruent with the values inherent in a PALAR culture.

Indigeneity

La Donna Harris, a citizen of both the Comanche Nation in Mexico and of the USA and the founder of 'Americans for Indian Opportunity' (AIO), describes a dynamic process by which Indigenous peoples identified and articulated their core values to broader audiences (Harris and Wasilewski, 2004).[1] Initially, 12 North American tribes representing the seven major Indigenous culture areas in the USA participated in these meetings. They then held structured dialogue sessions with other Native Americans and with Maori participants from New Zealand. The four Indigenous groups identified core values, each of which manifests itself in a core obligation in Indigenous societies and can be summarized in the four R's as follows:

1. *Relationship is the kinship obligation*. Everyone/everything is included in this relationship: humankind and all creation (animals, plants, rocks, stars, etc.). Everyone feels that they can make a contribution to the common good. Hence, they value decision making by consensus.
2. *Responsibility is the community obligation,* a responsibility to care for family, community and for all and everything in the universe. Indigenous leadership is based on an ethos of care, not of coercion.
3. *Reciprocity is the cyclical obligation*. In nature things are circular: the cycle of the seasons, the cycle of life, and dynamic relationships (all are brothers and sisters and 'kin' to each other).
4. *Redistribution is the sharing obligation* with the primary purpose to balance and rebalance relationships by redistributing material and social goods. The principle

is that one should not acquire and own anything one is not willing to give away. Generosity is the most highly valued human quality.

Harris and Wasilewski (2004: 5) explain:

Each of these values ... is integrally related to all the others and builds on the others. Indigenous peoples understand that relationships define our roles and shape our responsibilities. We realize that these relationships, roles and responsibilities are reciprocal in nature and lead to the redistribution of both society's tangible and intangible assets.

Harris and Wasilewski (2004: 1) also state:

These four R's form the core of an emergent concept, *Indigeneity*. The dynamic inclusivity of this value cluster has much to contribute to global discourse as we go about the task of constructing global *agoras*, the dialogue spaces of optimal mutual learning of the twenty-first century.

Agoras is an ancient term for a public open space and the action of gathering people for a common purpose, e.g. making laws or decisions for a particular region or country. Indeed, contemporary forms of agoras such as the United Nations or the European Union and online journals like those of Emerald are current manifestations of a very old and profoundly human 'social technology' and 'deep logic' of dialogic processes based on these ancient core values. The contemporary forms serve to create social spaces, dialogue spaces, in which everyone has an authentic voice.

In action leadership through PALAR, too, we explore participatory systems that engage our diversity in conscious evolution and for a better world. *Indigeneity*, the common Indigenous worldview that assumes a spiritual interconnectedness between all aspects of creation, with a right to exist and to make a positive contribution to the larger whole, is especially topical given today's considerations of solving problems of global warming and other ecological disasters. It is a dialectic through which contributors create relationships between diverse elements, in dynamically inclusive dialogue space.

Integrating Knowledge and Action

The newly gained, integrated knowledge, including *Indigeneity* and using PALAR processes, leads to new understanding and new abilities to create knowledge. As Reason and Bradbury (2001: 2) put it:

So action research is about practical outcomes, and also about creating new forms of understanding, since action without reflection and understanding is blind, just as theory without action is meaningless. . . . Action research is only possible with, for and by persons and communities, ideally involving all stakeholders both in the questioning and sense making that informs the research, and in the action which is its focus. . . . Action research is emancipatory, it leads not just to new practical knowledge, but to new abilities to create knowledge. In action research knowledge is a living, evolving process of coming to know rooted in everyday experience; it is a verb rather than a noun.

The success of action research depends on the active participation of practitioners in the research process and on the capacity to develop an understanding of their own problems and practices. It is, therefore, inappropriate to consider participants in action research as 'subjects', i.e. the focus of study and scientific observations, and to expect that they accept and apply the scientific solutions of others to their problems and practices. Rather, practitioners become participants in the research process and develop their own meta-learning theories, i.e. they can learn to understand the processes (as well as the content) and consequences of their own learning.

Apart from personally relevant knowledge, there is social knowledge that is constructed not only by individuals' concepts and ideas but also by historical, economic and material conditions (Marx and Engels, 1951; Leontiev, 1977). These conditions in turn structure and affect people's perceptions and ideas. In professional and action leadership development it is important to understand these ideological processes and critically to reveal them and their influences on participants' interpretations of reality. One of the five requirements that Carr and Kemmis (1986: 129–130) claim any approach to educational theory needs to accept is as follows: *Educational theory is practical, in the sense that the questions of its educational status will be determined by ways in which it relates to practice*. As mentioned above, educational theory must be oriented towards assisting practitioners in their understanding of their problems and practices, towards transforming the ways in which practitioners see themselves and their situation, and towards transforming the situations that hinder practitioners from achieving desirable goals. These hindrances perpetuate ideological distortions, and therefore impede rational and critical work in developmental situations.

Transformation of situations and contexts is the most difficult to achieve. It has been the main concern of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, one that Carr and Kemmis (1986) have adopted for a critical education science. Through its theoretical writings the Frankfurt group of philosophers and social scientists has articulated views of a theory that aims at emancipating humans from the positivist 'dominion of thought' (i.e. that all practical problems are technical problems) through the understandings and actions of humans themselves, e.g. through the praxis of action research. By way of furthering the dialectic conversation, here are the comments made by Rebecca Marsh (e-mail of 5 May 2010) on this section of my discussion of the dialectical relationship between theory and practice:

> I found your chapter fascinating and it stimulated a number of ideas. I completely support the point that theory and practice are not mutually exclusive and that each contribute to and are shaped by the other. I was particularly interested to read about the four different kinds of knowledge integration in PALAR. We have been grappling with the notion that there are different ways of demonstrating knowledge and knowledge transfer (in our specific case, looking beyond citation). The four areas that you highlight provide a very useful framework to start to look at 'knowledge' in a clearer and more structured way. Again, your chapter struck a chord with me in the section 'Indigeneity'. As we work increasingly with researchers in all parts of the world, we run headlong into the issues of how Western schools of thought can conflict with practice in other cultures. We (in the West) assume that our approach is the correct one and who could dare to argue with certain accepted rules, especially if they form part of an ethical code. However, for very good reasons, this approach does make me feel uncomfortable at times (education and understanding of the

'rules' are not uniform) and I wonder for how long Western values can, in all conscience, be exported and even imposed.
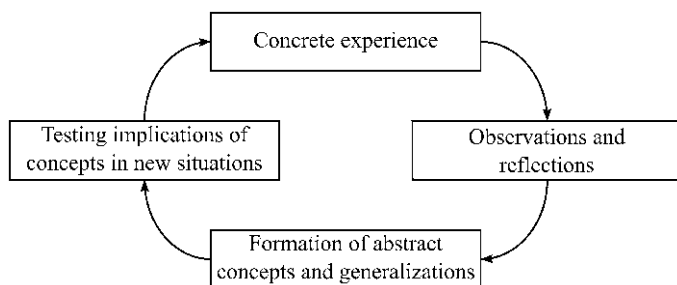
The next section introduces some basic assumptions and practical theories that have informed and influenced PALAR praxis. Further theories are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

Practical Theories

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the term 'action research' has been defined in different ways. In this book we understand it mainly as *research by practitioners into their own practice*, with the aim of social change and of improving practice, e.g. learning, professional and action leadership development. This kind of learning and development through action research has been based on practical theories, such as Lewin's field theory (Lewin, 1951), Kolb's experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984), and Carr and Kemmis' (1986) critical education theory.

Action research, according to Lewin, is a learning process – an ongoing spiral of cycles of inquiry consisting of systematic planning, acting, observing and reflecting, as explained in the previous chapter and illustrated here in Fig. 3.3 on the basis of Kolb's theory of experiential learning. The underlying insight of experiential learning is deceptively simple, namely, that learning, positive change and growth are best facilitated by an integrated process involving the four-stage cycle.

In brief, experiential learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of immediate, concrete experience (Kolb, 1984: 38) through observation, reflection, conceptualization, testing and new applications, in a continuous cycle of learning and gaining knowledge. It is not a static, but a dynamic process of experiential learning, consisting of a dialectic between theory and practice, abstract generalizations and concrete experiences, and observation and action; between social knowledge and personal knowledge (Polanyi, 1958), between

Fig. 3.3 The Lewinian experiential learning model (Kolb, 1984: 21)

Concrete experience

Grasping via apprehension

Accomodative knowledge

Divergent knowledge

Active experimentation

Transformation via extension

Transformation via intention

Reflective observation

Convergent knowledge

Assimilative knowledge

Grasping via comprehension
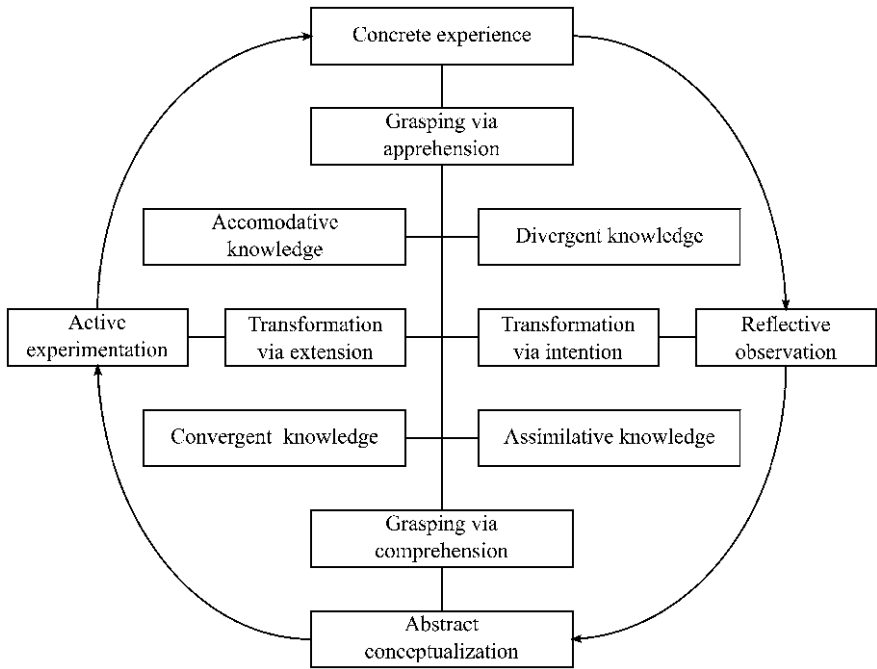
Abstract conceptualization

Fig. 3.4 Kolb's (1984: 42) model of experiential learning

accommodation and assimilation (Piaget, 1977); between apprehension and comprehension and between intentional reflection and extensional action (Kolb, 1984). Kolb's model (in Fig. 3.4) is briefly explained below.

Figure 3.4 represents Kolb's structural dimensions underlying the process of experiential learning and the resulting basic knowledge forms. The learning process has two basic structural dimensions: the prehension dimension and the transformation dimension. The first includes two dialectically opposed modes of grasping experience, one through direct apprehension of here-and-now concrete experience and the other through indirect comprehension of symbolic representation of experience. The second structural dimension of the learning process includes two dialectically opposed modes of transforming experience, one through intentional reflection and the other through extensional action.

This model is consistent with Piaget's theory, except in one important regard: Kolb (1984: 60) maintains that 'apprehension and comprehension as prehension processes, and intention and extension as transformation processes, are equipotent contributions to the learning process'. He does not ask that logical consistency and experimental evidence be entirely abandoned but only that judgment on them be initially suspended while personal criteria are applied.

To Piaget, comprehension and intention are superior processes. His has been the dominant view in Western education, particularly in higher education. Acceptance,

in theory and practice, of Kolb's view would constitute a huge advance in university education. That is, the view that extensional action and direct apprehension of immediate concrete experience can equally lead to knowledge creation, just as intentional reflection and indirect comprehension of experience can. If practitioners themselves first experience through action research that they can gain and advance knowledge about their practice through experiential learning processes, it is more likely that they will adopt Kolb's theory implicitly or explicitly and, in turn, facilitate experiential learning for their students in their courses and programmes of study, or more generally for learners (leaders, clients, employees, etc.), as demonstrated in Part II of this book.

Gustavsen (2001: 19) describes and analyses the complex interplay between theory and practice as 'mediating discourse' or democratic dialogue, a process of enlightenment, 'where theory and practice meet, not the generation of theory as such, nor the development of practical action . . .' alone. Gustavsen's 13 democratic dialogue criteria are those we use in PALAR, the most important of which are listed below:

- Dialogue is based on the principle of give and take, not one-way communication.
- All who are concerned by the issue under discussion should have the possibility of participating.
- All participants are obliged to help other participants to be active in the dialogue.
- All participants have the same status in the dialogue arenas.
- Work experience is the basis for participation.
- The dialogue should be able to integrate increasing disagreement.
- The dialogue should continuously generate decisions that provide a platform for joint action.

From my own experience, I know that we cannot simply explain these principles of democratic dialogue and expect that participants will be able to put them in place without first enjoying the facilitating processes of learning about and discussing group dynamics. Participants need to actually experience why these criteria are important and what happens if the criteria are not adhered to. Therefore, we facilitate this learning process at the beginning of a PALAR programme or project in the start-up workshop.

Science is a species of the genus of research and not vice versa. Gustavsen (2001: 24) warns that if we go down the path of seeking general answers to the questions of what constitutes 'research' and 'science', we may enter a territory 'where action research immediately comes under fire from the proponents of analytically generated de-contextualized statements'. Instead, he recommends that we start and consider questions of practice and context and choose democracy as the foundation for building social relationships that enact the principle of the equality of all participants. Democracy needs to be the foundation for all social sciences that seek to help construct the future as well as interpret the past. Gustavsen (2001: 25) concludes with the 'recognition that unless people can relate in a democratic way to

each other, no new ideas, no just causes, or indeed any science, be it social or other, is possible'.

I invite readers to think about praxis as theoretically and morally informed practice – practice that aims not to apply theory but to use and test it in action and to be oriented by intellectual traditions (theorizing) in their field of practice, that is, practice that aims to extend the excellence of practice in the field and to push towards *the common good* for individuals and humankind.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed the supposed dichotomy between theory and practice. As a result of this review, the relationship between theory (being created from practice) and practice (being improved by theory) has been considered dialectically as 'praxis'. This means that theorizing should not be left totally to specialist researchers, and that practice is not reduced to the technical application of theory. Theory can be formulated by practitioners as practical theory, i.e. theory generated from the concretized reality of their practice and professional or leadership experiences, and thus, more relevant and practical to the people at whom it is aimed and who will be affected by the results of the action research. In this chapter I have taken the position that the value of PALAR must be judged primarily by the extent to which (a) it improves practice; (b) practitioners participate and develop an understanding of their own problems and practices; and (c) it helps them to transform situations that impede desirable, rational and critical improvement or positive change in workplace situations. The last of these three requires that a thesis and antithesis must be balanced by constant practical reasoning, a deep logic, and dynamic, dialogic spaces (*Indigeneity*) involving consensus in judgements, decisions, responsibility and 'wisdom', that is, the application of knowledge to its best effect.

As I pointed out in the introduction, this chapter is a dialogue response to Rebecca Marsh's invitation to Emerald authors and editors to provide ideas and suggestions for a new framework to connect the world of theory, research and scholarship and the world of practice. Here is her reply (e-mail of 5 May 2010):

> The reason I particularly enjoyed your chapter is because you have truly captured how theory, practice and policy formation are inter-related. I feel the well-rehearsed arguments 'for' and 'against' impact that we see in the press are misleading and have now become a political football (at least they have here in the UK) and we are in danger of completely missing the point. In many ways, the arguments have divided us further into the 'theory' or 'practice' camps. We are trying hard not to be drawn into this battle!
> I'm sorry that I don't have any constructive criticism or suggested areas for improvement, but I genuinely can't see any! As a response to the challenge in the 'Note from the Publisher', I absolutely think you have addressed the challenge and developed a response perfectly.

The praxis and art of PALAR are manifested in the facilitation of gradual change and continuous improvement of practice through the practitioners' own definition

and solution of practical problems, rather than through outside researchers' theories and specialist advice. This conclusion and insight are founded in the PALAR paradigm and require an understanding of the methodology used in this paradigm, to which we turn in the next chapter.

Discussion Starters

1. How would you define/describe the dialectical relationship between theory and practice in PALAR?
2. Do you agree or disagree with the author's position on this relationship? Why?
3. What can we learn from the concept and value system of *Indigeneity*?
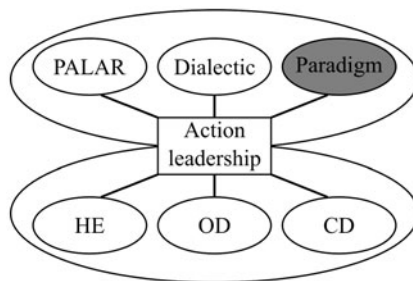4. What would be good praxis in your field of practice?

Note

1. Micael Olsson, Global Education Advisor – Child Development and Rights, World Vision International, told me in April 2010 that Jacqueline Wasilewski is La Donna Harris' professional scribe/editor.

Chapter 4
PALAR Paradigm and Methodology

The Whole is more than the sum of its parts
Aristotle

Chapter Overview

This chapter continues the argument for a dialectical integration of practice improvement *and* theory/knowledge advancement through participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) methodology. I explain an alternative to the traditional, positivist paradigm of learning and knowledge creation developed in terms of ontology (our assumptions about the nature of being/reality), epistemology (our assumptions about the nature of knowledge and knowing) and methodology (our consequent approach to problem solving and inquiry strategy). The chapter is based on (1) my perspective, drawing on more than 30 years of professional experience using action learning and action research and (2) my theoretical framework that includes selected aspects and principles taken from several existing theories, including grounded theory, action theory, critical educational theory, systems theory, personal construct theory and experiential learning theory. This framework explains why PALAR can be so powerful and successful in organizational change programmes. It therefore underscores the utility of PALAR for professional and action leadership development in the present time of rapid change and unpredictability. The chapter also synthesizes a thesis and an antithesis to produce a dialectic methodology.

Introduction

In this chapter I first argue that there is a new evolving paradigm and methodology that strengthen and are strengthened by participatory action learning and action research (PALAR). Some might argue that the non-positivist paradigm is not really 'new' since it has continued to evolve across the past 60 years or so. But, by its very nature, this paradigm is evolutionary. It is therefore still being developed, argued and presented from new perspectives and decked out in new clothes as, for example, in the approach of this book from a critical, dialectic, holistic point of view. In this chapter I argue for a new dialectic paradigm and methodology of learning and knowledge creation, which are open to debate and further development as new ideas and literatures arise.

I then explain why we need to reconsider the debate on methodology in the face of global resurgence of technocratic efficiency and economic rationalism that threatens a humane, organismic and ethical approach to professionalism and action leadership. I have long maintained that action research is a useful 'methodology' for a new 'paradigm' of research (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992b, 2009). I now take the opportunity to review these notions in the light of recent and classic philosophical debates in the literature (MacIntire, 1979, 1981; Somekh, 2006; Carr, 2007; Denzin, 2009). Although I continue to use the same terminology as before, I now want to de-emphasize the importance of action research as a technique, method and procedure. Instead, I emphasize the importance of dialogue and of creating an open, dialectic discussion space. I argue against the domination of a research methodology that serves and functions as an 'ideology of bureaucratic authority' (MacIntire, 1979) and that is based on strict principles and rules established by and for biomedical research, so different from human/social research as discussed in this book.

For example, Denzin (2009) reminds us of the dilemma of methodology for qualitative research in general, but it is especially pertinent to PALAR. Denzin (2009: 37) explains why qualitative research, in an age of global uncertainty, is under attack from conservative governments and academics, and he calls for new paradigmatic dialogues, not for a return to the paradigm wars that we experienced in the 1980s. He explains that the Bush administration used the so-called terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 as an excuse to launch a 'Global War on Terror' and that this administration and its version of truth, justice and law led to global armed aggression, imperial democracy and totalitarian fascism all in the guise of democracy, enshrining a mistaken mythology that pre-emptive war seeks to secure peace:

> Around the globe, governments are attempting to regulate interpretive inquiry by enforcing bio-medical, evidence-based models of research. These regulatory activities raise basic philosophical, epistemological, political and pedagogical issues for scholarship and freedom of speech in the academy. Their effects are interdisciplinary. They cut across the fields of educational and policy research, the humanities, communications, health and social science, social welfare, business, and law. This legislation marginalizes indigenous, border, feminist, race, queer, and ethnic studies.

Denzin ([2009](#): 63) also cites the National Research Council's definition of quality research (Towne et al., [2005](#)) as an example of how this influential body argues from a positivist paradigm firmly established in the natural sciences:

> For this group, quality research is scientific, empirical, and linked to theory and uses methods for direct investigation and produces coherent chains of causal reasoning based on experimental or quasi-experimental findings, offering generalizations that can be replicated and used to test and refine theory. Research that has these features is of high quality, and it is scientific.

Clearly, we need an alternative paradigm and different quality criteria for qualitative research, including action research. These will be based in the human/social sciences that have different purposes and goals, couched within a moral frame and in terms of social justice, inclusive of Indigenous and other minority voices and more transformative practices. Denzin ([2009](#): 22–23) further suggests:

> We need a global interpretive community that honors and celebrates diversity and difference. We need to draw together in common purpose and common cause. . . . Interpretive scholars imagine societies where qualitative inquiry is valued. These are societies where progress and humanity are judged in terms of the utopian ideals critical scholars try to live by – justice, equality, human rights. We need societies that will allow their social sciences to do just this. The challenges are great. The payoffs are huge. If the ideals are realized, the consequences will transcend our wildest utopian dreams.

Therefore, we need to resist the further advance of technical hegemonic politics with its fixed standards and guidelines for conducting and evaluating research. Instead, we need to create and advocate our own criteria and standards of quality through continuous critical dialogue, self-critical consciousness and the art of interpretation.

Terminology

It is worth noting that in the literature on qualitative research the terms 'paradigm', 'methodology' and 'methods' are used differently or interchangeably. Here we take paradigm as the common beliefs, sets of values and the worldviews underlying the theories and methodology shared by the community of action researchers. It is the philosophical orientation that underlies and informs our preferred form of methodology. Methodology is a 'way of thinking about and studying social phenomena' (Corbin and Strauss, [2008](#): 1). It is an explanation of and justification for the choice of methods used. Method (used in the singular) may be used synonymously with methodology. Methods (used in the plural) and techniques are instruments or tools for collecting and analysing data. As to the concept of PALAR, there is also a dialectic of action learning and action research, as I explained in Chapter 2.

Dialectic

Overall, the present chapter itself argues for a dialectic on methodology by presenting a thesis (against method), an antithesis (for method) and a synthesis. My discussion on paradigms and my theoretical framework draws from my earlier explanations (Zuber-Skerritt, 2001, 2009, Chapter 6). Figure 4.1 illustrates the commonalities of action learning and action research and the overlap of what I call the four Ps of PALAR: paradigm, praxis, programmes and projects.
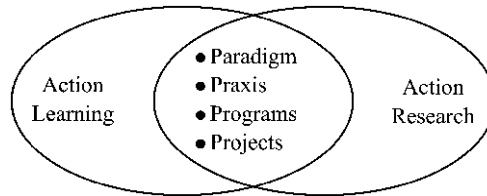
**Fig. 4.1**   Commonalities of action learning and action research (Zuber-Skerritt, 2009: 106)[1]

In both action learning and action research, paradigm and praxis constitute a practical theory and programmes and projects contribute to the improvement and advancement of practice. This shows the dialectics between theory and practice, research and learning/development, reflection (understanding, knowledge) and action. As Bridges and Smith (2007: 6) point out, the Aristotelian tradition of 'practical philosophy' and practical judgment (*phronesis*) is a predecessor of AR 'as a mode of reflection on and improvement of practice distinguished by an epistemological basis other than the scientific paradigm'. So what is the alternative paradigm of this tradition?

Paradigms

PALAR is located in the social or human sciences, not in the natural sciences. This is important to note, because we are not concerned with organic or inorganic matter, but with sentient human beings, groups of people as intentional agents, and organizations or societies, whose characteristics, ideas, strategies and behaviour are complex and even possibly unpredictable.

In the social sciences there are many different approaches to inquiry, especially regarding the researcher's role. Here I simplify the voluminous and complex debate in the literature in two simple models to make my subsequent arguments easier to understand. The diagram in Fig. 4.2 illustrates the position of the expert researcher as located outside the field of research, action and development (e.g. the social group, organization or community), because his/her role is to be a detached, neutral or 'objective' observer of reality, i.e. not personally or emotionally engaged in the social world. The aims of this kind of traditional research include statistical hypothesis testing, using certain variables (for verifying or refuting the hypothesis), fact

Fig. 4.2 Delivery model
of research and policy
development
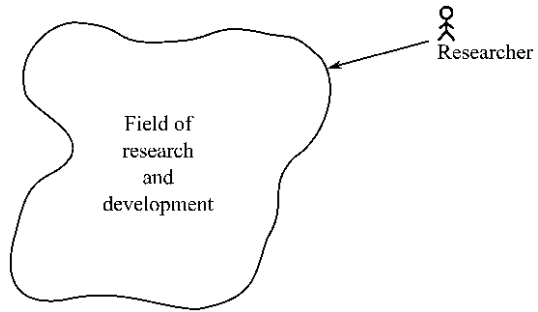
finding, cause–effect relationships, theory building and a final report with recommendations to be implemented by the 'subjects' of research, i.e. the social group in their field of practice.

This model can be likened to the traditional delivery model – a model of performance, compliance and deliverance – raising performance, complying with regulations and delivering solutions, in a manner similar to how DHL delivers a parcel or Dominos delivers a pizza.

However, solutions to complex human and social problems cannot be delivered effectively; they have to be created, because there is no one right way. There are always several possible solutions to a complex problem, depending on the social situation and conditions. Charles Leadbeater, with a focus on health policy, and innovation generally, put it very simply in his video talk (http://vimeo.com/channels/eidostv) by saying that there are only four solutions to most problems: We can deliver something *for* and *to* people, or we can do things *with* and *by* people. Clearly, in the delivery model in Fig. 4.2, an outside expert researcher delivers the solution *for* and *to* people. Conversely, in the PALAR model illustrated in Fig. 4.3, the solution is created with and by the participants in the PALAR project, including the researcher/facilitator as a co-researcher who joins the group to better understand their situation and in collaborative action and inquiry
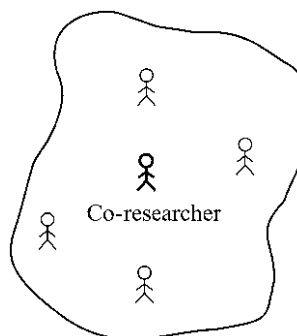
Fig. 4.3 PALAR model of research and development

to help improve or change the social situation for the better. PALAR is designed to bring about social change, to expose unjust practices or environmental dangers and recommend actions for change. In many respects, then, PALAR is linked into traditions of citizens' direct action and community organizing. The practitioner is actively involved in the cause for which the research is conducted. It is precisely this commitment that is a necessary part of being a practitioner or a member of a community of practice. Chapter 7 will expand on these thoughts in more detail.

I recognize two main problems in the social sciences that can be overcome by adopting the PALAR paradigm. One is the separation between theory and practice, which are conceived as dichotomous instead of dialectical. Another problem in the social sciences arises from a lack of understanding of what underpins and influences our actions, behaviour and strategies for changing, transforming, maintaining or improving our practice. These are, importantly, paradigms, philosophies, values and *Weltanschauungen* (worldviews). Therefore, this chapter outlines the salient characteristics of the two main competing paradigms in the social sciences, one leading to a technical, reductionist approach and the other to a more holistic, phenomenological approach to learning and knowledge creation. This book argues for a dialectical relationship of theory and practice as *praxis* in PALAR, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Competing Paradigms

The positivist paradigm was first established at the beginning of the twentieth century when the social sciences were being formulated and their methodology was adapted to mirror the positivist thinking of the natural sciences. The phenomenological paradigm has gradually emerged since the Second World War and after disenchantment with the quest for rational enlightenment. This approach is likely to become the predominant paradigm for the new millennium, considering the proliferation of numerous reference books published in recent years on this emergent paradigm and qualitative research methods (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Carson et al., 2001; Flick et al., 2004, 2005; Bunker and Alban, 2006; Charmaz, 2006; Checkland and Poulter, 2006; Denzin and Lincoln, 2006; Hansen, 2006; Lichtman, 2006; Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Barbour, 2007; Bridges and Smith, 2007; Bryant and Charmaz, 2007; Burns, 2007; Kindon et al., 2007; Tharenou et al., 2007; Cooperrider et al., 2008; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; James et al., 2008; Shani et al., 2008; Buchanan and Bryman, 2009; Flick, 2009; Gray, 2009; McDonald et al., 2009; McNiff and Whitehead, 2009; Coffey, 2010).

It is useful here to briefly outline the characteristics of the old and new paradigms and the differences between them, and to point out that it is more appropriate to distinguish between two main research paradigms than to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative methods. Although it is accurate to claim that in the traditional paradigm the methods used are predominately quantitative, and in the

alternative paradigm they are predominately qualitative, both quantitative and qualitative methods may be – and indeed have been – used in both paradigms, even in multimodal forms and despite the objections of those claiming that they are incompatible at their very root. However, it is the inquirer's philosophical assumptions that mainly determine which methods she/he will choose, especially when the inquirer is conscious of his/her epistemological framework.

Thus, *methods play a secondary role; the paradigm or the theoretical framework is of primary importance and must be made explicit* so that the reader/examiner can evaluate the process, methods and outcomes, using relevant criteria from the researcher's particular perspective. Whenever the processes by which we come to know are estranged from ourselves as knowers, our capacity then to represent and critically theorize about our conditions and practices is diminished (Diamond and Mullen, 1999).

In the literature, the old and new paradigms are often cast in opposition: hard versus soft; traditional versus alternative; experimental versus naturalistic; prescriptive versus descriptive; reductionist (reducing phenomena to simplest elements) versus holistic (looking at the totality of the situation); external versus internal (regarding the researcher's perspective); nomothetic (study of general laws and trends) versus ideographic (study of individual characteristics, case studies); normative versus interpretive; positivist versus non-positivist; using large numbers of 'subjects' and standardized methods to control selected variables versus using a small group of 'participants' and an open-ended communicative approach and multiple methods.

Several points need to be mentioned about these dichotomies and the observation that experience often escapes the hold of cold logic. First, there are other paradigms in the social sciences, e.g. feminist, post-structural and post-modern paradigms. Here I include them in the new paradigm for reasons of necessary brevity and simplicity. Second, these are observations of paradigms in their most absolute forms. In practice, such purity does not exist. The oppositions discussed are nonetheless useful as models or mind maps for identifying, dramatizing, justifying and clarifying our own philosophical position that underpins our PALAR strategy.

In their discussion of the theoretical foundation for action research, Altrichter et al. (2008) have presented a model that is also relevant to action learning and PALAR. They distinguish between a technical/rational view of problem solving and professionalism on the one hand and a more personal, reflective view on the other. I summarize their account of basic assumptions underlying the two paradigms in Table 4.1. In reality, most views are somewhere within these two extremes, mixing and using multiple methods (triangulation and even crystallization). As we have many choices, it is important that we explain the rationale for our choice based on the philosophical assumptions that underpin the research.

It is apparent that participatory action learning and action research are located in the evolving, non-positivist paradigm of reflective rationality, and it is important to point out that 'validity' and 'rigour' have a different meaning in different paradigms. Validity is accepted in the positivist paradigm when knowledge is generalizable and when the study is conducted in controlled conditions, using rigorous methods of

Table 4.1 Basic assumptions of opposing views of problem solving (Zuber-Skerritt, 2001: 4)

	Technical rationality	Reflective rationality
Problem solution	There are *general* solutions to practical problems	Complex practical problems demand *specific* solutions
Method	These solutions can be developed *outside* practical situations (in laboratories and research centres)	These solutions can be developed only *inside* the context in which the problem arises and in which the practitioner is a crucial and determining element
Application	The solutions can be translated into practitioners' actions by means of training, publications, etc.	The solutions cannot be successfully applied automatically to other contexts but they can be made accessible to other practitioners as hypotheses to be tested
Credibility	*Hierarchy* in the institutional power structure: The closer a person is to policy making and theory development, the more credible and powerful she/he is. Theory and practice are separate	New types of communication: networking, *symmetry of communication*[2] and collaboration. Research and development, theory and practice are integrated

data collection, analysis and interpretation. The research design is experimental. It starts with the inquirer's predetermined hypothesis that is to be tested and finally either confirmed or refuted. Selected 'subjects' must be recognized as representative of a large cross section of the relevant population. The sample size must be proportionately large for findings to be recognized as valid, and there are normally experimental groups and control groups. This kind of inquiry is useful for statistical purposes, such as population audits, and for predicting future trends, e.g. in economics, finance and politics, and for establishing cause–effect interventions or outcomes. But all things can never be equal. Some groups cannot be fully matched with other (or the majority of) groups.

On the other hand, phenomenologists recognize that knowledge is socially constructed and created from within, and for, a particular group and context. The researcher's role is to describe and explain the situation or the case in as convincing and trustworthy a manner as possible. The aim is not to establish generalizable laws for multiple contexts but to know, understand, improve or change a particular social situation or context and to advocate for the benefit of the people who are also the 'participants' (not 'subjects') in the inquiry and who are affected by the results and solutions. Variables are not predetermined and controlled but are taken on board as they are identified from the emerging meanings. These are multiple and dynamic. Rigour is achieved through triangulation or multiple use of methods and of perspectives and through participant validation or member checking. Therefore, this kind of inquiry is more complex and difficult to conduct if it is to be of high quality, systematic and valid to those involved. But it is eminently worthwhile as it promotes the transformation of its participants, including the researcher.

Validity in the new paradigm is more personal and interpersonal than methodological and should be based on an 'interactive dialectic logic' (Reason and Rowan, 1981: 244) rather than a dichotomy of 'subjective' or 'objective' truth. This dichotomy can be overcome by the concept of 'perspective', i.e. taking a personal view from some distance and *after* an interactive dialectic using multiple data sets, respondents and co-inquirers. In brief, the action learner/researcher is interested in perspectives, rather than truth per se, and in giving a credible account of how the participants in the project view themselves and their experiences and what language they use.

Language

Paradigms use and can be identified by a certain language and style. We have already mentioned the use of third versus first person, passive versus active voice and research 'subjects' versus 'participants' in the old versus new paradigms. We also mentioned technocratic 'efficiency' and economic rationalism versus a humane, organismal and ethical approach to 'effectiveness' in professionalism and action leadership, that is, in more general terms, a quantitative, normative capitalist worldview versus a qualitative, collaborative and participative democratic worldview. I was astonished to read in a recent newsletter of the Business and Higher Education Round Table (B–HERT, April 2010) that our leaders in this field use language for human beings, such as 'human capital productivity' and 'productivity determinants' for the 'accumulation of human capital' in disability health and Indigenous education (Hicks, 2010); and using the analogy of students being 'manufactured product' and 'raw materials' and employers in industry being stakeholders in the 'education supply chain' (Nagy, 2010).

Language is an expression or, as in the case above, a disclosure of our thoughts, personal theories, attitudes, culture and behaviour. It is an indicator of our worldview and educational philosophy. Some scholars might not be aware that they believe in a paradigm of research and development for a better world for all human beings, yet use the language of technocratic materialism.

PALAR may be informed by many theories of learning and creating new knowledge. Below I explain six important areas of theory that I believe are relevant to most action learners, researchers and leaders in the new paradigm.

Theoretical Framework

I have long maintained that all of us – consciously or unconsciously – develop through our life experience a personal theoretical framework or lens through which we appreciate the world. It is determined by our personal values and worldviews (*Weltanschauungen*) that are shaped by our life experience and it determines and guides our strategies and behaviour. Therefore, it is important for us personally, professionally and as members of collective bodies to identify, understand

and consciously develop our individual theoretical frameworks. This can be aided through reflection on practice, personal and organizational learning, and through critical discourse.

It is interesting to note that, as a powerful illustration of synchronicity, like-minded people around the world can develop the same or similar ideas without knowing of each other. For example, Joe Raelin (Northeastern University, Boston) wrote to me after meeting Bob Dick and myself for the first time at a symposium in Brisbane (e-mail communication 17 November 2009):

> . . . My time with you and Bob was one of the supreme highlights of my trip. It was so good to meet both of you after all these years. It is also so interesting to me that we have developed such compatible theories of learning and leadership yet from such different academic pathways.

Numerous observers have confirmed the relevance and utility of my theoretical framework for action research (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992c) in other national contexts, e.g. Singapore (Murphy, 2009), China (Chan, 1993), Europe (Zuber-Skerritt, 1997; Laske, 2009), South Africa (Fletcher and Zuber-Skerritt, 2008; Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; Fletcher et al., 2010), South America (Santos, 2009), and New Zealand (Melrose, 1993; Piggot-Irvine, 2001). My intensive postgraduate qualitative research courses held annually in Innsbruck (since 1995), Vienna (since 1998) and South Africa (since 1995) yield similar responses. I next present a revised and briefer version of my theoretical framework as outlined in my interview with Santos (2009) with reference to four theories: grounded, critical, systems and personal construct theories. In addition and in the light of my discussion of experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) and action theory (Argyris and Schön, 1974) in the previous chapters, I revise my framework here by combining these theories with my previous model to produce a more comprehensive model, as shown in Fig. 4.4.

Many other theories have influenced the practice and theory of PALAR, but these six theories are the main ones I have identified as influential in my personal and professional life of PALAR. My account is by no means comprehensive and reflects my own perspective on and experiences in PALAR. I invite readers of this book to add their own preferred theories. Here I briefly outline the aspects of these six theories that I consider most relevant to PALAR. As we see in Fig. 4.4, PALAR provides an overarching framework that combines grounded theory, action theory, critical theory, systems theory, personal construct theory and experiential learning theory.

Grounded Theory

The Sage Handbook of Grounded Theory (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007) presents a comprehensive overview of the theory and practice of grounded theory, including the debates since the key canonical texts and formulation of the original theory by Glaser and Straus (Glaser, 1965; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This early theory was

Fig. 4.4 Theoretical
framework for PALAR
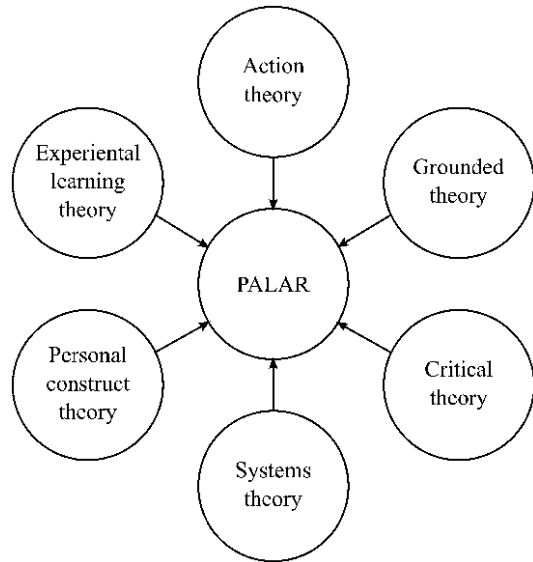
originally influenced by the positivist thinkers of the time. But the new reference book is located in the new, emerging paradigm. It takes its motto from Plutarch's philosophy: 'The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be ignited'. Bryant and Charmaz (2007: 1) define the theory as follows:

> Grounded Theory Method (GTM) comprises a systematic, inductive, and comparative approach for conducting inquiry for the purpose of constructing theory.... The method is designed to encourage researchers' persistent interaction with their data, while remaining constantly involved with their emerging analyses. Data collection and analysis proceed simultaneously and each informs and streamlines the other.... The iterative process of moving back and forth between empirical data and emerging analysis makes the collected data progressively more focused and the analysis successively more theoretical.

Both induction and abduction play a key role in GTM. Charmaz (2006: 188) defines *induction* as 'a type of reasoning that begins with study of a range of individual cases and extrapolates patterns from them to form a conceptual category' – thus moving from the particular to the general and from the detailed descriptive to the more abstract, conceptual level. The opposite is *deduction*, that is, the inference of particular instances by reference to a general law or principle. Gray (2009: 14) explains, 'Deduction begins with a universal view of a situation and works back to the particulars; in contrast, induction moves from fragmentary details to a connected view of a situation'. A third term is *abduction*, defined by Charmaz (2006: 104) as follows: 'In brief, abductive inference entails considering all possible theoretical explanations for the data, forming hypotheses for each possible explanation, checking them empirically by examining data, and pursuing the most plausible explanation'. So abduction combines both rational and imaginative aspects

of research. The methods of action research also involve induction and abduction (not deduction), that is, drawing conclusions from individual cases or particular instances, using mainly qualitative methods rather than starting with a hypothesis or theory that is to be confirmed or refuted through large-scale studies using quantitative and statistical methods – the deductive or 'scientific' approach.

However, the purpose of GTM is theorizing, that is, developing abstract concepts, identifying the relations between them and finding emergent categories; in this method it is the researcher who builds the theory. The purpose of action research is action oriented and collaborative: the improvement of practice through experimental action and in the process, developing theoretical understanding for everyone involved.

I agree with Bob Dick (2007) that grounded theory has enhanced our understanding of action research and that action researchers and grounded theorists can learn from each other. Action researchers can learn to become more explicit about how to develop their actual theory/theories from data and experience and how to treat literature as data. Grounded theorists can learn to involve themselves more directly in the action/intervention and to involve their 'informants' more as 'participants' in the research.

Based on my observations, beginning postgraduates or action researchers like to use grounded theory, especially based on earlier work (Glaser, 1992; Strauss and Corbin, 1998), because they can follow the detailed explanations of coding and theory building, feeling confident that their results are more systematic, rigorous and acceptable to examiners or reviewers. But experienced action researchers prefer individual and collective reflection and structured discussion and holistic or impressionistic responses, without the onerous and reductionist task of coding.

Dick (2007) developed a model and dialectic process of constant comparison and apparent disagreement to generate agreement at a deeper level. He calls this process 'convergent interviewing' that can be used not only for interviews but also for small group discussions, such as focus groups. Meanwhile, over 100 interview studies have confirmed Dick's dialectic process of convergent interviewing as an effective method of data collection with quick convergence on key issues. For example, Driedger et al. (2006) concluded that this method helped a multi-disciplinary and multinational research team arrive at a shared ontology and epistemology. For a detailed description of the method, see Dick (1999).

Dick (2007: 408) also describes how he elicits grounded theory with the cooperation of participants by guiding them through the following three pairs of questions, aiming to reach consensus on each before proceeding and using conflict resolution processes if necessary. I include the questions here, because they are unique in the literature and provide a simple, practical way of theory building:

1a What do you think are the important features of the situation?
1b Why do we think those are the important features?
2a If we are right about the situation, what outcomes (that is, consequences) do you
      think are desirable and feasible?
2b Why do we think those outcomes are desirable and feasible in that situation?

3a What actions do we think will give us those outcomes in that situation?
3b Why do we think those actions will give us those outcomes in that situation?

Answers to the 'a' questions provide, in turn, the participants' assessment of the situation, the consequences and the actions. Answers to the 'b' questions bring to the surface participants' assumptions. Together the answers provide a basis for theory building. We then carry out our planned actions and compare the results to the expected outcomes. In this way, by including action, the iterative cycle of action research enhances rigour and quality.

Action Theory

We have discussed Argyris and Schön's (1974) theories of action in Chapter 2. Another action theory that has influenced my thinking is that of Leontiev (1977) and his associates. Here I briefly outline Leontiev's action theory, because it is known in the German and Russian psychological literature but not in English-speaking countries. Leontiev (often spelt Leontjev or Leontjew) developed a subject–action–object schema that I applied to a model of action research as professional development in higher education (Zuber-Skerritt, 1996a), discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 and applied specifically to activities in the field of higher education.[3] Although in PALAR we prefer to use the term 'participant' rather than 'subject', here I am faithful to the original.

Leontiev (1977) emphasizes that human action (frequently translated as activity) is determined strongly by social conditions and that human knowledge and skills are self-developed and passed on from generation to generation as historically derived knowledge. One of the key concepts in his theory is *gegenständliche Tätigkeit*, often translated as 'object activity', but I prefer the translation 'concrete action' or 'material action', i.e. action with concrete (rather than conceptual) matters. In contrast to positivist theories at the time, Leontiev (1974: 10) defined this concept as follows:

> . . . a unit of life mediated by mental reflection whose real function is to orient the subject to the world of objects. Activity is thus not a reaction or a totality of reactions, but rather a system possessing structure, inner transformations, conversations, and development. . . . In a society a person does not simply find external conditions to which he (sic) must adapt his activity, but, rather, these very social conditions bear within themselves the motives and goals of his activity, its means and modes. In a word, society produces the activity that shapes its individuals.

An activity is a process that continuously undergoes transformation. It is characterized by its constituent 'object'. An object of activity may exist independently, or as a mental image in the subject, and be realized through his/her activity. There is a transformation from the process of activity to a product in the subject (mental images/constructs as 'static properties' – *ruhende Eigenschaften)* as well as in the object (e.g. works of craft or art as products of human activity). This dynamic process is shown in Fig. 4.5.

Fig. 4.5
Subject–action–object
schema (Zuber-Skerritt,
1992c: 73)
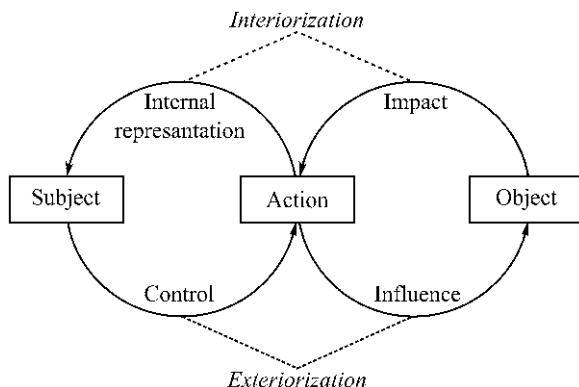
Galperin (1967: 374), whose educational interest led him to focus on mental activities, developed an 'interiorization theory'. In essence, it says that 'mental activities (or thinking) are the results of transformation of external, material activities to interior representation and active reflection, i.e. to the form of perceptions, ideas and concepts' (my translation). Given a dependency of inner activities on exterior activities and starting from a hierarchy of these internal, mental activities, Galperin (1967) differentiated between certain progressive stages in this internalization process. These are characterized by an increasing abstraction and language is an important constituent of interiorization. Stadler and Seeger (1981) maintain that the concrete action is characterized as 'the manifestation of life provided by mental reflection and having the material function to orient the subject in the concrete world' (my translation).

In simpler language, the basic concepts in the action theory developed by Russian and German psychologists involve subject, action and object. This terminology is not used in the common sense of the English language, but in the German sense of *Subjekt–Tätigkeit–Objekt* and in the meaning of the English grammar usage of 'subject–predicate–object', where the subject is the agent; the predicate is the activity or action (i.e. a verb stating something about the subject); and the object is that which the agent creates or acts upon. In PALAR the subject is the action learner/researcher/leader; the predicate/action constitutes the intervention and project activities; and the object is the practical improvement, change or development outcome. In terms of learning and teaching, professional, action leadership and organization development, we can restate these operational definitions as follows:

The *subject* is the holistic person and his/her consciousness, including intentions, motivations, cognitive aspects (e.g. thoughts, ideas, concepts) as well as affective aspects (e.g. emotions, feelings, anxiety). The subject might be students, academics, administrators, staff developers or other professionals and action leaders.

The *action* may refer to any aspect of learning, teaching or other professional activities. Whether the action is practical (exterior) or mental (interior), its aim is to

be reflected upon, refracted or transformed in the subject's consciousness together with the product of action (the object) that is also to be reproduced for consideration in the subject's consciousness.

The *object* refers to a task, problem or to that which is produced (e.g. learned or taught) by the subject through action. It includes all given factors within the particular context and system of higher education, workplace or other organization development/change. Endogenous factors include the curriculum (content, structure, assessment system), the dominant philosophy in the university or organization, its conditions, requirements and regulations. Exogenous factors include economic and political circumstances and government policies at national and relevant sub-national levels.

As depicted in Fig. 4.5, the subject consciously plans and controls a course of action in his/her consciousness based on existing knowledge, intuitive theories and past experiences. During and after the implementation of the action, the action is interiorized in the subject's mind as 'refracted', personal, new or modified knowledge and integrated in his/her existing knowledge system. As mentioned before, Leontiev and his followers believed that it is also passed from generation to generation as historically derived knowledge. Action – whether material/concrete or mental – may have an influence on the object, which, in turn, may have an impact on the action.

On the one hand, the action is limited and influenced by the object, i.e. by the task within the demands and requirements of the context (organization, community, nation, etc.); on the other, it may influence and change the object (task and/or context) and produce new conditions for future actions. Thus, the agents (staff, students, group members) are both the products and producers of the social situations in which they learn and work. This dialectic is also part of critical theory to which we turn next.

Critical Theory

Critical theory consists of a great variety of critical traditions, including Marxist and feminist traditions, and post-modern and post-structuralist critiques of society. What they all have in common is the goal of emancipation and the construction of social theory. For the purpose of this chapter, we focus on educational critical theory, based on the Frankfurt School, as I think this tradition is best suited for PALAR. Based on Habermas' (1978) theory of knowledge-constitutive human interests, Carr and Kemmis (1986) developed an educational critical theory for action research that has become a seminal work for action researchers, not only in education and higher education but also in other social sciences, especially social and community work, and health sciences. Of particular interest has been their distinction between technical, practical and emancipatory or critical action research, a distinction that I have summarized in Table 4.2 according to aims, facilitator's role and the relationship between facilitator and participants.[4]

Table 4.2 Types of action research (Zuber-Skerritt, 2009: 111)

Type of action research	Aims	Facilitator's role	Relationship between facilitator and participants
1. Technical AR	– Effectiveness/efficiency of practice – Professional development	Outside 'expert'	Co-option (practitioners depending on facilitator)
2. Practical AR	– As (1) above – Practitioners' understanding – Transformation of their consciousness	Socratic role, encouraging participation and self-reflection	Co-operation (process consultancy)
3. Emancipatory AR	– As (1) and (2) above – Participants' emancipation from the dictates of tradition, self-deception and coercion – Their critique of bureaucratic systematization – Transformation of the organization or system	Process moderator (responsibility shared equally by participants)	Collaboration

I have always recommended to students and workshop participants that if they want to buy only one book on action research it should be the *Action Research Planner* (Kemmis and McTaggart, 1988). The fourth, substantially revised and extended version is due soon. The authors' main message is that action research aims to change practices, people's understandings of their practices and the conditions under which they practice – their definition of emancipatory action research.

Kemmis and others have since reinforced this message/theme in various ways, e.g. Kemmis (2001) in relation to the theory of communicative action and the theory of system and life-world, Kemmis (2006) in terms of participatory action research (PAR and the public sphere), Kemmis (2009) in terms of action research as meta-practice and Kemmis (2010) in terms of praxis-related research.

In all of these works, we recognize Habermas' (1978) three-principle media in which social life is structured: *language*, *work* and *power*. Kemmis (2009: 464) explains: 'These were the underpinnings for our emphases on understandings as expressed in language, practices as expressed in work, and situations and circumstances or the conditions of practice as expressed in relationships of power'. And in the same article, Kemmis (2009: 463) states:

Action research . . . changes people's patterns of 'saying', 'doing' and 'relating' to form new patterns – new ways of life. It is a meta-practice: a practice that changes other practices. It transforms the sayings, doings and relatings that compose those other practices. . . .

> Transforming our practices means transforming what we *do*; transforming our understandings means transforming what we *think* and *say*; and transforming the conditions of practice means transforming the ways we *relate* to others and to things and circumstances around us. . . . Each – sayings, doings and relatings – is irreducible to the others, but always in an endless dance with the others.

It is interesting to observe that Kemmis, too, now regards action research as an art by using the metaphors of dance and music. He goes back not only to Habermas but also to the ancient philosophers, e.g. by referring to Hadot (1995), who had studied ancient philosophy and the form of life that was advocated at that time. As we saw in Chapter 3 of this book, these philosophers distinguished between three parts of philosophy – dialectic or logic, physics and ethics. Their aim was not theoretical discourse for its own sake, but to seek wisdom and to live philosophically. Hadot (1995: 267) observes:

> . . . philosophy itself – that is, the philosophical way of life – is no longer a theory divided into these parts, but a unitary act, which consists in living logic, physics, and ethics. In this case, we no longer study logical theory – that is, the theory of speaking and thinking well – we simply think and speak well. We no longer engage in theory about the physical world, but we contemplate the cosmos. We no longer theorize about moral action, but we act in a correct and just way.

We can draw conclusions from Hadot's philosophy for our own lives, as Kemmis (2009: 465) does:

For a professional practitioner in any field today . . . to live a 'philosophical life' is a matter of
(1) *Living* a 'logic' by thinking and speaking well and clearly, avoiding irrationality and falsehood;
(2) *Living* a 'physics' by acting well in the world, avoiding harm, waste and excess; and
(3) *Living* an 'ethics' by relating well to others, avoiding injustice and exclusion.
These three come together in a unitary praxis – that is, morally committed action oriented and informed by traditions of thought.

These conclusions cohere with the values and worldviews of a PALAR culture or, as Kemmis would say, with a kind of 'philosophical' or 'critical' action research that, like 'a fire ignited', is spreading fast and wide, not only as a research methodology but also because of its heuristic power for understanding the consequences of human action and social practice.

Systems Theory

Like grounded, action and critical theories, there are different traditions of systems theory. Ison (2008) gives an excellent overview of the many forms of and influences on the many different lineages of systems thinking and practice. In particular,

he distinguishes between systemic and systematic thinking. Ison (2008: 140) explains:

> The word 'system' comes from the Greek *synhistanai*, meaning 'to stand together' (the word epistemology has the same root). A system is a perceived whole whose elements are 'interconnected'. Someone who pays particular attention to interconnections is said to be systemic. . . . On the other hand, if I follow a recipe in a step-by-step manner then I am being systematic. Medical students in courses on anatomy often take a systematic approach to their study of the human body – the hand, leg, internal organs etc. – but at the end of their study they may have very little understanding of the body as a whole because the whole is different to the sum of the parts, i.e. the whole has emergent properties.

Peter Checkland, one of the main proponents of systems theory, had reacted against the systems engineering and operational research in the 1960s and distinguished between 'hard' and 'soft' traditions of systems thinking (Checkland, 1981, 1985). Hard systems people think in terms of goal orientation and talk in the language of 'problems' and 'solution'. They assume that the world contains systems that can be engineered and that system models are models of the world (ontologies). Soft systems people think in terms of learning and talk in the language of 'issues' and 'accommodations'. They assume that the world is problematic but can be explored by using system models and that these system models are intellectual constructs (epistemologies).

This epistemological shift – from seeing and building systems as entities of 'the real world' to using systemic models in a process of participatory action learning and action research – was important. However, I agree with Ison (2008), who believes that this *either/or* dualism is unhelpful. Instead, he suggests using the duality of systemic (holistic) thinking *and* systematic (linear, step-by-step) thinking, depicting the Chinese *yin* and *yang* symbols, because together they make a whole. This dialectical duality is possible through epistemological awareness and discussion (Ison, 2008: 152):

> From my perspective systems thinking and practice are a means to orchestrate a particular type of conversation where conversation, from the Latin, *con versare*, means to 'turn together' as in a dance. To engage, or not, with systems thinking and practice is a choice we can make.

Again, it is interesting to note that Ison, too, regards systems thinking and practice in action research as a dance, i.e. a form of art.

Flood (2001) in a similar way explains the relationship of systems thinking to action research. He proposes that we arrive at valid knowledge and understanding through building whole pictures of phenomena, rather than breaking them into parts. To him, emergence and interrelatedness are the fundamental ideas of systems thinking to interpret social phenomena, and not to try to present systems as if they really existed in the world. Like Ison, he categorizes systems thinking in the social sciences into two schools of thought: systems thinking and systemic thinking. The first refers to thinking about social systems as if they existed in the real world and the latter refers to thinking that assumes only the social construction of the world is systemic; it is the latter – systemic thinking – that is most important to PALAR. Flood (2001: 142–143) concludes:

> It is through systemic thinking that we know of the unknowable. It is with action research
> that we learn and may act more meaningfully within the unknowable. Where these two arcs
> of reasoning converge, we witness the incredible genesis of a conceptual universe that opens
> up otherwise unimaginable ways in which people may live their lives in a more meaningful
> and fulfilling manner. . . . However, systemic thinking is not an approach to action research,
> but it is a grounding for action research that may broaden action and deepen research.

In a 30-year action research programme, Peter Checkland developed an approach
to tackling messy real-life situations that he called soft systems methodology or
SSM. In his book with John Poulter, he presents a clear and definite account of
SSM and its use for practitioners, teachers and students (Checkland and Poulter,
2006). As Ray Ison says in the foreword to their book:

> SSM is not a tool or technique to be used occasionally but a way to think and act every day.
> It is an antidote to the instrumental and naïve ways SSM has been taught to a generation of
> MBA students. It is also a provocative challenge to those academics and practitioners stuck
> in a 1960s view of systems scholarship.

I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants to learn or teach SSM as an
action research methodology that is flexible yet structured, and facilitates dialogue
and discussion on 'perceived problematic situations', relevant 'activity models' as a
source of questions, conflicting worldviews and 'action to improve'. These elements
are illustrated in hand-drawn diagrams for better understanding, and they constitute
a continuous learning cycle, similar to that by Kolb (1984). Here I simplify the
authors' skeleton account and diagrams even further in Fig. 4.6 and then summarize
each element.

First, participants in a PALAR programme or project identify a problematic
real-world situation that they all are concerned about and that calls for action to
improve it. The learning that takes place is social learning for the group as well as
personal learning from their different individual experiences. Second, participants
draw some purposeful activity models that they think are relevant to this situation.
Each model is an intellectual device and is based on their particular worldview.
Third, participants explore the possibilities of improving the situation by discussing
the individual models and their conflicting worldviews in a structured way with or
without a facilitator (depending on group size and experience), using the models
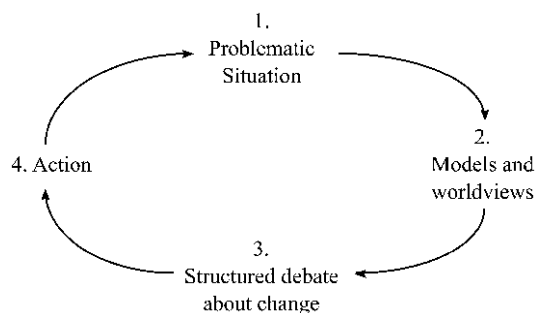
Fig. 4.6 SSM's learning cycles (after Checkland and Poulter, 2006)

to question the real situation and to identify change(s) that they find both desirable and culturally feasible to make in this particular situation. Fourth, participants decide what action they need to take to improve the situation and then to carry it out, which might generate a new problematic real-life situation and require a new cycle of learning.

Checkland and Poulter (2006) point out that the four activities above are not a prescribed sequence of steps to be followed, but a model that is flexible to accommodate both any new or emerging problematic situation and the building of additional models at any stage. SSM has been applied in many fields and contexts all over the world because it accommodates the process of 'learning your way' and it is organized and structured by models of purposeful activity as a source of questions to ask in the real situation. Checkland and Poulter (2006: 15) maintain: 'This is because every real-world situation contains people trying to act purposefully, intentionally. It is the sheer generality of purposeful action – the core of being human – that makes the area in which SSM can be used so huge'. Checkland and Poulter (2006: 22) summarize the broad account of SSM like this:

> SSM is an action-oriented process of inquiry into problematical situations in the everyday world; users learn their way from finding out about the situation to defining/taking action to improve it. The learning emerges via an organized process in which the real situation is explored, using as intellectual devices – which serve to provide structure to discussion – models of purposeful activity built to encapsulate pure, stated worldviews.

Another theory that has influenced my theoretical framework is personal construct theory (PCT) arising from the field of psychology.

Personal Construct Theory (PCT)

Personal construct theory (PCT) is a theory of human inquiry first created by George Kelly in his work on the *Psychology of Personal Constructs* (Kelly, 1955). This work has been the foundation for all subsequent scholars who have further developed this theory and methodology in a broad range of fields, including health, education, higher education, professional and organization development, business and marketing. The main focus is on the study of individuals and groups and how they organize and change their views of self, others and reality. This is most relevant to PALAR. Yet it is surprising that PCT and its accompanying repertory grid technique are not included in the main reference books on qualitative research (Glaser, 1992; Dey, 1999; Denzin and Lincoln, 2006; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Flick, 2009; Gray, 2009) nor in the handbooks of action research (Reason and Rowan, 1981; Somekh and Lewin, 2005; Reason and Bradbury, 2006, 2008; Somekh, 2006; Stringer, 2007).

There are two aspects of this theory that I have found particularly useful in my own PALAR work for eliciting people's constructs of effectiveness in research, teaching, professional development (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992c: 56–63) and postgraduate supervision (Zuber-Skerritt and Roche, 2004). The first aspect is the notion of *person-as-scientist*, emphasizing the human capacity for meaning making, agency and ongoing revision of personal knowledge. Fay Fransella (2007), on the occasion

of her 80th birthday, comments on the philosophy of PCT: '. . . none of us is trapped by what has happened to us in the past, although we might trap ourselves if we construe it that way'. She appreciates the idea that 'all behaviour is an experiment', that is, PCT links construing and behaviour in a meaningful way. It is not only useful for research but is also a psychology for living.

The second aspect relevant to PALAR is the non-invasive approach to research when using the repertory grid technique, explained below. Rather than having the researcher formulate the questions (in interviews, group techniques and surveys) and interpret other people's statements/views, which amounts to imposing the researcher's constructs on them, the action researcher in PCT acts as a facilitator of participants finding their own constructs and interpreting the meaning for themselves as in a 'learning conversation'. I think it is the least intrusive and most open-ended approach to qualitative research, although computer analysis can be done more effectively through quantitative, statistical methods. Since this theory of personal constructs and its accompanying repertory grid technique are not well known among scholars and practitioners of action research, I briefly outline the theoretical framework and methodology as I did in my co-authored paper (Zuber-Skerritt and Roche, 2004).[5]

Theoretical View of Personal Construct Theory

According to the theory, people develop their own tentative models or personal theories about the world in order to understand and negotiate their environments in the roles of 'personal scientists' (Kelly, 1955, 1963). Like scientific theories, personal theories help people anticipate future events and guide behaviour and attitudes. Theories are tested against experiences and discarded if they fail to provide meaningful interpretations of the world. Personal construct theory assumes that people anticipate and explain events in their world through organization of perceptions, called 'bi-polar constructs'. People use these bi-polar constructs to test hypotheses, which are the basis of personal theories. Constructs are continually revised when experience suggests the need for further thought. Kelly's fundamental assumption of 'man the scientist' (sic) thus recognizes a dynamic and reflective role for human beings or 'personal scientists' as constructors of knowledge.

Kelly developed the repertory grid technique based on his theory to enable structured conversations between researcher and participant and explorations of the individual's world of meaning. Unlike standard approaches to research, such as questionnaires and interviews, a repertory grid can elicit people's constructs without influencing them by the researcher's preconceived questions. In this way the repertory grid is both an ideal tool to explore the uniqueness of a practice (e.g. in research, teaching, professional or action leadership development) and a useful benchmarking tool, against which change can be planned and assessed.

Methodological View of Repertory Grid Technology

When one of my books was launched in London (Zuber-Skerritt, 1984),[6] I had the privilege of being invited by the editor of Kogan Page, who was a member

of the Personal Construct Psychology group in the UK (called the Kelly Club in the 1960s), to meet the group's founding members, including Fay Fransella, Maureen Pope, Pam Denicolo, Mildred Shaw, Don Bannister, Phillida Salmon and others. It was then that I realized how useful this theory is for action research, and it was Maureen Pope at Surrey University who taught me how to use Kelly's repertory grid technique, using Mildred Shaw's computer software (Shaw, 1984).

I then conducted repertory grid studies on research effectiveness in three different countries – Australia (Diamond and Zuber-Skerritt, 1986), UK (Zuber-Skerritt, 1987) and Germany (Zuber-Skerritt, 1988) – and one study on second language teaching (Zuber-Skerritt, 1989) in Australia. These and subsequent studies suggest that the repertory grid technique is a powerful heuristic tool, not only for the researcher to elicit people's present personal constructs of research and of teaching for the researcher's perspective but also, more importantly, to help staff and students to become aware of their own and other people's personal perspectives of professional and academic aspects in R&D. The grid results are also useful as a basis for discussion and negotiation of meaning with colleagues and for decision making. However, in PALAR projects the repertory grid technology should not be used as a research method without having the participants discuss, negotiate and validate the results presented by the researcher/facilitator. We found the discussion most enlightening and transformative for our professional and action leadership development, discussed further in Part II of this book.

The repertory grid technique has been adapted by many researchers and practitioners in order to help individuals explore their construct systems as a first step in recognizing the process of change. For example, Peters (1994) used the repertory grid in staff and organizational development. Diamond and Zuber-Skerritt (1986), Zuber-Skerritt (1992b, c), Pope and Denicolo (1991) and Roche (1999) applied the technique in higher education research and staff and curriculum development.

The basic components of a repertory grid are constructs and elements. Constructs help people organize their perceptions of the world. Elements are examples of areas of the topic under study. Elements can be people or objects and they can be chosen by the participant or supplied by the researcher. For instance, elements in a study of supervision effectiveness would be exemplars of good and poor supervisors. Elements that are commonly supplied may be 'myself as I am now' and 'my ideal self'. These are especially useful in developmental studies where the grid is used as a baseline or a benchmark of performance and growth.

Each participant in the research elicits the grid by proceeding through a series of comparisons that result in the production of bi-polar constructs. The participant is asked to compare three elements and to indicate which two are similar, in what ways and how they differ from the third element. In this way what the participant recognizes as opposing poles, or at least as distinguishing features, are drawn out through the comparison. Using the example of supervision effectiveness, a person may develop a bi-polar construct *committed to student–no interest in student*, where the opposition is clear. However, bi-polar constructs are not necessarily direct opposites, e.g. *committed to student–committed to their own career*, because what

influences the participant's perception is not only the attributes of elements being compared but also how the participant understands the construct labels.

Repertory grids can be elicited in individual and/or group sessions. They can be generated, scored and analysed manually or by a computer programme. Each method of generation has its advantages and disadvantages in terms of the clarity and depth of constructs, and resources available such as time and equipment. An outline of the hand scoring and analysis method is included in Appendix 1 on the topic of action research as an example. 'Action research' may be replaced by 'professional development', 'action leadership development', 'qualitative research', etc., depending on the purpose of the study.

Advantages and Disadvantages

The results of a repertory grid study do not provide a static picture; they may change over time. Repetition of the grid elicitation with the same group of participants after some time would usually result in a changed picture. This can be turned into an advantage for professional development of action researchers because they can use the results as a snapshot of their constructs at a particular time and compare them with their construct system at later times. The advantage is that participants become aware of their own and other people's constructs of action research. They share their interpretation of the results in discussion with others, and their own constructs are reviewed and confirmed, revised or changed in the light of that discussion. This 'learning conversation' is the learning process that leads to change and new knowledge.

The grid elicitation, scoring and analysis may seem complicated and time consuming, but practice makes us faster at this task, and the hand scoring may be replaced by computer analysis. Computer software is merely to compare all the ratings to detect the similarity of constructs held by each participant and by the group as a whole. It saves time in comparing figures and calculating percentages of match, *not* in interpreting the meaning of these figures. The latter must be done by the participants themselves. They may use the results of computer analysis only as a tool and basis for individual reflection, awareness raising and subsequent group discussion of their personal and mutual constructs of action research. Once a 'gridder', Diamond (2006) has become a 'proustifier', using arts-based approaches to elicit construct systems, including situated mini-narratives, vignettes, (auto)biography or (my)stories, organizational ethnography, poetry, drama, dance, music and visual art forms such as palimpsests. Every mode is now an option. As with PALAR, both Kelly and Proust exemplify a universal yearning for connection and meaning that leads to and is released as the urgent, involuntary recollection of experience.

Alignment with Other Qualitative Methods

The greatest advantage of the repertory grid technique is that the researcher does not influence the participants as much as in other qualitative methods, such as interviews and questionnaires, by way of framing the questions. Here participants do

not answer questions but rather elicit their own constructs by comparing elements
(i.e. people they know well as action researchers) and stating in which way two
are similar and the third is different from them. However, the repertory grid tech-
nique can also be used in triangulation with other methods and perspectives. For
example, after the participants' own perspectives of action research have been estab-
lished, an external evaluator might conduct an inquiry into the quality and value of
their action research project using peer assessment, document analysis, and pro-
cess and product analysis. The focus group technique could be used to structure the
discussion of the individual and group results and the nominal group technique to
prioritize the attributes that are most likely to achieve value and quality of action
research.

Experiential Learning Theory

Based on Kolb's theory (Kolb, 1984), I defined experiential learning in Chapter 3
as a process whereby we create knowledge through transforming our experiences,
via observation, reflection, conceptualization, testing and new applications, in a
continuous cycle of learning and gaining knowledge (see Figs. 3.3 and 3.4). The
learning and knowledge that we gain through this process of transforming concrete
experience impacts on our values, attitudes, personality and thus on our existential
knowledge. Kolb's experiential learning theory is the cornerstone of participatory
action learning and action research, because PALAR is an iterative process of reflec-
tion and action. Our reflections on and through action lead to new insights that help
to inform the next action in our learning and research, and so the cycle contin-
ues throughout our life. This is an approach to lifelong learning, as I discuss in
Chapter 7. It can be facilitated, developed and enhanced through certain methods,
such as keeping a reflection diary or a journal or a log book; holding a briefing
session or evaluative discussion and eliciting feedback from appropriate others.
Chapters 2 and 7 in this book present more details about such PALAR processes.

The theoretical framework developed so far includes aspects of some theories and
methodologies that are relevant to PALAR and that I have found particularly useful
in qualitative and action research. We now return to my introductory comments
on Denzin's (2009) concern about 'qualitative inquiry under fire' from a positivist
paradigm and a technical evidence-based hegemonic politics with its fixed standards
and guidelines for conducting and evaluating qualitative research. In the next section
I discuss a dialectic methodology, including a thesis, an antithesis and a synthesis
of *pro* and *con* views on the importance of methodology.

Dialectic Methodology

I reasoned in my most recent book (Zuber-Skerritt, 2009) that action research was
created in times of crises after the First World War and was resuscitated after the
Second World War as a powerful methodology for action and social change because

practitioners could identify and solve their own problems and act accordingly, directly and fast. Subsequently I read Carr's (2007) chapter that argues differently, that in the history of action research, methodology was a reason why early action research (influenced by Kurt Lewin and positivist, empirical researchers) was criticized and dismissed for not meeting the principles and standards of positivist research, e.g. lack of generalizability of qualitative case studies with small numbers of participants instead of large numbers of subjects, control groups and standardized quantitative methods and statistical evidence. Carr argues further that action research re-emerged at a time (in the 1970s) when qualitative research was finally validated and accepted within a newly emerging paradigm and that this is one reason why authors like Somekh (2006) have focused on the 'methodology' of action research, in the belief that without it there would be a lack of the norms and standards that ensure the status of 'real' research.

However, I would argue that in AR, like all qualitative research, it is necessary to explain and justify the choice of methods, as Somekh does, because they are not as well defined and known as in traditional quantitative research. Many methods have the same label/name tag but different meanings and assumptions in different paradigms. For example, the term 'case study' means different things to different authors in the positivist or phenomenological paradigm. And even within a certain paradigm, methods such as 'focus group technique', 'interview' and 'survey' have different meanings for different authors. So each author has to know the field of methodology, may adopt or adapt a method or even invent a new method but needs to explain in detail what he/she means by the label used for each method and why he/she believes it is most appropriate for the particular research. This approach is different from 'a research methodology based on principles and rules', mentioned above. It is a communicative approach to sharing one's assumptions and research strategies with the reader and leads to appropriate, rigorous and high-quality research, whether qualitative or quantitative.

Let us now consider a dialectic debate in the social sciences. The thesis is Carr's (2007) position: against method and for a practical philosophy of AR. The antithesis is Somekh's (2006) position: the importance of AR as a methodology for change and development. We then need to negotiate a synthesis.

Thesis

Carr (2007) shows how the contemporary preoccupation with and privileging of 'method' or methodology in the 'rational sciences, uncontaminated by irrational presuppositions and beliefs', has distorted the character of human understanding and self-understanding, and he calls for a rehabilitation of Aristotle's 'practical philosophy'. Carr (2007: 142) frequently quotes Gadamer (1980: 76):

> And for Gadamer the search for a non-methodological understanding of social science inevitably leads to a re-understanding of 'the remote and no longer vital tradition of Aristotelian philosophy' (p. 78). 'But how', he asks, 'does the philosophy of Aristotle lead

itself to this discussion? How can the philosophical analysis of human life and human atti-
tudes and human actions and human institutions by the ancient thinker contribute to a better
understanding of what we are doing?'

Gadamer's answer in brief is a return to Aristotelian philosophy that distinguishes
between two forms of human action: *poiesis* and *praxis*. The former refers to eco-
nomic life activities and the work by craftsmen and artisans whose end is known
prior to practical means applied to achieve it. The Greeks called it *technē*, that is,
technical expertise (knowledge, methods, skills) and instrumental means–ends rea-
soning. *Praxis*, on the other hand, refers to acquiring knowledge of what is 'good'
and promoting a morally worthwhile form of human life. This knowledge cannot be
theoretically determined in advance and can be acquired only in a particular con-
crete situation by the practitioners themselves who develop the capacity to make
wise judgments about doing 'the right thing in the right place at the right time in the
right way' (MacIntire, 1981: 141).

For Aristotle, *phronesis* is a method of ethical reasoning, including deliberation,
reflection and judgement. As Carr (2007: 138) explains:

> 'Deliberation' is necessary because, unlike *technē*, *phronesis* is not a methodological form
> of reasoning about how to achieve some specific end, but a deliberative process in which
> both means and ends are open to question. Such reasoning is reflective because the means
> are always modified by reflecting on the end just as an understanding of the end is always
> modified by reflecting on the means. And judgement is an essential element of *phronesis*
> because its outcome is a reasoned decision about what to do in a particular situation, that
> can be defended discursively and justified as appropriate to the circumstances in which it is
> applied.

However, I think that in the same line of argument, the choice, use and justifica-
tion of appropriate methods in PALAR are reasoned decisions about why and how
to address the issues in a particular situation.

Practical judgment – *phronesis* – to Aristotle is embedded in *praxis*, that is, in the
development of practical knowledge that guides praxis. Carr (2007: 139) concludes:

> . . . . practical philosophy is 'practical' in that it recognises that the knowledge that guides
> *praxis* always arises from and must always relate back to practice. And it is 'philosophical'
> in the sense that it seeks to raise the unreflectively acquired knowledge of the good embed-
> ded in *praxis* to the level of self-conscious awareness in order that practitioners may subject
> their pre-philosophical understanding of their practice to critical examination.

So Carr's thesis is that knowledge in practical philosophy (and action research)
arises from and guides action and praxis, and knowledge acquired without reflection
can be raised to conscious knowledge through critical reflection. There is no need
for technical application of methods to attain this knowledge. On the contrary, *mod-
ern preoccupation with methodology*, especially referring to Somekh's work, *has
distorted the character of human understanding and self-understanding*, because
practical knowledge and understanding can be developed and advanced by practi-
tioners only in dialogue and conversations that lead to insights into and collective
transformed understanding of their praxis. *These conversations have to be protected
from the dominion of research methodology.*

Antithesis

I suspect that the main reason why Somekh's (2006) book entitled *Action Research: A Methodology for Change and Development* is the focus of criticism in the above thesis is that in the introduction to her book, she has developed eight methodological principles grounded in her experience of working on AR projects for 25 years. These principles form the broad, inclusive definition of AR adopted in her book. In brief, these are the following. Action research

1. integrates research and action in a series of flexible cycles;
2. is conducted by a collaborative partnership of participants and researchers in ethical practices;
3. involves the development of knowledge and understanding of a unique kind that is not accessible to traditional researchers coming from outside;
4. starts from a vision of social transformation and aspirations for greater social justice for all;
5. involves a high level of reflexivity and sensitivity to the role of the self;
6. involves explorative engagement with a wide range of existing knowledge drawn from a variety of fields in the social sciences;
7. engenders powerful learning for participants through combining research with reflection on practice;
8. locates the inquiry in an understanding of broader historical, political and ideological contexts that shape and constrain human activity locally and globally.

These are principles, not technical rules and regulations. While I agree with Carr (2007) to a certain extent – that a technical approach to qualitative methods is not sufficient in action research – I believe that he has chosen the wrong example or he has not read Somekh's (2006) book, for she promotes a critical reflexivity and holistic approach to action research methodology, encouraging debate and discussion on alternatives. In her Foreword, Somekh (2006: 6) points out quite clearly:

> The eight methodological principles presented here are the outcome of this process [of reading and reflecting on her writings and experiences]. For clarity and simplicity they are stated briefly and they are definite for me, personally, at the time of writing this book. However, they are underpinned by ideas that are the subject of continuing debate among action researchers, many of whom will wish to take issue with either the principles themselves or their wording. Chapter 1 deals with some of this complexity and, ideally, the principles should be read in conjunction with Chapter 1.

Indeed, Chapter 1 of Somekh's book explains the philosophical and theoretical assumptions underpinning the action research principles. It refers to many of the traditions Carr (2007) refers to, such as Lewin's social psychology, Dewey and Mead's 'learning by doing', ideas of certain European philosophers (e.g. Habermas, Gadamer and Arendt), Foucault's ideas and influence on the post-modernist and deconstructive theories of social formation and change, Vygotsky's socio-cultural theories, the generation of 'actionable knowledge' (Elliott, 2007) and many others.

She even considers Aristotle's ways of knowing: *technē* (technical knowledge, building something new), *phronesis* (knowledge that combines reason and ethics as a basis for action) and *nous* (intuitive knowledge). These understandings of the nature of knowledge strengthen rather than weaken the argument for the importance of action research as a research methodology for the social sciences, because this methodology generates contextualized knowledge. Somekh (2006: 28) argues:

> Because of its contextualized nature, knowledge generated from action research is cautious in its claims, sensitive to variations and open to reinterpretation in new contexts. It is, therefore, not only more useful than traditional forms of knowledge as the basis for action but also more open than traditional forms of knowledge to accepting the challenge of its own socially constructed nature and provisionality.

As I said earlier, I believe that if Carr had read this book – and especially Chapter 1 – he would not have chosen this book as an example of a technical recipe book on AR methodology.

Synthesis

We accept the argument that democratic dialogue, ethical reasoning and practical judgement in praxis are of foremost importance to a practical philosophy of AR. On the other side of the coin, we reject the notion that all 'pre-occupation' with method or methodology is *technē*, i.e. technical application of rules and regulations and rigid quality requirements. Indeed, we realize that we need both philosophical debate and consideration or justification of the choices of, and reasons for, using certain methodologies and methods to achieve our democratic and ethical goals. Action research is an important methodology in the social sciences because it is flexible and it is open to debate, collective interpretation, reinterpretation and change on a continuous basis. This means that we endeavour to identify, clarify and share our (1) explicit, espoused, practical theory; (2) underlying, implicit theory-in-use and (3) choice and justification of using certain methods for addressing particular, complex problems or issues in our research.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I have argued for a new paradigm of learning and knowledge generation through PALAR, a paradigm that is located in the non-positivist, phenomenological tradition in the philosophy of science. This paradigm has been supported here by a theoretical framework, consisting of aspects of existing theories that are aligned with and underpin the theory and praxis of PALAR. These theories include those that have been most important and relevant to my professional praxis:

- Grounded theory
- Action theory
- Critical education theory

- Systems theory
- Personal construct theory
- Experiential learning theory

All of these theories were created in the twentieth century as a reaction against reductionism. All were used to critique positivist theories that broke down and studied phenomena in small elements and in terms of a single relationship – cause and effect – and then compiled these individual parts to generate knowledge and to understand the whole. In contrast, the theories and methodologies discussed in this and previous chapters focus on phenomena as emergent properties of an integrated whole. They see the individual as part of a collaborative group discussing and working together on how to advance practical and theoretical knowledge for the common good. This holistic and collaborative approach to studying social phenomena in the real world has the following advantages over traditional approaches to research and training:

- In *grounded theory*, solutions to problems, issues and challenging new questions are identified from collected data, analysis of this data and interpretation based on participants' practical life experience.
- In *action theory*, participants themselves are the agents of development and change who through trial and error, and individual and group reflection on and in action, come to understand their social situation/dilemmas and to know the factors that influence success or failure in personal, professional and action leadership for organization and community development and change.
- In *critical education theory*, participants as equal partners in 'symmetrical communication' are free to explore any way in which their situation under consideration can be improved, even if constraining conditions have to be removed or changed.
- In *systems theory*, participants take a systemic, holistic approach to inquiry and subsequent improvement of praxis.
- In *personal construct theory*, the researcher is not an unattached outside observer, but a facilitator of participants' construction of knowledge and their interpretation of this knowledge for their consequent behaviour, attitudes, values and responsibilities in real-life situations.
- In *experiential learning theory*, participants create knowledge and insights on the basis of concrete experience, reflecting on this experience, identifying their learning from reflection, forming abstract concepts/principles, testing these new concepts in new situations, and continuing the next cycle of concrete experience, observation and reflection, learning and conceptualization for new action.

The theories above, discussed in this chapter, can inform and strengthen or validate PALAR values, principles and practices, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, because of the following:

- There is an integration of action/development with research/knowledge creation in a way meaningful for participants.
- Active and pro-active democratic, social engagement and agency are promoted, rather than becoming re-active or passive victims of circumstances in society.
- Humankind is seen as 'personal scientists', 'reflective practitioners' and 'critical friends' helping one another, as action learners and action researchers.
- Discussion, debate and dialectic thinking are encouraged.
- Swift action, change and resolution of complex, unknown issues and challenging situations are encouraged and facilitated.

The above theories and principles explain why PALAR is among the most appropriate and effective practical theories and methodologies for people empowerment, taking charge of their own learning, teaching, and personal, professional and action leadership for organization and community development in present and future times of rapid change and unpredictability.

Discussion Starters

1. Explain *your* PALAR paradigm, theoretical framework and methodology in your own words.
2. What are the main questions/issues you would like to discuss with your colleagues?
3. Can you think of a dialectic in your work/life and reach a synthesis through a thesis and an antithesis?

Appendix 1

Repertory Grid Technique: Instructions and Forms for Participants

The purpose of the repertory grid technique is to elicit personal constructs of action research attributes and effectiveness,[7] to help people to construe their own theories-in-action, to negotiate their personal meaning and to evaluate the criteria of effectiveness of action research. The repertory grid form can be analysed manually, as described in this section, or by computer technology.

The following instructions are a revised version of the guidelines originally developed by Diamond and Zuber-Skerritt (1986) for elicitation of research constructs, their ratings, scoring and interpreting the grid, and later adapted for other topics, such as postgraduate supervision (Zuber-Skerritt and Roche, 2004) and action research (Zuber-Skerritt, 2008).

Instructions for Elicitation of Constructs

1. Think about action researchers whom you know personally or whom you have observed/studied. On the repertory grid elicitation form that follows (p. 105) and in the boxes headed ELEMENTS, indicate as follows:

- E1 – An ideal action researcher
- E2 – Me as an action researcher
- E3 – An example of a good action researcher
- E4 – An example of a poor action researcher
- E5 – Another example of a good action researcher
- E6 – Another example of a poor action researcher

2. On the 'Repertory Grid Elicitation Form' there are three circles marked in each of the horizontal rows. The circles indicate the order in which you will compare the elements (action researchers). In line 1 you will be comparing E1, E2, E3. In each row you will be comparing different action researchers.

    Note: Remember that there are no right or wrong answers in this exercise!

3. Focus on the elements (action researchers) that are marked with circles in line 1 and think about how two are similar and different from the third. Put a cross through the two circles that you think are the most *similar*. Try to think of the most distinguishing characteristic that the two action researchers have in common and write this down under the left-hand column marked *emergent construct* (1–3 words).

4. In the column marked *implicit construct*, write down the characteristic or attribute that distinguishes the third action researcher from the other two (1–3 words).

5. Repeat the process with the next lines 2–8 making sure that you compare only the *elements that are marked with circles.* Do not forget to mark a cross through the circles of the elements that are similar in each comparison made.

Instructions for Ratings

1. Rate each action researcher (element) on a 5-point scale against the constructs that you have developed. A score of 1 means *most like the construct* and a score of 5 means *least like the construct.* If you feel that any of the elements cannot be scored on the constructs, give a score of 3. With each construct rating, start with the action researchers whom you originally compared to elicit the construct, in order to get some kind of scale. It is logical that at least one of the elements that helped develop the construct will have a score of 1 or 2 (most like) and the element that was different will have a score of 4 or 5 (least like).

2. Work your way through the ratings until you have completed the rating of all elements on each of the constructs.

3. Your final task, using the same rating scale as before, is to rate each element (action researcher) on overall *effectiveness.*

Instructions for Scoring and Interpreting the Grid (Hand Scoring Method)

We will be computing difference scores between the overall effectiveness rating and the constructs that you developed. A low difference score will denote a high

relationship and a high difference score will indicate a low relationship with the overall construct of what makes for effective action research. You will be able to rank each of the constructs in order of relationship to the overall construct at the end of the exercise.

1. On one side of a *post-it*, write down the ratings that you gave to the elements for overall effectiveness, e.g. 4, 1, 1, 5, 2, 4. On the opposite side of the *post-it*, reverse the scores you have just written down, making sure that they are referring to the same elements so that 4 becomes 2, 1 becomes 5, etc.
2. Turn to the ratings of constructs in the columns going down the page and put the *post-it* edge under the first row of ratings in line with those that you have written on the *post-it.* Compute the difference between the overall effectiveness ratings and the construct ratings listed in the row. Add up the differences. Record the difference score on the right hand of the form. If you find that you have a difference score over 12, turn your post-*it* around so that you are computing the differences from the reversed scores. In this case, append a letter *R* to the summed difference score. Where the reversed summed score is lower than the original, it indicates that the construct and comparison descriptions need to be switched around, so if you had *unfriendly* as the emergent construct and *friendly* as the implicit construct, the emergent construct becomes *friendly* and the implicit construct becomes *unfriendly.* Circle the lowest scores (including reversed scores) for each construct pair that you will use for ranking of constructs.
3. Rank the constructs from low difference score to high difference score. The constructs that have the lowest difference scores will be most closely associated with your perception of effective action research. The highest scoring items are least associated with your perceptions of effectiveness.
4. Take the three highest ranking items and write them on the post-its supplied and then post them on the board for construct clustering. These clusters will help us develop a theory of an *effective action researcher.*
5. Consider your scores as an action researcher (E2) on the constructs. How do you rate yourself compared to an ideal action researcher? What are your strengths and needs for further development?

Repertory grid elicitation form: Effectiveness constructs for action research
Name/date: ....**..**

Emergent construct	Elements						Implicit construct
	E1	E2	E3	E4	E5	E6	
What attributes do two of the action researchers have in common?							How is the third action researcher different?
1	o	o	o				
2				o	o	o	
3	o		o		o		
4		o		o		o	
5	o	o		o			
6			o		o	o	
7		o	o		o		
8	o			o		o	
9 *Effective*							*Ineffective*

Notes

1. Reprinted from Zuber-Skerritt (2009: 106) with permission from Sense Publishers.
2. Symmetrical communication is a term used in the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. It means, for example, that in a PALAR group/team all are equal and contribute equally to the project, although differently according to their individual talents, gifts, skills and knowledge.
3. This book is out of print and I hold the copyright.
4. Reprinted from Zuber-Skerritt (2009: 111) with permission from Sense Publishers as above.

5. Reprinted with permission of the journal editors.
6. This term includes manual and computer-generated compilation and analysis of the repertory grid technique.
7. An earlier version of these instructions and the repertory grid form was created by Diamond and Zuber-Skerritt (1986).

Part II
Action Leadership Development and Applications

Part I has provided the philosophical and theoretical frameworks for PALAR as an appropriate and effective methodology for professional and action leadership development. Part II introduces the main issues and concerns of action leadership development in higher education (Chapter 5), in management education for organization development (Chapter 6) and in community development in economically developed and developing countries (Chapter 7).

Chapter 5
Action Leadership Development in Higher Education

Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day.
Teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.
Chinese Philosopher Lao Tsu

Chapter Overview

This chapter focuses on PALAR applications in higher education (HE), turning first to professional development (PD) – improving learning, teaching and academic staff development – and then to action leadership development (ALD). Practical improvements in HE have been slow due to the low priority that universities give to pre- and in-service training and professional development of university teachers. This chapter therefore explains the need for positive change and how to achieve it. The arguments in this chapter are informed by the theoretical framework presented in the previous chapters of Part I. The section on PD focuses on the relevance to higher education of Leontiev's theory of action and of one of my PD models of action research (CRASP). Examples illustrate how principles of learning – by both students and academic staff – can be interpreted using Leontiev's theoretical framework, the CRASP model and other theories. The resulting dynamic model of HE may be applied, adapted or extended by readers according to their own purposes. The section on ALD focuses on the main principles of action leadership, characteristics of a respected action leader and three levels of leadership in higher education.

The chapter contributes to a new paradigm and model of self-developed action leadership in higher education in the light of Covey's 'principle-centred leadership' (Covey, 1992), Maxwell's 'indispensable qualities of a leader' (Maxwell, 1999) and the action learning concept of 'failing forward' (Maxwell, 2000), that is, turning mistakes into stepping stones for success. This chapter offers a new model of action leadership in higher education that integrates heart and head in a holistic way, combining EQ and IQ, soft and hard, qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, process management and knowledge management.

Introduction

All too often education research findings published in books and journals of higher education have had little impact on the day-to-day practice of university and college teachers. There are two main reasons for this failure. One is the expectation of researchers that the practitioners, i.e. the tertiary teachers, should simply apply the knowledge and principles generated by theorists to their practice. This technocratic view has been rejected by the majority of university academics who, in their own discipline, have been trained to be autonomous, responsible, critical, independent and creative teachers and researchers. Second, academics reject the psychological jargon in which most quantitative, educational research papers and books are written. My own experience suggests that university teachers are the most effective people to do research into their own teaching practice and to publish their results in a language that is easily accessible to their peers. Other tertiary teachers in similar situations may be guided by the action researchers' findings, and encouraged to conduct their own action research projects.

In this chapter, action research is understood as team research carried out by practitioners into their own practice, rather than by specialists on their behalf from the sidelines. It is carried out as a spiral of cycles, each consisting of problem analysis, strategic planning, action, reflective observation, critical evaluation and abstract conceptualization. It aims to improve or advance learning, teaching, professional and action leadership development. Also, it is an important means of integrating, rather than dichotomizing, theory and practice. So, when specifically related to higher education, action research means research undertaken by university or college teachers into their own teaching practice, and into issues of curriculum and student learning. In this way, action research is confirmed as an effective means of professional development.

For example, as I have demonstrated in an intensive case study situated within an Australian university (Zuber-Skerritt, 2008), action research proved to be the most effective method of professional development for seven academics involved in six different kinds of PD activities. I have also shown that university teachers are capable of advancing knowledge in higher education by generating educational theory from their research into, and reflection upon, their teaching practice. My audit or evidence-based trail is constituted by joint publications with university teachers

published in prestigious Australian and international journals of higher education, and by the successful use of these publications accepted as documentation and evidence of excellent teaching to support and inform personnel decisions concerning tenure and promotion (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992b). So I argue that it is demonstrably worthwhile passing on such experienced knowledge to others that action research in higher education can be very effective, that is, if carried out systematically and if based on a theoretical framework underpinned by cognitive, experiential and critical theories of learning. Collecting, distributing and reflecting on knowledge generation in such an explicit way is a significant task for any university.

The basic epistemological assumptions behind action research are based on notions such as 'the personal scientist' (Kelly, 1963), 'the teacher as researcher' (Stenhouse, 1975) and 'the reflective practitioner' (Schön, 1983), as explained in Chapters 2 and 4, and as each academic as a professional leader as discussed below. These inquirers come to know by a problem-posing and problem-solving process, through their action or (research/teaching) 'activity' and through critical reflection on that process and action. They consciously control their action, which also has an imprint on their cognitive and affective systems (Leontiev, 1977). Other theories that are relevant to the practice and procedures of action research in higher education include Revans' concept of action learning and Lewin's field theory, Kolb's experiential learning theory and Carr and Kemmis' model of action research as critical education science. Since these theories have been explained in previous chapters, this chapter focuses mainly on Leontiev's work and on my CRASP model, and how they may relate most effectively to professional development – improving student learning, teaching and academic staff development – and to action leadership development in higher education. First, we consider PD and then LD in higher education.

Professional Development in Higher Education

In this section, I briefly explain Leontiev's theory of action as part of a theoretical model of action research and action leadership.[1] I explain why this model is particularly appropriate for university teachers to adopt today, followed by examples of action research projects at an Australian university undertaken as a case study. Reflections on the case include comments in relation to Kelly's theory, Leontiev's theory, critical education science and to the CRASP model.

Leontiev's Theory of Action

Leontiev's work is relatively unknown in English-speaking countries because it has been published mainly in Russian and German. The previous chapter outlined the main concepts of Leontiev's action theory and his basic model or 'subject–action–object' schema (see Fig. 4.3), which I use as the basis and develop further in this

chapter. Here I discuss new models of (1) student learning, (2) academic staff learning (about their teaching) and (3) academic staff development, with particular reference to action research into university learning, teaching and professional development of academic staff.

A Model of Student Learning

If the basic model (Fig. 4.3) is applied to active student learning (Fig. 5.1), students are seen to have conscious or inside-out control over their own learning, rather than to be merely responding to stimuli from teachers or from the outside in. Students' study and learning activities achieve certain tasks in the curriculum and may indeed lead to developments or changes in the curriculum. On the other hand, the learning tasks and conditions may also impede effective learning.

A Model of Academic Staff Activities

The same basic model of action may be applied to staff learning and to their main professional activities and responsibilities: research, teaching, administration and community services. The different aspects of the academics' action can be associated with the appropriate aspects of the object as shown in Fig. 5.2.

A Model of Staff Development

Staff development is simply defined as the professional development of university teachers particularly through the advice and assistance of educational advisors called staff developers. Figure 5.3 is an extension of Leontiev's basic model and an adaptation of Heger's (1986: 68) evaluation model. It is an overlap of two subject–action–object schemata. Here two sets of subjects have differentiated objects sharing common intentions and tasks, which are partly congruent in staff development activities. The three double strands can be described as follows.

The subject is represented by academics from two groups: the teaching staff (subject 1) and the staff developers (subject 2). People in both categories may be employed full- or part-time by the university in three ways. They may be
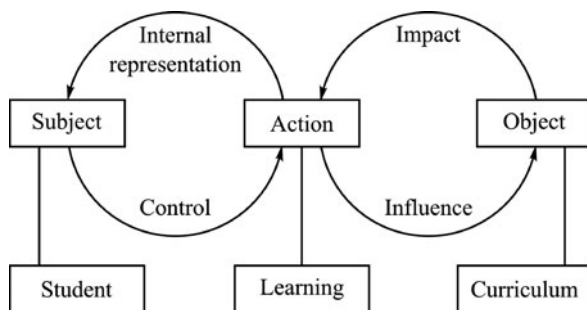
Fig. 5.1 A model of student learning
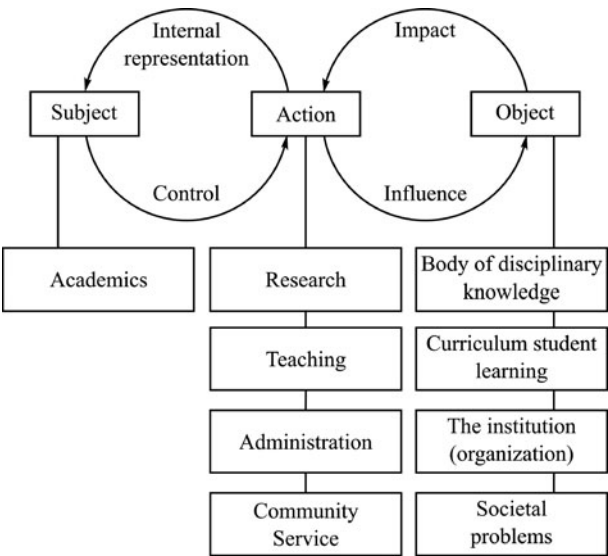
Fig. 5.2 A model of academic staff activities
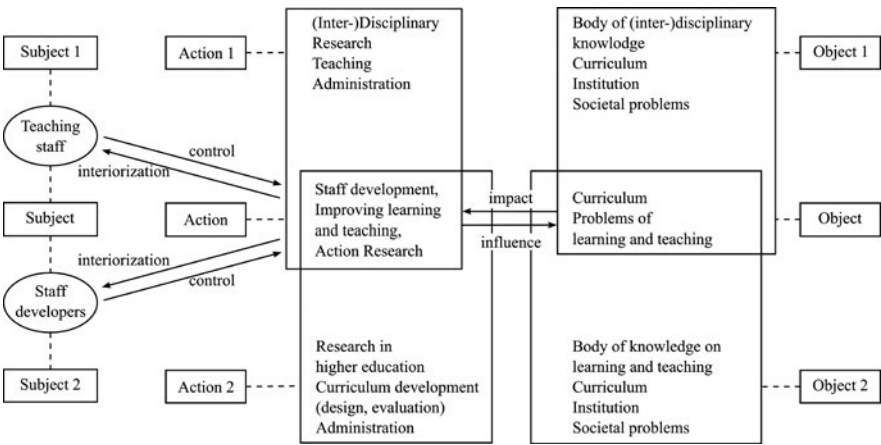
Fig. 5.3 A model of staff development

outside experts on a short-term contract, general or academic staff on a fixed-term appointment or academics in a special department/unit/centre in continuing employment.

The action consists of an overlap of two fields of action – the activities of teaching staff (action 1), such as teaching, (inter-)disciplinary research and administration; and those of the staff developers or educational advisors (action 2), such as research in higher education, curriculum design and evaluation/review and administration. Where these two fields of action overlap, there is a possibility for joint action, such

as staff development through improving university learning and teaching, or action research.

The object, too, consists of an overlap of two objects: the object of the teaching staff (object 1), which includes (inter-)disciplinary tasks or problems, the curriculum, the institution and societal problems; and the object of staff developers (object 2), which includes problems of learning, teaching, curriculum, the institution and society. The overlap of the two objects shows the mutual tasks in staff development at which all activities are aimed: improving learning, teaching and curriculum within the context of the university.

Some principles of learning apply to teaching staff as well as students and match Leontiev's theoretical framework. The first is that the action of learning should be as concrete and practical as possible in the early stages of studying a new area of knowledge, in order to facilitate 'internal representation' (see Fig. 5.1). Gradually, the action may become more and more abstract as the process of interiorization and consciousness develops progressively in the learner.

The second principle is that the degree of consciousness depends on the extent to which actions – whether practical/concrete or mental/abstract – are interiorized in the learner. Important constituents of interiorization are language, communication with others and active reflection. It should be emphasized that 'interiorization' is meant not only as a mirror-effect of the action of learning on the learner but also as his/her own affective reaction to, and reflective thinking about, the content and processes of learning. Mere internalization of action, i.e. storage of information or events and accumulating them in one's memory, is the lowest level of thinking. To reach higher levels of abstraction (generalizations and theory), learners must progressively think more actively, reflectively, critically, self-critically and creatively. Language, in both its oral and written forms, provides an instrument to reach more and more advanced levels of theory. From this mediational viewpoint, concepts and the language that infuses and extends them give power and strategy to cognitive activity or growth of the mind. This then enables one to theorize more powerfully through discussions with others and through writing a report or paper to an imagined audience than through rote learning or thinking in isolation of others.

The third principle of learning and teaching that supports Leontiev's theory of action is that the existing knowledge and skills of students and staff should be utilized in action learning. Action learning (e.g. by doing, experiencing and participating through discussion, problem solving, project work, etc.) and meta-learning (e.g. reflecting on the processes of learning, evaluating, etc.) are possible because of previous experience and existing knowledge of staff and students in most areas of learning. Their minds present not *tabulae rasae* but storehouses full of life experiences that staff and students can use as a base for, and link to, the new knowledge and skills to be learnt.

The fourth principle relates to the dialectical relationship between institutional requirements and the learners' needs in a rapidly changing world. On the one hand, active learning and meta-learning may influence the learners' tasks or conditions through open discussions between staff and students, through students' evaluation of courses and of teaching, through representation on committees, etc. On the

other hand, university conditions, requirements, expectations and rules have a great impact on learning. They may even restrict or prevent active learning. For example, an assessment system with 100% end-of-semester/term examinations is likely to encourage rote learning (surface approach) and to discourage active learning (deep-meaning approach). It follows that an open, critical and self-critical university community provides the ideal environment for continuously adjusting to find the right balance between the institution's requirements and the learners' needs as they are negotiated in a constantly evolving society. This means, with reference to Figs. 4.3, 5.1 and 5.2, that the strength of the 'influence' and 'impact' arrows would be about equal, whereas in the present university climate in many countries, the 'impact' arrow is considerably stronger. Indeed, in some traditional departments, the 'influence' arrow is almost non-existent. This principle is important to student learning as well as staff activity and professional development.

Leontiev's theory has further implications for staff learning. With reference to Fig. 5.2, learning is the interaction of the subject (i.e. the academic staff) with the object (i.e. knowledge, tasks, problems) through action (i.e. research and teaching). In research, as well as in teaching, staff are concerned with specific, concrete, material, tangible actions, which have to be considered in the context of their practice, e.g. the imparted values and cultural traditions from which they come. In the same way as staff learn about their disciplined knowledge through doing research, they can learn about problems of student learning and curriculum development through their professional praxis, that is, through critical reflection on their teaching practice.

With reference to Fig. 5.3, teaching staff and staff developers may collaborate in areas where their objects overlap (i.e. in areas of the curriculum and problems of learning and teaching) through joint actions (such as action research) aimed at improving learning, teaching and staff development activities. Before discussing examples of such action research projects and publications, I present a rationale for the use of action research in universities.

Action Research in Higher Education: The CRASP Model

Action research has been generally successful in social work, industry, business and in teacher education at the primary and secondary levels. But how feasible is it at the tertiary level? At least five reasons explain why action research at the tertiary level, too, can lead to a better understanding and improvement of learning, teaching and staff development, as well as to a more critical reflection on an institution's status quo operations and on its role and functions in society. These five reasons, summarized in the acronym CRASP, relate to the development of the following:

- *C*ritical attitude
- *R*esearch into teaching
- *A*ccountability
- *S*elf-evaluation and
- *P*rofessionalism as teachers

Critical Attitude

The development of critical thinking in students is one of the major goals of higher education. That means their teachers must be masters of critical thinking. The development of critical practice and critical reflection is one of the salient features of action research. Indeed, *critique* (in the Habermas sense) of all social practice, not only in the educational context but also in the wider social context of a community, a state or a nation, is an important role and function of a tertiary institution in its contributions to knowledge and discourse.

Research into Teaching

Research into teaching is not only possible for academics as personal scientists and reflective practitioners but also likely to have a more powerful effect on the improvement of learning, teaching and staff development than so-called fundamental research produced by educational theorists. It appears that basic educational research has not had a great impact on the practice of university teaching and learning. Communication is lacking between university teachers (here referred to as practitioners) and educational researchers about the appropriateness of their different knowledge agendas. I have argued in Chapter 3 that the division between educational theory by researchers on the one hand and educational practice of university teachers on the other has resulted in educational ineffectiveness or in the estrangement of theory and practice. The underlying assumptions for this separation of theory and practical application are based implicitly on a kind of behaviourism that regards students as passive respondents to teachers' stimuli and teachers as relatively mindless technicians applying certain techniques of transmitting knowledge and skills to students, and putting into practice the ideas and research findings developed by educational researchers. Although these assumptions have resiliently survived in higher education, they are contrary to the goals of university education, especially the major goal of developing critical and self-critical thinking. It is unreasonable, therefore, to expect academics to apply and translate theories (developed by educational researchers) into their practice uncritically and technocratically.

Action research integrates theory and practice. Thus, action research by practitioners into their own teaching practice seems to be more appropriate than educational research conducted by theorists and applied by practitioners. Action researchers' teaching practice might be informed by theory but should not be bound totally by the normative prescriptions of high-level and often ecologically invalid theories. Instead, practitioners may arrive at a qualitatively based educational theory and knowledge, appropriate to their own situation, through reflection and criticism directly of their practice. For example, academics could critically analyse a major problem they share with other colleagues, plan a strategy of action, implement and evaluate the action programme and reflect on the results, analyse them for further action and proceed to a continuation of another cycle in the action research spiral until a satisfactory solution has been found. Here I shall present some concrete examples that have culminated in action research reports or journal articles.

These contribute not only to the participants' personal and professional development and the advancement of knowledge in higher education but also, in a sense, to the university's accountability as a knowledge-building community.

Accountability

Accountability of higher education institutions to society has become a more and more pressing issue in the last two decades. For example, in Australia, higher education has become a focus of attention and debate since the Federal Government's White Paper (Dawkins, 1988). This was marked by a narrow conceptual vocabulary limited to free market considerations. I argue that, whatever changes universities must make because of cuts in or targeting of government funding, reviews and revisions of curricula are most effectively carried out by academics themselves on the basis of their own action research, rather than on academic policies and curriculum decisions imposed upon them by the government or the institutional administration. Action research by academics into their own curricula may contribute to safeguarding institutional autonomy and to avoiding excessive government control. The reports and publications resulting from emancipatory action research may form part of the institution/department/school's ongoing responsibility to provide documentation of, and accountability for, the effectiveness of its teaching programmes; owned self-evaluation is preferable to evaluation imposed from outside. Merely attaining adequate levels of accountability pales beside the prospect of continual transformation of perspective and renewed social action.

Self-evaluation

Self-evaluation of teaching performance, of individual courses and of whole programmes by the practitioners themselves, individually as well as in teams, is at the very heart of action research. It is the machine by which the goal can be reached, i.e. the improvement of the learning/teaching practice, the improved understanding of practice by the practitioners (individually and collaboratively) and the improvement of the situation in which the action takes place.

Apart from the need for accountability and the preference for self-evaluation over outside evaluation, there is another rationale and incentive for academic staff to engage in action research, namely the self-satisfaction flowing from greater professional development and the external rewards that publications resulting from action research will bring. Teaching and research need not necessarily be isolated activities. Action research is an ideal procedure for linking and integrating theory and practice. Research and teaching can be married, to the advantage of both and of the academic and students.

Professionalism

Importantly, action research can contribute to the professionalism of teachers in higher education. In the last two decades, there has been a growing professional

awareness among university teachers who traditionally have not had any formal training (as primary and secondary school teachers have) but who are willing to seek ways of better understanding and mastering their work. Most universities are now offering a variety of opportunities for PD, including accredited degree programmes in higher education at the postgraduate certificate, diploma, master's and professional doctorate levels. I take professionalism of academics to mean their involvement in the educational research and theory on which to base their practice and participation in decisions about the broader context in which they operate. Instead of leaving these decisions and the formulation of their educational, theoretical framework to outside experts and basic educational researchers, academics can be active participants in the process. As a result, they will be changed from uncritical technocrats to critical (and self-critical) action researchers studying university teaching and student learning.

To sum up, the CRASP model assumes that action research by academics, both into their curricula and into student learning, will have a direct and positive impact on their own teaching and professional development. The model seems to be particularly appropriate to the goals of higher education in recent years, i.e. being *critical*; bridging the gap between *research and teaching*; *accountability* to the outside world through reports and publications; *self-evaluation* rather than outside control and *professionalism* in tertiary teaching.

These goals have been stated and demanded frequently in recent years, but they have not been achieved satisfactorily because they are difficult to put into practice. Action research may provide a practical solution to this problem. Through collaborative, participative and systemic action research, tertiary teachers can become more professional, more interested in pedagogical aspects of higher education and more motivated to integrate their research and teaching interests in a holistic way. This, in turn, leads to greater job satisfaction, better academic programmes, improvement of student learning and practitioners' insights and contributions to the advancement of knowledge in higher education.

Educational researchers may stimulate, encourage and facilitate the action research process and provide relevant advice and references for the practitioners' analysis and solution of problems. Joint findings can be disseminated in educational or professional journals. There are also many professional associations and networks for academics and academic staff developers, running national and international conferences that provide a forum for presentation and discussion of ideas and PALAR projects. Examples include the UK-based CARN (Collaborative Action Research Network), the international ALARA (Action Learning Action Research Association) and PAR (Participatory Action Research) Network.

Examples of Action Research as Professional Development

This section presents a case study of university teachers (from lecturer to professorial level) in an interdisciplinary school at one university in Australia who conducted action research projects in collaboration with academic development staff. The case

consists of three action research spirals aiming at course/programme review to improve learning, teaching, curriculum and professional development. In general terms, these action researchers carried out the following activities:

1. Identifying and analysing a problem in the curriculum;
2. Designing strategies for solving the problem;
3. Implementing and testing the strategies;
4. Evaluating the effectiveness of these strategies;
5. Reflecting on the results as a team;
6. Reaching conclusions and/or newly identified problems;
7. Repeating this cycle again or several times, until satisfied with their improved practice;
8. Reporting on their findings, usually first in an internal report to a programme committee, board or the divisional standing committee, and then, in the light of this discussion and the committee's resolutions, either repeating an action research cycle, if warranted, or writing up a research paper. This paper would be first presented and discussed at a conference, and then revised and submitted to a journal of higher education.

This action research was initiated by university teachers – as individuals, teaching teams, programme committees, course or programme convenors or as members of the standing committee – and not by external researchers. My role as academic development staff member can best be described as facilitator. All team members contributed in various ways and learned from one another as they discussed their aims and tasks (described above in 1–8). The co-authored publications reflect this team spirit and 'symmetrical communication'. These projects certainly provided a challenging, highly satisfying and enjoyable experience for all involved. They confirmed my theories of action research in higher education (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992c) and actually followed the action research process, but they also turned out to have a multiplier effect. They appeared to provide an incentive for several other academics in the division to participate in action research projects. They also made an impact on the development of critical and holistic thinking among students in the division.

In these course/programme reviews a common thematic concern for several action research projects was the development of learning skills at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, in the substantive context of this interdisciplinary school. One of the major problems faced in that school was a heterogeneous student population with varying levels and types of knowledge and basic skills. How to help students develop their learning skills was a pressing issue because of a shortage of enrolments and the need to prevent high drop-out rates. A similar problem applies with students in equity programmes who have gained access to a university but who lack prerequisite knowledge and skills to varying extents.

Figure 5.4 presents the spiral of action research in three stages, each consisting of several cycles (not shown). The three stages represent action research into (1) developing student learning skills in a first-year (Foundation) programme;
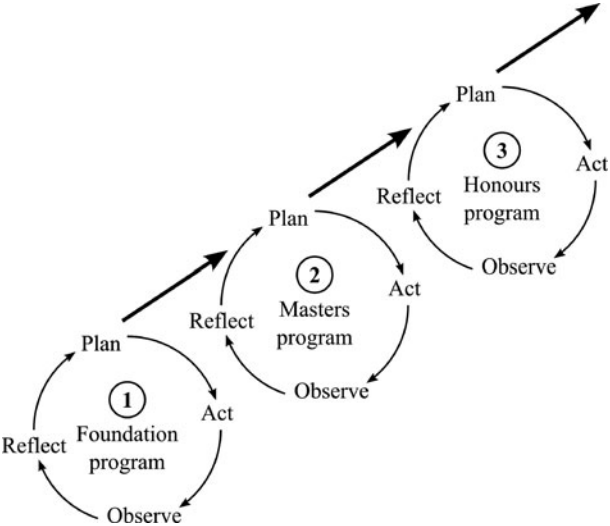
Fig. 5.4 The spiral of action research into developing student learning skills

(2) developing skills in dissertation research and writing in a Master-by-Coursework programme and (3) also an Honours course on 'Problems and Methods in Research'. For further details, see Zuber-Skerritt (1992b).

　　Finally, I asked the seven university teachers who had been involved in these three action research projects to participate in a study of personal constructs of professional development (Zuber-Skerritt, 2008), using the repertory grid technique based on Kelly's personal construct theory discussed in Chapter 4. The grid is sometimes considered as the acceptably quantitative face of an essentially qualitative approach. Of the six different approaches to professional development experienced by all seven academics (and used as the common 'elements' in the grid), action research was rated as the most effective, i.e. average 1.3 on a 5-point ranking scale, the lowest score representing the highest rank (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Effectiveness ratings of various methods of professional development (Zuber-Skerritt, 2008: 98)[2]

Staff member	Action research	Trial and error	Reading	Class observation	Formal sessions	Top-down advice
1	1	3	3	2	2	4
2	2	5	2	1	5	3
3	1	2	4	2	3	5
4	1	5	3	4	2	5
5	1	4	2	2	1	3
6	2	3	5	4	3	3
7	1	5	3	3	2	4
Average	1.3	3.9	3.1	2.6	2.6	3.9

The action researchers' views of the nature of, and criteria for, effective professional development closely match the characteristics of action research. They believe that professional development is likely to be effective if it involves a process of learning by experience, with active staff involvement in information gathering and problem solving, and if it is personally and consciously initiated, thought through and implemented on the basis of their own needs rather than controlled from outside.

In addition to these attributes, action research requires of, and promotes in, action researchers the principles of the CRASP model: *c*ritical, collaborative reflection on practice and on the conditions within which this practice takes place; *r*esearch into the teaching practice as an ongoing and systematic spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting; *a*ccountability and justification of the academic values of their practice; *s*elf-evaluation and *p*rofessionalism.

Reflections on the Case

I briefly summarize here my reflections on this case of action research into student learning and research skills with respect to (1) Kelly's theory, (2) Leontiev's theory, (3) critical education science and (4) the CRASP model.

The Case in Relation to Kelly's Theory

The 'personal scientists' involved in the present case were the convenors of the courses, the teaching teams, the students and myself as a teacher as well as an academic development staff member. Each stage has shown how each group of participants came to know and learn: Students learnt to identify the processes of their learning and how they may influence these processes. Staff learnt to identify with students the problems in their practice and how to alleviate the problems. I learnt to discern the processes by which we all, students, staff and myself, may influence our own learning, understanding and address systemic educational constraints. All of us experienced Kelly's theory in action in this case: that we need not merely accept and apply theories, rules and principles to our tasks (of studying, teaching, administration) in a technical manner but that we are personal scientists capable of construing our own and others' experiences, anticipating and predicting future events, and testing and submitting them to critical reflection and self-reflection. Kelly's repertory grid technique was used in the last cycle of the case to elicit staff and students' personal constructs of PD effectiveness (Zuber-Skerritt, 2008).

The Case in Relation to Leontiev's Theory

With reference to this particular case of course/programme reviews by action research, Leontiev's model may be adapted as shown in Fig. 5.5.

The action in this case consists of the course review activities as action research, i.e. as the spiral of three action research cycles. The subject in control of the action
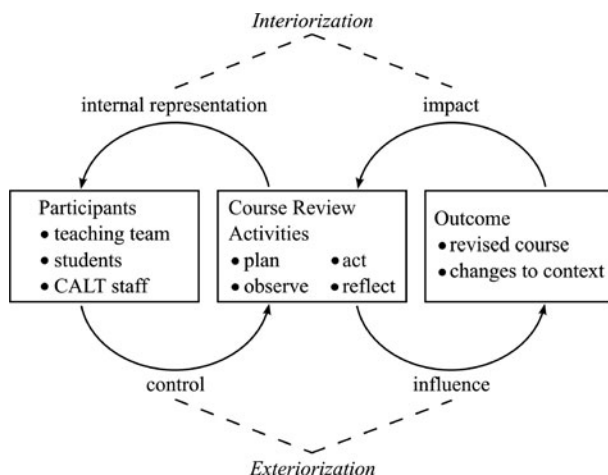
Fig. 5.5 The case of course reviews as action research

is the teaching staff in collaboration with the students and academic development staff in CALT (Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching), all of whom have an influence on the outcomes of the reviews (i.e. the revised courses) and on changes made to the educational context in order to reduce those constraints which impede meaningful learning (e.g. changes to the tutorial system). These outcomes and changes, in turn, had an impact on course reviews in this division generally, and in these three programmes specifically, where the revised courses were the starting point for any future review. The participants in this case have also been affected by the review activities. The interiorization (and learning) process of reflecting on the action of the participants as personal scientists has been discussed above. It is important to note that the agents in this case are not only the representatives of the institution (e.g. the committees) but also those affected by the outcome of the action and subsequent decisions. Therefore, it is important that educational action research includes the perspectives of students as well as of teaching staff and that it is not conducted by 'expert' researchers parachuted in from the outside, but by the teachers themselves. The role of the academic development staff is that of a facilitator and critical friend who constantly reminds the team of the institutional goals and constraints. An institution is not static but dynamically changed in the process of critical debate by its members. Not only are staff and students shaped by the university but also the university is shaped by its staff and students.

The Case in Relation to Critical Education Science

The last stage in the action research of this case, namely developing research skills in the Honours Programme (see Fig. 5.4), may be considered as a form of emancipatory action research because it fulfils Carr and Kemmis' (1986: 127–128) five requirements that any approach to educational theory and research needs to meet

(see Chapter 4). Thus, the results of action research in this case may be considered as critical education science. As to the first requirement, knowledge was actively created, rather than regarded as objective and with a purely instrumental value, and educational issues were solved in theory *and* practice, rather than seen as technical in nature (*rejection of positivist notions of rationality, objectivity and truth*). Second, this action research was grounded in the interpretations of the teaching staff (*employing the interpretive categories of teachers*) and led to the teachers developing consciousness, which shaped their practice (*reality*). Third, the practice in this course that had originally distorted teachers' consciousness of their ideological beliefs was critically examined, self-critically reflected upon and reviewed (*overcoming distorted self-understanding*). Fourth, teachers recognized that some of the aims they were pursuing (or not) were not so much the result of conscious choice as of the constraints within the educational context (*identifying and overcoming those aspects of the existing social order that frustrate the pursuit of rational goals*). Fifth, the teachers and I recognized through our publications that educational theory is practical (*in the sense that the question of its truth will be determined by the ways in which it relates to practice*) and that it must be oriented towards transforming the ways in which teachers see themselves and towards transforming the situations which hinder achievement of desirable educational and community goals.

The Case in Relation to the CRASP Model

The CRASP model may also be seen in relation to the specific case study of this chapter, which confirmed the assumption of the model that action research by the university teachers themselves into their curriculum and into student learning has a direct and positive impact on their own teaching and professional development. Table 5.2 is a brief specification of each of the five requirements of action research in higher education using examples from the case. Table 5.2 summarizes the case in relation to the CRASP model.

Critical Attitude

Earlier course reviews in this division, for which the university commissioned external evaluators, were not conducive to developing a constructively critical attitude

Table 5.2 The case in relation to the CRASP model

C	Critical attitude	Critique of status quo in practice and context
R	Research into teaching	Identifying and solving problems in the curriculum and student learning through AR
A	Accountability	Justification of the academic value of a course or programme
S	Self-evaluation	Self-reflection and self-evaluation, inviting students/others to provide critical comments
P	Professionalism	Professional development, encompassing the above four requirements

among the teaching staff themselves in the division. The university/school had an ideal or a transmissive model of what university teaching should entail and requested staff to comply with that norm. However, in stages 1–3 of the case (Fig. 5.4), the teams were critical of the status quo situation in which students were required to display certain skills that were assessed but not taught. As a result, the teams were motivated to improve this situation by research into teaching and active learning.

Research into Teaching

The teaching teams planned the strategic action (i.e. course reviews; workshops on student learning and research skills); acted (conducted the reviews and workshops); observed the action and invited feedback from students and other participants and reflected on the observation data. As a result, they produced a report/paper. Apart from intrinsic satisfaction, learning and professional development, this served to satisfy demands for accountability.

Accountability

Accountability has three forms that depend on whether the request for it comes externally from a government body or internally from the institutional administration, or whether accountability is intrinsically valued by the staff as continuing self-evaluation. The earlier examples of course evaluation in which the data had been collected by external evaluators were often concerned with accountability to the university (and staff paid mere lip service to the changes), rather than with a justification of the academic values of the course. However, in this case study the teaching staff of the Foundation Course, the Master's and the Honours programmes were personally interested in, and felt responsible for, justifying the academic value of the course/component they were developing. The issue of accountability as bureaucratically imposed versus the justification of a programme/course is related to the value of extrinsic evaluation versus self-evaluation.

Self-evaluation

Justifying one's practice means also anticipating critique from others. This necessitates self-critique, rigorous self-evaluation and self-reflection. Self-evaluation is so vital that, without it, CRASP loses its 'S'.

Professional Development

The above four requirements lead to professional development. Professional university teachers are not expected to take and carry out orders from above them in a technical manner, but *critically* to examine the implications for educational practices and conditions and to challenge the accepted order if necessary. Professionals feel responsible for their actions and therefore *research* and revise their practice constantly so that they can justify it as intrinsic *accountability* after self-reflection

and *self-evaluation*. The convenors and the teaching teams in this case have fulfilled the requirements of genuine *professionalism*.

Limitations

The main problem with engaging academics in action research is helping them realize their arguments about time constraints and lack of institutional rewards (*external values*) for educational action research activities are bureaucratic and self-defeating. Unless university teachers control their own practice as true professionals displaying a critical, inquiring attitude, researching and justifying the academic value of their practice through continuing self-evaluation and professional development (*the CRASP model*), their own integrity and that of the university is jeopardized through outside control.

Another limitation in this case was that only the course convenors were actively involved in documenting and writing the reports/papers, which constitute the highest degree of self-reflection and heightened understanding of the problem(s), of their own practice and of the total situation. There is scope for improvement and further research and development of how to encourage academic staff to engage in educational action research and to co-author publications in this field.

Conclusions from the Case

Leontiev's subject–action–object model of the active growth of mind may serve as a theoretical framework for university learning, teaching and staff development, all of which are conceived as conscious, active and ongoing processes of learning and knowing. But how can this model of university learning, teaching and staff development, or any other educational theory, be enacted in practice? The relationship between the results of research and effective action based upon it in university practice is an important issue and constitutes a valuable area for future research and development in higher education. One of these possibilities to integrate theory and practice is action research – defined as research by the university academics themselves into their own teaching practice and into student learning with the assistance of educational advisors. These facilitators know they have been most successful when they seem to have made themselves redundant. This field of higher education research and development is important because it is more likely to have a positive impact on university practice than educational theory has had to date.

My reflections on the case presented in this chapter lead me to understand that the role of an academic development staff member is not so much to provide information, advice and the results of evaluation and research to faculty staff who then apply this knowledge to their practice. Rather it is to help them to create this knowledge themselves through experience, self-reflection and critical debate with others. Similarly, the role of university teachers is not so much to provide students with the answers based on the teachers' research in a particular field but with questions, taking a Socratic approach and giving students the opportunity to discover answers

themselves through problem solving and discussion with their fellow students and staff alongside reading and critical thinking. This is a mindful type of education, not just teaching facts or skills but opening the minds of all to the pursuit of lifelong inquiry.

Reflecting on the case in relation to Kelly's and Leontiev's theories, to critical education science and to the CRASP model, I conclude that the action researchers in this case were acting as personal scientists, shaped by and shaping the university and the division, and fulfilling the requirements of emancipatory action research, of critical education science and of the CRASP model of professional development. We now turn to action leadership development (ALD) in higher education through PALAR. I argue that each academic can become an action leader. Action leaders develop other leaders around them, as proposed in the next section.

Action Leadership Development in Higher Education

Professional development at its best is action leadership development (ALD).[3] An extensive literature on leadership theories and models concerns large organizations in industry and has been established mostly by outside researchers with expertise in conducting large-scale, quantitative surveys on, and interviews with, 'subjects' in leadership positions. Recently, such theories have been adopted or adapted to higher education. These theories and their derived guidelines for practice in higher education present some promising ideas but have rarely been of much practical, transformational value and benefit to academic ALD.

First, this section addresses the question: What is action leadership in higher education in the new participatory paradigm of collaborative partnerships? In answering the question, I discuss works in the international literature that seem most appropriate for ALD in higher education in this time of accelerated change. Second, I briefly outline selected examples of major change programmes through PALAR in Australian and South African universities. Third, I present a model of ALD that may have wider application beyond higher education.

What Is Action Leadership in Higher Education?

It is impossible to include a comprehensive review of the vast literature on leadership within the boundaries of this book. An overview of the voluminous research with examples of effective leadership in action and skill development guidelines is provided by Dubrin and Dalgish (2003), who present the view that leadership effectiveness depends on four sets of variables: leader characteristics and traits, leader behaviour and style, group member characteristics and the internal and external environment.

The aims of this section and its principle-based elaboration are (1) to identify the main principles of action leadership in organizations, and the indispensable characteristics of respected action leaders in general, and (2) to discuss the three levels of

leadership in higher education in particular: the institutional level, the professional developers' level and the individual academic staff development level.

General Principles and Characteristics of Academic Action Leadership

Here we focus on the work of Covey (1992), Maxwell (1995, 1999, 2000) and Newman (2007) to explain the conceptual framework for action leadership in the twenty-first century that has application for higher education. The most important of Covey's (1992: 14) basic principles of effective leadership can be summarized in the sentence that he quotes from renowned Chinese philosopher Lao Tsu, 'Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime'. Covey (1992: 18–19) introduces a paradigm based on natural laws and governing principles. He explains why we need to become principle centred and how we attain this quality:

> Principles are not invented by us or by society; they are the laws of the universe that pertain to human relationships and human organizations. They are part of the human condition, consciousness, and conscience. To the degree people recognize and live in harmony with such principles as fairness, equity, justice, integrity, honesty, and trust, they move toward either survival and stability on the one hand or disintegration and destruction on the other (p. 18).

> Principles are self-evident, self-validating natural laws. They don't change or shift. . . . They have proven effective throughout centuries of human history. . . . They are not easy, quick-fix solutions to personal and interpersonal problems. Rather, they are foundational principles that when applied consistently become behavioral habits enabling fundamental transformations of individuals, relationships, and organizations. . . . Principles, unlike values, are objective and external. They operate in obedience to natural laws, regardless of conditions. Values are subjective and internal (p. 19).

Values are influenced by many factors, especially our cultural and family backgrounds, the environment we live in at a particular time, and the role we play in society. So values may change; they are like spectacles or windows through which we see the world but, when we align our personal values with foundational principles, we are liberated from old perceptions or paradigms. This ability to take off the spectacles or revise our personal construct system (Kelly, 1955) to analyse how our behaviour compares with our values, perceptions and beliefs and how these may align or otherwise with universal principles enables us to appreciate discrepancies (our prejudice, ignorance or error) and then make adjustments and realignments to give us stability and rich internal powers of synergy. This ability is true personal empowerment and wisdom, the essential characteristics of action leadership.

Covey's (1992: 21–22) model of principle-centred living and leadership identifies four fundamental dimensions or internal sources of human strength: security, guidance, power and wisdom. However, if we focus on particular life centres, such as work, pleasure, friends, enemies, church, self, spouse, family, money, possessions, we are weakened and disoriented. For example, if we are focused on what Covey calls the social mirror, preoccupied with how others see us (the looking glass self), we allow others to guide and control us. If we lack direction and guidance, we tend

to follow trends instead of pursuing and achieving our own goals. If we lack wisdom, we tend to repeat mistakes. If we lack personal power, we react to external conditions and internal moods. Thus Covey (1992: 22) maintains that principle-centred living and leadership provide the following:

- *Security* to not be threatened by change, comparison or criticism;
- *Guidance* to discover our mission, define our roles and write our scripts and goals;
- *Wisdom* to learn from our mistakes and seek continuous improvement; and
- *Power* to communicate and cooperate, even under conditions of stress and fatigue.

In summary,

1. *Security* relates to our sense of worth, identity, emotional anchorage, self-esteem and personal strength.
2. *Guidance* means our direction in life is influenced by the standards, principles or criteria that determine our decisions and actions. On a continuum, low guidance tends to manifest itself as physical addiction and emotional dependencies centred on selfish or social lifestyles. Medium guidance represents the development of the social conscience centred on human traditions and relationships. High guidance means spiritual conscience and guidance from inspiring sources centred on true principles.
3. *Wisdom* is a sense of balance, a holistic and integrated perspective on life, an understanding of how the various principles apply and relate to each other.
4. *Power* is the capacity to act and accomplish something, the courage and energy to make choices and decisions.

Covey (1992: 23) argues:

These four factors – security, guidance, wisdom and power – are interdependent. Security and self-founded guidance bring true wisdom, and wisdom becomes the spark or catalyst to release or direct power. When these four factors are harmonized, they create the great force of a noble personality, a balanced character, a beautifully integrated individual.

Covey (1992: 24–25) uses the same model for organizations:

As with individuals, principle-centred companies enjoy a greater degree of security, guidance, wisdom, and power. . . . Alternate organizational centres – profit, supplier, employee, owner, customer, programme, policy, competition, image, and technology – are flawed compared with a principle-centred paradigm. . . . Real empowerment comes from having both the principles *and* the practices understood and applied at all levels of the organization. . . . If we only teach practical skills and techniques without principles, people become dependent on us or others for further direction and they can't cope with changed conditions and different practices in the future (p. 24) . . . The challenge is to be a light, not a judge; to be a model, not a critic (p. 25).

As well as developing principled or ethical actions, how can principle-centred leadership be developed in higher education so that it is collaborative and distributed? Maxwell (1995) suggests that leaders can help others reach their full potential by developing the leaders around them. Leaders cannot do it alone. They

must develop other leaders around them. They must establish a team and find a way to have their vision seen, implemented and contributed to by others. Leaders see more of the whole landscape, but they need other leaders to help make their picture reality. This notion resonates with Taylor and De Lourdes Machado's (2006: 155) notion of distributed leadership in higher education:

> The higher education enterprise must shed its defense of the status quo and develop a far more adaptive, proactive and flexible approach to strategic management. It must also recognize that the growing complexity of the institution necessitates that the leadership delegates more responsibilities and empowers more individuals. This in turn means leadership must recognize the need to employ the best and brightest minds possible and to accept the realization that no one individual can be the final authority on every aspect of institutional operations. Any number of people within an organization can be found that (sic) possess a strategic perspective. The complexities of today's HEI [higher education institutions] demand that the designated leader call upon these individuals to contribute to the collective process of distributed leadership.

However, the question remains: What are the characteristics of effective action leaders in complex institutions today? Maxwell (1999) identified 21 indispensable qualities found in great leaders that need to be developed from inside the person. I summarize nine of these leadership qualities for their relevance to the present discussion:

- *Character* inspires confidence and determines who you are as a person (reliable, ethical, truthful).
- *Charisma* is other-mindedness, that is being 'more concerned about making others feel good about themselves than you are about making them feel good about you' (p. 8).
- *Commitment* starts in the heart and is tested by action and improvement or development of abilities (not just dreaming and talking).
- *Communication* is the skill to share knowledge and ideas in a clear and simple way, and to motivate others to act on them. 'Without communication skills you travel alone' (p. 23).
- *Competence* is 'know how' and performance at the highest level, which is recognized by others who then want to follow.
- *Courage* is demonstrated through taking risks, overcoming fears, making things right (not just smoothing them over) and inspiring commitment from others. 'One person with courage is a majority' (p. 37).
- *Discernment* means identifying the heart of the matter in a complex situation and trusting your intuition. 'Smart leaders believe only half of what they hear. Discerning leaders know *which* half to believe' (p. 44).
- *Focus* needs to be sharp, concentrated and prioritized. Advice: Focus 70% on your strengths, 25% on new things and 5% on your weaknesses and compensate for them by delegating jobs to others.
- *Vision* is the most important characteristic of a leader. It comes from inside the person – from passion, not position. True vision is far-reaching and meets other people's needs. It attracts, challenges and unites people and gives value to them.

Table 5.3 Approaches to negative experiences (Maxwell, 2000: 8)

Failing backward	Failing forward
Blaming others	Taking responsibility
Repeating the same mistakes	Learning from each mistake
Expecting never to fail again	Knowing failure is a part of progress
Expecting to continually fail	Maintaining a positive attitude
Accepting tradition blindly	Challenging outdated assumptions
Being limited by past mistakes	Taking new risks
Thinking *I am a failure*	Believing something did not work
Quitting	Persevering

In Maxwell's next book (2000), his aim is to help people maximize their personal and leadership potential by facing the prospect of failure and changing their attitude about failure, through showing how to turn mistakes into stepping stones for success and achievement. He maintains that the key to success is people's perception of and response to failure, rather than family background, wealth, opportunity, high morals or the absence of hardship. In Table 5.3 he juxtaposes the two main approaches to dealing with negative experiences.

Failing forward is aligned closely with the philosophy of action learning and applies to all levels of action leadership development.

Sloane (2007) stresses the importance of innovation and creativity in modern business to help organizations secure competitive advantage over rivals. This book is also useful for action leaders in higher and management education, because it demonstrates the importance of setting out the vision clearly and emphasizes the need for continual evaluation of the process. This practical guide explains how to

- become an innovative leader and how to kick off an innovative culture;
- frame problems;
- generate lots of ideas;
- structure innovation projects in your organization;
- build a culture where creativity thrives and develop personal creativity skills.

Both Duke (2002) and Fraser (1999) argue for a strong strategic leadership role at the three levels of a university: (1) management, (2) professional developers and their unit leaders and (3) academic staff development.

Leadership in Higher Education at the Institutional Level

Bargh et al. (2000), Duke (2002) and Taylor and Machado (2006) provide a useful historical summary of leadership approaches in higher education. Duke (2002: 66) argues from a senior management perspective that the management characteristics of a university as a learning organization are 'delegation, trust, valuing of local expertise down the line, nurturing teams and giving credit'. He maintains that staff development 'will support learning on the job and in teams through work. It will

provide mentoring, formal training and reflective evaluative review and planning (away day type activities) which allow learning and tacit knowledge to be identified, shared and extended in pursuit of the university's objectives' (p. 118).

My experience as an academic staff developer in Australia and other countries supports the notion of visionary and strategic leadership in higher education integrating the three essential ingredients of vision, focus and implementation skills (Neumann and Neumann, 2000). I believe that all people in universities can be, or develop as, action leaders, whether students, lecturers, professors, researchers or administrators. I recognize that action leadership development is most effective if it is shared, participatory and collaborative – in line with the basic concepts of participatory action learning and action research (PALAR).

Before we move further, an issue needs clarifying. What is the difference between leadership and management? There is general agreement in the literature that leadership refers to a process of guiding people and influencing decisions, and that management involves administration and implementation of organizational policies and decisions. Taylor and De Lourdes Machado (2006) provide a comprehensive overview of the literature on leadership, management and strategic planning generally, and with reference to higher education institutions (HEI). Of particular interest is their position that leadership and management are two totally different, discrete and autonomous entities, but they need to be addressed as intimately intertwined aspects of the overall effective functioning of a higher education institution. They argue that 'simplified and flexible planning processes, implemented through the complementary roles of leaders and managers with necessary planning expertise, may provide the most productive higher education environment for advancement and progress' (pp. 138–139). This is the approach we take in PALAR. For example, in one of our Queensland University Action Learning (QUAL) programmes mentioned below, the 'Departmental Excellence in Managing Institutional Quality' (DEMIQ) programme consisted of mixed project teams, each of three to six senior administrative and academic staff members. They were all action leaders, but the senior administrators had substantial management experience and knowledge.

Key elements of successful planning identified by Taylor and de Lourdes Machado (2006: 151) are the following:

- Leadership
- Vision
- Environmental scanning
- Communication
- Participation
- Flexibility and simplicity

This is also our experience and approach in our PALAR programmes in Australia and South Africa discussed below under the heading 'Examples of major residential leadership development programmes'. Taylor and de Lourdes Machado (2006: 156) conclude that 'the time has come in Europe and elsewhere for formal professional

development experiences to be created that will prepare aspiring leaders for the challenges they will face'. But whose role and responsibility is it to conduct such programmes and determine their content?

Blackmore and Blackwell (2006: 373) argue that the current trend to professionalize the faculty role of teaching, research and administration in higher education necessitates the professionalization of the academic developer's role, for this role 'can and should assist faculty in managing their work in an integrated way'.

Leadership in Higher Education at the Professional Developers' Level

The formation of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and the Leadership Foundation in the UK and the establishment of the National Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE) in Australia (Nelson, 2003) are examples of attempts to professionalize academic activity. These attempts combine 'top-down' initiatives with 'bottom-up' development. A genuine 'bottom-up' example is the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) in the UK. These associations are concerned with the whole role of academics, including teaching, research, knowledge transfer and civic engagement, leadership, management and administration, and with the relationships between these. It is important to retain this holistic conception in the face of increasing pressures on academics to achieve continuous excellence on all fronts. Leadership in academic staff development requires an understanding of all of these aspects of academic work and their interrelationships, if staff developers want to assist academics in their various roles, responsibilities and work activities. Staff developers also need to practice what they preach by living and modelling the approaches they wish academics to adopt.

Rowland (2003) rightly dismisses both non-theoretical 'training to teach' approaches and the arbitrary division between 'theory' generated by educational experts and 'practice' by teachers/practitioners who are expected to apply the theory (see above). The position I take in this chapter is that PALAR and evidence-based practice are more appropriate approaches to developing the professionalism of academics, because academics can actively engage in the research and development of their own practice and link their roles with those of academic staff developers. For example, Blackmore and Blackwell (2006: 385) suggest some effective approaches to academic leadership development:

> . . . through personal support and shadowing. Reflection may be assisted through peer mentoring, coaching, co-facilitating events and activities, action learning sets and 'critical friend' support. There may be a need to embed informal processes within or around formal, in-context, 'work-based learning' qualifications, that embody the qualities outlined above, probably at the Master's level.

On the other hand, Fraser (1999) found in a study of 71 Australian academic developers, including heads of units, that 63% had a teaching qualification (although not all in higher education); 32% did not originally plan to go into academic staff development, after gaining much experience in other areas; and most had moved into the field through a long interest in, and talent for, teaching. The study also

showed that respondents allocated little time for their own personal and professional development. Instead, they said they gained their development through 'the ways in which they worked', that is, through the social and informal nature of learning. Fraser (1999: 97) concludes that an accreditation scheme for academic staff developers would need to recognize 'the diverse career paths which people took to enter the field, the wide range of areas in which members work, and the subsequent diversity of professional development needs that members have'. It therefore appears important to ask: How credible as leaders are heads and members of a higher education and research development (HERD) unit or centre in the formal preparation of academic staff if they themselves have not participated in formal learning and professional development?

The next section outlines some examples of PALAR programmes on action leadership development.

Leadership in Higher Education at the Academic Staff Development Level

Figure 5.6 is an overview of some of the effective residential action leadership development programmes for academic staff that my associates and I designed and implemented through PALAR at various universities in Australia and South Africa.

These were action learning programmes with participatory action research team projects, *funded* by the Australian Government, *residential* – away from private and professional distractions – and in an *exclusive environment* conducive to discussion, intensive work and informal networking. The themes/concerns of these programmes were in three categories: (1) PG (postgraduate) research and supervision; (2) QUAL (Queensland University Action Learning) and (3) South African HE (higher education).
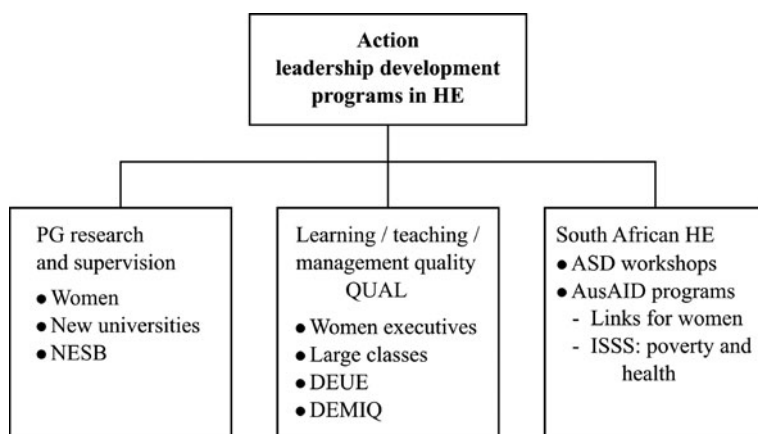
Fig. 5.6 Residential action leadership development programmes in higher education through PALAR (Zuber-Skerritt, 2007b: 999)

Postgraduate Research and Supervision

The first theme focused on postgraduate research and supervision for (a) women academics as affirmative action, because these women have been disadvantaged by the so-called glass ceiling; (b) newly amalgamated colleges of advanced education in Australia (like technikons in South Africa) that had always been teaching institutions but suddenly had to produce research and supervise master's and PhD theses and (c) supervisors of students from non-English-speaking backgrounds (NESB). Participants were selected supervisors of postgraduate students in nine universities in Queensland and northern New South Wales. The results were published in manuals, video programmes and books (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992d, 1996b; Zuber-Skerritt and Ryan, 1994; Ryan and Zuber-Skerritt, 1999).

Queensland University Action Learning

The second theme involved QUAL – Queensland University Action Learning – to enhance the quality of learning, teaching and management for (a) women executives, (b) academics teaching large classes (e.g. more than 1200 students) and (c) departmental teams in the *DEUE* programme – Departmental Excellence in University Education – and in the *DEMIQ* programme – Departmental Excellence in Managing Institutional Quality. These QUAL programmes were evaluated by Passfield (1996).

South African Higher Education

The third theme was on South African higher education for (a) many cohorts of university academics from all provinces in South Africa and surrounding countries; (b) women academics from six historically disadvantaged universities of technology in Gauteng, funded by the AusAID Links Project through IDP, the Australian Government's International Development Program and (c) another leadership development programme funded by AusAID's ISSS, the International Seminar Support Scheme, to alleviate poverty and improve education and health in six African countries. Readers interested in the details of these leadership development programmes in South African higher education may consult the publications that resulted from these programmes (Speedy, 2003; Fletcher and Zuber-Skerritt, 2008; Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; Fletcher et al., 2010).

On personal reflection, I recognize these programmes have been significant because they were

- strategically and professionally planned, designed, implemented and evaluated;
- well resourced, government funded and supported by top management in the respective universities;
- residential, away from the office and home distractions, with opportunities for networking and informal discussions during coffee/meal breaks and after dinner;
- using our hearts and heads; and
- producing tangible, deliverable outcomes (relationships and publications) that could be evaluated.

A few of the programmes I have been involved in were less successful than those I discuss here. The reasons for less success were lack of resources and/or interest, not enough time or no management support for

- start-up workshop (foundation programme);
- team building;
- creative future vision building by the team;
- discussion of values and worldviews;
- learning and reflection (only a focus on tasks and products); and
- collaboration (individual competition instead).

Through taking stock of and reflecting on these principles and examples of action leadership development in higher education, we may now be able to develop a model of academic action leadership in higher education based on a holistic, principle- and learner-centred approach to higher education.

A Model of Action Leadership in Higher Education

Figure 5.7 illustrates the integration of

- the head (rational thinking) *and* the heart (feelings, emotions);
- knowledge management (KM) *and* process management (PM);
- traditional learning/teaching *and* reflection through action learning/facilitation of learning;
- disciplinary and educational (expert) research *and* practitioners' research into their own teaching practice through action research and evidence-based inquiry;
- hard *and* soft research methodologies, quantitative *and* qualitative research methods; and
- IQ *and* EQ.
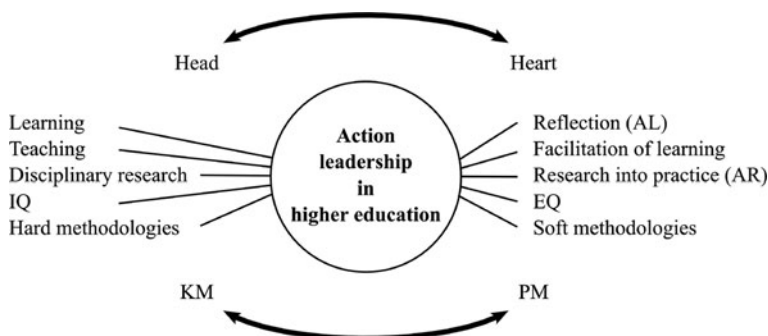
Fig. 5.7 A model of action leadership development in higher education (Zuber-Skerritt, 2007b: 1001)

Goleman (1998) convinced us that EQ – emotional intelligence – and skills are vital in leadership development for personal competence (self-awareness and self-management) and for social competence (social awareness and relationship management). Newman (2007) calls today's top executives 'emotional capitalists', because their effective leadership in the workplace is the by-product of emotions, such as self-confidence, optimism, independence, enthusiasm, feelings, beliefs and values. These emotions can be developed, managed and can boost personal and professional performance. They are valuable because they can create strong relationships. Newman (2007) advocates 'partnership' as the best model for leadership and inter-personal relationships with a collaborative approach and a willingness to distribute power so that everyone can contribute to a 'win–win situation'. These conclusions apply equally to academics and academic staff developers as action leaders in higher education, and also to action leaders in other organizations (discussed in Chapter 6) and in community development (discussed in Chapter 7).

Chapter Summary

This chapter has focused on higher education, the field in which I have worked for over 30 years. The aims of this chapter have been to present an alternative approach to professional and leadership development that can be developed actively from 'inside out' by the participants themselves in the professional or action leadership programmes. Participants do so through processes of participatory action learning and action research (PALAR), and reflection on their own character and values, rather than through application of theory 'from outside in'.

I have been informed and influenced by leadership theory and practice in the international literature, as well as by my own experience with designing, conducting and evaluating such programmes. But in the programmes I have initiated, facilitated or been associated with otherwise, the participants were not subjected to 'training', but were offered 'self-directed development'. The action research and the action leadership development discussed in this chapter have been conducted *by* and *with* professionals and leaders as 'participants', rather than traditional research *on* them as 'subjects' in the research.

I have argued that in this time of rapid change, a new paradigm of learning, teaching, research, knowledge management and leadership is needed and that academics need guidance and professional development to prepare them for their roles and new challenges. Therefore, the chapter has defined the elements in this new paradigm and identified the main principles and characteristics of action leadership in general, and in higher education in particular, with regard to leadership at the institutional, academic staff development unit and individual staff development levels.

I have discussed some of the important issues of action leadership development in higher education and presented a conceptual framework of professional development (Table 5.2) and of action leadership development (Fig. 5.7), as illustrated by examples from the literature and from my practical experience (Fig. 5.6). This framework attempts to avoid the 'sickness' in organizations evident as 'rationalization', quality assurance (QA) or control and over-bureaucratization. Instead it focuses on the (re-)humanization of higher education through democratic processes and collaborative strategies, such as participatory action learning and action research (PALAR).

This chapter offers a new approach to professional and action leadership development in higher education within the PALAR paradigm. In developing action leadership in higher education, the model (Fig. 5.7) suggests that the heart of the matter is a matter of the heart; that we put emphasis on personal relationships and cross-cultural communication; and that we integrate heart and head in a holistic way, EQ and IQ, soft and hard, qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, process management (PM) and knowledge management (KM). Above all, we need to practice what we preach so that as effective action leaders we serve as role models, mentors, coaches, co-learners, co-researchers, hermeneutical helpers and co-leaders in partnership.

In summary, in higher education, PALAR means collaborative, critical enquiry conducted by academics themselves (rather than expert educational researchers) into their own teaching practice, into problems of student learning and into curriculum problems. It is professional development through academic course design/development, group reflection, action, evaluation and improved practice, conceptualizing these innovative processes and publishing the results of action research in refereed journals for others to learn from these experiences. These publications not only document the authors' educational research achievements as well as their excellence in teaching but also contribute to their institution's accountability and standards of excellence. These outcomes legitimize PALAR in higher education, integrating theory with practice and research with teaching. Thus it is a way to genuine professionalism and action leadership.

Apart from rewarding the teaching excellence of *individual* academics, I encourage teaching *teams* and whole *departments* to build a culture of quality and excellence, to strive for professionalism in university teaching and to build an active 'learning organization'. In a learning organization, people are continually discovering how they create their reality, how they can change it and how they can shape their future. The underlying philosophy is that learning should be continuous, life-long and cooperative, through discussion and dialogue, and sharing of ideas and meaning within a group. This enables participants to discover insights and synergies that are not attainable individually.

I hope that this chapter will trigger discussion among leaders and aspiring leaders about how they might integrate the human with the social and economic dimensions and goals of higher education, where the human heart is at the heart of professional and action leadership development.

Discussion Starters

1. What do you consider most important in professional development in higher education in terms of defining features, characteristics, processes and principles?
2. What do you consider most important in action leadership development in higher education in those terms?
3. What are your personal experiences of leading or being led? Can you think of, and discuss with your colleagues, any experiences you have had – positive and/or negative – that have impacted profoundly on your professional learning, career, personal life or others?

Notes

1. This section is a revised version of Chapter 7 in Zuber-Skerritt (1996a) Action Research for Change and Development. Gower, Aldershot, UK. This book is out of print and copyright reverted to me as the author/editor.
2. Reprinted with the kind permission of the editor in an e-mail of 21 July 2010 (Eileen Piggot-Irvine epiggotirvine@unitec.ac.nz)
3. This section is based on an earlier paper (Zuber-Skerritt, 2007b), revised here with the kind permission of the journal editors in an e-mail on 3 February 2010 (Veronica Schmidt VS1@sun.ac.za).

Chapter 6
Management Education for Organization Development

We must be the change we wish to see in the world.
Mahatma Gandhi

PALAR | Dialectic | Paradigm

Action leadership

HE | OD | CD
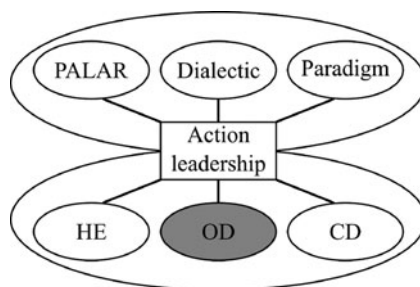
Chapter Overview

This chapter concerns applications of PALAR for professional and action leadership development of managers, senior executives and organizations in industry, government and within communities. I explain how this development can be achieved in a way similar to that in higher education, applying and generating appropriate principles, processes and practices using PALAR. I argue that emancipatory action research is 'best practice' for organizational as well as educational change, fostering both organizational learning and the development of the 'learning organization' (Senge, 1990). In management education, examples of an MBA undertaken by action learning and of a professional doctorate by explication illustrate how the traditional methods of management education can be improved or replaced by action leadership development of experienced managers and executives using PALAR. I finally develop and discuss a new conceptual model for organizational change and management development, created step by step by combining action research with adaptations of the field theory of Lewin (1951), and a model of managerial interventions for organizational change (Beer et al., 1990). These models are in response to the need for organizations to develop a particular mindset for managing change and bringing about successful renewal or revitalization. The models emphasize a problem-oriented, task-driven action learning organization under action leadership.

Introduction

For about 30 years, and along with other authors, I have argued that action learning is an effective and appropriate approach to both executive and management education and strategic development in business. Most recently, Dilworth and Boshyk (2010) confirmed this and explored other applications in health science, government, the military, education, community and civic sector, business community, organization development, action research and future search.

We distinguish between *management education*, normally leading to a degree from a university or a business school, and *management development*, a one-off or a series of seminars or workshops, usually voluntary and not normally leading to an academic qualification. However, this chapter presents ideas and examples of executive and management development for organization development resulting in higher education degrees/awards at the *professional* master's and *professional* doctorate levels.

Management education, especially degree programmes leading to an MBA (Master of Business Administration), a DBA (Doctor of Business Administration) and a PhD (Doctor of Philosophy), has long been criticized by top management in industry and by authors in the international literature for being too theoretical and irrelevant to the needs of industry. This chapter presents alternatives that offer a new approach to management education and action leadership development, preparing senior managers for the task of leading a high-performing learning organization. Based on the theoretical framework explained in Part I of this book, this chapter takes a dialectic, holistic, integrated and humanistic approach to senior management and executive development through action learning and explication writing.

This approach is based on the premise that practicing senior managers have considerable valuable experience, knowledge, skills and insights in management and leadership issues. Through reflection on their practice and achievements and/or failures, and through discussion with like-minded colleagues, they are able to contribute new insights in their field by writing a 'thesis' by explication, i.e. explicating their work experience, professional learning and others' learning in their organization.

From Higher Education to Management Education and Development

This section argues that both sets of literature – practical/managerial and academic/educational – can benefit from cross-fertilization. However, from the vast array of available approaches, this book focuses on participatory action learning and action research for professional and action leadership development, using selected, relevant literature in both higher education and management education. Much of the literature on management education has been developed separately and

independently from that on higher education. The latter was generated first by theorists and academics in psychology, sociology or other behavioural sciences, and later by educational specialists in higher education research and development units, and also in human resource development centres. In contrast, the literature on management education and development emerged mainly from research conducted by consulting firms, popularizing business experts and CEOs and published for an audience of practitioners and busy executives who may be content to buy the books at airports and read them on their travels. So these books are typically written in an accessible, jargon-free, non-academic language. But they are not necessarily without merit. There is also a growing research literature produced and written for and by university academics and their students that is relevant to business.

This present book seeks to help all readers, including managers, to become lifelong learners as well as action leaders. By becoming more self-alert, they may become more self-managing and so benefit from self-supervision. First, I tell my personal story of how I came to move from higher education to management education and development. I then discuss the similarities and differences between the two fields and reasons why links and collaboration between higher education and management education can be beneficial to both fields.

My Story

It was in the late 1980s when, at the end of one of my seminars on professional development through action learning and action research in higher education, two participants asked me a few questions and invited me to talk to their staff and students – called 'associates' – in the International Management Centre (IMC) Pacific Region. The two men were Charles Margerison, professor and former founding dean of the Graduate School of Management, University of Queensland (UQ), and Jim Kable in the same former position at the Queensland Institute (now University) of Technology (QUT) in Brisbane. Charles and Jim had left their university positions because they wanted to focus on action learning for management education and professional and organization development in what many refer to as the 'real world'. Their qualitative and transformative approach was then seen as too radical and too 'unscientific' by their fellow academics inside the university. So they co-founded the 'Pacific Region' Centre of the UK-based IMC – a non-profit organization with centres around the world, all using action learning as their learning–teaching method/process.

I became a part-time faculty member (while also a full-time university academic) and later dean of the IMC Pacific Region. I was very enthusiastic about action learning, I learnt a lot from Charles, Jim and other colleagues in IMC, and I also contributed to IMC, especially in the field of action research and postgraduate research training and supervision. However, one day in 1990 I felt very uncomfortable when Jim asked me to take over from him an action learning programme for engineers in the Main Roads Department in Brisbane, because he had to leave for the UK.

I refused categorically; as I saw it, my field was higher education, *not* management and organization development in industry and government!

Jim talked with me at length, trying to convince me that I would be the ideal colleague to do this job because of my understanding of, and skills in, action learning and group facilitation, which was then called 'process management'. I could not be persuaded, but I did not want to be unkind to him, so I agreed to come to his next session, purely as an observer. Jim had advised participants in advance that Dr Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt would be present, but when I entered the room, I was amazed that they were all male, and they were even more amazed that 'Ortrun' was a female! I sat quietly in a corner observing the action and inter-action among these engineers, whom I categorized as 'model 1' leaders (see Chapter 2) in a hierarchical organization with the CEO as one of the 15 group members. In my mind it was quite clear: I would have no chance as a female in this group of male scientists in high positions of management, a field in which I thought I was no expert.

Nevertheless, Jim was not swayed by my objections, countering with two main arguments. First, he said I should practice more generally what I preach – action learning and process management; I did not need to be an engineer and have a degree in business studies/management. Second, he offered me a daily fee that was higher than I had ever earned in my life and that was timely for what I then wanted to do. But another mitigating event was also at work; in the 'refreshment' break, some of the engineers talked with me over a glass of wine – the 'ice breaker' for me and them. They must have later chatted with Jim and agreed to accept me as his replacement. We finally agreed that I would do my best but that I could terminate the action learning programme at any time if necessary. I gave no other guarantee, and I was assured this would entail no risk for me. I think our agreement signalled that Jim had more faith in me, in my capacity and resilience, than I had. Fortunately, he was right and I was wrong with regard to achieving the intended programme outcomes. I was ultimately very pleased that I took up the challenge here because of the depth of the learning experience and increase in confidence that I gained. Yet with task completed, I was somewhat concerned – and intrigued – with wondering whether the senior managers in this organization had actually undergone transformative change, e.g. moving from model 1 to model 2 values, strategy and behaviour. I wanted to come to know more through further experiences in management development; this experience had whet my appetite for further experience and learning, and my appreciation of the importance of evaluating programmes. A fire had been ignited in me and another dichotomy had been synthesized.

The International Management Centre (IMC) gave me a wealth of opportunity and experience. I was able to not only (1) apply my knowledge from higher education research and development to management education and professional development of senior executives and CEOs but also (2) gain new knowledge and skills, especially in interviewing, mentoring and coaching. For example, Charles Margerison taught me interview skills when I had applied for an associate professorship at the University of Queensland, a position advertised internationally and

to me a great challenge. First, he interviewed me, then he told me what I had done well or needed to improve. We then reversed roles: he was the interviewee and I was the interviewer asking him similar questions, all of which he answered positively. For example, instead of my admission that I did not know or had no experience in a particular area, he would say something like this: 'It is interesting you asked this question, because it was only recently that I thought I want to follow this up because I'm very taken with it'. So I learnt to be positive in my interview responses without being untruthful or deceitful.

I also learnt through experience that the basis of mentoring and coaching is a Socratic approach to action learning, that is, asking probing questions and encouraging mentees to find and formulate the answers themselves so that they learn to elicit their tacit knowledge and make it explicit. Although I had read widely on the subject, my most profound learning about mentoring and coaching came only when I actually did it, especially when I had to teach it and to design activities that were built on the Socratic approach. Socrates (469–399 BC) was a Greek philosopher who asked his disciples questions, rather than telling them answers. He also used dialogue with others to expose and dispel error in order to reach deeper understanding of ethics. I was experiencing for myself the powerful efficacy of action learning that has continued to enrich my life.

Largely on the basis of my experience, learning and professional and personal development through IMC, I have since accepted invitations to teach in many public and private business schools. These include in Australia: Graduate School of Business at Griffith University (Brisbane) and at Southern Cross University (Lismore, NSW), Gibaran Graduate School of Business (Adelaide) and the International Centre for Management and Organizational Effectiveness, University of South Australia (Adelaide); and in Europe and South Africa: Maastricht School of Business (Holland); Business School Netherlands (Amsterdam, Cape Town and Johannesburg); Faculty of Business Management, Tshwane University of Technology (Pretoria, South Africa); SAP Business School Vienna; Management Centre Innsbruck; and the Institute for Organization and Learning at Innsbruck University (Austria). My workshops and courses have included topics like action learning, action research, qualitative research methods, civic engagement, postgraduate research training and supervision, thesis writing, academic writing for publication and topics concerning business/staff development.

This experience inside and outside business schools gave me the courage and confidence to design innovative management programmes guided by action learning and action research, together with my colleagues. For example, we designed an MBA programme by action learning at Griffith University in Australia (Zuber-Skerritt, 1995) and a doctoral 'Senior Executive Action Learning' (SEAL) programme in the IMC in the UK (Zuber-Skerritt, 2006, 2007c). Before discussing the design of these programmes, let us explore the question: What are the common goals of management development in industry and government, on the one hand, and academic staff development in higher education, on the other? What underpins the collaboration?

Links Between Higher Education and Management Education and Development

I maintain that, when it comes to professional, leadership and organization development through PALAR, the concepts, principles, processes and models of learning and development in higher education, as discussed in Chapter 5, are equally valid in the fields of management education and professional development in organizations in business, industry, government and communities. One important exception is that a different language may be used. For example, instead of academics and teachers, the equivalent roles in industry and government are termed 'managers' and 'executives' (terms also used more recently in higher education); students are 'associates'; staff developers are 'consultants' and human resource professionals; and teaching is 'work' or 'management'. However, most labels mean the same thing, such as learning, research, policy, professional and leadership development, work generally, workplace and the ALAR language (sets, mentors, set advisors, sponsors, programmes, projects, etc.).

The main reason for these similarities is that both sets of practices are influenced by values, worldviews, paradigms, theoretical frameworks and culture (see Chapter 4); if the latter are shared, then the practices can be easily adopted or adapted. On the other hand, if the philosophical, theoretical and ethical assumptions are not shared, it follows that the practices are different; however, this is as applicable within a field as it is between fields. Another reason why practices may be different in the two fields is the management educators' conflicting expectations and goals, sometimes within one department or business school. I present them here from my observations and framed from my perspective in the form of dialectic: the thesis relates to expectations and goals in an academic culture and the antithesis in a managerial culture, leading to a synthesis in a PALAR culture. Table 6.1 shows the management educators' conflicting expectations and goals in an academic and managerial culture.

In a PALAR culture, we can synthesize the above conflicting expectations and aims into the following:

Table 6.1   Management educators' conflicting expectations and goals

In an academic culture	In a managerial culture
Importance of contents, knowledge and cognitive skills	Importance of learning, process and demonstrable skills
Focus on theory	Focus on practice
Curriculum and teacher centred	Process and client centred
Publication-oriented research	Organizational problem-oriented research
Evaluation of performance mainly based on research publications	Evaluation of performance mainly based on practical outcomes
Importance of general research findings	Importance of specific research findings

- Appreciation of the importance of all types of knowledge (see Fig. 3.2) and demonstrable action skills;
- Focus on both improving practice and developing practical theory (see Chapter 4);
- Process- and learner-centred, as well as task- and action-oriented;
- Relevant practice- and action-oriented research;
- Importance of specific organizational research findings that may or may not be published.

We may conclude from this synthesis and discussion in previous chapters that management education and development for the future have to be process-oriented, rather than merely content-oriented, and that action learning is an appropriate method to develop process managers for organizational leadership. Academics, too, have to be managers (of learning, teaching, self-development, curriculum, administration, committees, budgets, etc.) and facilitators of learning processes, rather than transmitters of content and subject knowledge. In addition, action research has been proven in my experience to be a more effective approach to staff development than any other traditional methods (see Chapter 5, Table 5.1).

The reason for this revolution or shift from content to process is the increasing importance of responding swiftly to fast-changing environmental forces (e.g. technological, political, economic and socio-demographic factors, climate change and natural disasters). The boundaries of disciplines are constantly extending or blurring as their content is rapidly growing or becoming outdated or obsolete. What managers need at present and in future, as I also found, is a synthesis of disciplinary knowledge and specific skills on the one hand and generic skills and competencies to acquire new knowledge and capacity to solve completely new problems on the other. Furthermore, entrepreneurial attitude and 'vision' are required to compete in an international context.

Reasons for Collaboration

Since there are clearly mutual interests, common objectives and a similar approach to management development in the private and public sectors, and to staff development in higher education, it seems obvious and mutually beneficial for those responsible for human resource development in these sectors to collaborate and learn from one another.

Examples of many possibilities are links projects between industry and universities, e.g. SPIRT grants in Australia (Strategic Partnership with Industry – Research and Training); other government-funded national priority projects; and cross-section conferences on management development, such as the international symposium on 'Action Research in Higher Education, Government and Industry' mentioned briefly before (in Foreword and Chapter 2) and held in Brisbane in March 1989 by special invitation. Thirty academics from universities in Australia, New Zealand, England,

Austria and Thailand, and ten executives (five from government departments and five from private enterprise) participated in this event.

The purpose of the symposium was twofold: first, to present and discuss a variety of models of action research in higher education that had been developed in parallel in many parts of the world and second, to explore with representatives from government and industry, in charge of personnel training and management development, how action research might be used effectively in manager and organization development through action research and how the three sectors may collaborate to more effectively prepare people (i.e. students, staff and managers) for rapid change in technology, industry and society. Hence, the symposium had two parts, the first consisting of discussions on action research in higher education based on 10 previously circulated papers and the second consisting of workshop discussions on action research in government and industry.

After the first two days of theorizing, identifying some 'burning issues' and debating the nature and salient features of action research, a common understanding was reached and put into a simple formula (presented in Chapter 2, Table 2.1) which then served as the basis for discussing individual concrete projects during the last two days of the symposium. Informal and open-ended questionnaire feedback from participants suggested the symposium was a great success, not only in terms of achieving the intended purpose but also in establishing a supportive and creative atmosphere of open, collaborative and constructive debate between congenial 'critical friends' in the three sectors. Indeed, the integration worked so well that in the end it was difficult to distinguish who came from which sector; it was decided that distinction would be unnecessary and that future conferences would not have separate parts for the different sectors. Several further events were held in Brisbane, the most important of which were the first and second World Congress on ALARPM, followed by further ALARPM congresses in the UK, Colombia, South Africa, The Netherlands and Australia.

This section has discussed why an alternative, action-oriented approach to management education and academic staff development is necessary; how similar are their requirements and processes; what new methods are appropriate; how these methods may be applied; and what are the possibilities for learning and collaboration among the three sectors. The next section discusses the design of management education programmes through action learning.

Management Education Through Action Learning

This section starts with an historic perspective on management education and the need to close the gap – indeed, to interweave academic knowledge and experiential knowledge. It then explores ideas and issues related to management education and development, and presents examples of MBA programmes by action learning and doctoral programmes for experienced executives who wish to make a considerable contribution to their organization and their field and receive a higher degree in recognition of their work.

A Historic Perspective on Management Education

The literature has sustained a long debate over the appropriate character of management education in universities and business schools. This debate is characterized by a constant struggle between on the one side practitioners, who are interested in the relevance of the education offered to the practice and needs of industry – and society in general – and on the other side academics, who are interested in fundamental knowledge, 'academic purity' and the value of basic or quantitative research. Although all parties agree on the need to synthesize and balance experiential and academic knowledge, in reality they have found it difficult to devise practical means of achieving this goal through agreeing on the level and strategies of integrating experiential and academic knowledge. This chapter offers some solutions and practical suggestions for change.

Augier and March (2007) examined the history and development of management education in business schools in North America and Europe, based on a literature review, and I briefly summarize it here. They maintain that, during the first half of the twentieth century, business schools focused on their students' needs to seek successful careers in business. They employed experienced executives as professors involved in consulting and linking their course work to students' temporary employment in business firms. They were interested in 'best practice', rather than research. So they were generally less distinguished theoretically than their fellow academics in other disciplines, such as engineering and medicine. They suffered from a reputation for mediocre academic capabilities and were seen as intellectually shallow and academically second rate (Mintzberg, 2004).

This situation changed dramatically after the Second World War, and especially during the 1950s and 1960s, when what counted as academic knowledge was broadened and its role increased in the education of managers. Augier and March (2007: 133) cite the report written for the Ford Foundation by Gordon and Howell (1959: 426) as follows:

> The general tenor of our recommendations was that the business schools (and departments of business) need to move in the direction of a broader and more rigorous educational program, with higher standards of admission and student performance, with better informed and more scholarly faculties that are capable of carrying on more significant research, and with a greater appreciation of the contributions to be made to the development of business competence by both the underlying . . . disciplines and the judicious use of . . . materials and methods.

As a result, business schools have since become conscious of their role and responsibility in two main directions: (1) research and educating future teachers and researchers of management and (2) training future practitioners of management, based on the foundational disciplines of economics, the behavioural sciences and quantitative disciplines – in the same way as in medicine, based on biology, physiology and chemistry. This explains the growth of graduate schools and programmes of management and elevation of their importance above undergraduate programmes. It also explains why the positivist paradigm became predominant in management research.

Following this revolution in early post-war, a counter-revolution in the 1980s and 1990s saw enormous pressure exerted by society – taxpayers and governments – to make management education more relevant to society, industry and government. Business schools were criticized for being irrelevant to, or destructive of, good management practice (Goshal, 2005). For example, in Australia the government funded a multi-million-dollar international research programme conducted by the 'Task Force on Leadership and Management Skills' (Karpin, 1995) with the aim of 'renewing Australia's managers to meet the challenges of the Asia-Pacific century', that is, the twenty-first century. One research group (Barraclough et al., 1994) identified a gap between the requirements of the business community and the educational services provided by educational institutions, in terms of both content (what managers learn) and process (how they learn it). Participants in this research included human resource professionals, senior managers, company directors, management consultants and academics. Virtually all of them saw that closer relationships between business and educational institutions were essential.

Another research team, the Boston Consulting Group (1995), concluded that the traditional MBA programme was outdated in terms of its length, its discipline-based approach to problem solving and its classroom teaching style. In response, the Boston Consulting Group (1995: 57) recommended a more organizational focus and four types of changes in programmes for developing the next generation of senior managers:

1. Shorter programmes (less time away from the organization);
2. Development programmes more focused on an individual company's needs (customization);
3. Development programmes linked more closely to the workplace than to the classroom (experiential and action learning);
4. A project-based approach to learning.

As to implementation of these recommendations, I think the sticking point has been the inability of the majority of academics to make the shift: in epistemology, from academic to experiential knowledge; in research paradigm, from positivist to non-positivist thinking; and in education, from a content-focused to a process/learner-centred approach. Another problem has been that faculty in business schools in universities are still expected to conduct research and publish in international, peer-reviewed journals in the same way as their fellow academics in other disciplines/fields. In many cases, academics do not know how to 'begin with self' and generate experiential knowledge, how to produce practice-relevant research and how to take a learner-centred approach to teaching. Change is always difficult per se, but it is more difficult if people do not know how to effect change and to think carefully and creatively about possible alternatives.

Bennis and O'Toole (2005: 98), two of the most respected business school professors with both academic and consulting experience, declare that the situation in business schools has not improved:

During the past several decades, many B-schools have quietly adopted an inappropriate, and ultimately self-defeating, model of academic excellence. Instead of measuring themselves in terms of the competence of their graduates, or by how well their faculties understand important drivers of business performance, they measure themselves almost solely by the rigor of their scientific research.

I think that the ongoing debate and myopic dialectic of rigor versus relevance or quantitative versus qualitative needs to be and can be well balanced in a synthesis of both, i.e. in a more holistic, integrated and humanistic approach to management education, leadership and organization development. This book suggests that participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) presents the ideal solution to the above problems and to change in management education and leadership development for the benefit of all involved and for that of their organizations. It deals with the conceptual change conditions, processes and practices of the 'learning organization' (Senge, 1990) or the 'learning company' (Pedlar et al., 1997) through active involvement of people at all levels of an organization, through continuous debate and discussion and through creating general models for achieving humanness in life. As Augier and March (2007: 144) conclude, 'In the process, the management education that is constructed reflects both managers and educators; and the arguments they develop to justify that education define the kind of people they wish to imagine themselves to be'.

Argyris (1982, 1993) distinguishes two kinds of organizational learning: (1) 'instrumental' learning or 'single-loop' learning, which is basically concerned with improving efficiency, and (2) 'generative' or 'double-loop' learning, which is more radical than 'instrumental' learning, challenges existing beliefs and paradigms and is concerned with effectiveness, including the appropriateness of existing goals, assumptions and beliefs. Both of these kinds of organizational learning are appropriate in certain situations. However, generative learning, both of individuals and organizations, is needed for effecting significant positive change and for learning faster than change, yet this type of learning tends to be resisted most as 'soft' and 'airy fairy'.

Research in Australia and elsewhere has shown that managers today and in the future will need to develop skills and competences to solve complex problems in completely new situations. They will need to anticipate change, adjust rapidly to it and manage the process of their employees' learning. In higher education too, academics need to develop competences as managers and facilitators of learning. Management development for the future across all sectors needs to be process oriented as well as content oriented. I have repeatedly argued that action learning and action research are appropriate methods to develop process managers for the twenty-first century. Evaluative studies by Zuber-Skerritt and Howell (1993) and by Howell (1994) of MBA and doctoral programmes undertaken through action learning confirm these suggestions.

The gap between theory and practice identified in the management literature has also been confirmed in one of our joint pilot studies (Phillips and Zuber-Skerritt, 1993). Results showed that managers emphasized practical skills, while management educators emphasized specialist and theoretical knowledge. However, both

groups considered communication and interpersonal skills to be important. Again this suggests a need for a more process-oriented approach to management in the private and public sectors, and a collaborative approach to research in business and education.

A similar gap has been identified between the advanced theory of adult learning (Candy, 1991, 1996), including manager learning (Mumford, 1988, 1997), on the one hand and management practice on the other. The following examples of action learning programmes at the postgraduate level address this issue.

Examples of MBA Through Action Learning

Moving beyond the International Management Centres (IMC) already mentioned – now called International Management Centres Association (IMCA) – here I refer to three examples of MBA programmes presented through action learning from (1) the Postgraduate Institute of Management, University of Sri Lanka; (2) the Business School Netherlands and (3) the Kenan-Flagler Business School, University of New Carolina. I then propose a generic MBA programme by action learning in more detail.

Postgraduate Institute of Management, University of Sri Lanka

After the Indian Ocean tsunami hit Sri Lanka in December 2004, killing about 40,000 people and displacing over one million people in that country, the Postgraduate Institute of Management (PIM) engaged 164 managers enrolled in the MBA course in recovery, reconstruction and rehabilitation processes in their 'Tsunami Disaster Management' programme over 9 months. Twelve faculty members each supervised six or seven development projects/teams and provided opportunities for action learning and development of management competencies by improving camp conditions, providing temporary shelter and restoring the livelihood of many families. The project teams had to analyse the current situation, organize and manage the camps, formulate business propositions and oversee start-up operations, identify material supplies and the location of technology, etc. The whole programme required MBA students to develop solutions to real-world problems and encouraged them to present their findings of the problem solutions in a collaborative environment for feedback and evaluation. We cannot but wonder, why has this real-world, problem-focused approach to management education through action learning not been continued after the 9-month programme? It is interesting to read on the PIM website (http://www.pim/lk – accessed 21.02.2011):

> A pertinent question to ask is, whether the body of management concepts, models and practices that we have embraced in our educational institutions as well as in business and government are adequate to address the issues that have surfaced after the Tsunami disaster. The action learning projects, that were based on management of camps and reconstruction work, have begun to highlight the need to enrich the traditional classroom teaching by learning-by-doing.

The next example illustrates that it is possible to offer an integrated MBA through an action learning programme that has been run successfully for many years.

Business School Netherlands

The Business School Netherlands offers an International Action Learning MBA (IALMBA) programme in a flexible delivery mode of distance learning combined with regular set meetings and two 9-day residential conferences in Holland and/or South Africa. Associates may choose the normal MBA of 2 years with the possibility of taking 4 years to complete, if necessary, or the fast track that is possible only when prospective associates have completed an executive education of one to one and a half years upfront. The fast track includes three phases:

- *Phase 1* (2 months): Introduction to management theory;
- *Phase 2* (16 months): Activities of completing six action learning projects and two residential conferences;
- *Phase 3*: (6 months): Dissertation and 'Evaluative Assessment of Managerial Learning' (EAML).

The six AL projects are related to the core courses: marketing management, human resource management, financial management, information management, operations management and strategic management. The dissertation may address a thematic organizational concern and integrate all six core courses in relation to this concern, or consist of a new change management or action research project.

Instead of the traditional imparting and absorbing of knowledge, here a learning situation is created in which managers ask and share pertinent questions, address complex problems/issues of significance to their organization, work together in sets and explore/discuss how to find the best solutions. This process of action learning is facilitated by the lecturers drawing on their experience.

Admission criteria require a candidate to be in a managerial position (work-related experience), to hold a bachelor degree or equivalent and to have e-mail connection for communication and Internet access for the electronic library. This library includes 1500 professional and academic journals, articles from leading business publications, downloadable abstracts and full texts.

I have enjoyed working in a similar way with some MBA and doctoral sets in Cape Town and Johannesburg in my role as workshop leader on action research and dissertation writing. These associates were in leadership positions and highly intelligent, motivated, self-directed, entrepreneurial, open and sharing; I learnt at least as much from them as they did from me. This is the spirit of PALAR, that is, working, thinking, reflecting and being together, learning from and with one another for personal, professional and organizational change, development or transformation.

Kenan-Flagler Business School, University of New Carolina

Although I have not personally been involved in the 'MBA for Executive' programme offered by the UNC's Kenan-Flagler Business School, I wish to include it here as an example of action leadership development for the twenty-first century, because it highlights experiential learning, action learning and lifelong learning and it can be adopted or adapted by business schools elsewhere in the world. Readers may watch the video on *Leadership and Action Learning* and listen to the comments by the dean (Steve Jones), several graduates (e.g. Jan Davis and Kevin Leibel), CEOs and employers of those graduates. It is available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ueKvZDGknMc&feature=related (accessed 21.02.2011). Additional testimonies are available on the video entitled *The Leadership Initiative* available at http://www.kenan-flagler.unc.edu/About/LeadershipActionLearning.cfm (accessed 21.02.2011). Management educators wishing to introduce such an MBA for Executives and being new to action learning may learn from Michael Marquardt (2009) what the essential features of an action learning programme are so that they may experiment and gradually replace formal lectures/seminars by action learning programmes and projects in the real world.

Although action learning is increasingly being used in organizations, the above examples of management education in business schools and universities from three continents are still exceptions rather than the rule.

Learning from Examples and Literature

Based on my experiences with MBA programmes through action learning, I propose a generic MBA programme by action learning designed for experienced executives in the private and public sectors who integrate work and study. I agree with Raelin (2008), who argues against leadership training conducted in offsite conference centres because such training aims to impose leadership onto people so that they can later transform themselves and then their organizations. Instead he argues for alternatives that can more effectively put leadership directly into the organization where it belongs. These alternatives are work-based learning and action learning, bridging knowledge and action in the workplace and transforming both the leaders and their organizations. Leadership needs to be brought out in everyone in the organization, all of whom are encouraged to make a unique contribution to its growth, to become collaborative and to develop deep consideration of others (see also Raelin, 2003). This collaborative form of leadership – that I term action leadership – is best developed through action learning in its original formulation, i.e. through reflection on real-time work experience and distilling knowledge and learning from this context with others. Thus, individuals learn to lead collectively with others whose leadership cultures and practices differ from their own. Here difference is not seen as problematic, but as synergetic.

A recent article by Rhee and Sigler (2010) addresses the question: What does it take to develop enlightened leaders who can transform their organizations and communities? These authors designed a master of science programme in 'Executive

Leadership and Organization Change' (ELOC) to develop leaders who are self-aware, learning-centred, adaptable, interpersonally competent and team oriented. They claim that this goal can be achieved through a pedagogical framework of action learning, competence development, teamwork and a public engagement *practicum* or service-learning course in the first summer of their programme.

In the following section I describe a generic MBA programme for executive leadership and organization development/change that is based on a similar educational framework, but it is fully work integrated, not just partially work-based (through a service-learning *practicum*). This means that the MBA candidates' learning takes place in and for their own organization, supported by action learning sets and online readings. They are full-time executives and full-time 'students' or associates. Their teachers synthesize and offer insights from academic and managerial knowledge, because they are both academics and consultants in the private and public sectors, as the following section reveals.

A Generic MBA Programme by Action Learning for Executives

The MBA (Executive) programme by action learning under discussion here[1] is in response to the recommendations mentioned above of the International Task Force on Leadership and Management Skills for developing senior managers for the twenty-first century (see the history of management education). This programme is a work-integrated, learner-centred, problem-focused, interdisciplinary degree, designed on adult, active learning principles. It aims at organizational learning and development as well as personal and professional development of senior managers who can upgrade their knowledge and skills and exchange their work experience and ideas with fellow executives in small groups. Since this programme may serve as a model to other educators of MBA (Executive) programmes, it is discussed here in more detail than in the examples cited above.

A comparison of the MBA (Executive) and the traditional MBA is provided in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 The MBA (Executive) programme in comparison with the traditional MBA

MBA (Executive)	Traditional MBA
Flexible off-campus delivery	On-campus delivery
Local, interstate, off shore	Local (fixed timetable)
Intensive residentials	Formal classes (weekly)
Off-campus reading courses	Lectures
Action learning 'sets' and project work	Tutorials
Learner centred	Curriculum and teacher centred
Emphasis on the process of learning	Content centred
Work-based assessment	Course-based assessment
Interdisciplinary, problem oriented	Disciplinary
More expensive	More economical

The MBA (Executive) framework is set to make an educational shift from knowledge transmission in a formal setting to the facilitation of integrated workplace learning off-campus, that is, there is a shift or revolution in paradigm from training (*Ausbildung*) to an integrated, holistic approach to the formation of management knowledge, skills and attitudes (*Bildung*) and an organizational culture of continuous improvement of learning and quality action leadership.

The feasibility and the framework of this programme were established in a 1-day strategic planning meeting by a taskforce of 20 people consisting of management educators from three Australian universities and managing directors of private consultancy companies, and facilitated by a CEO of a major Australian manufacturing and retail company. All members had substantial experience in action learning and/or action research in the private and public sectors. Most were members of ALARPM and involved in one or more world congresses. Outlines of the programme and of each course were approved by the Graduate School of Management (GSM) Board and by the Academic Committee of the University. A concise outline and discussion of the programme follows, relating to characteristic features of the programme, target group, flexible delivery mode, teaching methods, benefits and limitations. For more details, course outlines appear in Appendix 2.

Characteristic Features of the Programme

The task force identified the following characteristic features of the programme:

- Students/associates do not have to attend on-campus lectures after work;
- Programme is work based, flexible and provides credentialed recognition (MBA) while the associate is working;
- Proven high return on investment;
- High-tech approach;
- Advantage of working in small groups;
- Networking and forming strategic alliances;
- Personal and individual support with work-based problems, both at group and set advisor levels;
- Collaboration with other experienced and seasoned managers working at master's level;
- Access to the latest information, internationally, on associate's chosen topic;
- Immediate value, and continued ongoing value for the organization, long after the individual staff member finishes the MBA;
- High level of personal growth;
- Excellent staff–student ratio, with group sizes of five to six;
- Recognition of prior learning (not necessarily a degree);
- Associates acquire lifelong learning skills that they can pass on to others in their organization;
- The programme is individually structured/designed to suit needs of the associates and their organization – a custom-made programme.

Target Group

The MBA (Executive) by action learning is designed initially for local and national – and eventually for international – senior managers in the private and public sectors with five or more years of experience. They might own their own business, or hold an executive position of considerable responsibility within their organization, and/or are sponsored by their organization on the basis of high managerial performance and top management potential. This programme is for keen, busy executives who wish to make a significant contribution to their organization and beyond, to deepen their own learning and to receive a university degree in recognition of their work.

Flexible Delivery Mode

Since the managers' work and organizations become the focus of their study and assessment, this programme of 12 semester units (SUs) can be completed as an intensive programme of three semesters in 13 months (including the summer semester) or as an option in 2 years.

Senior managers who normally would not enrol in a traditional MBA course with on-campus lectures, tutorials and a set timetable of evening classes will appreciate the flexible delivery mode of this off-campus MBA (Executive) by action learning. It consists of the following:

- Two residentials of 2 weeks each (four SUs in total);
- Two off-campus reading courses (two SUs in total) with regular meetings of action learning groups (three weekend seminars each);
- Two work-based projects: an action learning project (two SUs) over two semesters and an action research dissertation (four SUs) in the last semester, both supported by regular action learning sets.

In both projects, senior managers address a work-related problem of significant importance to their organizations and themselves. They share their ideas and problems in regular meetings with their action learning set and an advisor, who acts as a group mentor and resource person.

Teaching Methods

Teaching methods are based on a combination of specialist input and learner-centred methods. It is assumed that practising managers have a wealth of experience, knowledge and skills, which can be built on, and that knowledge can be gained not only from grand theory (in texts or lectures) but also, if not mainly, from practical theory, which is theory developed from practice, experience and reflection on this experience. Emphasis is placed on team/group work. Teaching staff include international visiting professors and noted speakers from industry.

Teaching methods are also based on the principles of action learning and flexible learning. Flexible learning is an approach to education that increases the learner's control over learning and enables him or her to develop increased responsibility and

independence. This approach recognizes that learning is a lifelong process and that generic, lifelong learning skills should be important attributes of all graduates.

In flexible learning, instead of expecting associates to adapt to a fixed teaching method, ways of learning are adapted as far as practicable to meet learners' requirements:

- Interaction between teachers, associates and learning materials, in terms of time, place, content, sequence, entry and exit, is as adaptable as possible so that learners have maximum control and choice over how, where and when they learn.
- The distinctive needs of associates from diverse backgrounds are accommodated, access is improved and different needs are addressed through appropriate learner-support systems.
- Appropriate educational technologies to enhance learner independence and control are used; they may range from written study guides to sophisticated interactive multimedia programmes.
- Flexible assessment procedures are used to help develop lifelong learning skills.

Benefits

Participants in this MBA programme by action learning will appreciate the personal treatment because of the excellent staff–student ratio in groups of about five to six, instead of sitting in anonymous mass lectures. Therefore, they will be prepared to pay a higher fee for this self-funding programme, conducted by academic and senior consultants with international reputation and industry experience. Each intake of associates is limited to a maximum of 50 per year.

Other advantages of this programme include the following:

1. Candidates without a first degree from a recognized tertiary institution may be admitted if they can provide documentary evidence that their qualifications or professional achievements are equivalent to a first degree. They are required to attach such documents to their application form, or a supporting letter from their company's chief executive officer.
2. Candidates can exit the course after successful completion of the following: four SUs of specified courses – which will be awarded the Graduate Management Qualification (GMQ) – for one-third of the fee and eight SUs of specified courses – which will be awarded the Graduate Diploma of Management (Grad Dip Mgt) (Executive) – for two-thirds of the fee.
3. Exemption from specified courses may be granted by the GSM Board on the grounds that a candidate's educational qualifications include material of the same type and level as the courses for which exemption is sought.

Limitations

The main limitation of this programme is the higher costs owing to its resource-intensive teaching methods in residential, small action learning sets and individual

project supervision. In addition, this programme has to be run in a way to sustain it as fully funded, bearing in mind that most teaching staff are not on a university salary and are external specialists who have to be paid senior consultants' fees.

Another limitation is related to programme promotion and marketing. How can this new programme be launched? How will senior managers be informed? Apart from sending brochures to CEOs and placing advertisements in newspapers as usual, a personal approach is necessary to explain the concepts and benefits of action learning to the learning organization, but this approach is time consuming. Yet, we do know from the literature and from our experience that there is a great deal of common interest in the action learning approach to management education and development in all sectors and in the development of the new paradigm. Innovative colleagues are encouraged to consider and further develop this generic MBA programme by action learning for experienced managers.

The next section focuses on professional development of senior managers and executives through PALAR and the design of alternative higher degree programmes.

Professional Development of Managers and Executives Through PALAR

In the previous section we made the distinction between management *education* and management *development*.[2] In this section, we discuss innovative ways of providing higher-degree programmes that are specially designed to maximize the associates' professional and action leadership development and growth, and simultaneously the development of their organizations.

We also pointed out the two strands of management literature – academic and practical – for different audiences. The core problem of (graduate) business schools in universities has been a failure to distinguish between two different types of learners who have different learning needs and capacities. One type is represented by managers already in, or preparing for, executive positions and the other by those preparing for academic positions in higher education.

This distinction forces recognition of the need for two different education programmes, each with its own aims, teaching and assessment methods, learning outcomes and contributions to knowledge by graduates. Aspiring academics in departments or (graduate) schools of management need to acquire and contribute mainly to propositional or theoretical knowledge and 'grand theory', while practising managers/executives need to develop and explicate mainly practical theory, that is, theory based on practical experience and yielded to improve practice. Therefore, there must be a difference in the kind of thesis produced by the candidates in (1) research master's and PhD programmes for future academics and (2) MBA, DBA and other professional master's and doctoral programmes for executives and senior managers. The former type of thesis needs to demonstrate contribution to theorized knowledge, while the latter thesis must make a contribution to both experienced

knowledge and improved practice. This difference needs to be clearly understood by the candidates, teaching staff and examiners of theses.

I think problems have arisen when individual academics or a whole department in a university has resisted change: from the traditional, academic, mainly theoretical approach to management education in the last century to a more customer/practitioner-oriented, learner-centred, practical problem-based, action learning approach needed for the circumstances prevailing in this century. Although academic resistance to change can at times still be fierce and stifling, an increasing number of progressive, innovative academics in university institutes use action learning and action research, such as the business schools I have mentioned and taught in, as well as the Revans Institute for Action Learning and Research, the University of Salford (UK); SOLAR – the Social and Organisational Learning as Action Research team in the University of the West of England, Bristol (UK); SOL – Society for Organizational Learning, based at Cornell University (USA); and the Department of Management and Leadership Learning, University of Lancaster (UK).

However, it is predominantly in private business schools and corporate universities that an action learning approach to management and executive development has been used. The best teachers from industry and selected academics part-time and from across the world have been employed here, in recognition of their knowledge, understanding and ability to meet institutional needs/goals and to facilitate work-related, lifelong learning.

These institutions use action learning, action research and process management approaches to executive development and management education. Coffey (2010) developed a new methodology of leadership and organization development, called SAL (Systems Approach to Leadership), a multi-methodology based on a worldview that naturally fits with high complexity and uncertainty. Therefore, it is significant for addressing complex issues in difficult organizational situations. The book first outlines the theoretical framework of SAL and its philosophical assumptions, explaining the changes in thinking that are necessary – from a deterministic worldview to a naturalistic worldview. It then progressively presents a series of systems models to arrive at SAL's final model and method, and a supporting set of individual and organizational strategies and processes of action. Coffey (2010: 18) defines systems approach to leadership as:

> . . . an holistic approach to leadership and organization development which can be used by any leader at any organizational level to optimize an organization (or part of it) to create sustainable high performance in conditions of high complexity and uncertainty.

SAL is built on a framework that consists of three levels of perspective and strategy: activity, process and whole system. Coffey (2010: 18) explains:

> . . . a strategy of 'whole system' development to optimise all forms of organisational entity (i.e. individuals, teams, business units and whole organisations) for sustained high performance.

> . . . an 'in-context' method of systemic enquiry, critical reflection and strategic action to move quickly and effectively toward local optimisation.

... a supporting set of integrated action strategies, processes, skills and knowledge.

... foundational assumptions, system methods and models which link individual cognition (knowledge-in-action) to organisation performance.

It is interesting to note that Coffey relies heavily on pioneering work by Roy Bhaskar and Garreth Morgan, which was recently revised (Bhaskar, 2008; Burrell and Morgan, 2008).

In the following section I present an example of an innovative action learning programme at the doctoral level (also available at the master's level) that I designed with my associates in the International Management Centres Association (IMCA) in the UK. The programme is called 'Senior Executive Action Learning' or SEAL programme for experienced management practitioners and executives, called 'associates' in IMCA rather than 'students'. It offers associates systematic and systemic opportunities to develop and make explicit their tacit knowledge of innovative organizational management and action leadership, and to write a thesis by explication of their published work, i.e. work made public in whatever form. The SEAL programme makes a particularly valuable contribution to the body of organizational knowledge by bringing into more widely accessible written form what may otherwise remain unarticulated and unrecorded insights and experiences.

Senior Executive Action Learning (SEAL) Programme

The SEAL programme is a forum for leadership, vision and networking, a forum for those 'at the top of their game' who want to continue to learn and make a significant contribution to their field. Participants learn from the forum's collective expertise and bring to fruition innovations through their business or organization. At the end they gain a professional doctoral degree from the IMCA. The first set (or group) of 14 associates started the SEAL programme in the UK in 2003, the second in 2005. The full cohort of both groups has graduated successfully.

Like the MBA (Executive), the SEAL programme is a work-based, learner-centred, problem-focused, interdisciplinary degree, designed on the principles and theories of adult learning (Knowles, 1985) and Revans' 'gold standards' of the self-organizing/evolutionary form of action learning (Willis, 2004). It aims at organizational learning and development as well as personal and professional development of senior managers who can explicate their experiential knowledge by reflecting on their work experience, thinking critically and developing their ideas with fellow executives in small groups.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a detailed description of the programme, but an information brochure (including the programme goals, benefits, structure, activities, requirements and accreditation) is available and can be downloaded from the website http://www.g-a-r-c.org/seal/ by clicking on *SEAL* (accessed 21.02.2011). The cost is comparable to most full-fee-paying programmes in universities and business schools and includes EBSCO[3] abstracting service, but

excludes all personal travel and residential accommodation fees. Most associates are sponsored and supported by their companies.

When designing the SEAL programme, our assumptions were that (1) successful, experienced senior managers already have so much empirical knowledge that they will not need to study all management subjects from A to Z like young graduates in universities; (2) their prior learning/knowledge evidenced in written, public documents can be accredited for up to one-third of the degree requirements and (3) by the start of the programme, each associate would have reflected on their own published work and identified a theme worth further developing, writing up and publishing. The thesis by explication is based on their experience, achievements, plus some additional study necessary to substantiate and verify the new knowledge claims they set out in their explication. However, the explication need not be interpreted only as a retrospective piece seeking to make sense of past achievements but also as a re-thinking of the past towards present and future possibilities – provided that these possibilities are presented not as fantasies, vagaries or unsubstantiated opinions, but in a cogent, insightful professional and scholarly manner. Table 6.3 presents an overview of the SEAL programme.

Readers interested in a detailed description of the methods of learning, reflecting, coaching, model building, assessment and examination used in the SEAL programme may consult my book chapters (Zuber-Skerritt, 2005b, 2006). Here I summarize the main concepts and activities in the form of a diagrammatical model of knowledge explication. I have developed this model in relation to the programme's three main goals and concepts that can be achieved through PALAR: 'self-managed leadership' and 'knowledge explication' in and for the 'learning organization', as shown in the upper half of Fig. 6.1.

Self-managed leadership is now required for a fast-changing, global world. Self-managed or self-organizing leadership (Knowles, 2001) might benefit from knowledge of the research literature, such as the theories, examples and guidelines presented by Dubrin and Dalgish (2003). Yet an important additional requirement is the ability to use processes and methods of guiding and transforming organizations and their leaders so that they are able to self-organize or self-manage when faced with sudden and totally new challenges or problems that have never been researched. Action learning, as practised in the SEAL programme, is one effective methodology, as Dotlich and Noel (1998) and others (e.g. Sankaran et al., 2001) have demonstrated convincingly.

Knowledge (re-)creation and explication is through the executives' reflection on their practice and previously published work. Processes through which associates make their implicit knowledge explicit result in their development of 'questioning insight' and lifelong learning. Methods include individual coaching, collegial interviews, reflection journals, action learning set meetings and model building.

Learning organization: Executives acquire personal mastery of both the knowledge and skills they need to develop and sustain a learning organization. They do so not only as self-managed leaders themselves but also as facilitators of processes that develop other leaders' learning capability to become action learners, reflective

Table 6.3 Overview of the SEAL programme (Zuber-Skerritt, 2006: 261–262)

One-third recognition of prior learning/public work	Two-thirds personal explication of public work			Viva voce
Publications	*Meetings*	*Public Workshop*	*Explication*	*Defence of Explication*
• Management reports	• >4 days of workshops (including start-up)	To be conducted on associate's own topic and assessed by mentor, peers, audience and self	Of publishable standard, examined by internal and external examiners	
• Annual reports • Strategic business plans	• Individual mentoring			Oral examination and debate with at least two examiners
• Keynote addresses	• Action learning set (ALS) meetings		Published Monograph >4,000 words	
• Conference papers	• Sub-set discussions (self-organized)			
• Training and development courses/manuals • Board proposals	• International meetings with other sets (optional)			
• Client/stakeholder reports/evaluations				
• Co-authorship or supervised work, etc.	*Support* network for concept development, writing and publishing	*Trial* and presentation of ideas	*Quality* assured	*Evidence* of own work

Fig. 6.1 A conceptual model of the SEAL programme (Zuber-Skerritt, 2006: 271)

practitioners, knowledge creators (not just 'knowledge workers') and self-organized managers and action leaders.

In retrospect, I recognize this model of self-developed leadership through action learning accords with Maxwell's (2000) approach to 'failing forward' by learning from mistakes and from and with others. It is also aligned with Covey's (1992) principle-centred leadership. In each case, learning and leadership are developed from the inside out.

The next section discusses the nature, purpose and quality criteria of a professional doctoral thesis by explication – a requirement in the SEAL programme – because this kind of thesis is little known and differs from other doctoral theses.

Professional Doctoral Thesis by Explication

'Professional doctoral thesis by explication as professional management development' is the title of one of my papers (Zuber-Skerritt, 2007c). In this section I focus on a particular kind of doctoral thesis by explication designed for the

Senior Executive Action Learning (SEAL) programme outlined above. It is not a traditional PhD but a *professional* doctorate named *DPhil* (doctor of philosophy), *DMgt* (doctor of management) or *DLitt* (doctor of letters). I present a brief definition of a doctoral explication thesis (*DET*), underlying theoretical assumptions, quality criteria, examples, assessment, outcomes and a conceptual model.

In 1990 I first read about the possibility of writing a thesis by explication in IMC, based on one's published work and as a means of continuing professional development through critically reflecting on this work. The idea appealed to me immediately. While I had already been awarded a PhD by research in literature and a PhD by action research in higher education, I found it very enjoyable, stimulating and personally enriching to review my publications to date (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992c), focusing on a theme and reflecting on my learning and development journey. In hindsight, having a clearer idea of what a DET involves would have enabled me to improve the quality of my DLitt thesis by explication. Similarly, being a member of an action learning set, discussing ideas, problems, challenges and experiences with others, and learning from and with one another invariably improves the quality of one's work.

These experiences triggered my interest in developing arguments for a professional doctorate as distinct from a traditional, academic PhD. In papers I co-authored with a colleague (Perry and Zuber-Skerritt, 1992, 1994; Zuber-Skerritt and Perry, 2002) we argue that action research is more appropriate than traditional, academic research for practising senior managers to use in their theses, because action research can best achieve both of the vital aims of the best social or human science research: *improving practice*, professional development and organizational learning, and *advancing knowledge* in and of their field.

The design of the SEAL programme was based on similar assumptions and on the ideas that (1) senior executives or 'associates' in the programme could gain accreditation for their prior learning and professional achievements that were documented in written, public papers, speeches, reports, presentations, etc.; (2) the 'thesis' proper could be more concise and shorter than a usual academic thesis by the associate reflecting on and explicating their previous work and referring to details in the written documents appended to and supporting their thesis and (3) associates could develop their theme and original contribution through PALAR within a 'set' or group of like-minded executives and through discussion, trials and workshop activities to bring their thesis by explication to completion.

Many universities around the world have introduced various kinds of PhD by publication. The quality of these doctorates varies considerably. The worst I have seen, from a European university, was a collection of five or six published papers – all of them non-refereed and/or co-authored with the supervisor – with only a brief introduction and no overall rationale. The best was a collection of original research papers with a proper explication of how each paper on its own contributed to knowledge in the field and was relevant to the theme and focal question/problem of the thesis that, in turn, created new, additional knowledge (Dick, 2005). Let us first consider the question: What is an explication?

Definition of an Explication

I have always understood the term 'explication' in its simplest definition. *The Australian Macquarie Dictionary* (Delbridge and Associates, 1981: 626) states: 'To explicate: 1. to develop (a principle, idea, etc.); 2. to make plain or clear; explain; interpret. Explication: 1. the act of explicating; 2. an explanation; interpretation'. Based on this information and discussion with five experienced experts, I arrived at the following definition of a doctoral explication thesis (Zuber-Skerritt, 2007c: 30):

> A thesis by explication has to first clarify, explain and interpret the theme that the candidate has identified in relation to her/his achievements in the written documents supporting the thesis; and second, develop a principle, argument, conceptual model or theory that constitutes an original contribution to knowledge in practice and theory and explains the theme discussed in the thesis.

How can this be achieved?

Theoretical Assumptions

Based on the theories and principles within the phenomenological paradigm in the social sciences (Chapter 4), we can better identify how candidates in the SEAL programme and in their theses by explication are able to make an original contribution to knowledge in their field because they can

- create new knowledge – inductively developed from their own lived experience (in their written documents) and from 'raw data' that they may obtain systematically (e.g. in interviews, group discussions, open-ended questionnaires) – and rigorously evaluate and validate the results to provide evidence for their knowledge claims, e.g. through participant confirmation (grounded theory);
- share and negotiate meaning in action learning sets and as personal scientists to arrive at their individual and group concepts (personal construct theory);
- adopt a critical and self-critical attitude in order to achieve real transformational change (critical theory); and
- develop system-oriented, holistic resolutions to complex problems in their organizations through PALAR (systems theory).

The next question is: What constitutes a quality doctoral thesis by explication?

The Quality of a Thesis by Explication

We need to remind ourselves that there is a difference between an *academic* doctoral thesis by explication, based on scientifically researched data, books and/or refereed articles in academic journals, and a *professional* management doctoral thesis by explication, based on living knowledge, experience and strategy in written management documents. In this section we focus on the latter, the doctoral explication thesis (DET) written by senior managers that leads to a DPhil, a DMgt or a DLitt award.

In my paper with a colleague (Zuber-Skerritt and Fletcher, 2007), we distinguish between a traditional thesis by research (PhD) and an action research thesis and explain how the latter has to meet the main requirements of a traditional thesis plus additional requirements, just as I argue in this chapter for additional and specific requirements of a thesis by explication. First, I define the main principles affecting the quality of any doctoral thesis (shown below), followed by some examples of explications, in order to identify the specific characteristics of a DET. Main principles affecting the quality of a thesis include:

- *Quality* versus quantity. Many universities specify the maximum length of a thesis to be 200–250 pages. This means succinctness.
- *Succinctness* and concise language in the thesis proper and detailed evidence and support materials in appendices.
- *Impeccable formatting* and freedom from errors. With spellcheck function and computer software packages such as *Endnote*, there is no excuse for errors and inconsistencies in headings, spellings, etc. In addition, professional editors may be used.
- *Critical tone*, i.e. the use of self-criticism, dialectic (recognizing multiple perspectives) and constructive critique of the literature.
- *Sound methodology* to be clearly defined, explained and argued.
- *Original contribution* to knowledge in the field in both practice and theory.

The most important criterion on which all doctoral theses are examined and judged in all universities worldwide is the achievement of an *original contribution* to knowledge in the field. This essential characteristic of a thesis applies to any scholarly work in the traditional social sciences and also to a thesis by action research or explication, but the latter is required to contribute to knowledge in practice as well as theory.

So what are the distinguishing characteristics of a thesis by explication (DET)? In essence, the written explication is shorter (10,000 words plus) than other kinds of doctoral theses, because previous public management documents are appended to it. In addition, its contribution need not necessarily be based on original research but on the candidate's previously published work, reflection on this work and on professional practice, praxis, experience, expertise, achievement and evidence thereof in their field – that is, in the case of SEAL, professional and organizational learning and action leadership development. In brief, the SEAL programme has three main requirements of a good thesis by explication:

1. Evidence of professional achievement and innovation to date – in a selection of previous documents and publications;
2. Cogent analysis of and reflection on this work in relation to the existing literature and known practice and development in the field, in order to identify the gap in the literature that the thesis fills and to contribute to new knowledge in the field in practice and theory – an original contribution that needs to be argued in the

thesis and proven by evidence from the published work and additional evaluation research; and

3. Evidence of reflective practice, learning, action leadership and professional and organizational development and growth.

Examples of Theses by Explication

As yet, there are still few examples of doctoral explication theses because the concept of DET and the philosophy underpinning it are not understood or accepted by many academics in management education and senior management/leadership development, especially within universities and traditional business schools. Nevertheless, all senior managers I know who have completed a DET are enthusiastic about the outcomes. They mainly report on the following:

- The value of action learning for effective management development, personal and professional growth of the people they have worked with and of themselves;
- The whole explication process as contributing to organizational growth and productivity; and
- The benefits of both the processes of action learning and of explication writing for improving management practice and producing a 'thesis' that is a 'worm's eye from deep inside', a 'point of view' or a 'personal theory'.

Here are five brief and illustrative examples of doctoral graduates of IMCA. For more testimonials, see http://www.g-a-r-c.org/garc/testimonials.asp (accessed 21.02.2011).

Gary Jarrett (DPhil 2000) claimed that as a result of his DPhil, he provided his company $250 million annual savings by 'improving the economic and operational effectiveness of the logistical organization' and 'implementing just-in-time systems'. His personal annual income had increased 270%.

Chandi Jayawardena (DPhil 2001) wrote:

> Most doctoral theses from traditional universities collect dust in libraries, and are hardly read by anyone else. In contrast, IMCA doctoral associates are encouraged to publish the essence of their research and share it with the world. This is a rewarding experience. I used my doctoral research outcomes to publish two 'post-doctoral' articles in a highly respected peer reviewed journal. I also continued my research in the same topic area, and edited a 400-page book that was launched in 2003. I recommend IMCA's action learning doctoral programs to all managers who are serious about boosting their career prospects, being more productive at workplace and thinking about it 'outside the box'.

Edward Cumings (DPhil 2002), who was a member of a doctoral action learning set in South Africa, wrote:

> At the heart of IMC is the core global commitment to developing more effective managers by action learning. . . . I estimate the investment in my MBA and DPhil to be around £25,000 (lots of commuting between SA and UK) and the minimum ROI (return on investment) in operational benefits (from measurable rises in competitive advantage), to be a pessimistic £15 million. Thereafter things become hazy. How does one extrapolate value that derives

from some dozens of key managers around the world who now look outwards and foster learning, innovation and action learning in their areas? IMC and action learning have come through outstandingly and, in my experience, fit real world management development and real work.

Bob Dick (DLitt 2005) from Australia for many years resisted encouragement to undertake a thesis by explication. He was not persuaded that it would be worth the effort it would take, but eventually he did allow himself to be persuaded, and he enjoyed both the work itself and the positive and unexpected outcomes that it produced. In June 2010 when I asked him to reflect on his thesis, he said:

> In the course of preparing and writing my DLitt explication I read and reflected on 30 years of writing. Much of this I had not read since it was first written. I relished my revisiting of some of the other authors who had been a formative influence on my development as educator, consultant and facilitator. I found that in much of my early writing there were hints of what later became more prominent themes.

> Looking back, in the past it would have been an advantage to have done this more often. Since completing the DLitt I have been setting aside more time for reading and thinking and writing. As part of the DLitt I searched for the themes that gave coherence to the body of writing I was reflecting on. There were such themes. I presume that previously they were present tacitly in the work that I did. Reflection for the explication raised them to awareness. There they now more deliberately inform my thinking and my practice, to my benefit and the benefit of the people I work with.

These examples begin to indicate the value of the explication process for developing senior managers' minds and intellectual abilities and for developing their professional practice in many different ways, from improving the bottom line to more carefully considered ethical behaviour. As is the requirement for all theses at the doctoral level, a thesis by explication must make an original contribution to knowledge in the form of 'living knowledge' or a 'model' or 'point of view' or 'personal theory' that is valid for the people with whom the senior managers work and for themselves.

Assessment

Supervisors and examiners of DETs may follow the assessment criteria used in IMCA for examining the main components of a doctoral degree by explication:

1. Assessment of published work: number of documents selected; relevance to the theme discussed in the thesis; intellectual rigour; originality; and actual or potential value in application;
2. Assessment of the explication: style, structure and presentation; synthesis; prospects for further research; international context and original contribution to knowledge; and
3. Assessment of the viva voce, that is, the oral defence of the thesis: knowledge and understanding of the field; ownership of explication and of the original contribution, especially in teamwork.

For most doctoral candidates, writing a DET would likely be more difficult than writing a traditional PhD thesis by research that follows standard procedures and is less focused on lived experience and transformation. However, for certain senior managers with a great deal of lived experience, practical knowledge and wisdom, producing a DET is more meaningful, manageable and enjoyable, and they would not have the time, interest or personal will to do a PhD and conduct academic research.

The explication process not only requires analytical and practical research skills but also involves the author's whole person: physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. It does not focus only on content with facts and figures but on human dilemmas, complex relationships, social problems and also on the 'self'. It is about self-development, social justice, professional development, organization or community development, and generating new knowledge, based on practical experience, reflection on this experience, conceptualization and model building. Hence, the explication process develops creative, innovative and analytical thinking, and right and left brain activities. It requires research and writing for creating new knowledge and sharing it with others.

Conceptual Model of Knowledge Creation and of a Thesis by Explication

What are the main activities of research and writing and the thought processes of knowledge creation that are required for this type of thesis (DET)? How can an inciting moment or critical issue be revealed? First, the main activities involved in researching and writing a DET remind me of the ancient practice of *Lectio Divina* or 'spiritual reading' for the purpose of revelation and transformation of one's life to make it more meaningful. The four main phases are *reading*, *thinking*, *praying* and *living* (Peterson, 2003: 16–23). I apply these phases to an explication as follows.

The phase of *reading* involves the following:

1. Reading again what you have written and published over the years;
2. Identifying the readings written by others that have had a significant impact on your life and thinking (in order to use the literature to support your argument/thesis and to show the 'gap' in the recorded knowledge in your field);
3. Continuing reading in the field, including professional journals (to be informed and updated in your field);
4. Using a bibliographical software package, such as *Endnote*, to enter all references relevant to the thesis (this will save you a lot of trouble and time in the long run).

The phase of *thinking* involves the following activities:

5. Identifying the main theme and sub-themes of your explication, based on your selected management documents and publications (mentioned in item 1 above);
6. Identifying the gap in the literature in the field and your potential contribution to knowledge and meaning (see item 2 above);

7. Formulating a focal question that you will be able to address comprehensively in the given time limit, reflecting on your activities in items 1–6 above;
8. Using a reflective diary or logbook to record events, ideas, reflections, action plans, etc.

The phase of *praying*, that we rename as *reflecting*, may correspond to the following:

9. Spiritual acts of meditation and reflection, finding an elevated space;
10. Allowing intuition, vision, feelings and emotional intelligence to be used for creating knowledge and making implicit or 'tacit' knowledge explicit;
11. Integrating knowing, doing and being, i.e. propositional/theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge and experiential or existential knowledge;
12. Sharing and discussing this integrated knowledge (in item 11 above) and personal meaning with critical friends (action learning set, public workshop and interested others).

The phase of *living* involves *acting*, 'practicing what you preach', experimenting, evaluating and collecting evidence for your contribution to knowledge in your field and to meaning in your life and work.

Figure 6.2 is a conceptual model of knowledge creation, combining the above four phases in the light of the four theories underpinning the process and production of an explication. This means the following:

- Phase 1 (reading) identifies the existing recorded knowledge in both the literature and in the manager's prior work.
- Phase 2 (thinking) identifies the new knowledge, i.e. the manager's original contribution to knowledge in the field, grounded in his/her already accomplished work and using grounded theory and systems theory.
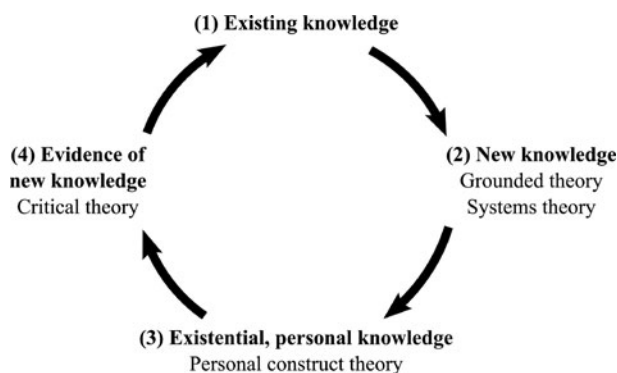
Fig. 6.2 The cycle of knowledge creation in an explication

- Phase 3 (reflecting) leads to development of the existential and personal knowledge of the candidate and of the participants (in the research and development) – as personal scientists and reflective practitioners, using personal construct theory as well as intuition and innovative, creative vision.
- Phase 4 (acting) means collecting further evidence for the manager's knowledge claims developed from the published work and explicated in the thesis. The whole process of knowledge creation and claims needs to be evaluated critically and self-critically, individually and collectively (critical theory); the results need to be used for strengthening the thesis argument and contribution. For there should be no claim without evidence and indeed no evidence without claim!

By the end of the candidate's process of creating and advancing knowledge in the field, the candidate has contributed this new knowledge as addition to existing knowledge, which can be used by the candidate himself/herself and by others in the field as a basis for further research cycles of reading, thinking, reflecting and acting.

Appendix 3 consists of a practical checklist for candidates, supervisors and examiners for evaluating the three assessment items in the SEAL programme: the published works, the written explication and the oral examination.

I am hopeful that the conceptual model and practical tools I have presented here will contribute to knowledge in the field of professional management development and action leadership in fields where they may be useful. I do so in the hope of encouraging reflective, critical, personal production of knowledge, in the collaborative spirit of PALAR and action leadership that guides my professional work and beyond.

At present I am involved in a new PALAR system of professional and action leadership development that I recommend to people in organizations and communities who want to make a difference, learn and reflect on their work and be awarded a professional degree at the certificate, diploma, bachelor, master or doctor level from the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL), discussed in Chapter 7.

Organization Development for the Learning Organization

So far we have established that professional, leadership and organizational development are closely linked and integrated in higher degree programmes through PALAR, such as those in the above examples, especially if senior managers or executives are sponsored by their organization. If they are not sponsored or cannot afford the high fees, they and their organizations may opt for the GULL system, which is online and self-managed, i.e. less expensive but not less effective than fee-charging institutions (see Chapter 7).

This section argues that emancipatory action research is organizational change as 'best practice' and that it fosters organizational learning and the development

of the 'learning organization'. Based on the conceptual frameworks discussed so far, I now present a conceptual model for organizational change and management development,[4] which combines emancipatory action research with adaptations of the organizational change models of Lewin (1951) and of Beer et al. (1990).

The aims of any action research project or programme are to bring about practical improvement, innovation, positive change or development of social practice, and the practitioners' better understanding of their practices. This section addresses the problem of how to achieve effective change and why many change programmes do not produce real transformational change. Although Beer et al. (1990) do not refer at all to the term 'action research', I wish to argue that the same barriers to, and managerial interventions for, effective organizational change that they identify also apply to emancipatory action research and that in fact this integrated research and development methodology is a very effective way to achieve management and organization development. So we can adapt and use Beer et al.'s (1990) model as the basis for creating a new model of emancipatory action research for management and organization development.

In Chapter 4, I explained that action research is emancipatory when it aims not only at technical and practical improvement, the participants' transformed consciousness and change within their organization's existing boundaries and conditions but also at changing the system itself or those conditions that impede desired improvement in the organization. Emancipatory action research also aims at the participants' empowerment and self-confidence in their ability to create 'grounded theory' (Corbin and Strauss, 2008), i.e. theory grounded in experience and practice. These aims are achieved by solving complex problems in totally new situations, collaboratively as a team or 'community of scholars', with everyone being a 'personal scientist' (Kelly, 1963), contributing in different ways but on an equal footing with everyone else. There is no hierarchy, but open and symmetrical communication (Habermas, 1974).

The Learning Organization

To *build a 'learning organization' with a culture for innovation and change* was the main aim of our quality improvement programmes discussed in Chapter 5 (see Fig. 5.6). Senge's (1990) book *The Fifth Discipline* was the start of a new tradition of building learning organizations. The fifth discipline refers to systems thinking and building new types of organizations that are decentralized, non-hierarchical and dedicated not only to the success of the organization but also to the well-being, growth and development of its members. Senge (1990: 4) predicts, 'The organizations that will truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization'. He defines a learning organization as a place where people are continually discovering how they can create and improve their reality. This requires an attitude that learning should be lifelong and cooperative. It should be learning through discussion and dialogue. Senge refers to the original Greek meaning of *dialogos*, i.e. sharing of ideas

and meaning within a group that is able to discover insights that cannot be attained individually.

The discipline of dialogue also involves learning about group processes that support or undermine learning. As I have acknowledged throughout this book, we are living in a time of rapid change, and in order to recognize and adapt to change, and moreover to learn how to anticipate change and respond to it as an opportunity, we must develop a capacity to create new conditions, strategies and methods for solving new problems in unknown future situations. We have evidence that effective ways of building learning organizations involve quality improvement programmes and interventions that use action learning and action research (Zuber-Skerritt, 2009; Dilworth and Boshyk, 2010). Quality and excellence are of central importance, not only to business and industry for a country's economic survival in growing international competition but also to educators charged with the responsibility of educating people to become enlightened and responsible citizens of the world. This underscores the importance of having a global view and seeing the total picture, and striving continually for the best achievements and for a peaceful, sustainable future. This also means to satisfy our 'customers' in the widest sense, including future generations, through quality management and assurance processes.

To sum up, the literature on quality management and organizational innovation, change and development provides ample advice and sound guidelines for positive change and quality improvement programmes. However, many such programmes do not have the desired effect.

Why Change Programmes Do Not Produce Change

This is the title of the classic article by Beer et al. (1990) in the *Harvard Business Review*. In their 4-year study of six large corporations (each with revenues of US \$4–10 billion), these researchers identified three major interrelated factors required for corporate revitalization: *coordination* or teamwork (e.g. among marketing, product design and manufacturing departments, as well as between workers and management); a high level of *commitment* necessary for coordinated action and new *competencies* for problem solving as a team (e.g. analytical and interpersonal skills and knowledge of the business as a whole).

These researchers have also found that the greatest 'fallacy of programmatic change' is the textbook idea that corporate revitalization and renewal processes come about through company-wide change programmes including a mission statement by top management, the employment of human resource managers, a new organizational structure, a performance appraisal system and training programmes to turn managers into 'change agents'. Instead, they advocate an approach to change based on work and task alignment, starting at the periphery with general managers and moving gradually towards top management. They maintain that successful change efforts focus on the work itself, not on abstractions (p. 159). This is in

Table 6.4 A six-step model of managerial interventions for organizational change

Step	Task
1	Joint definition and diagnosis of a business problem. This mobilizes the general managers' and their staff's initial commitment to the change process
2	Developing a shared task-aligned vision of the organization and creating consensus for the new vision among stakeholders
3	Strong leadership in facilitating team building and learning, as well as replacing managers who cannot function in the new organization
4	Spreading the new vision to all departments without pushing it from the top, letting them apply the concepts or coordination and teamwork to their particular situation, even if it means 'reinventing the wheel'.
5	Institutionalizing the revitalization and change by general managers through formal policies, systems and structures so that the process continues even after they have left
6	Monitoring and adjusting strategies in response to problems in the revitalization process. This leads to the learning organization capable of learning to learn and of adapting to a changing competitive environment

line with the principles of PALAR. They also suggest a move from the hierarchical and bureaucratic model which has characterized corporations since the Second World War to what we call the task-driven organization where what has to be done governs who works with whom and who leads (p. 158). Action research is likewise non-hierarchical and aims at reciprocal communication and work-oriented tasks.

On the basis of in-depth analysis, Beer and associates recommend a sequence of six steps ('the critical path') to achieve task alignment. Table 6.4 is a summary of their six-step process of managerial interventions for organizational change.

These steps develop a self-reinforcing cycle of coordination, commitment and competence. It is important that CEOs and senior managers themselves practise what they preach. This means that they themselves must adopt the same team behaviour, attitudes and skills that they encourage in their general managers. Beer et al. (1990: 166) conclude from their research:

> Companies need a particular mind-set for managing change: one that emphasizes process over specific content, recognizes organization change as a unit-by-unit learning process rather than a series of programs, and acknowledges the payoffs that result from persistence over a long period of time as opposed to quick fixes. This mind-set is difficult to maintain in an environment that presses for quarterly earnings, but we believe it is the only approach that will bring about successful renewal.

A Model of Emancipatory Action Research for Organizational Change

As stated earlier, although Beer and associates have made no mention at all of action research, it is an appropriate and complementary methodology compatible with their

findings and conclusions. Action research, too, emphasizes process over a specific content; it recognizes change as a continuous, cyclical, lifelong learning process, rather than a series of training programmes; it is based on team collaboration, coordination, commitment and competence; and it needs to foster critical double-loop learning in order to effect real change and emancipation, not only for the participants themselves but also for the organization as a whole. Therefore, I wish to compare the key processes of the two models, the task alignment model and the action research model of organizational change, and then suggest a combined model of emancipatory action research for management and organizational change, developed in a five-stage argument.

First, the task alignment model summarized in Table 6.4 is a linear process, whereas the process of action research is cyclical. Figure 2.4 presents the classical spiral of action research cycles, each cycle consisting of a *plan* (including problem definition, situation analysis, team vision and strategic plan); *action* (i.e. the implementation of the strategic plan); *observation* (including monitoring and evaluation) and *reflection* on the results of the evaluation, which usually leads to a revised or totally new plan and the continuation of the action research process in a second cycle, then a third, and so on.

Second, I wish to convert Beer et al.'s (1990) linear model into a cyclical process, as suggested in Fig. 6.3, because it can be argued that organizational and business management problems cannot always be defined clearly at the outset, are
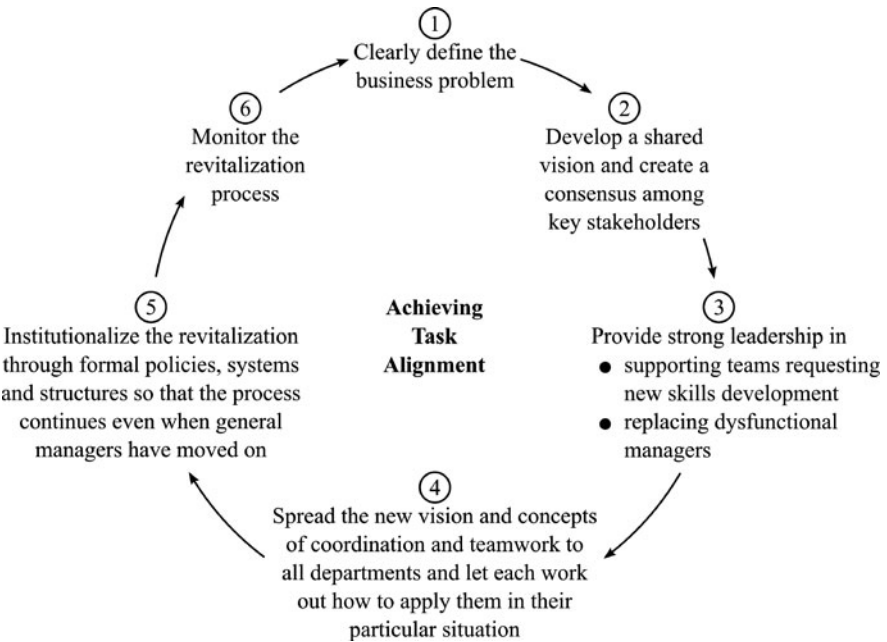
Fig. 6.3 Achieving task alignment for organizational change
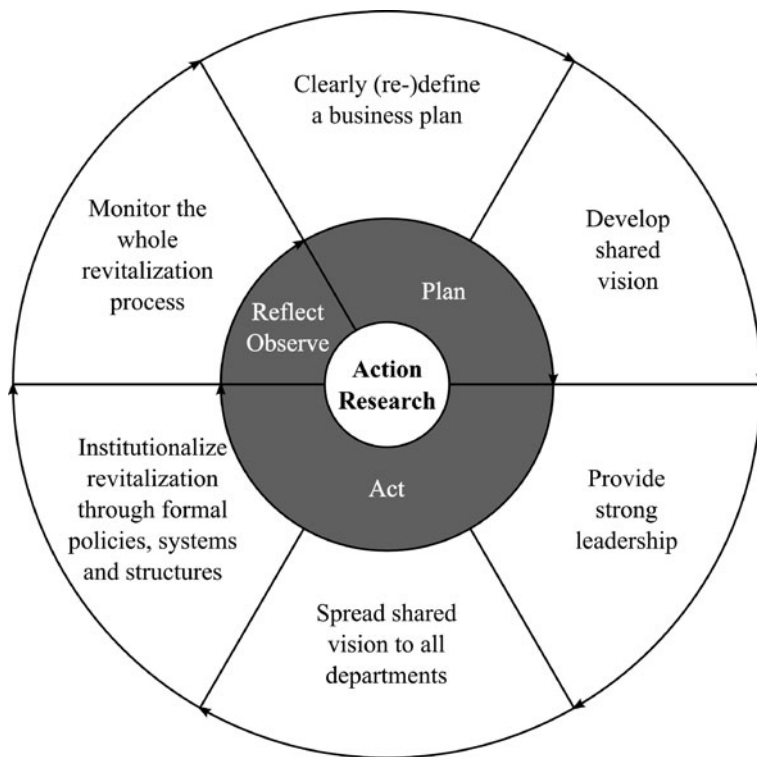
Fig. 6.4 The overlapping process models of achieving task alignment and action research

often vague and usually have to be revised several times through trial and error. It can also be argued that change is not necessarily unidirectional with a beginning, process and end but that it is evolving, recursive and ongoing.

Third, the cyclical models of task alignment and action research may be over-lapped, as suggested in Fig. 6.4 as a tentative model. This shows clearly that the task alignment model lacks an important part of the action research process: reflection.

Fourth, it is interesting to add Lewin's (1951) model of organizational change to the above two models and to show the three stages of unfreezing, moving and refreezing. *Unfreezing* means creating the motivation to change in an organiza-tion through a disturbance – for example, an innovation. *Moving* means changing and developing new beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours on the basis of new information and insights. *Refreezing* means stabilizing and integrating the new beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours into the rest of the system and reaching a new equilibrium until there is a need for a new cycle of unfreezing, moving and refreezing.

The three overlapping models of organizational change in Fig. 6.5 result in a new model of emancipatory action research for organizational change and development.
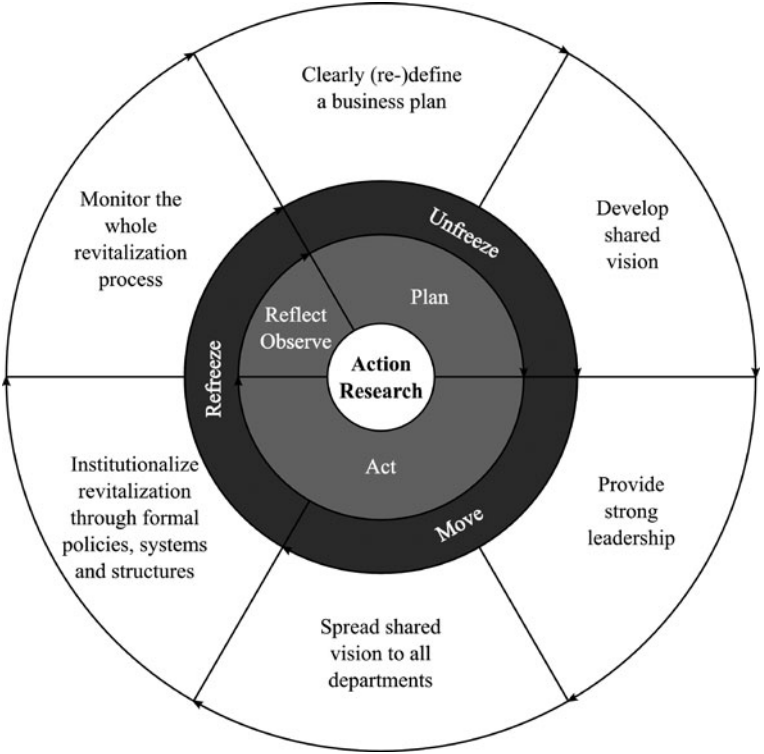
Fig. 6.5 A tentative model of emancipatory action research for organizational change

However, Fig. 6.5 (like Fig. 6.4) is still a tentative model, for it shows that an important part of the action research process remains missing: reflection.

By integrating the three models in Fig. 6.5, it becomes clear that there is an overlap of moments or stages in the process of organizational change as shown in Table 6.5.

It is important to note that a key element in the action research model is critical and self-critical reflection on the whole process, which is emancipatory, empowering, transformational and therefore effective only if subsequent steps are taken to

Table 6.5 Comparison of three organizational change models

Task alignment model	Lewin's model	Action research model
Steps 1 and 2	Unfreezing	Planning
Steps 3 and 4	Moving	Acting
Steps 5 and 6	Refreezing	–
Step 5	–	Acting
Step 6	–	Observing, reflecting
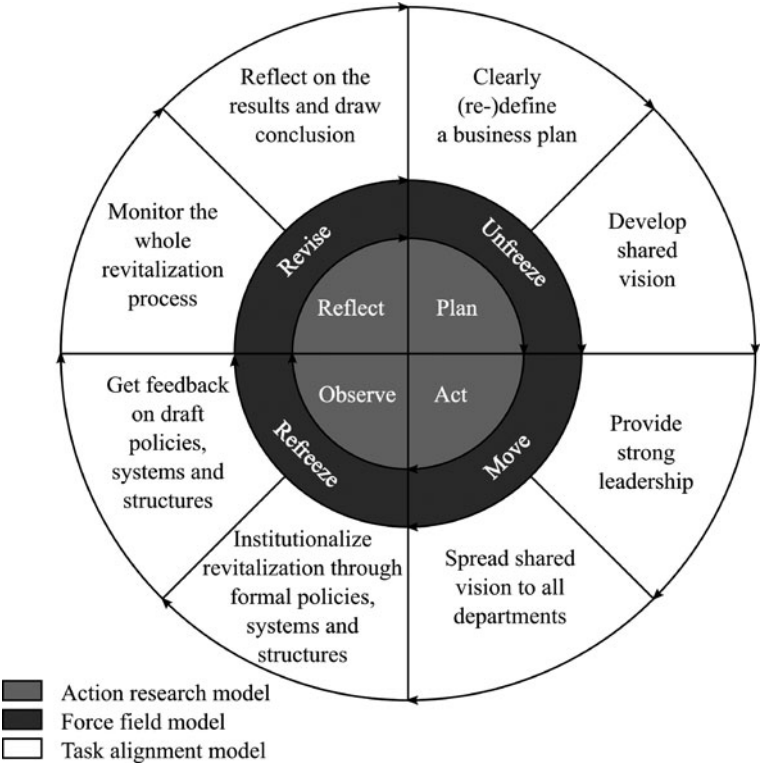
Fig. 6.6 A model of emancipatory action research for organizational change

transform the system and to make changes to those conditions in the organization that impede real change and improvement.

Hence, a fifth and final adaptation to the model of emancipatory action research for organizational change is necessary to achieve a coherent integration of the three models in Fig. 6.6. This means Lewin's model has to be extended by one step (revise) and the task alignment model by two steps (obtain *feedback* on *draft* policies and *reflect* on the results).

This is the model of emancipatory action research for organizational change, developed in a five-step process of adapting and extending two classical organizational change models and integrating them into the action research model. Although this model provides a general and broad framework for understanding organizational change, the process is often less structured in practice. For example, the process may not start with planning/unfreezing, but may be entered at any point. I would also like to point out that Lewin developed his model at a time when change was an occasional interruption to stability. It was reasonable to expect a return to stability through 'refreezing'. In current turbulent times this is often less the case; instead turbulence requires more revision and continuing change.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has used a dialectic, holistic, integrated and humanistic approach to action leadership, management education and organization development, addressing the problems of (1) a lack of relevance of management education and development to the needs and requirements of business, industry, government and society at large in the twenty-first century and (2) the fact that organizational change programmes have not produced the necessary effects. First, I have suggested that we can learn, as I personally did, from the concepts, processes, principles and models in higher education (see Chapter 5) and forge closer links and collaboration between higher education and the other sectors of society. Next the focus has been on management education, its history and explanations of why there is a gap between academic knowledge and culture on the one hand and practical, managerial knowledge required on the other hand. I have shown that since the 1990s there have been many R&D reports and policies (e.g. Karpin, 1995) suggesting changes to management education curricula and organization development. Yet these changes have been slow and difficult to implement because, I argue, they require changes in governing values, paradigm and methodology (see Chapter 4) from a content-centred to a process/learner-centred approach. I have also argued that participatory action learning and action research are the best current approach to use for transformational learning in management education and development, integrated in the learning organization and its continuous development and change. I have provided examples and models of this new approach, e.g. the MBA (Executive) through action learning; the Senior Executive Action Learning (SEAL) programme using a new kind of thesis by explication for effective executive and organization development and my integrated model of organizational change.

I conclude that participatory action learning and emancipatory action research are effective ways to achieve positive organizational change and concurrently facilitate organizational learning. Orchestrating a company-wide process of revitalization, change and renewal is the prime responsibility of senior management. Development of effective change leaders, however, cannot occur in isolation in the classroom. Rather, development needs to occur in an organization that effectively serves as a place where teamwork, high commitment and new competencies are practised. These competencies include knowledge of the business as a whole, analytical skills, interpersonal skills and skills to identify and solve practical problems. The design of an MBA Executive programme by action learning is an example of leading-edge management education for the future, fully integrating work and study, and challenged only by the GULL pathway leading to a master or doctor of professional studies, discussed in Chapter 7.

Organizations need a particular mindset for managing change and bringing about successful renewal or revitalization. This worldview includes emphasis on process over mastering specific content, seeing organizational change as a by-process, rather than the end of a series of training programmes, and long-term outcomes as opposed to short-term benefits. Emancipatory action research also requires a move from the old model of the hierarchical, bureaucratic organization to the new

model of a problem-oriented, task-driven action learning organization under action leadership.

Discussion Starters

1. For the benefit and advancement of professional and leadership development, what are your ideas about forging closer links and communication between higher education and industry and government?
2. How would you define action leadership?
3. For you personally, what are the characteristics and competences of future managers after their graduation from an MBA, an MBA (Executive), a DBA or a professional doctorate (DPhil or DMgt or DLitt)?
4. Do you think that these characteristics and competences are the same for future academics as researchers and teachers in these programmes? Why or why not?
5. How would you define the 'learning organization' and organization development (OD)?
6. What have you learnt from your reflection and discussion on this chapter?

Appendix 2

MBA (Executive) by Action Learning: Course Outlines

Foundation Course

As the title suggests, this course lays the foundation for the whole programme. It introduces the fundamental concepts of action learning, action research, quality management, the high-performing learning organization, global competitiveness and information technology. It also introduces the use of reflection log books and it models the process of action learning, networking and strategic alliances with other experienced managers and organizations.

The residential mode of this course is designed to facilitate team building, networking and strategic alliances among participants and thus model the content of major segments of the programme – practising what we preach. The foundation course is also important for preparing participants for the design, implementation and evaluation of their organization-based action learning projects.

An active approach to learning is encouraged from the beginning of the programme. Assessment is seen as a vehicle for learning. In this foundation course, participants are required to reflect on the following:

- Significant turning points in their careers and the extent to which they have learned from their work experience in the past 5 years and developed as professionals – an assignment of about 1,500 words (30%) to be prepared before the residential;
- Their understanding of the course content in a short-answer examination (40%);

- The implications of their learning outcomes and workshop results from this foundation course for their organization's change and development – an assignment of about 1,500 words (30%). They will also be encouraged to state their own philosophical adult learning theory and to submit a reflective log on the learning processes during the course.

Strategic Marketing Management and International Business Relations

In this second residential block of 1 week's duration, participants develop the knowledge, analytical understanding and action-taking competences required by strategic managers and marketers in Australia and overseas. Strategic marketing, and the development of positive networking within an international and global context, are an essential part of successful management and business development.

Teaching methods are based on a combination of programmed learning and questioning insight. Learner-centred techniques include workshops, problem solving, group presentations, discussions, action learning, flexible learning, synergistic exercises, expert groups, nominal group technique, case studies, simulation exercises and projects/reports.

Assessment methods comprise three components:

- There is an individual project report of about 1,500 words (30%). Managers will bring an individual work-related project to the block for discussion and subsequent action. The project will outline a marketing management problem in the candidate's organization and suggest possible strategies to resolve the problem.
- Class quizzes (40%) based on exercises conducted during the residential block aim to assess the managers' understanding and insight into strategic marketing in a domestic and international context.
- A group presentation (30%) comprises analysis of an integrative case study of an Australian or international marketing plan developed through the block. This assesses the group's analytical skills and the ability to work as a team.

Strategic Human Resource Management (HRM)

This off-campus reading course is designed to replace lectures and tutorials by self-study materials and regular meetings of the action learning sets with academic staff on three weekends during the semester.

The content includes alignment of strategy, structure and culture. Design of jobs and roles, strategic roles for HRM managers, industrial democracy, workplace bargaining, equal employment opportunity legislation, human potential and world-class quality, and teamwork are the basic issues, but participants will bring their own emphases.

Self-study materials consist of book references, videos, compiled collection of articles and a workbook. These provide the basis for seminars conducted by academic staff. Managers will select a seminar topic of their choice, relate readings to practical examples, problems, issues and concerns in their organization and prepare questions for discussion.

Assessment methods comprise a seminar presentation (40%) and a seminar essay of about 3,000 words on the same topic (60%).

During the three weekend programmes, managers have the opportunity to discuss the relevance of the readings to their work in the organization, to present their ideas, learn from others and revise their ideas before writing the essay for assessment. The essay includes the manager's reflections on the whole subject and on personal learning.

Action Learning Project

After the theoretical introduction of the action learning concept and of project design, implementation and evaluation in the foundation course, it is essential that participants actually implement a practical project in an organization, typically their own.

In this project work, participants learn to solve an organizational problem that is significant not only to themselves but also to their organization. They acquire new skills, create new insights and exchange their experience and ideas with fellow executives in regular meetings.

There are six meetings of a half-day's duration in each semester to provide group supervision of projects, as well as regular meetings in action learning sets of five to six managers with a set advisor whose role is to monitor the progress of the projects. The set advisor is usually available 'on call' to discuss projects and provide advice and guidance to associates.

Assessment methods comprise an oral presentation of a progress report (50%) and a written outline of the progress report of about 2,500 words (50%) at the end of the first semester for one semester unit (one SU) for those candidates who wish to exit the course with the Graduate Management Qualification (Executive) award. For continuing candidates who wish to gain two semester units (two SUs) of credit, the assessment methods comprise an oral presentation (25%) and a written outline (25%) of the progress report at the end of the first semester and a final written report of about 5,000 words (50%) at the end of the second semester.

The progress report is a written outline that is explained orally and discussed in the set. The aim is to make use of the feedback from staff and fellow associates for improving the project work and its final presentation. It is a learning experience as well as the result of resolving an organizational problem. Both reports include achievements, problems, limitations and reflections on learning.

Action learning promotes self-critical reflection and advice from critical friends. Therefore, each candidate is required to supply a self-assessment mark and then to ask a set member to provide a peer assessment mark and comments. Both marks will be considered by the supervisor, who then determines the final assessment mark.

Managerial Accounting and Finance

The off-campus reading course introduces associates to the central theme: that management accounting exists within an enterprise to facilitate the development and

implementation of business strategy. Management uses the information generated to plan, communicate, develop tactics and maintain control over activities. Relevant foundation material and selected newly emerging technologies will be examined and applied.

This course will be designed to replace lectures and tutorials by self-study materials and meetings with academic staff on three weekends during the semester.

Assessment methods comprise three components:

1. A seminar presentation (20%) addressing organizational problems in the context of the areas covered in the prescribed readings.
2. A case study of about 1,500 words (30%) linked to issues relevant to the manager's own organization. During the three weekend programmes, managers have the opportunity to discuss the relevance of the readings to their work in the organization, to present their ideas, learn from others and revise their ideas before submitting the completed case study for assessment. The case study will also include the manager's reflections on the whole subject and on the process of learning.
3. An examination (50%) based on an analysis of accounting technologies using quantitative data.

The High-Performing Organization

This intensive 1-week residential block integrates the inputs and learning of the programme to date and deals explicitly with the concept of the high-performing organization and related topics such as ethics, information technology, organizational learning and development strategies.

All aspects of individual, group and organizational functioning are potentially included in this course, but particularly the question of why some organizations are high performing and many others are not. Many of the previous topics will be revisited but in a way seeking to achieve an integrated and dynamic perspective rather than a fragmented and static mental model.

Assessment methods include the following:

1. An open-book analysis (40%) of student-selected issues and self-designed alternative methods for resolution;
2. A written assignment of about 3,000 words (60%) on what action the associate has taken to deal with organizational issues, following attendance at the various courses of the programme prior to this third residential block, plus what action has been taken following attendance at this course's workshop.

Managers as Researchers

This course is also taught as an intensive 1-week residential block. It prepares managers for their action research and dissertation writing. Participants develop knowledge and skills in systematically resolving a major problem in their organization, using rigorous qualitative action research methods.

As in traditional quantitative research, rigour within action research and qualitative case study methodology is essential, but it is achieved differently. A wide variety of methods of enquiry and evaluation techniques will be covered in this subject, including interviews, focus groups, case study methods; survey design methods and analysis; the nominal group technique; illuminative evaluation; and participant observation, triangulation, the quasi-historical approach and the repertory grid technology based on Kelly's personal construct theory.

Potential supervisors of dissertations will be invited to attend the first session on standards, expectations, the role and functions of the supervisor, university rules and regulations, communication between, and responsibilities on the part of, the associate and supervisor, etc. and any other sessions they may wish to attend.

The purpose of this course is to avoid the usual problems of attrition and late submissions rates in master's courses by preparing associates properly for their tasks of conducting and writing up action research.

Assessment methods comprise an open-book exam (40%) on qualitative research methods and a written assignment of about 3,000 words (60%). The open-book exam assesses associates' knowledge and skills in systematically addressing a major problem in their organization, using rigorous qualitative action research methods.

The written assignment is different for MBA (Executive) candidates and those who wish to exit with a Graduate Diploma of Management (Executive) award. The former group will focus on dissertation design and rationale, including problem definition, significance of the project, method and time schedule. The latter group will focus on practical application of business research within their organization.

Dissertation

The dissertation integrates the knowledge, skills and learning experiences from the previous courses in this programme and culminates in the candidate's own comprehensive piece of work on the learning organization. As in the action learning project, the dissertation focuses on an organizational problem that is significant not only to the candidates themselves but also to their organization. They meet regularly with the action learning 'set' (five to six members) and a set advisor to discuss any problems they might have. The aims of the dissertation are to:

- improve an area or an aspect of work within and for the candidate's organization;
- develop the candidate's action research and process management skills and competences for future projects; and
- make a contribution to knowledge by virtue of the fact that candidates are taking an interdisciplinary perspective within their specific context.

Assessment methods comprise three components:

1. An oral presentation (20%) of the results of field work in the light of the literature and main argument/thesis. The aim is to obtain feedback from peers and supervisor before producing the final presentation of the dissertation.

2. The final presentation of the dissertation of about 12,000 words (60%), which is assessed by the supervisor and an external examiner following the guidelines on assessing dissertations.
3. A viva of about 30 min (20%) in which candidates have to defend the main argument(s) of their dissertations before an external moderator, the internal examiner and invited peer group members. In this viva they can demonstrate that it is their own work and what they themselves and their organization have learned/benefited and what action has been or will be taken as a result of this project.

Overview of Courses and Their Weighting

- *GMQ (Executive)*:

    – Foundation course (one SU) – residential;
    – Strategic marketing and international business relations (one SU) residential;
    – Action learning project (one SU) – organization based; and
    – Human resources management (one SU) – off-campus reading course.

- *Grad Dip Mgt (Executive)*:

    – As above plus:
    – Managerial accounting and finance (one SU) – off-campus reading course;
    – The high-performing organization (one SU) – residential;
    – Managers as researchers (one SU) – residential.

- *MBA (Executive)* as for the Grad Dip Mtg (Executive) plus a dissertation (four SUs).

The above courses may be credited for work undertaken elsewhere, with the exception of the foundation course and courses on the high-performing organization and managers as researchers.

Exemption from specified courses may be granted by the GSM Board on the grounds that a candidate's educational qualifications include material of the same type and level as the courses for which exemption is sought.

Appendix 3

Checklist for Evaluating the Quality of a Doctoral Thesis by Explication

Part 1: General assessment criteria for a thesis at the doctoral level
1. What is the distinct contribution to knowledge?
2. To what extent has the candidate demonstrated originality, critical insight and capacity to carry out independent research?
3. Is the quality of the thesis suitable for publication (in whole or in parts)?
4. Has the candidate sufficiently explained and justified the methodology employed?
5. Are the style, structure and presentation of the thesis clear, at a high standard and free of errors?

Part 2: Specific criteria for the published works
6. Is there a substantial body of documents and public works to justify a credit for up to one-third of a professional doctoral degree?
7. Has the relevance of the published works been demonstrated in relation to the theme (and sub-themes) of the explication?
8. Are the collected written works of high intellectual rigour?
9. Is there evidence of originality?
10. To whom is the collected work of actual or potential value?

Part 3: Specific criteria for a doctoral thesis by explication
11. Has the focal theme/topic/problem/question/issue/concern clearly been stated and explained?
12. Has the candidate explained his/her philosophical assumptions, theoretical framework and value system that underpin his/her knowledge claims?
13. Is there a clear synthesis of the candidate's prior works and each chapter of the explication?
14. Has the explication and original contribution been positioned in the international literature, and to what extent can it contribute to the international community of scholars and practitioners?
15. Has the candidate demonstrated reflective insights and learning?

Part 4: Specific criteria for the *Viva*
16. Is the thesis the candidate's own work?
17. Does the candidate show satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the field?
18. Is the candidate's own contribution (especially in a team situation) worthy of the award?

Note:
The examiners are required to give a recommendation that the candidate be granted the degree with Pass/Credit/Distinction (1) without any conditions *or* (2) subject to minor amendments and corrections *or* (3) that the candidate has not satisfied the examiners for the award and either be (a) allowed *or* (b) not permitted, to resubmit and be re-examined.

Notes

1. The argument in the next section is based on my earlier work first published in the journal *The Learning Organization* (Zuber-Skerritt, 1995) and revised here with the kind permission of the editor (Nancy Rolph NRolph@emeraldinsight.com on 18 January 2010).
2. This section is based on three earlier papers (Zuber-Skerritt, 2005b, 2006, 2007c), summarized and revised here with the kind permission of the editors.
3. EBSCO is a world leader in providing information access and management solutions. See http://www2.ebsco.com/en-us/Pages/index.aspx (accessed 21.02.2011). Further information about the SEAL programme can be obtained from Dr Joanna Kozubska in the UK (E-mail: jkozubska@totalserve.co.uk). My colleague (and former PhD student) Ron Passfield, who is now concentrating on working with managers in the Queensland State Government, was influential in the design of the SEAL concept.
4. The model and figures in this section were first published in Zuber-Skerritt (1996c) © Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt.

Chapter 7
Community Development

> *If you've come to help us, you are wasting your time. But if you've come because your liberation is bound up with ours, then let us work together.*
>
> Lilla Watson, Aboriginal social worker
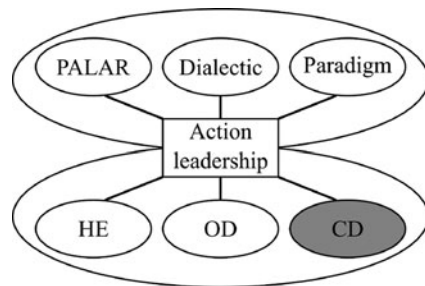
Chapter Overview

This chapter focuses on applications of participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) to community development. I argue that beyond education and development through formal institutions, PALAR is practicable and especially suitable to the development of lifelong learning and action leadership for individuals, groups and whole communities, especially in developing countries and in natural-disaster crisis situations. This knowledge claim is substantiated by examples of community development in many parts of the world – from both the literature and my own experience. The new concept of PALAR is important in this chapter because both action learning and action research need to be participatory in the three areas discussed: (1) community development, (2) action leadership development and (3) development of lifelong learning. This chapter introduces a new approach to development that serves all three areas. The new system using this approach, designed and offered by the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL), is explained and illustrated by examples from many parts of the world, including two case studies – of Haiti and of Samoan migrants in Australia. Only about 3 years old (at the time of writing), GULL has spread like a breath of fresh air across the world.

Introduction

Chapters 5 and 6 dealt with professional and action leadership development (with an impact on organization development) for those in higher and management education and in senior executive development. However, those people are a privileged few, which points to the main problem with these development programmes and projects through PALAR. They involve high costs for universities or private business schools, including costs related to infrastructure, salaries for academic and administrative staff, consultants' fees and residential workshop expenses, and therefore high costs for corporations and individuals who pay for this education. These costs inevitably limit both where this type of programme for development education can be mounted and who can participate in it. But what of the places and the people who cannot afford such costs and who have the most to benefit from that development education through PALAR?

In this chapter I consider the majority of humankind who are in urgent need of educational opportunity but cannot afford the costs of PALAR programmes discussed in earlier chapters. Most of these people are in underprivileged, disadvantaged or oppressed communities, mainly in developing countries, but some are in Indigenous and migrant communities in developed countries. In the case of Australia, with which I am most familiar, these communities include Aborigines, whose forebears arrived in Australia in the Dream Time 50,000 years ago, and South Pacific Islanders and Samoans who came as immigrants in contemporary times. Marginalized communities in developed countries have backgrounds, cultures and therefore particular learning needs that differ from those found in Western educational traditions and systems. They share great personal, practical, emotional and intellectual challenges as they seek to find an authentic place for themselves under these dominant conditions. Yet as I explain in this chapter, these people can be helped to help themselves at minimal cost by identifying and addressing their own needs and concerns through PALAR, particularly through 'liberatory', 'participatory' inquiry and action. I illustrate this claim with examples from the literature and my own experience.

Participatory action research (PAR) was first developed in the mid-1960s and development continued throughout the 1970s. Today PAR is still used increasingly and ever more widely throughout the world, mainly to support people who are disadvantaged, oppressed and believe they are powerless in their organizational or community settings. PAR helps enable these people to recognize and use their own power. It has arisen not from universities or other formal educational institutions, but from community-based organizations, non-government organizations (NGOs) and others in civil society, with funding from private and public sectors, including the World Bank. The original intellectual pioneers in PAR for community development were Paulo Freire and Orlando Fals Borda in Latin America, Marja-Liisa Swantz with her colleagues in Tanzania, and Md Anisur Rahman and his associates in Pakistan and Bangladesh. All four trailblazers were university trained but reached beyond formal education institutions to share and enable learning with people excluded from this kind of education.

This chapter takes a positive approach to community development with disadvantaged and Indigenous people, for as Okri (1997: 101) points out:

> The responsibilities of the unvalued, the unheard, the silent, are greater than ever. . . . It is
> not the size of the voice that is important: it is the power, the truth and the beauty of the
> dream. . . . There is no such thing as a powerless people. There are only those who have not
> seen and have not used the power and will.

Figure 7.1 presents the three main concerns of this chapter: community development, leadership development and the development of lifelong learning. These three areas of concern are separable but interrelated through PALAR, so it is useful to envisage them here in a model that recognizes their integration.

As in previous chapters, I argue that PALAR can be an appropriate and effective methodology for developing individuals, groups and whole communities, not only in developed countries (that some unreflectingly call the First World) but especially in developing countries where the traditional, Western education system has not had the intended sets of effect/impact/outcome.

In the following discussion we consider first community development and then leadership development. We then turn to the development of lifelong learning supported by GULL, the Global University for Lifelong Learning, with examples from various countries that illustrate this discussion with commentary and often very moving anecdote.

Community Development

Community development is a rubbery term that needs defining here. Senge and Scharmer (2001: 238) offer us some insights into development of community as they differentiate between action research and community action research:

> Community action research builds on the tradition of action research by embedding change-oriented projects within a larger community of practitioners, consultants and researchers.
> Like action research, community action research confronts the challenges of producing

practical knowledge that is useful to people in the everyday conduct of their lives. . . . But unlike traditional action research, community action research focuses on:

- fostering relationships and collaboration among diverse organizations, and among the consultants and researchers working with them;
- creating settings for collective reflection that enable people from different organizations to 'see themselves in one another';
- leveraging progress in individual organizations through cross-institutional links so as to sustain transformative changes that otherwise would die out.

Senge and Scharmer (2001: 242) suggest that such a community of practice continually produces new theory and methods, new tools and new practical know-how. This can be achieved in practice by (1) establishing a shared statement of purpose and a shared set of guiding principles; (2) developing infrastructures that support community building; and (3) undertaking collaborative projects that focus on key change issues and that create concrete contexts for further deepening common purpose and improving infrastructure. A key concept here is *sharing*.

The authors conclude that community action research, at its heart, rests on a basic pattern of interdependency, the continuing cycle linking research, capacity-building and practice – the ongoing creation of new theory, tools and practical know-how. They have used community action research mainly in and with large industrial organizations, but here we are concerned with types of settings other than business corporations. Our concern is with disadvantaged communities that may be, and usually are, quite remote from business corporations. In our previous practice and thinking, my colleagues and I had adhered to the understandings of the definition and guiding principles outlined by Senge and Scharmer (2001) before fully digesting their work. It is therefore useful here to formulate a specific definition of community development through PALAR for the underprivileged and disadvantaged that is based on personal practice and professional concepts.

Definition

Here community development means facilitating the process of lifelong learning so that individuals, groups and whole communities may develop the relationships that enable them to learn to analyse and improve their real-life situations. They do so by taking charge of their own lives and work, discussing and reflecting with others on what has or has not worked well, why and why not, and what needs to be done next. This process means learning from and with others; it is double-loop learning, transformational and generic, and problem solving through trial and error. In other words, it is not just limited to one specific task, but also applies to other tasks that may or may not be directly related. At a macro level it is learning for life; not just for earning a living, but for living.

So community development here does not mean passive reliance and dependence on foreign aid and outside experts, but active, self-directed and collaborative problem solving and learning together by the people themselves within their

community. Outside help and resources may be needed at the outset in extreme poverty or natural disasters, as the examples of Bangladesh, East Timor, Mexico, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Haiti demonstrate later in this chapter. But it is important for human dignity and for satisfying existence not to rely on handouts for life, but to learn to be self-sustaining and creative. As claimed in the most important of the basic principles of effective leadership in a collection by Covey (1992: 14) gathered from around the world and from ancient times: 'Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach him how to fish and you feed him for a lifetime'. This principle can be understood by an illustrative story.

Ernie Stringer, a past president of ALARPM, who lives with his wife Rosalie in a small Aboriginal community of about 500 people in the desert of Western Australia (about 1,600 miles inland from Perth), told me this story. Rosalie is a social worker involved in a child-protection project, working with women and children. One day an Aboriginal woman named Maureen knocked at their door bearing a ready-mix cake packet and asked Rosalie to make the cake for her son's birthday. Rosalie said, 'No, but do come in, you make it and I'll help you'. She also showed the mother how to decorate the cake with icing sugar. When finished, this Aboriginal woman was very proud and happy, and so was her son. One year later, she came again, this time with two ready-mix packets and a packet of icing sugar, because she wanted to make a big cake for her son's birthday and invite her whole family. Rosalie did not need to help her much, but gave her two eggs as required by the directions on the packet. (The first time Maureen was given the eggs. The second time she came with all the other things needed for the cake and decorations.) Maureen was elated and all her relatives admired and praised her.

This is how Rosalie works. She encourages and empowers people to trust in their own abilities and to build on their strengths. This concept is the principle of *assets-based community development* explained in detail by Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) in their book, *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*. The principles of assets-based community development set out a process for identifying assets in social groups or informal networks, starting from what these groups or networks are currently doing, what issues need attention, and what are the strengths (skills, resources, determination and personal will) of their members. Then the process begins to build on these strengths and enable the people involved to address the issues themselves, as our project with a Samoan community illustrates towards the end of this chapter. Assets-based community development is capacity-building using internal resources, rather than providing money and resources from external sources.

Extended Definition: Community Development by People-Researchers

I extend my brief definition of community development above with quotations from the literature that emphasize the importance of collaboration between communities and action researchers as change agents, activists and animators.

Rahman (2008: 49) defines the thinking in participatory action research (PAR) for community development as:

> . . . ordinary, underprivileged people will collectively investigate their own reality, by themselves or in partnership with friendly outsiders, take action of their own to advance their lives, and reflect on their ongoing experience. In such PAR, self-investigation by underprivileged people naturally generates action by them (including inaction if they so choose) to advance their own lives, so that *action unites, organically, with research.* The 'action' content of the term PAR refers specifically to action by the people themselves, not excluding any action taken by outside partners in such research.

Rahman (2008: 52) calls the outside partners or friendly outsiders 'animators' who cannot be 'trained' but need to be 'sensitized' in order:

> to work as 'keys' to unlock self-thinking and self-initiatives of the people. . . . 'Animation', in fact, does not and cannot follow any methodology but is an art in which one can, with practice and reflection, develop one's skill, given the necessary commitment, creativity and sensitivity to the specifics and dynamics of a given situation.

If successful, the external animators or galvanizers will progressively retreat, be replaced by 'internal animators' taking over the task of energizing people's groups, and move on to other locations to initiate similar work. Examples are the International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) based in Toronto, Canada, with self-directing nodes in New Delhi, Dar es Salaam, the Netherlands and Venezuela, and the global programme called Participatory Organization of the Rural Poor (PORP) in Asia, Africa and Latin America (Colombia, Nicaragua and Mexico).

The International Network on Participatory Research as part of ICAE presented the first definitional statement of participatory research (PR) at a major conference on action research at Cartagéna in April 1977, reproduced by Hall (2001: 173):

1. PR involves a whole range of powerless groups of people – the exploited, the poor, the oppressed, the marginal.
2. It involves the full and active participation of the community in the entire research process.
3. The subject of the research originates in the community itself and the problem is defined, analysed and solved by the community.
4. The ultimate goal is the radical transformation of social reality and the improvement of the lives of the people themselves.
5. The process of participatory research can create a greater awareness in the people of their own resources and mobilize them for self-reliant development.
6. It is a more scientific method or research in that the participation of the community in the research process facilitates a more accurate and authentic analysis of social reality.
7. The researcher is a committed participant and learner in the process of research, i.e. a militant [an activist] rather than a detached observer.

Compared to action leadership for organization development discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, the above definitions and examples of PR and PAR already make

it clear that community development is mainly targeted at the underprivileged and disadvantaged with activists as animators.

Examples

Examples of action leadership and community development from various countries literally put flesh on the bones of the discussion above. Here we consider instructive anecdotal stories from Bangladesh, East Timor, Mexico, Colombia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and the 'other Africa'.

Bangladesh

Rahman (2008: 58) reports on several PAR community projects funded by an agency called Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB: http://www.rib-bangladesh. org/ – accessed 21.02.2011) to find alternatives to an unsuccessful micro-credit initiative. The first PAR project was started in 2002 in the Belaichondi district with 228 members and their families, who worked in small groups and in inter-group sessions with two principle animators to identify the causes of their poverty and to seek ways of economic advancement.

> The six-month PAR exercise had an electrifying effect on the personality of the participants. Previously used to seeking sympathy and charity, they now transformed into positive personalities proud of their identities as '*gono-gobeshoks*' (people-researchers) seeking self-understanding for themselves to advance their own lives. The exercise promoted solidarity among the participants listening to and offering solutions to each others' problems, forming solidarity groups to advance their joint livelihood by various means like collective savings and different types of economic action, minimizing wasteful practices like gambling, and reducing oppression of women.

This exercise was followed by other animation work in Bangladesh, and two projects in particular are worth mentioning. One conducted in the Nilfamari district in 2003 aiming to promote the culture of *gonogoshona* (people-research), resulted in the formation of 176 *gonogoshona* groups of underprivileged villagers in 15 unions consisting of 161 female groups with 4,347 members and 15 male groups with 405 members. Small groups met once or twice a week to discuss mutual problems. Rahman (2008: 59) observes that the *gonogoshona* culture in the area is

> . . . spreading like a positive virus beyond the RIB [Research Initiatives, Bangladesh]-supported project, with village mothers spontaneously forming their own *gonogoshona* groups to discuss better child-rearing practices; . . . members of such various groups . . . have found a new meaning of life in the culture of *gonogoshona*: this is giving them self-confidence and a sense of belonging to each other amidst their poverty and transforming their despondency into a sense of mission to face life together with their own individual and collective intellect without depending on outside patronage, wisdom and/or charity and with positive social values.

The other animation work in Bangladesh that I mention here is with the 'untouchable' *dalit* community in the Shatkhira district, whose members work as cleaners of

jungles and city wastes. They discussed their problems of social exclusion, oppression and associated poverty. Another example of an 'untouchable' community is that of sweepers in Kushtia town who were empowered through the drama of conscientization (for more details, see Guhathakurta, 2008). Commenting on both these and other experiences, Rahman (2008: 60) concludes:

> Further PAR work with socially excluded communities has been launched with RIB support and is showing encouraging response from the concerned communities forming assertive solidarity groups and engaging in collective deliberations on their problems and collective actions and struggles to promote their livelihood and social status and to resist injustices and oppression.

Rahman also reports that difficulties have arisen when Bangladesh government RIB funding ended, because of a lack of external animators, except where internal animators have replaced them. But whether animators are paid or volunteer, equity and even sensibility related to cross-cultural communication remain significant issues. I take this up later in this chapter when discussing GULL.

East Timor

East Timor's long history of colonization was closed by a United Nations-sponsored act of self-determination through which East Timor won independence from Indonesia and became the first new nation of the twenty-first century in 2002. Stringer (2008) was actively involved in developing and implementing a national education policy in East Timor after independence. This was as a consultant to UNMISET (United Nations Mission in Support of East Timor) in conjunction with the Ministry for Education, Culture, Youth and Sports. The Ministry had initiated a programme to engage the community in rebuilding the nation's schools through a system of parent teacher associations (PTAs) across the nation. Since democratic will was crucial to East Timor's arduous struggle for independence, Stringer used participatory action research in all phases of establishing PTAs (as a national strategy) to develop the capacity-building processes and skills that would enable schools to achieve desired outcomes.

There were four main stages. In the first phase, Ernie Stringer worked with all stakeholders: school stakeholders (parents, teachers, community leaders, principals and district office staff) and agency stakeholders (minister, director general, senior directors and superintendents in the ministry, NGOs, the church and donor agencies – the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank) to develop a concept paper called the Options Paper that was accepted enthusiastically by all stakeholders. In the second phase, he initiated democratic, participative developmental processes by preparing an operation manual describing processes for consulting with parents and the local community, and outlining procedures for initiating parent activities within schools. He demonstrated PAR consultation processes in workshops with key stakeholders, processes that would form the basis of parent workshops. After one of the workshops with parents, Stringer (2008: 556) recorded in his field notes:

> As we left the village late in the afternoon, my colleagues were buzzing with excitement, their eyes shining and their conversation bubbling with the events of the day. 'Streen-gere', they said. 'This is so exciting. This is so democratic. The people were so interested'.

Anyone who has worked with groups of people like these, using PALAR processes, will recognize this sense of excitement and possibility.

The third phase was a trial of PTA development in six core schools in various locations across the nation. Workshops with parents, teachers, principals and community leaders helped participants to identify activities, create action plans and implement them to develop a PTA. The evaluation report was very positive and pointed to activities in local communities that multiplied the intent of this project. For example, providing water for the school was extended to water supply for the village.

Phase 4 consisted of implementing a national plan and process of development of PTAs throughout the schools of the nation. A National Support Team (funded by UNICEF and the Ministry) was set up to coordinate and support the work of 'district support teams', each working with a cluster of schools. This support system was so effective that it was extended to include other necessary developments in the school system, such as teacher training, school management training and the introduction of a new curriculum. Stringer (2008: 560) concludes:

> People working in concert to achieve common purposes are able to make significant contributions to the well-being of their community, providing possibilities for further development derived from the capacities – social capital – that has been built into their lives. . . . Systemic and participatory processes of development that are an integral part of action research in this instance has provided an effective means for instituting national policy in a developing nation.

A powerful statement – with far-reaching consequences for policy-making and nation-building! It points in the right direction for newly independent peoples trying to build anew their communities and nation at grassroots level. It also signals to policy-makers the unparalleled value of grassroots-up development of national policies that are mindful of working towards reconciliation within the nation as the people themselves put into action the democratic, humanistic values on which their shared future prosperity depends.

Mexico

Castillo-Burguete et al. (2008: 523) were involved across 14 years in community organization and participation on health and environmental issues in The Port, a small coastal village in Yucatan. The issues included an all too familiar lack of health care services, a poorly designed health care programme, alcoholism, and the need for prototypes of *palafitte*, i.e. houses built on stilts to avoid flood damage. These authors concluded their study with the following suggestions:

1. A long-range approach is useful in PR for understanding how the learning acquired in the process is applied to the facets of daily life, both at the family and community levels.
2. Young people use the 'look–judge–act' routine to change their reality.
3. Interdisciplinarity is highly useful since the problems addressed with PR are typically complex, involving social, political, economic, cultural and environmental aspects.
4. Participation, understood as a component of the socialization and re-socialization processes, is part of a community's cultural capital.
5. PR process agents (i.e. *facilitadores* [facilitators] and *acompanantes* [companions] must invest abundant time, effort and feedback to promote horizontal, multiple leaderships, manage resources, negotiate agreements, account for actions, understand group norms, patterns and behaviours, and facilitate learning in action.

We can summarize the last point using the words of Heron and Reason (2001: 179): 'Good research is research conducted *with* people rather than *on* people'.

Colombia

Orlando Fals Borda (1925–2008) spent many years of his life on groundbreaking PAR work to help poor communities to increase control over their own lives and particularly through the process of creating and using knowledge. He started the PAR network and was instrumental in extending it across the world. I give examples of his influence on my work and on that of some of my colleagues' work in Australia and in the international association 'Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management' (ALARPM) (now ALARA) to illustrate how his ideas on community development through PAR have brought the winds of change even to developed countries. Based on over 30 years of personal observation and participation, Fals Borda (2006: 358) concluded that

> . . . we need new educational, cultural, political, social and economic movements in which greater account is taken of grassroots groups, the excluded, the voiceless, and the victims of dominant systems. . . . To prove our worth as resolute, thinking, feeling, experiential investigators we need to become fully involved in these fundamental transformations.

Here I offer examples of Orlando's influence on three colleagues in Australia who are activists, past presidents of the international ALARPM Association, and who have, in turn, made a great positive impact on others.[1] The first is *Ron Passfield* (PhD), the inaugural president of ALARPM. He met Orlando Fals Borda in 1992 for the first time when Orlando was a keynote speaker at the World Congress 2 in Brisbane and Ron was the president of ALARPM. In his e-mail (23 September 2006) Ron hailed Orlando:

> I have many pictures of Orlando in my head – the humble man working with peasants, the United Nations contributor, Professor Emeritus of Bogota University, representative of the Government, and the gentleman patiently explaining his passion for action research to

eager students. Though of small stature, Orlando stands tall among other 'tall poppies' – he is highly respected and admired and his counsel is much sought.

Ron recalled Orlando's offer to convene World Congress 4 in Cartagéna, Colombia, in 1997, recognizing how fully Orlando delivered on his promise to make this congress a truly global event. Orlando had brought the world to Colombia and was a catalyst for bringing about convergence of the 46 different modalities of action research he had then identified. Ron observed:

> More than three times the number of registered participants turned up to the first day of World Congress 4. Orlando, with his calm, unassuming presence, was able to turn chaos into a magical convergence as people connected and shared and explored their differences on so many dimensions. The highlight for me was when over 1800 people from so many countries and languages joined together to sing a Spanish folksong in the Spanish language. Orlando is a person who by his very presence can create harmony and unity of vision. He also displays a remarkable humility. As I stood with him on the podium at the closing ceremony of World Congress 4, facing a sea of people from so many different nations, he turned to me and said, 'You and ALARPM are responsible for all this. From a small seed a large Oak Tree grows'. He was referring to the seeding money that ALARPM provided to enable the Congress to be launched through the 'Expression of Interest' brochure. Such is the calibre of the man; he creates the vision and does not need to take credit for the outcomes.

The second colleague is *Yoland Wadsworth* (PhD), also a past president of ALARPM. Like Ron Passsfield, Yoland first met Orlando at the 1992 Brisbane Congress. In her e-mail (9 November 2006), she recalled:

> It was a great honour to speak at a seminar with Orlando at the Highlander Center in Tennessee in 1995, and in 1997 to witness both the triumph and new depths of understanding achieved by the Cartagéna congress. Along with his great intellectual comrade, Md Anisur Rahman of Bangladesh, Orlando has made a profound contribution to the world through his deep insights into the connections between the worlds of theory and practice, action and reflection, academicians and 'ordinary' people, patricians and citizens, party and non-party, left and right, and rational thought and feeling. Venturing between both, he has noticed keenly the powers and the dangers, the strengths and the weaknesses, the gifts and the risks of each of these bifurcations, particularly when the more powerful hold sway. He has seen the links from the very micro to the very macro. His conclusions have informed how we, the next generation, take part in the great human journey of 'making the road by our walking'. Future generations may think that the philosophy and practice of holistic self-organizing living systems began with the new physics, ecology and spiritual movements of the twentieth century. But this overlooks the great practice-based thinkers. Orlando Fals Borda is one of the great thinker–practitioners who have appreciated *all* the worlds of ordinary life action. Orlando and his ilk have engaged with life keenly, observed deeply and reflected sensitively. They have cared for those with most at stake while thoughtfully sketching the outlines of the new, in this way grasping the great truth of all truly living systems.

The third colleague is *Ernie Stringer* (PhD), also a past president of ALARPM, as mentioned earlier. He wrote in his e-mail (23 September 2006):

> The work of Orlando Fals Borda resonates strongly with my own experiences with Indigenous people in Australia. In the course of struggling with the complex and sometimes debilitating problems that emerge from a history of colonization, I learned that there was precious little that I could do to remedy the situation. It became evident to me that it was only by engaging the people themselves in the processes of exploration and resolution

that any progress could be made. Today it is an article of faith that I work in ways reflecting the imperatives deeply embedded in Orlando's work – that only by empowering people to acquire the skills and knowledge to deal effectively with the issues that affect their lives can I contribute to their liberation. In the process I find that I myself have become liberated in very significant ways from the dead hand of an over-bureaucratized world. The words of an Aboriginal social worker, Lilla Watson, ring in my ears: 'If you've come to help us, you are wasting your time. But if you've come because your liberation is bound up with ours, then let us work together'. This I take with me to the diverse groups of people I engage with around the world; knowledge and liberation are inextricably bound. Research – acquiring knowledge – leads to actions that can transform our lives.

The above testimonials show how profoundly Orlando Fals Borda's work (as well as his personality, his heart and his leadership style) has influenced the thinking of many of my associates and my own, and by consequence has flowed through to those with whom we have all worked.

Tanzania

Swantz et al. (2001: 387) offer two PAR case studies with Tanzanian women in the context of rural development, presenting practical analysis of the situation of these women as they gain practical knowledge relevant to both their situation and their livelihood. The study usefully presents a list of what the authors identify as the pre-requisites to applying PAR successfully in the context of rural development. Swantz (2008) presents numerous other examples of PAR and PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) and an interesting history of PAR from her own perspective, communications and special personal relationships with PAR pioneers, activists and other action researchers in all parts of the world over roughly the past 50 years. I recommend her book chapter to interested readers and continue here with further examples of community development through participatory action learning and action research in African countries.

Zimbabwe

Nyoni (1991) explains how the people of Zimbabwe gradually developed their power after independence in 1980 through dialogue and participation. The goal was to create a consciousness within the people by sharing their experiences of oppression, exploitation and dominion by the colonial regime. In 1981 Nyoni and a small group of people founded the Organization of Rural Associations for Progress (ORAP) in Matabeleland, a province in Zimbabwe. A look at the website reveals that this grassroots organization has grown swiftly, with millions of members today.

> With 17 associations in three regions, this indigenous African NGO has mobilized millions of members from rural communities to choose their own development path through a bottom-up approach and according to their own culture and tradition. In times of disaster, civil strife and drought, it has organized to share food and other resources, and has alerted the outside world in time to get aid and avoid crisis situations. Their work is rooted in five basic principles which are the fibre of their traditions. ORAP is a woman-led organization which puts women as a top priority in development.
>   http://www.iisd.org/50comm/commdb/list/c41.htm (accessed 21.02.2011)

These five philosophical principles translate into English as: *Ziqoqe* – mobilize yourself; *zenzele* – do it yourself; *ziqhatshe* – be self-employed; *zimele* – be self-reliant; and *oogelela* – save/invest or collective saving.

http://www.synergos.org/voices/orap1.html (accessed 21.02.2011)

An evaluative study of ORAP by four 'professionals' (specialists in evaluation), cited by Rahman (1991: 101–102), presents a revealing observation about the translation of the concept of *development* into Sindebele (a local language of Matabeleland) to mean 'taking control over what you need to work with'. Interestingly, the names of some of the ORAP groups also reflect this concept, for example: *Siwasivuka* – we fall and stand up; *siyaphambili* – we go forward; *dingimpilo* – search for life; *sivamerzela* – we are doing it ourselves; and *vusanani* – support each other to get up.

Authentic development for these people means that they want to *stand up*, *take control* over what they need to do to improve their situation, *do things themselves* in their own *search for life* and *move forward* by *supporting each other*.

Nyoni warns against the misuse of the words 'empowerment' and 'participation' that have often been appropriated by politicians and professionals for their own ends. However, ORAP has facilitated a process through which people consider contradictions and conflicts, understand and master them, and find new visions and strategies of work. Within ORAP, Nyoni (1991: 112) defines participation as

> . . . a continuous reaction of powerless people to their national forces as well as the major world of political and economic forces. It is an active and dynamic process that does not try to hide what is actually happening. Through it, people become aware of the internal and external conflicts and contradictions as well as certain fundamental ambiguities and the dangers of those ambiguities.

ORAP's fundamental belief is that just as the power of the oppressors is used through the exercise of military, political and economic power over the weak, so the weak, poor and oppressed can create power through their united resistance, awareness-building, self-reliance and access to appropriate resources.

As to *appropriate resources*, I believe it is positive and constructive for people in the developed world to provide money and food to starving and otherwise needy people in war zones and crisis situations (as consequence of drought, flood, earthquake or other natural disasters). But to improve the lives of people in under-developed countries, it is more appropriate and mutually beneficial to achieve long-term outcomes by joining with them in talking about their situation, helping and encouraging them to identify their own solutions, and thus developing their creativity, sense of self-worth, self-confidence and self-reliance and using their local knowledge. Instead of remaining powerless and dependent on others, particularly through foreign aid, they can create an awareness of themselves, their world and their own capacity for achievement. This is empowerment of the people through developing their own capacities for self-liberation from poverty and subjugation. Foreign aid may still be needed, but here we see how the nature of this aid is particularly important. Aid must be in a form that equips the poor with capacity to address their own difficulties in the long-term as creatively and effectively as

possible. Dynamic education and development through action learning and PAR at all levels, from leadership to grassroots levels, has been particularly effective as our case studies from Africa reveal (Fletcher and Zuber-Skerritt, 2008; Louw and Zuber-Skerritt, 2009). Also important is to whom the aid is given and how it is distributed, so that it actually reaches the people who will use it themselves to enhance their self-sufficiency.

To solve basic problems, ORAP started with small grants (sometimes referred to as micro-credit) for traditional projects such as sewing, knitting, bread-making, carving, carpentry and other manual skill areas. Like in East Timor, results in Zimbabwe soon indicated that small grants were not the answer to deal with entrenched poverty. ORAP then changed its strategy from small-scale income generation to large-scale, employment-creating activities in large communities, such as dam construction for improved irrigation schemes, grinding mills, cattle-fattening, village 'development centres' and workshops on making and repairing tools and household equipment. These projects were more successful financially and created employment, but tended to exclude and marginalize women and very poor families, the least powerful of all. ORAP therefore revised the structure of its projects. The basis of the new structure became *amalima*, that is, the traditional family working units or groups of five to ten families, helping one another to improve their quality of life. Nyoni (1991: 119–120) concludes that

> ... people's power can best be regained from within and through participation. ... participation and the empowerment of people are not possible without an element of self-reliance in terms of attitude of mind, a strong organizational base and an ability to organize their own resources to improve their situation. On the other hand, self-reliance cannot be achieved through projects alone. People need first to engage in a participatory process. ... Participation, self-reliance and people's empowerment are therefore inseparable. You cannot have one without the others and true advancement of all the people is not possible in a non-participatory society.

The 'Other Africa'

Apart from ORAP in Zimbabwe, Rahman (1991) gives positive glimpses of the 'other Africa' in examples of people elsewhere in Africa taking initiatives and mobilizing their own domestic resources. For example, he reports on the Participatory Organization of the Rural Poor (PORP) in West Africa and Rwanda, funded by the International Labor Organization (ILO), and reaches conclusions similar to those of Nyoni. Rahman (1991: 107–108) suggests that 'appropriate aid and resources' include genuine people-oriented activist-researchers with a powerful social vision, intellectual ability and methodological skill to provide some guidance, animation, development and facilitation of local initiatives. Referring to his work in Tanzania and other cases, he concludes:

> ... the people seem to be ready to respond to appropriate 'animation', even with no outside financial help. Must it be left to spontaneous historical emergence, or can some method of 'schooling' be devised to promote a great concern among a nation's potential intellectual leaders to work *with* and not *upon* the people, so that the 'Other Africa' could develop faster?

My response to the first possibility is a firm 'No'. We must not leave this required animation and development just to spontaneous historical emergence. We can devise a method of 'schooling', which I call leadership development through PALAR to equip leaders to work with, and not on, people. This is participatory action research by and with those involved, those who leaders teach, and the communities at large in which they work and live. In the following discussion I show how the development of leaders as learners can have a multiplier effect that extends the reach of these programmes from development of leaders to the grassroots of communities.

Apart from our professional and leadership development programmes in South African higher education mentioned in Chapter 5, another example is a leadership development programme that my colleagues at Griffith University and I designed for leaders in six African countries to enable them to both use PALAR in their work with needy communities and focus more specifically on poverty reduction and health improvement (Fletcher et al., 2010).

We received funding from the Australian Government's AusAID–ISSS (International Seminar Support Scheme) for a 3-day seminar, sponsored jointly by Griffith University and the University of Stellenbosch. Originally, we had designed the programme as a start-up seminar/workshop in a three-stage leadership development programme, but unfortunately funding was granted only for the first stage, i.e. for 3 days. At the end of this start-up workshop, participants were encouraged to collaborate with the organizers and facilitators in seeking further grants for the second and third stages from government, industry and businesses with philanthropic arms. However, the seminar so far has remained a one-off event. Therefore we cannot claim to have achieved much success and transformational change yet, but the idea of this programme design might stimulate others to apply for funding for a large-scale programme with several community development projects and a multiplier effect.

The content of the leadership development programme was determined by the participants themselves, but all team projects had to aim to reduce poverty and improve professional practice, especially in the health sciences and education. The aims and objectives of the programme were

- to identify people in African developing countries who are in key leadership positions *to effect positive change* in a range of fields and projects, within the policy framework of their respective country and supported by the co-organizing institutions;
- to create a forum for identifying or reviewing and discussing planned and existing *projects in poverty reduction, improved praxis and change management* in terms of participative action research cycles for sustainability;
- to build self-managed leadership capacity through using action learning and *action research methodology*; and
- to develop practical project-management and project-improvement skills related to the participants' own aims and *projects in a variety of professions.*

Activities and outcomes were envisaged with ultimate benefits to grassroots of society – through the multiplier effects of the participating leaders' PAR projects

Table 7.1   Themes of African projects

Country	Main theme	Number of participants
1. Kenya	Poverty reduction, improved health and environmental management	4
2. Namibia	Developing a model for blended learning	4
3. Tanzania	Women's participation and empowerment in community conservation	4
4. Uganda	Health professional education	4
5. Botswana	Developing online training for tutors and authors	4
6. South Africa	Food security in HIV/AIDS households	3
	Total number of participants	23

across six countries: Kenya, Namibia, Tanzania, Uganda, Botswana and South Africa. A total of 23 participants were involved: six project leaders, with three–four team members per project. The main focus of each of the projects ranged from e-learning; online training; food security and well-being of HIV/AIDS households, to enhancing the quality and public appreciation of the need to educate health professionals; gender and conservation for sustainability, and enhancing leadership in socio-economic and environmental issues in community-based organizations. A summary of these projects appears in Table 7.1.

Participants learnt about, and appreciated the introduction to, the concepts of action learning and participatory action research, collaborative leadership (see Raelin in the next section) and discussion of their strategic team project design. After the 3-day workshop, we, the animators, tried but were unable to follow the projects through for a number of reasons, including lack of funding and poor or total break of communication, which was mainly due to war (Kenya) or social, economic and political upheaval. The real world again intervened. However, as the organizers and facilitators of the 3-day workshop, we reflected on and learnt from our experience individually and collectively, and developed conceptual models of meta-action research. In our paper (Fletcher et al., 2010) on this topic, we defined meta-action research as

> . . . action research on or about action research. It is based on reflection, self-reflection, conceptualization and theorization of the activities, processes, methods and results of the action research program(s) or project(s), denoting systemic change, transformation, awareness and understanding of one's own learning, and arriving at higher-order concepts, principles, theories or models of action research.

We arrived at this transformative learning and higher-order knowledge through an iterative process where we reframed our progressive experiences and reflections on these experiences throughout each meeting through different lenses of interpretation. In these face-to-face meetings and online communication we were able to recognize and interrogate our own assumptions and biases through embracing the perspectives of others. We also learnt about our own leadership development in developing countries.

Action Leadership Development

In Chapter 5 we discussed general principles of leadership and action leadership development in higher education. Here we focus on action leadership development for community development with particular reference to developing countries. In the previous section we saw how crucially important the principles of participation, collaboration, networking and vision are to a positive approach to community development. This is particularly true for action leadership in community development. As Maxwell (1995: book cover) argues throughout his book:

> If you really want to be a leader, you must develop other leaders around you. You must establish a team. You must find a way to get your vision seen, implemented, and contributed to by others. The leader sees the big picture, but he [sic] needs other leaders to help make his picture reality.

However, the premise of the present book concerns enablement, where people identify their own vision and then achieve it together. In this sense, action leadership is the ability to involve others towards a mutual vision and achieving common goals that contribute to a worthwhile purpose such as community development and lifelong learning, including, as Lao-Tzu wisely informed us, knowledge of 'how to fish'. Effective action leadership generates the kindling and the match to ignite the fire of action and learning. A respected community leader therefore requires these leadership attributes: *knowledge* about the community, tasks and human nature; *skills* of motivating, planning, acting, reflecting, guiding, communicating and providing direction; *character*, including beliefs, values, ethics and vision for understanding and nurturing the people's development of their community; and *attitude*, such as cultural sensitivity, willingness to serve others and the community, and openness to change and diversity (e.g. race, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, economic class, body size, etc.).

In this action leadership framework, several kinds of knowledge – theoretical, practical, experiential and Indigenous – need to be integrated as living knowledge, that is, knowing, doing and being. This involves *knowing* about leadership, the job/task, oneself, human needs and emotions; *doing* the job/task, planning, setting goals, solving problems, building teams, motivating, coaching, delegating and making decisions; and *being* trustworthy, responsible, accountable, honest, committed, open, caring, sharing, self-critical, reflective and professional.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Jansen (2009) has identified another kind of knowledge embedded in the emotional, psychic, spiritual, social, economic, political and psychological lives of a community, and which he calls 'knowledge of the blood'. We learn from Jansen that this knowledge needs to be understood clearly when working with people not just in countries with a colonial past but in any divided communities, his study offering a 'post-conflict pedagogy' through which stories of the past are mutually conceived and resolved. During his life under and after Apartheid in South Africa, Jansen had the most profound and life-changing experiences as a black Dean of Education in a historically white, top-down, hierarchical university, the University of Pretoria (UP). All the professors were white, heads of

department were male and white administrative staff were Afrikaners, and the academics he worked with had epistemological values very different from his. Jansen (2009: 7–8) explains: 'This intense interaction with white Afrikaners as teacher, leader, manager, administrator, preacher, sports fan, workshop presenter, advisor, and counselor generated the data from which this book is composed'.

When reading this book I was reminded of Argyris and Schön's (1974) theory of action in that this knowledge of the blood is 'theory-in-use' and inconsistent with 'espoused theory' (see Chapter 2, this volume) on the part of South Africans in the post-Apartheid era. Both white and black colleagues and students at UP were consciously committed to reconciliation and non-racial attitude, but their governing values were still influenced and dominated unconsciously by their past experiences or, in the case of students who were too young to remember Apartheid conditions, by their parents' unspoken attitudes/behaviour and strategies and by other environmental influences. A rigid knowledge of race and ethnicity as biological and cultural givens, not as social and political constructions, made it very difficult for Jansen to begin guiding his colleagues – especially in the context of the social sciences – towards a broader theoretical understanding of received knowledge.

I was most interested in an example presented in Chapter 6 of Jansen's book where he criticized both his black and white colleagues for designing a module on *Ubuntu* in the curriculum of the faculty of humanities at UP. Here they espoused African *Ubuntu* values, without recognizing that the methods and strategies they used were deeply steeped in Afrikaans values. This example illustrates very well how knowledge of the blood is implicit knowledge created through social and environmental acquisition. This understanding of knowledge as a product of the dynamics of power is the basis for Jansen's position that only through bringing together diverse voices, positions and epistemologies can we begin to engage rival memories and other differences, and understand and change troubled knowledge.

Effective action leaders in community development are aware of and integrate/synthesize these kinds of knowledge as living knowledge. But this notion of a leader is not a modern invention. Nehemiah was one of the oldest inspiring leaders from the Old Testament who integrated these three kinds of knowledge. He used to be the trusted wine-taster of the Persian king Artaxerxes I, who then sent him to Jerusalem to rebuild the city walls and gates and to restore order and morals in Jerusalem and Judah, an onerous and complex task. This was about 445 BC. In short, Nehemiah used four main principles of leadership (CCCC) that, in hindsight, we have also applied to our action leadership development programmes with African teams: coordination, cooperation, commendation, communication (CCCC).

1. *Coordination*: Nehemiah blended together people and their activities in a way that successfully contributed to the whole. He helped people to discover their basic skills, gifts and talents and coordinated them so that they achieved maximum effectiveness with minimum weariness. We applied this principle in our African leadership development programme by asking each team to do a SWOT analysis, to identify and understand their basic talents/gifts, discuss how to build on their strengths as a team and overcome weaknesses.

2. *Cooperation*: Nehemiah had the ability to bring together people with different skills to cooperate and work closely with each other. Success derived from teamwork with people from all walks of life: priests, guards, goldsmiths, farmers and other ordinary people. Nehemiah set before them a vision of the whole task and its importance and convinced them that if the whole prospers the individual prospers. In our PALAR programmes, each team is required to draw a picture of their shared vision, a task that requires cooperation and strengthens team building.

3. *Commendation*: Nehemiah knew everyone by name and where they worked. He praised them for their honest effort. Every person had the same worth and was not to be exploited. In our PALAR programmes we always reward the project teams at the end of a programme for their work and celebrate the success of their project outcomes on what we call the 'Presentation and Celebration Day'.

4. *Communication*: Nehemiah divided the wall into 40 sections, each with a group of workers and a section head. He ensured that everyone knew what to do and where and how to do it. He simplified his task by delegating authority to section heads and foremen, so that decisions could be made by them and not constantly be referred to Nehemiah himself. In our PALAR programmes, tasks are mutually agreed upon among team members, distributed fairly among them, and the results communicated to other people, including stakeholders in the programme, in regular workshops and at the end on our 'Presentation and Celebration Day'.

The example of Nehemiah's leadership shows that our PALAR processes and methods are not totally new, but often have been forgotten or lost in the course of history. However, they are rooted in ancient and universal principles of learning, leadership, change and innovative practice related to complex human and social problems, such as rebuilding a city, community or nation, and restoring moral and democratic values, as in the case of East Timor. Therefore, it is worth resuscitating, reviewing and further developing these principles, processes and methods for present conditions so that we may work together for a better world while facing unprecedented as well as long-standing challenges. That, ultimately, is the *raison d'etre* of this book.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Raelin (2006: 153) argued that collaborative leadership can best be developed through action learning as originally formulated by Reg Revans, that is, through collective reflection on real-time work experience and solving unfamiliar problems with others in a team project situation. These two 'emerging' approaches – collaborative leadership and action learning – are based on common principles:

1. that learning be acquired in the midst of action and dedicated to the task at hand;
2. that knowledge creation and utilization be seen as collective activities wherein learning can become everyone's job;
3. that its users demonstrate a learning-to-learn aptitude, which frees them to question the underlying assumptions of practice.

In addition, collaborative leadership or 'leaderful practice' (Raelin, 2003) requires leaders to be *concurrent, collective, mutual and compassionate*. First, the requirement that leaders be *concurrent* means that groups have more than one leader and leaders share power; a group's capacity to achieve its aspirations can be increased by shared leadership that keeps everyone working together. Second, when leaders work and lead together concurrently, they need to work and lead *collectively*; collaborative leadership does not depend on any one member who has the lead position or who initiates an idea, but on members of a team participating collectively in learning, meaning making and decision making. Third, collaborative leadership is mutual and sensitive to the views and feelings of all members of a group or community, who are encouraged to exchange their views freely with others in a dialogical – perhaps dialectical – process. Everyone's opinion and contribution is equally valid and open for joint discussion. Fourth, collaborative leadership is *compassionate* and committed to preserving the dignity of others, appreciating other cultures and valuing every member regardless of background or social standing. It is sensitive to and recognizes the intrinsic value of views held by people who are less privileged than those in the dominant culture or who are outside the social mainstream.

The opposite of collaborative leadership or action leadership with democratic collective values is the idea of the individual hero who can deprive a community (or a whole nation) of its own power. If allowed to develop, this kind of leadership can turn into fascist despotism, as we have seen, for example, in the twentieth century devastation of Germany in the grip of Adolf Hitler and in Yugoslavia under Slobodan Milosevic, and in the present century in Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe. This is leadership as absolute betrayal and total subjugation of the people.

Development of Lifelong Learning

This section deals with transformational lifelong learning that can be developed through PALAR and is particularly significant for creating and sustaining quality of life for people with very limited resources to sustain their existence. Our focus is on GULL, the Global University for Lifelong Learning. Here I build further on my discussion of PALAR for community and action leadership development in the previous sections and my discussion of PALAR projects and programmes in Chapter 2 of this book and of the GULL system in Chapter 9 of my previous book (Zuber-Skerritt, 2009). This section provides a more hands-on explanation of PALAR in actual practice through GULL: (1) for individual development in communities (with reference to web pages, anecdotal stories and examples of GULL work in several developing countries) and (2) for community development as a common theme for team projects (with Samoan, other migrants and Indigenous people in Australia).

GULL – The University for Lifelong Learning

GULL is a system of lifelong learning to enable *all* people to make a positive contribution to our world.[2] A not-for-profit foundation registered in California and now

operating in many parts of the globe, GULL was launched and officially recognized by the Government of Papua New Guinea in October 2007, and since then numerous other governments, leaders and organizations have also endorsed it. As initiator and president of GULL, Richard Teare has designed, implemented and evaluated this alternative system of learning, which can run parallel with, and may well feed into, the formal education system of schools, universities, technical and vocational training. It is learning in real-life situations such as the workplace. It focuses on the goals, vision and ability of the individual learner, starting where the learner is, that is, at his/her level of knowledge and skills, and increasing this level step by step at the individual learner's own pace. It provides a supported learning system with a self-nominated personal coach/mentor, a 'learning set' (i.e. a support group of co-learners) and guidelines for completing certain tasks.

GULL does not seek to compete with existing forms of education and development. It aims to cater for those outside the formal education system who cannot afford or access a school or university. These people are the most disadvantaged, underprivileged and the poorest in developing countries, remote areas or from learning cultures beyond mainstream. The detailed story of GULL's creation, mission, pathways, operation and representation appears on the GULL website – www. gullonline.org (accessed 21.02.2011) – with examples of how the University's lifelong learning system has been introduced in the relatively brief period since its inception in late 2007, and how it has worked effectively in different parts of the world, including Papua New Guinea, Malaysia, Indonesia, Jamaica, Sera Leone, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, South Africa and Haiti.

In my dual role as an 'academic' scholar in established universities internationally and as an 'elder' in the Global University for Lifelong Learning, I came to the conclusion that the learning pathways and outcomes of GULL should not be assessed and accredited by established universities. GULL's goals and objectives are not academically oriented; they are professionally and personally oriented. Therefore, they are assessed by GULL professionals and awarded degrees of *professional* Bachelor (BL), Master (ML) or Doctor (DL). These qualifications are recognized freestanding and reflect personal learning and professional achievement; they offer potential for positive change and transformation at the individual learner, community and/or national levels. We see, then, that GULL is accrediting the 'people-researchers'.

Bachelor Level

Each degree pathway has five levels (L1–5). Learning outcomes are always verified by the local facilitator (internal reviewer) prior to GULL certification at L1–4 and additionally by an independent local external reviewer at L5. The criteria for all reviewers' assessment (in a concise report) and recommendations for the candidate (either 'accept' or 'defer' until any gaps have been addressed) relate to evidence of the candidate's learning and application. Using the metaphor of a staircase, Fig. 7.2 indicates the five levels of a 'Bachelor of Professional Studies' or 'Bachelor of Management' degree, showing an upward movement in the gradual step-by-step progression of professional development through action learning.
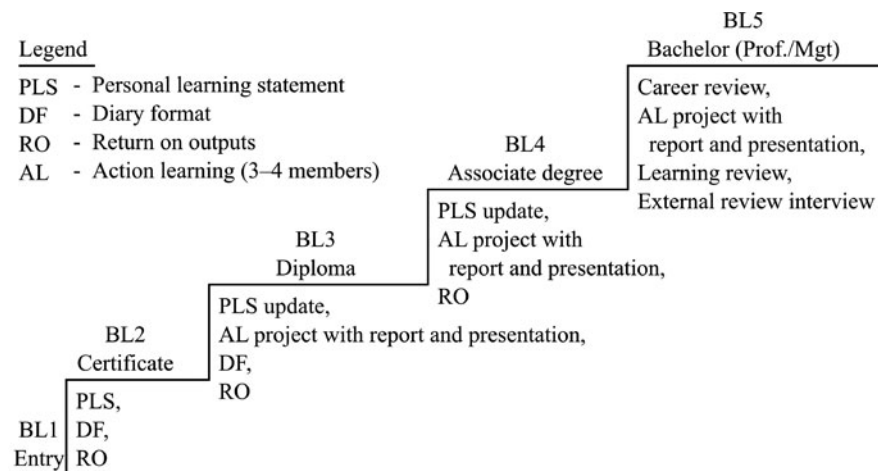
Fig. 7.2 Indicative GULL Bachelor levels BL 1–5

As Richard Teare commented on my draft figures (e-mails of 23/24 May 2010):

> These pathway elements are only indicative – there are many, many wonderful expressions of active learning around the GULL world. Whenever active learning is working well for the participant and the community, I lock into that. There is nothing static or standard about a GULL learning journey; all that matters is alignment (the right age/seniority with the correct pathway) and that the evidence of learning is clear and tangible to third parties. . . . There are no circumstances in which a single design is used. I always customize to fit with what exists – the circumstances and the way(s) of working and active learning that will fit. It is very important to convey the essence of GULL – the only expert that matters is the learner. My notes and guidelines are evolving all the time and so there is never a fixed point or a definitive way of doing anything.

Personal Learning Statement (PLS)

GULL provides guidelines and templates for the main activities; and we adapted them slightly to make them workable for our particular cultural group. The first template is the 'Personal Learning Statement' (PLS) form requesting the learner's personal, individual responses to the following questions:

Consider your current situation/job role:

(1) What is going well?
(2) What could I do better?

Consider the current training/activity you are undertaking:

(3) What would I like to accomplish for myself?
(4) For my team/colleagues and/or customers?
(5) For my department/section/organization/community?

Consider future possibilities:

(6) What new/different types of work would I like to experience?
(7) Where do I see myself in 12 months time?
(8) What new skills will I need to achieve my 12 month goal?
(9) In summary: What do I need to learn (list the key things arising from questions 1–8 inclusive)

Participants are then required to re-write the list of things that they want to learn in sentence format as their 'personal learning statement' in about 750 words. This includes a timeframe, the resources or support that they will need, and reflection on how they will know if they have accomplished this learning. They then discuss their PLS with their coach who gives written comments and signs the paper.

Daily Summary Form (DF)

The second GULL template is the 'Daily Summary' form (DF), asking for the following:

- Today's activity list
- What went well and why?
- What did not go well and why?
- What could I have done differently and how?

The diary-form reflection cycle includes a reflection every day, with a summary at the end of the week and at the end of the month. The weekly summary includes the weekly activity list and the above questions, as well as a list of discussion points for the coach and discussion outcomes afterwards, because this summary is to be discussed with the personal coach. The monthly summary, in addition to the above questions, asks: 'What have I learnt this month and what do I need to learn next month?' The report (of about 750 words) must be discussed with the learning coach who adds his/her written comments on the report for the internal assessor to add his/her comments as well, and with signatures and date by both.

Return on Outputs (RO) form

The third GULL requirement for the BL2 certificate is the 'Return on Outputs' (RO) form that consists of six sections, each to be completed in 100–150 words:

(1) Provide a summary of the training, action learning or other development activity undertaken.
(2) What were the key learning outcomes? (Please list these below)
(3) Describe the *personal* learning (and any other benefits for you) arising from this activity.

(4) Describe the *organizational or community* learning (and any other benefits for the organization) arising from this activity.
(5) Explain the value of the outcomes from this activity (improvements, cost reduction, etc.).
(6) List your recommendations for implementing these outcomes and outline any further action required.

External Review Interview

The final requirement is an external review interview on the above assignments. This ensures that the work done is validated, explained further and of high quality.

Master and Doctor Levels

In principle, the staircases to a Master or a Doctor degree are similar to those for Bachelor level and are also in five stages, except at a conceptually more advanced and demanding level (Figs. 7.3 and 7.4).

At the *Certificate* level of ML2 and DL2, the personal learning statements are updated, and the DF learning cycles are also daily, weekly and monthly, ending with a written RO report.

At the *Diploma* level, ML3 and DL3 include PLS update, DF learning cycles and RO, but at ML3 there is a career review and a diary reflection cycle linked to a managerial challenge (e.g. turning apathy and low morale into high motivation and agency); at DL3 there is a 'learning log' and a 'leadership' action learning project that requires the participants to lead others. For example, they might start by mentoring another GULL group of people who want to achieve a Bachelor or a Master degree.
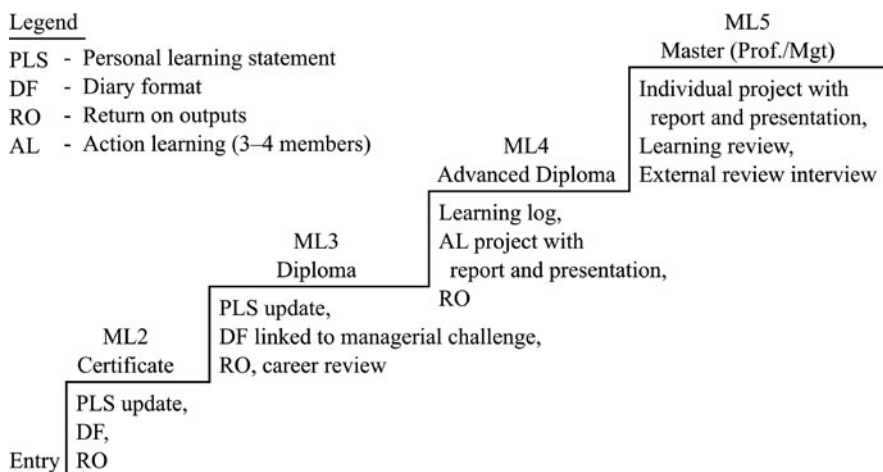
Fig. 7.3 Indicative GULL Master levels ML 1–5
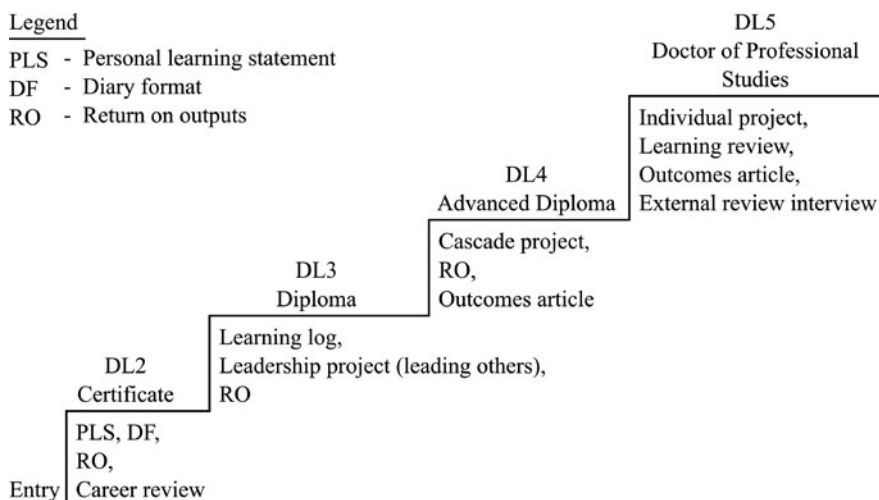
Fig. 7.4 Indicative GULL Doctor levels DL 1–5

At the *Advanced Diploma* level, ML4 includes a learning log, an interdisciplinary or cross-departmental action learning project with a report and presentation, and RO; DL4 is a cascade or continuation of the leadership project of the previous level with an 'outcomes article' and RO.

At the *Master* and *Doctor* (of Professional Studies or Management) ML5 and DL5 levels, the project has to be an individual one with a report and presentation at ML5 and a second outcomes article at DL5, with a written learning review and an external review interview.

When I asked Richard Teare why BL4 was not called 'Advanced Diploma' (as at the ML4 and DL4), he replied (e-mail of 23 May 2010):

> BL4 Associate degree is widely recognized, especially in the USA (GULL is registered there of course). The suggestion is that participants undertake a second reflection cycle and build on prior work by specifically focusing on a current managerial challenge – actually for leaders and managers. The significant GULL challenge is to cascade/multiply GULL; it is much more than an action learning project.

Suggested Timelines

    Activity 1 – week 01: Completing the personal learning statement (PLS) and finding a personal learning coach – someone the candidate respects and can learn from (but not a family member). It can be someone at work or from outside work.

    Activity 2 – week 02: Starting the diary format (DF) cycle of week 1 (750 words).

    Activity 3 – week 03: DF week 2 (750 words).

    Activity 4 – week 04: DF week 3 (750 words).

Activity 5 – week 05: DF week 4 (750 words).
Activity 6 – week 06: DF monthly summary (750 words).
Activity 7 – week 07: Starting the return on outputs (RO) form (750 words).

The Entry and Certificate levels (BL2, ML2 and DL2) can be completed in 10 weeks, the Diploma (BL3, ML3 and DL3) also in 10 weeks, the Associate degree (BL4) or Advanced Diploma (ML4 and DL4) in 15 weeks and BL5, ML5 and DL5 in 20 weeks, or less in all cases.

Developing Community Educators in Haiti

Here is a classic example of a GULL community development project in Haiti following the catastrophic earthquake in January 2010 that wrought unimaginable disaster upon the nation and its people. It illustrates an approach to bringing calm from chaos by refocusing energies in ways that offer structure, guidance, action and hope in a situation that seemed hopeless. Richard Teare in an e-mail of 16 March 2010 reported:

> Dear friends
> Am now in Haiti with World Vision. Impact of the earthquake is truly shocking . . . tens of thousands of people living in camps. We are launching GULL here tomorrow via World Vision and UNICEF – first wave of 80 youngsters (aged 17–24) will start the professional Bachelor process guided by World Vision staff (on the Master level pathways). The youngsters will become community educators, teaching the little children to read/write.

Meanwhile, GULL has been fully implemented in Haiti in partnership with World Vision International (WVI), a Christian relief, development and advocacy organization dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. WVI is also the world's largest NGO working in about 100 countries, with people and communities from all religions, races, ethnicity and gender. WVI has some 99 national staff in Haiti with more than 75 based at the Port-au-Prince headquarters, plus 50 international staff from its global rapid response team.

Richard Teare in his yet unpublished report (March 2010) on 'Developing Community Educators in Haiti' calls the WVI/GULL partnership the 'Vision–GULL' initiative, founded on practical, professional and holistic development in communities and recognizing and certifying the outcomes of action learning. The approach taken by Vision–GULL is to combine WVI's training inputs with GULL's generic action learning outputs, such as the 'personal learning statement', diary-format reflection cycles (using weekly and monthly diary summaries) and 'return on output' form, to enable all participants to identify and record their insights, experiences and learning outcomes as they progress.

Richard held a briefing session in Haiti on 16 March 2010 for staff of the WVI national and international lead team of the 'Early Childhood Development Learning Space' initiative. This initiative seeks to provide a learning space for young (often traumatized) children in the densely packed, tented camps, where 500 youths are working as pre-school teachers with children aged under eight. Each lead team

member started the next day by facilitating a group of the 500 volunteer community educators (aged 17–25) who have been denied the opportunity to attend a high school or university (all destroyed in the earthquake) but now have the chance to embark on a continuing pathway of action learning to a Bachelor of Professional Studies (Community Education) degree. WVI Haiti staff (aged 26+) act as the volunteers' coaches, mentors, set advisors and facilitators and use this experience and action learning themselves on a pathway to a Master of Professional Studies (Community Education), certified by GULL and endorsed by WVI as its professional and leadership development. This work will enable (1) WVI staff to reflect on, review and professionalize their roles and develop others' skills through action learning and (2) the Vision–GULL programme to cascade to all 500 young community educators and beyond as quickly as possible. In the unpublished report mentioned above, Richard Teare concludes under the heading, 'community-based action learning for everyone in Haiti':

> Vision–GULL is starting with Haiti's youngsters in the age range from 17–25. They are now by default, Haiti's frontline community educators. This group has lost its opportunity to enter and graduate from an academic institution but they can build their personal and professional skills in the community and help to lead and create an inclusive, community-based model for learning via Vision–GULL that will be led by Haitians – now and for the future. WV Haiti's national staff and the many other volunteers working with WV in Haiti will also become Vision–GULL action learners and through their efforts, there is hope for the future. Right now, Haiti's children and community educators have few resources – but their spirit and enthusiasm for learning will sustain them and help to build a brighter future.

The programme is free for all participants, and it is the very first time that it has been used in a post-disaster setting. It focuses on providing those without funds with educational opportunities for professional qualifications or access to other more traditional forms of education. It is for leaders as learners.

GULL in Australia

One month after the launch of the GULL project in Haiti, Richard Teare and Micael Olsson (WVI) visited me in Brisbane (21–22 April 2010, before returning home to the UK/USA, respectively, from PNG graduation ceremony) to discuss possible opportunities for disadvantaged communities in Australia. I invited key people in community development in Brisbane to participate in a 'think tank' at my home on 22 April, facilitated by Bob Dick. Participants included representatives from the Samoan community, community educators working with migrants, progressive university academics and consultants in government and industry. Nineteen people participated in the think tank.

The focal question we explored was, *What contribution can the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL) make in Australia and how can it be done?* We identified those community groups in Australia that would benefit from the GULL action learning system, including refugees in camps; Indigenous communities; illiterate and homeless people; certain migrant groups without government support for education, e.g. Samoan families who do not have Permanent Residency

status and cannot access all government support services; youth and school leavers who cannot find employment or apprenticeship; and the elderly or those in forced early retirement. We compiled a long list of ideas on how to approach and forge links and partnerships with existing networks, associations, foundations, organizations, Indigenous and other support groups.

GULL Pilot with the Samoan Community

At the end of the think-tank session, participants were asked to devise a final statement, recorded on video. Here I include those statements from people who are involved in the first GULL pilot programme in Australia, endorsed by the Samoan community. To begin, here are the comments from, and verified by, four Samoan community leaders who are all chiefs and representatives of an organization called the 'Voice of Samoan People'. The first comment is by the president:

- It has been a very beneficial evening and it is wonderful to hear various ideas and the possibilities for assisting the needy. I think that GULL is going to give people hope, a greater sense of their worth and in so doing, help restore or boost their human dignity. Nobody wants to be 'Nobody' – everyone wants to be 'Somebody' and I can see that the philosophy of GULL is to raise self-esteem but help each person to appreciate their God-given gifts within and beyond the context of their own culture. In so doing, it will assist many people to realize the potential that they have within them to help themselves, their families and the wider community. In turn, this will help people to feel better about themselves, create a stronger sense of solidarity and hope for the future. So I think GULL is a gift.
- I like the philosophy of building up people – especially starting from one or two and multiplying the effort. It has universal appeal – no matter where you come from – you still have an opportunity to benefit. I will commit to this process and to multiplying it in the Samoan community.
- I am a Samoan Elder from Logan and our community has hoped and prayed for the help that GULL offers. It can provide an opportunity for our people to further their education and as a vehicle to fully realize their knowledge and past experience. Our community is now subject to the Australian Government 2001 legislation that limits the extent of financial help available to pursue academic options.
- GULL opens the doors to people who are very good at doing certain things but without the recognition that comes with educational certification. I see that GULL is giving an opportunity to this large category of people.

Next I cite those academics who are already working with the Samoan community on an action learning programme focusing on the question, *What are the felt needs of the Samoan community to improve the educational opportunities for all?* We started this programme, funded by Griffith University, 6 weeks earlier and independent from GULL. However, as a result of the positive feedback at the end of the

think-tank session, we combined the programme with the GULL system for professional and leadership development. The first academic quoted is the convenor and the second is a mentor in the present Samoan programme:

- Sometimes I find myself thinking: 'How did I get to this point in my life and career?' A formative stage for me was working at Logan Campus [of Griffith University] and realizing that as teachers, we did not represent or reflect the profile of the Logan community and so for many years I have wondered about how the community might be better represented in educational terms by members of the Samoan community. That has led to an exciting partnership with the wonderful Samoan leaders who are here this evening, with the objective of enhancing educational opportunities – especially for the young. I think that GULL has got a real part to play in this process – I do not see it competing with traditional educational services, but I have met a lot of people – including those who have worked with the Queensland Government – who have been dependent on short-term employment contracts. They have so much potential to offer as community educators, but they cannot readily identify a career development pathway and I think that GULL could be a real enabler for a group such as this, with so much to offer the wider community.
- I am soon to retire from Griffith University and tonight has been one of those key moments during the past 12 months when I have seen a possibility for the future. I have been reflecting on the question, 'what will I do after I leave formal work?' I can see that GULL has so much to offer to the many who do not have formal opportunities to learn. Working with GULL would give me an opportunity to give back to Australia or somewhere else what I have been privileged to receive. I am not looking at what GULL can do for Australia or for me; I am thinking about what I might be able to do for GULL and hope that I can find a way of using my skills. I feel that there is still much that I could contribute and I look forward to that opportunity – even someone like me who others might view as highly educated, can still learn from GULL!

There were also three senior consultants working in the private and public sectors. They indicated their interest to work with us.

- I am excited by the potential for GULL in Australia. There are pockets of action learning across the country and within these, people who would understand its credibility, but I think that the opportunity to use a system that is officially recognized (in the form of a named, systemized approach with its own status) is really important and very exciting.
- I am enthusiastic about action learning because I have seen how well it works and I hope that people here are willing to help GULL take off in Australia because I think it has got a contribution to make.
- I have considerable hope for and expectation of GULL. I admire the mission and I have seen action learning work very effectively all around the world. The mechanism itself can generate many positive outcomes. I see that my contribution

is to use internet marketing to promote the concept and the outcomes and to generate some funding.

The last comment by Ron Passfield needs explanation. Ron has subsequently developed a Squidoo website (lens) for GULL: http://www.squidoo.com/gull (accessed 21.02.2011) and given me permission to include the following information provided by him here.

The Squidoo lens will enable further dissemination and marketing of the GULL concept and outcomes and facilitate donations to GULL as a charitable organization. Squidoo is a multimedia platform designed to enable anyone to create focused websites on a topic of their choice. It was developed by Seth Godin who has published ten New York bestsellers in the area of Internet Marketing. Seth Godin's vision is that Squidoo will raise $100 million for charity. A percentage of the advertising revenue from Squidoo goes to approved charities, and people who create Squidoo lenses (lens masters) can channel their direct revenue from the site to one of these approved charities (on a monthly basis).

Godin (2008) in his book, *Tribes: We Need You to Lead Us*, suggests that a tribe develops around a leader where there is a shared interest and a way to communicate. His comments about the resultant evolution of a movement resonate with GULL and the PALAR paradigm because, Godin (2008: 23) argues: 'Great leaders create movements by empowering the tribe to communicate. They establish the foundation for people to make connections, as opposed to commanding people to follow them.'

Richard Teare, as the leader of the GULL *Tribe*, has enabled it to grow in a classic manner described by Seth Godin (2008: 25) as

- transforming the shared interest into a passionate goal and a desire for change;
- providing tools to allow members to tighten their communications; and
- leveraging the tribe to allow it to grow and gain new members.

However, Richard has done more than leverage the tribe (through his *cascading* approach) for he has set in place the mechanism to enable the spontaneous development of new 'leaders of tribes', thus realizing Seth's vision.

Shortly after the 'think-tank' meeting, we started the first GULL pilot project in Australia, endorsed by the 'Voice of Samoan People', with 12 volunteers from the Samoan community, including the four chiefs quoted above. The two academics mentioned above already have a PhD from Griffith University, and are interested in mentoring the Samoans while going through the process and experience of a GULL doctorate of Professional Studies themselves.

In the start-up workshop, we introduced the GULL philosophy and the pathways to the awards of Bachelor, Master and Doctor (of Professional Studies or Management). We first explained the five-level progression to a Bachelor degree (see Fig. 7.2). Participants experienced the basic process of the first two requirements of BL 2 by filling in the templates of PLS and DF explained above to enable them to complete the Certificate level independently with their learning coach. Participants were then asked to share their experiences with, and learning from, these exercises and, for the next meeting, to re-write the list of things they want to

learn in sentence format as their 'personal learning statement' (in about 750 words), including the timeframe and resources or support they will need, and to reflect on how they will 'know' if they have accomplished this learning.

The third GULL requirement for the BL2 certificate is the 'Return on Outputs' (RO) form that we introduced briefly but obviously could not finish during the workshop. However, participants completed the PLS, DF reflection cycle and the RO on their own with their individual coach and received their 'Certificate of Professional Studies' from GULL in a graduation ceremony with Richard Teare on 28 October 2010. Most have already indicated that (1) they will continue their journey to a Diploma level and (2) they have in mind a group of people who, under their action leadership, will be keen to start a GULL programme at the Certificate level.

PALAR by its very nature never comes to an end, but moves on to an ever new beginning. Every week new members who have heard about our pilot programme by word of mouth want to join our group. We intend to conduct the next two pilot programmes with representatives from (1) the Aboriginal community and (2) ACCES (Assisting Collaborative Community Employment Support) Services Inc., a community-based, not-for-profit organization in Brisbane established 25 years ago. ACCES is committed to fostering community development, settlement and employment initiatives and to providing personal support programmes to address the needs of disadvantaged community groups including migrants, refugees, humanitarian entrants to Australia and temporary protection visa holders. Their mission is to provide leadership, education, support and advocacy services to assist migrants, refugees and the broader community to shape their own future. I look forward to working on these new exciting GULL action leadership programmes with the Samoan, other migrant and Indigenous communities, but that will be the focus of another book.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed three main concepts of development in developing countries and non-Western communities: community development, action leadership development and the development of lifelong learning through participatory action learning and action research (PALAR). It has illustrated how PALAR offers a different form of leadership and leading through individuals who learn to discover ways to change through self-discovery processes.

Community development has been conceived in theory and practice as a process of action learning and lifelong learning for individuals, groups and whole communities. This process can be initially facilitated by animators, activists or participatory action researchers, but should ideally become a self-sustained, self-directed and ongoing process in the communities where people have learnt to analyse and solve their own problems and improve their life and work situations themselves. The principle of assets-based community development (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993) has been promoted as a process for identifying assets (skills, resources), strengths and issues in communities, social groups or informal networks; then building on

these strengths and letting members solve the issues themselves. Assets-based community development is capacity and empowerment building, rather than providing people in poor, disadvantaged communities with aid, money and other handouts. This is made clear in Ernie Stringer's stories of an Aboriginal woman in Western Australia and of developing a national policy in East Timor, by Rahman's work in Bangladesh, Orlando Fals Borda's influence in Colombia and around the world, Swantz's pioneer work in Tanzania, and the grassroots initiative of ORAP in Zimbabwe.

Action leadership development (for community development) in this chapter has been characterized by the principles of collaboration, networking and vision (also properties of PALAR) and by the ancient principles of coordination, cooperation, commendation and communication (Nehemiah). Action leadership or collaborative leadership (Raelin, 2006) requires the leader to be concurrent, collective, mutual and compassionate with other leaders on an equal footing. In crisis and underprivileged situations, community leaders need to develop other leaders around them, working in teams to achieve a shared vision. So vision and team-building, identifying issues, strengths and weaknesses (through SWOT and resources analysis) and strategic action planning are important knowledge and skill bases to be developed in leadership development programmes, for everyone can become a leader. As Lao Tzu[3] said: 'A leader is best when people barely know he [sic] exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves.'

Development of lifelong learning (for action leadership) is particularly essential in communities in crisis situations (e.g. through natural disasters) and in poor and disadvantaged communities, so that they need not rely on handouts, but are able to create their own future. This ability of lifelong learning has not been developed easily in the traditional systems of formal education and higher education, characterized by a teacher-led, content-centred, curriculum-oriented approach (barrels to be filled). Lifelong learning by contrast needs to be learner-centred, self-directed, question/issue-focused, problem-oriented, participatory and collaborative; and an effective approach to developing lifelong learning is through participatory action learning and action research (fires to be ignited). The most effective and cheapest system of developing lifelong learning and action leadership for professional and community development to my knowledge is that designed and facilitated by the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL) that has emerged in the last couple of years and has spread like a positive, life-giving virus especially in developing countries with millions of action learners around the globe. The examples of Haiti and the Samoan Community in Brisbane are heartening.

Discussion Starters

1. What do you consider to be the key elements of effective (1) community development, (2) action leadership and (3) lifelong learning?
2. Please, watch the video talk by Sir Ken Robinson, an international expert on creativity, and discuss the difference between the traditional education paradigm

and the alternative paradigm proposed by Robinson (2010): *Changing education paradigm.* Available online: http://www.gullonline.org/media/briefings-events/briefings/changing-education-paradigms/ (accessed 21.02.2011). Then discuss how Robinson's (2010) 'alternative education paradigm' differs from the traditional education paradigm.

3. How does this alternative paradigm relate to the GULL system?

Notes

1. I had interviewed these and other colleagues in 2006 by e-mail to convey their message in my keynote address to the delegates of the International Symposium in honour of Orlando Fals Borda, published in my chapter in Santos and Todhunter (2007). Parts of that chapter are reprinted here with the kind permission of the editors. The text of the interviews was re-confirmed by my colleagues in April 2010.
2. I thank Richard Teare for reading and validating this section of Chapter 7, written on the basis of his information and www.gullonline.org – accessed 21.02.2011.
3. Available at: http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/l/lao_tzu.html – accessed 21.02.2011.

Chapter 8
Action Leadership Within a Participatory Paradigm

We cannot hold a torch to light another's path without brightening our own.
Ben Sweetland cited in Maxwell (2004: 67)

Chapter Overview

This chapter draws conclusions from all previous chapters in this book into a coherent argument that early in this twenty-first century, when neo-liberalism and managerialism are dominant forces in much of the world we need to shift the dominant mindset towards a participatory paradigm of action learning, action research and action leadership to improve human and social conditions for ourselves, others and future generations. I argue that participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) can best facilitate the collaborative learning and shared democratic leadership required for individuals, groups and whole organizations and communities. This argument is evidenced by my own, my colleagues' and other authors' experience and research and summarized in two new models, one for the advancement of PALAR praxis and project development and the other for action leadership towards a participatory paradigm – the title of this book. I also suggest a new genre for PALAR writing as developed in this book.

Introduction

This book has been ambitious in focusing on participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) for personal, professional, leadership, organization and community development in a wide range of fields. I have initiated PALAR, drawing purposefully from a wide variety of existing and emerging theories and building new models. These foundations are substantiated by the literature and complemented with my own experience in, observation of, and reflection on, professional and leadership development over the past 30–40 years in higher education, management education, senior executive development and community development in Western and developing countries. In this book I have not sought to plough each field in depth; others have done so before me. Rather, my intention has been to take a

helicopter view over these adjacent fields to identify the interconnections, dialectical relationships, dynamics and processes that enable development, growth and positive change in human and social conditions. I have sought to synthesize these as the foundation for the new paradigm of action leadership, which will be developed over time with the understandings, experiences and reflections of interested people.

In this final chapter, I review the goals of this book and how these have been achieved. I evaluate the results and limitations of this work, setting out clearly what is new, different and significant in it (contributions to knowledge), and summarizing the conceptual framework and applications of action leadership towards an emerging participatory paradigm.

Goals

My goals in writing this book have been to contribute to a better *understanding of*

- *action learning and action research* in their origins and emergent forms of experiential and lifelong learning; practical, emancipatory, critical, participatory and community action research; the integrated notion of ALAR (Zuber-Skerritt, 2009); and the new concept of *PALAR* introduced in this book – as a way of life and being, a way of thinking and working; and a practical philosophy or 'ethos', rather than a set of techniques (although the last of these might be helpful to novices to learn what specific standard practices and methods we have used in our PALAR programmes and projects);
- *professionalism*, not in a technical sense of mastering skills, but as an art of balancing moral decisions, expertise and wisdom, based on intellectual, emotional and spiritual maturity and ongoing growth; and
- *action leadership* in a PALAR culture, i.e. leadership not as individual charismatic leadership or as a top position and high status in an hierarchical organization, but as collaborative, shared leadership in the form of *primus inter pares*, guided by democratic, ethical human values and universal principles, and developed in learning and coaching partnerships.

Achievement of Goals

Capacity to achieve these goals has been maximized through a multi-faceted approach to developing and capturing the essence of the key concepts of *PALAR*, professional and leadership development in the emerging non-positivist paradigm of research, and *action leadership* in the social and human sciences. I have used the literature and existing theories to create new practical theories and models of PALAR, and of professional and action leadership in higher and management education in various public and private sector organizations and in communities. These models were also based on my extensive experience of 30–40 years in the fields

of teaching, research and development. The illustrations I have presented, through examples, stories, reflections and conclusions, draw from these experiences.

Summary of Work

This book is the result of long years of reading, careful thought and reflection on my practice, especially over past few years. It is partly based on my previously published work in the light of the literature, both ancient/classic and most recent, but mainly its basis is my practical PALAR programmes and projects and understanding of how these relate to the advancement of learning and development at all levels: personal, professional, leadership, organizational and community learning.

Chapter 1 introduces the idea that this time of unprecedented, radical and rapid change calls for profound rethinking of how people and organizations learn and address the complex problems/issues that challenge society at all levels and all nations in a globally connected world. These issues include rapid economic, financial, social and ecological changes and natural disasters, such as floods, droughts, earthquakes, global warming, oil spills in oceans and volcanic eruptions with global impact on human and ecological life. All these phenomena require swift and responsible action, not just by individuals, but collectively and collaboratively. Participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) is a proven process for effectively dealing with these problematic and crisis situations, as argued and demonstrated throughout this book.

Part I of the book provides the conceptual framework and clarifies the philosophical and methodological assumptions that underpin the practice of action leadership development through PALAR. Chapter 2 introduces the fundamental concepts and values of various kinds of action learning, action research and action leadership, and presents models for PALAR programmes and projects. Chapter 3 explains the dialectical relationship between theory and practice as *praxis*, and the synthesis of various types of knowledge, and of knowledge in action. An understanding of these integrated concepts and relationships is essential for understanding the philosophy, processes and effective use of PALAR. Chapter 4 explains and justifies the PALAR paradigm, theoretical framework and methodology. It is important for people to understand this practical theory if they effectively participate in, or lead, practical improvement programmes for organization or community change.

Part II introduces and discusses the main issues and concerns of action leadership and professional development, first generally and then applied to higher education (Chapter 5), management education for organization development (Chapter 6), and to community development, reported in the literature and illustrated by the example of GULL – Global University for Lifelong Learning (Chapter 7). Chapter 7 shifts gear dramatically because GULL is evolving at a roaring pace in response to many unprecedented natural and social calamities now challenging communities, countries and all of us globally. GULL presents a moving feast of experience, action and learning.

Evaluation of Work Done and Limitations

Apart from having evaluated the reported individual programmes and projects in the spirit and method of PALAR discussed in this book, I am fortunate to have had 'critical friends' who were interested in my work and willing to read the first draft of the book or a particular chapter. They provided me with valuable feedback that I have used for revisions and writing the final draft (see my acknowledgements at the beginning of the book).

When considering their comments, I learnt that I had often made assumptions that readers would know or could read between the lines, when obviously they could not. I realized that drawing simple diagrams helped to get my message across. I also learnt to focus more on the essence of 'action leadership towards a participatory paradigm' and hence, changed the title from the general, descriptive, academic title I had originally intended: 'Professional and leadership development through action learning and action research'. I was able to both reduce the limitations of my work and expand its knowledge contributions through reflecting and responding to the challenges I saw in the constructive comments of my critical friends. I know that with more time I could have responded to other people's critique, but as the saying goes: 'The perfect is the enemy of the good'; if I were satisfied only by perfection I may never have finished the book. Readers' views and perspectives will differ, and some will be in opposition to my work or parts of it. But such is the nature of dialectic as the exchange of opposing ideas moves them from thesis towards synthesis. And such is the nature of paradigm development, for which I have opened the pathway here towards action leadership. If I have made my readers excited about agreeing or actively disagreeing with me through new innovations and creative alternatives, I consider my work worthwhile.

At the end of this book I realize that I have focused my discussion on adults in higher education, management education, organization and community development. I have not discussed the development of one of the most important groups of people for future development and sustainability of democratic, participatory, innovative and creative life and work globally: schoolchildren who will be the action leaders of the future. This is a challenge for another book. Potential authors might start the process of developing action leaders in primary and high schools, rather than universities and technical colleges. But as Sir Ken Robinson points out with a wry sense of humour in his video TED talk on 'Bring on the learning revolution!' (http://tinyurl.com/24qxfl4 – accessed 21.02.2011), there needs to be a radical shift from standardized schooling to personalized learning – cultivating creativity and conditions where children's natural talents can flourish. By nature, children are creative and innovative and try out anything. That is how they learn, until it is drummed out of them at school or even pre-school. 'We are educating people out of their creativity', says Robinson in his latest co-authored book (Robertson and Aronica, 2009) on *The Element*. Here he argues that every one of us can find our element – that is the point at which natural talent meets personal passion – to enhance creativity and innovation by thinking differently about ourselves, connecting with our true talents and fulfilling our creative potential. We are all born with tremendous natural

capacities, but we lose touch with them as we spend more time in the world and forget what we are really capable of achieving. Education, business and society as a whole are losing out.

Contribution to Knowledge in Theory and Practice

As I pointed out in Chapter 1 and at the beginning of this chapter, the intention of this book is not to contribute another academic book on a specific topic, such as 'Professional Development in Higher Education' or 'Leadership Development in Organizations' or 'Organization Development' or 'Community Development'. Nor did I want to produce another book on 'Action Learning' or 'Action Research' or 'Participatory Action Research'. Rather, this book is about connecting these fields through a new concept of PALAR to show a shift from departmental, reductionist thinking in the traditional sciences to holistic, critical and innovative thinking in the social sciences. The latter is required in today's global world and for a sustainable future. Therefore, I wanted to contribute to the big picture of interrelated concepts and practices, that is, a holistic understanding of how these fields are interconnected and as a whole can contribute to solving very complex problems in this time of swift economic, social and ecological change and natural disasters. I particularly wanted to make this contribution through the practical theory of action leadership and processes of PALAR. In the process of writing this book, I realized that this new way of thinking and acting also requires a new way of writing.

A New Book Genre

This book is written in a new, evolving genre of an academic book that is different from the conventional academic research and writing. Here I develop this genre dialectically by synthesizing two opposite genres. The thesis is the genre of an academic book typically written on a narrow, specific topic in a scientific discipline in the traditional form, style and language, using third person, passive voice or even jargon for a special audience of academics and scholars in that particular discipline and excluding other people who lack the necessary knowledge and hence interest.

The antithesis is the genre of an educational storybook or novel written for a wide audience in a creative style and simple language with the intention to convey a message and to motivate and educate/teach the readers to learn certain lessons, to be wise and to lead a happy, responsible, peaceful and sustainable life.

The synthesis represents the positive aspects of both in a new genre that we might call academic creative narrative or PALAR writing, because it is based on action research (AR) or participatory action research (PAR) that, in turn, is founded in and informed by action leadership, and action learning defined as experiential or lifelong learning through action and reflection on this action. PALAR writing is interdisciplinary and problem/issue focused. Authors write in the first person and

active voice in simple language, because this writing is aimed at a wide readership who are interested in the issue(s) and methodology and in creative, ever evolving new styles and forms. For example, in my most recent book (Zuber-Skerritt, 2009) I developed a new genre – PIP – an acronym for Prelude – Interview – Postscript. I used this form in each chapter and across the whole of that book.

In the present book I introduce PALAR writing that integrates *theory* (understanding through research) and the improvement of *practice* (acting, living, being) in a new dialectic called *praxis*. Writing for praxis needs to be clear, concise, illustrative (through examples, stories and visual representations) and accessible to both academics/scholars and practitioners in a wide variety of fields, disciplines and countries. PALAR can be used globally and a book using PALAR needs to be readable by people from many non-English-speaking backgrounds. Another contribution might be to the field of PALAR itself.

The Concept of PALAR

Many readers might be familiar with and involved in action learning (AL) *or* action research (AR) *or* participatory action research (PAR) *or* other forms. This book shows for the first time how these concepts are theoretically related and can be combined in action leadership and actual PALAR programmes and projects, even if some participants enact more action learning and others more action research. It is the spirit, synergy and outcomes that count.

This book has provided the philosophical, theoretical, conceptual framework and practical applications of this new integrated, holistic concept of PALAR, emphasizing the importance of participation of practitioners in the problem solving and/or research that is likely to affect them. PALAR is dialectically integrated learning and action, research and action, always in collaboration with other significant people affected by the same issue – people with different kinds of gifts, talents, skills and knowledge, intelligences and attributes, but a shared spirit, working together to achieve mutual vision, values, principles and goals. This does not mean that action leadership is easy. Working in partnership with others, especially if they come from opposing or very different perspectives, requires coaching (Robertson, 2008), communication and negotiation skills, patience, respect for difference in views, and a fair amount of dialogue and goodwill. But the outcomes are rewarding and worthwhile; for everyone involved they are more acceptable than coercion, control and heavy-handed decision making.

The Use of Dialectic

Dialectic is a method of argument and reasoning in both Western and Eastern philosophy since ancient times. It is based on a dialogue between two (or more) people with different ideas or opposing views/opinions (thesis and antithesis) who wish to

persuade each other and finally arrive at a higher truth (synthesis). It is the art of discussing the truth of opinions. In this book I have used dialectic thinking and discussing in order to shed light on 'both sides of the coin' and to show the nature of integration. Through these dialectic processes (pursued in diverse contexts through theory and practice) I have arrived at a synthesis that is represented by PALAR.

For example, PALAR synthesizes the following:

- Action learning and action research (as the name suggests)
- Research and development
- Theory and practice
- Individual and collective (organization/community) development
- Technical training and professional development
- Traditional and action leadership
- Management and academic cultures
- Power and empowerment through participation
- Method(ology) and dialogue
- Quantitative and qualitative methods.

Models for Professional and Action Leadership Development

I have provided examples and models of the new approach to professional and action leadership development. Here I summarize my conclusions about my integrated model of organizational change and about three action learning degree programmes at the postgraduate level discussed in Chapters 6 and 7:

- MBA (Executive) through action learning
- Senior Executive Action Learning (SEAL) programme and its new kind of thesis by explication for effective executive and organization development
- Degrees of Professional Studies (or Management) through the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL)

I then create two new models of PALAR, the first for the advancement of PALAR praxis in general (but built on all chapters in Part II) and the second for action leadership within a participatory paradigm.

Model for Organizational Change and Development Through Action Research

Drawing on my experience and on selected models of organizational change and innovation in the literature, I have argued that emancipatory action research is organizational change 'best practice', and that it fosters organizational learning and the learning organization. I have developed a model of emancipatory action research for management and organization development in a five-step process. This model represents a cyclical, ongoing process of managerial intervention and learning for organizational change and the development of a learning organization.

I hope that this model (Fig. 6.6) may be useful to and be adapted by action researchers, change agents, managers, teachers and students for their own purposes, when introducing interventions and processes of action research for management and organization development. More research and development work is needed to resolve the problem of dealing with people and organizations having positivist, neo-liberal mindsets and being resistant to the notions of action research, change and empowerment of people.

MBA (Executive) by Action Learning

My aims were to present an alternative for experienced managers to the much criticized traditional MBA degree programme – an alternative that prepares senior managers for the task of leading a high-performing organization. The course outlines are included in Appendix 2. Here I summarize the main features of the programme:

- *Flexible delivery mode*: two residential workshops of 2 weeks each instead of regular timetabled classes on-campus; two subjects by distance education with regular meetings of action learning groups; two work-based projects.
- *Duration*: 13 months (high density) or 2 years (option).
- *Programme individually structured* to suit the needs of the managers and their organizations through work-based assignments and projects.
- *Academic faculty* with international reputation and industry experience.
- *Use of PALAR*, strategic alliances, networking and the latest information technology with global reach.
- *Excellent staff–student ratios* – groups of five to six.
- *Recognition of prior learning* and credit for relevant prior management development programmes.
- *Flexible exit possible*: after one third of the course, a Graduate Management Qualification; after two thirds of the course, a Graduate Diploma of Management.

I hope that this model will contribute to a new approach to management education and development for the learning organization in the twenty-first century. Much has been written about the learning organization in theory and also in practice, but little has been suggested about how practising, experienced managers themselves (rather than expert consultants) can learn and be prepared to develop a high-performing learning organization in the emerging national and international social, economic, industrial, technological and organizational contexts. This model is one possible way this might be achieved in graduate management education: through participatory action learning, action research and action leadership. Another example is the SEAL programme and its alternative doctoral thesis by explication as action research.

The Senior Executive Action Learning (SEAL) Programme

I have argued that a professional higher degree is different in nature, purpose, aims, and format from a research higher degree. However, a thesis for a professional higher degree must make an original contribution to knowledge in theory *and* practice, based on the candidate's previous, published management documents and the candidate's critical analysis of, and reflection on, this work by focusing on a particular theme, complex problem, concern or issue in the field of management/leadership and organization or community development.

I have identified the main principles affecting the quality of a thesis, the main characteristics of a professional thesis by explication and the differences between a professional higher degree by explication and a PhD by research. I have also offered conceptual models of both knowledge creation (Fig. 6.2) and a thesis by explication, as well as a practical checklist for candidates, supervisors and examiners for evaluating the quality of a professional thesis by explication (Appendix 3).

Degrees of Professional Studies Through the Global University for Lifelong Learning (GULL)

While the above MBA through action learning and the Senior Executive Action Learning (SEAL) programme are less academic than traditional MBAs and PhDs because they are more experiential, issue/problem-based and work-related, they still require a dissertation or thesis at the end with guidance from academics. The degree of doctor of professional studies through GULL also requires an individual project at the end of the pathway, but it is in the form of two outcome articles based on a substantial leadership project that leads and cascades new action learning teams through Bachelor and/or Master level pathways to GULL graduation (see Figs. 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4).

I now develop a model of PALAR, also using the metaphor of a staircase, but here to show ongoing improvement, development and positive change for the advancement of praxis generally, including lifelong learning.

Model of PALAR for the Advancement of *Praxis*

The following model relates to generic processes used for the advancement of learning, teaching, staff development and action leadership in higher education (Chapter 5); management education for organization development (Chapter 6); and community development (Chapter 7).

As discussed in Chapter 3, *praxis* is an integrated concept of theory and practice that is achieved through reflection on, and understanding of, what might work in practice or not and why or why not. *Praxis* as the highest form of reflective practice can be achieved through PALAR programmes and/or projects as demonstrated in this book and illustrated in Fig. 8.1. The staircase to success and significance starts with (1) *relationship and team-building*, as a pre-condition for effective
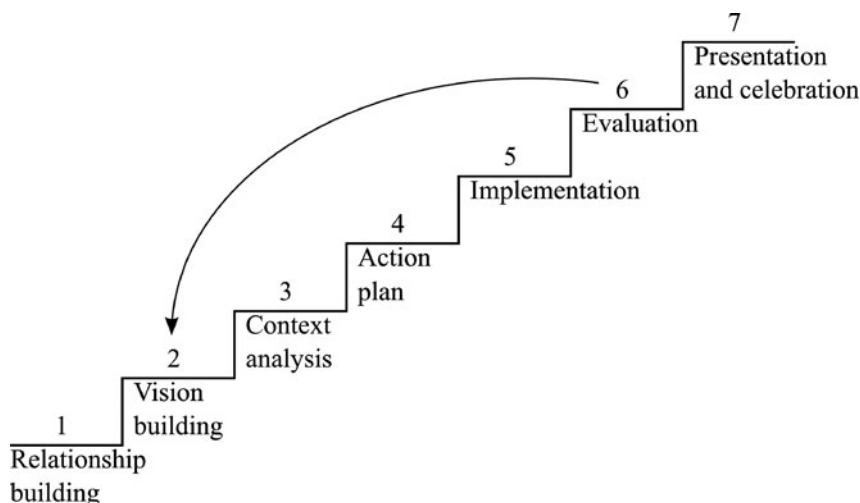
Fig. 8.1 Model of PALAR for the advancement of praxis

collaboration and (2) *vision-building* for sustainable motivation and inspiration. As Maxwell (2004: 88) put it: 'A significant vision is a picture of the future that produces passion in people'. It is important that the team conducts (3) a *context analysis* before designing (4) the *action plan* and that (5) the *implementation* of the action plan is accompanied by continuous and (6) final *evaluation* to provide evidence for the knowledge claims to be made. The downward curving arrow indicates that the cycle of steps 2–6 may need to be repeated again or several times until the desired improvement or change can be achieved. From our experience, there is great leverage in building in (7) a *presentation and celebration* day when the teams are required to briefly report on the key results of their projects to all stakeholders, their families and friends, including the media if possible. Having a party at the end is to acknowledge/reward the hard work and to celebrate the success and the significance of the teamwork to all stakeholders and to the team members' own learning, growth and action leadership.

This model includes both team project development and personal, professional and action leadership development. The stages remind us of models in previous chapters that were mainly circular or cyclical (e.g. Figs. 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6) to indicate ongoing, continuous development. But here I also intend to show the progressive, forward and upward movement towards greater learning, personal growth, professional development and action leadership development for organization or community development.

Significance

As the title indicates, the significance of this book lies in its contribution to action leadership towards a participatory paradigm enacted through PALAR.

Action Leadership

Action leadership is a new concept of leadership that involves action, concern and responsibility for others, rather than a position of power and control over them. This kind of leadership is not reserved for the elite in power or in a hierarchical position, but it is achievable by all those who are willing to develop and capable of developing the capacity, knowledge, skills, attitude and democratic values of freedom, equality and fraternity for all humankind. Significant action leaders know, go and show the way and take joy in helping others succeed.

Action leadership can be developed through participatory action learning and action research in partnership with others through dialogue and dialectic, critical and self-critical thinking, reflecting on one's own practice and conceptualizing on the possibilities and barriers for human and social sustainable development. I suggest that action leadership is a solution to the increasing neo-liberalism in the form of bureaucratization, managerial control and normative regulation systems in many organizations and governments around the world. It is a hope for a humanist renaissance or revolution of people power and self-directed actualization of a just and equal society in a global community; and a more effective, sustainable, better world for future generations than a world of competition, rationality, control, technical efficiency (rather than effectiveness) and managerialism. This managerialism upholds the belief in, or reliance on, the use of professional managers in administering a nation, an organization or section thereof and the belief that organizations have more similarities than differences and can be optimized by the application of generic management skills and theory.

Action leadership does not rely on such managerialism but is more flexible, responsive to change, and innovative in solving problems. Action leaders are experienced, wise and other-centred rather than self-centred, for as some wise people have concluded – as cited in Maxwell (2004: 54–67):

- *No man can live happily who regards himself alone, who turns everything to his advantage. You must live for others if you wish to live for yourself.* Seneca (p. 63).
- *What we have done for ourselves alone dies with us. What we have done for others and the world remains and is immortal.* Albert Pike (p. 64).
- *We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.* Winston Churchill (p. 65).
- *No man becomes rich unless he enriches others.* Andrew Carnegie (p. 65).
- *All getting separates you from others; all giving unites to others.* Saint Francis of Assisi (p. 66).
- *He who wishes to secure the good of others has already secured his own.* Confucius (p. 56).
- *Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'what are you doing for others?'* Martin Luther King (p. 54).
- *You are not here merely to make a living. You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and*

achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if you forget the errand. Woodrow Wilson (p. 57).

The sentiment that comes through this wisdom is vision, passion, hope, enrichment, and empowerment, and giving to and living for others. This is action leadership. Action leadership (a way of being in the world) and GULL (enabling action leadership) are exemplars of this new paradigm of PALAR. Kuhn (1970) stressed the need for exemplars to ground a new paradigm and to enable its dissemination and diffusion.

PALAR

PALAR is located in the participatory paradigm, encompassing theories of action, personal constructs, critical, dialectic and systemic thinking, experiential learning, lifelong learning and work-integrated learning. These theories may inform and underpin the practice of PALAR programmes and projects, and vice versa, and they may be developed and created through PALAR as personal and local knowledge that may be tested, applied or adapted in wider national and international contexts.

At the beginning of this twenty-first century there are strong tendencies and realities of neo-liberal attitudes and practices of exerting power and control over many powerless people in public and private sector organizations and governments globally. These can yield devastating physical, psychological and emotional sufferings in human beings, caused by work overload, stress and victimization, as well as system-wide ineffectiveness or failure. Unless we can change this mindset and replace it with a more participatory paradigm, the future looks grim. This book is not a solution to the global economic downturn, but it shows what we as individuals can do to play our part and make a difference in our small world. And if we are hopeful and optimistic, we remember the saying 'from little acorns large oak trees grow' or the song by black Australian, Kev Carmody, and white Australian, Paul Kelly, in their 1991 album *Comedy*: 'From little things big things grow'.

Chapter Summary

Figure 8.2 summarizes the main arguments of this book. Apart from the introduction (Chapter 1: From ALAR to action leadership) and the conclusion in this chapter (action leadership towards a participatory paradigm), we can see the sequence and relationship of the three main concepts on the right hand side (PALAR, the theory/practice dialectic and the participatory paradigm) constituting the *conceptual framework* of (and arrows pointing to) the central theme of *action leadership*. The three circles on the left hand side represent the *applications* of action leadership in (and arrows pointing to) higher education, management education for organization development and community development.

Fig. 8.2 Model of action leadership towards a participatory paradigm

Action leaders, like action learners and action researchers, are active and pro-active, lifelong learners working in partnership with others to solve complex problems for positive change and development of individuals, groups, organizations or communities. Action leaders have a passion and vision for achieving significant goals for the common good. They can always see the light at the end of the tunnel; and they ignite a flame, spark or fire in others.

Discussion Starters

1. What are your main learning points from reading, thinking about and discussing the chapters in this book?
2. What action will you take to apply this learning to your work practice or life generally?
3. How do you explain the concepts of (a) action leadership and (b) PALAR?
4. What aspects do you disagree with? Why? What will you do differently?

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