

# Action Research: The Bridge Connecting Research, Practice and Theory

**Alexan Hagopian**

*Department of Accounting and Auditing  
Faculty of Business and Economics  
American University of Science and Technology  
Beirut, Lebanon*

*hagopianalex@gmail.com*

---

## Abstract

Action Research as a scientific approach capitalizes on collaboration between researcher and participants to collect information, solve problems, and deliver new results. It is one of the many management research methodologies at the disposal of researchers today though it remains a highly debated one. Literature debates its characteristics using either a thematic approach or case studies without a comprehensive review of themes to answer the question 'How does Action Research bridge the gap between research, practice, and theory?'. The current work carries out a content-based literature review of published articles on Action Research to highlight its ability as a methodology to outperform others in bridging this gap. It addresses the origin, definition, process, and stance of Action Research and aims to compile supporting evidence on its distinct bridging feature. It concludes that indeed Action Research possesses this distinct feature in more than one way. First, through a clear integration between various social science disciplines uncommon among managers due to higher levels of specialization involved in jobs. Second, through matching the problems faced by managers and the problem addressed by social scientists. Third, through the creation of social integration between social scientists and practitioners by bringing together the former with their academic interests and inclination to make contributions to knowledge and the latter with their career interests. Finally, Action Research remains a unique methodology that guides practitioners to understand the workplace and achieve an improvement of a problem situation, while incentivizing them to work better on perceived problems, be more effective and supportive while working collaboratively, and develop their skills.

**Keywords:** Action Research, Theory and Practice Gap, Theory and Practice Bridge, Action Research Origin, Action Research Development, Action Research Stance, Action Research Process.

---

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Action Research is one of the many research methodologies at the disposal of researchers today. The most common and concise definition of Action Research describes it as a scientific research approach that capitalizes on collaboration between the researcher and the participants to collect information, solve problems, and deliver new results (Dickens & Watkins, 1999; Lewin, 1946, 1948).

What distinguishes Action Research from the rest of the traditional methodologies is that it is one of the highly debated management research methodologies and the subject of extensive studies. What is evident from the review of the literature is that Action Research can bridge the gap between research, practice, and theory as contrasted with the rest of the traditional research methodologies where such a link is not seen.

A significant portion of the literature debates this characteristic of Action Research; indeed, it supports the idea that Action Research ties theory and practice via research. However, what appears evident is that most publications on Action Research use either a thematic approach or

case studies. Action Research is so far described by its application in various settings, industries, fields, or disciplines, as well as by its philosophical base, its models, its origin, and development. Nonetheless, one could rarely find a publication that would use all these themes altogether to answer the question “How does Action Research bridge the gap between research, practice, and theory?”.

Indeed, recent articles published on Action Research still handle the subject either thematically or by its application in certain areas. For instance, a recent article by Elg et al. (2020) sheds light on the application of action research for conducting high-quality collaborative research in services and proposes measures to enhance research quality in action research projects focusing on services. In another instance, Manfra (2019) looks at action research from the angle of its role to create intentional change in teaching practice. Guertler et al. (2020) focus on how innovation management research and researchers can more effectively and efficiently apply action research to their domain.

Apart from the publications that focus on the application of action research in certain fields or settings, one could also note some work on the importance of Action Research as a methodology. Eden & Ackermann (2018), for example, highlight how relevant theory from a range of disciplines can inform practice, and how the process of implementing theory into a method develops theory. Simmons et al. (2021) reflect on the importance of documenting researchers' experiences to address complex educational challenges in the improvement of curriculum and programs and in creating the conditions for enhanced student learning experiences.

Having stated the above, one cannot bypass the fact there has been several recent publications concentrating on action research connecting or closing the gap between theory and practice. However, they all discuss the matter from one perspective rather than looking at this feature of action research comprehensively as this article does. Ulvik et al. (2018), for instance, explore how research-based knowledge communicated at the university and experiences from practice teaching interact with student teachers' action research projects. Similarly, Bleijenbergh et al. (2021) acknowledge the suitability of action research for both theory and scholarly knowledge development, yet, they concentrate on the human resources management function and offer guidelines for conducting action research projects in human resources management.

Having in mind this literature gap and the controversial nature of this management research approach, the current review report aims at examining the existing literature on the origin, development, characteristics, approaches, and tools of Action Research, to highlight its distinct characteristic as that which connects research with practice and theory.

As such, the remainder of this paper is structured as follows: The first section describes the methodology of the review, and then the main review question is addressed by analyzing the contents of published articles over time on the various themes and applications of Action Research, and finally the conclusion with the main takeaways of this research.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The objective of the present review is to offer a collective review of the ability of Action Research as a research methodology to outperform the other research methodologies in linking research to practice and theory in a way that helps both the academicians as well as practitioners by improving the methodological rigor for the first and expanding an unfailing knowledge base for the latter (Tranfield et al., 2003).

To that aim and using an inductive approach, the current work used an inductive approach by first collecting a sample of existing literature on the characteristics of Action Research, then analyzing the content of the literature, and finally concluding that indeed Action Research is a research methodology that bridges the gap between research, practice, and theory?”

The process started by searching for research papers on Action Research on “Google Scholar” by using the term “Action Research” and other keywords such as “Action Research definition”, “Action Research origin and development”, “Action Research models”, “Action Research process”, “theory and practice gap,” “theory and practice bridging”, and other keywords about Action Research. Google Scholar was the choice for identifying articles or books given that it is a comprehensive source of worldwide research carried out in any field in a simple and time-saving manner.

Following this search, the list of the extracted articles was sorted out according to citations and relevance. To attend to the quality of the existing work in literature being used as the basis of this study, those with a number of citations of 50 or more were used. As for relevance, the publications included in the review were selected based on exposure relevancy i.e. those that discussed Action Research, based on outcome relevancy i.e. those that helped answer the research question in the intended way as described above, and based on comparison relevancy i.e. those that indirectly compared Action Research with other research methodologies.

Finally, the current work attempted to answer the question “How does Action Research bridge the gap between research, practice, and theory?”, by analyzing the compiled data both from theoretical and practical perspectives. Practically, in terms of the application of Action Research in various settings, industries, fields, or disciplines; and theoretically, in terms of its philosophical base, its models, its origin, and development.

### **3. The BRIDGE**

#### **3.1 The Bridge as Evidenced Through the Origin**

The review of the origin of any idea reveals the aims for which the idea was generated. As such, the first attempt to discover the bridging ability of Action Research will be carried out through the review of literature on the origin and development of Action Research.

Action Research presents itself as a research approach that does not have a simple origin and development path. This is mainly because Action Research has evolved from different disciplines, over different periods, and in different geographic locations.

The development of Action Research is often mingled with educational and industrial literature, with industrial Action Research schemes and educational Action Research inspiring each other (Corey, 1953; Stenhouse, 1981; Miller, 1993; Jefferson, 2014; Schubert & Lopez-Schubert, 1997; Neumann & Hirschhorn, 1999; Adelman, 1993; Hendricks, 2017). Meanwhile, the foundation of Action Research remains usually linked to the classical work of Kurt Lewin even though traces could also be found with Buckingham in 1926 and Collier in 1933 (Corey, 1953).

In fact, and despite the presence of similar works in literature, Kurt Lewin, an American-German psycho-sociologist remains quoted as the father of Action Research who introduced the concept in the United States back in 1946 or explicitly used the words ‘action’ and ‘research’ through his published article Action Research and Minority Problems (Lewin 1946, 1948; Adelman, 1993; Somekh&Zeichner, 2009; Burns, 2010; Hendricks, 2017).

In a nutshell, Lewin’s work initiated from a gap he noticed between theory and practice, in particular, between social theory and social practice; and the disconnectedness between two camps - the scientists and the practitioners. Lewin noted an absence of collaboration between the scientists and the practitioners who are the end users of the scientific results in their work. While the scientists’ camp focused on theory development without much attention paid to its applicability, the social practitioners’ camp focused on taking action without much attention to information. As such and aiming at having better-informed actions, improved behaviors, and strategies for encouraging social change, Lewin focused on bridging the gap through the production of information and solutions by combining theory and practice (Lewin 1946, 1948; Adelman, 1993; Somekh&Zeichner 2009; Burns, 2010; Hendricks, 2017). He promoted the use of

democratic research approaches in addressing and solving real-life or practice-based issues faced by practitioners. In other words, he promoted the integration of theory with practice in order not only to grasp the specific situation faced by the practitioners, but also to initiate a change in behavior that would lead to sustainability. Lewin stressed on the fact that through collaborative action and research, a comprehensive understanding of a given social situation could be achieved through the introduction of a change and the observation of its consequences. He considered that through a set of spiral processes incorporating inquiry and reflection, the work environment would improve. In turn, the democratic work environment would positively impact productivity. As such, following Lewin's work, Action Research started to emerge as a unique research form in the field of social and human sciences which looks at the past to learn and acts today to initiate a change, to bring about a better future (Lewin 1946, 1948; Adelman, 1993; Somekh&Zeichner 2009; Burns, 2010; Hendricks, 2017).

For sure, Lewin was not the only one who noticed this gap between theory and practice. A scan of the literature reveals the natural predisposition of researchers to favor knowledge production rather than translation and sharing of knowledge with practitioners in a useful manner that would unify the information presentation ways, languages, and strategies (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006; Khurana, 2007; Kelemen & Bansal, 2002; Kieser&Leiner, 2009).

Also, Lewin was not the only one who attempted to bridge this research-practice gap. The literature on the theme documents many attempts by different scholars who have tried to figure out ways of bridging. While Pfeffer and Sutton (2006) used evidence-based management for that purpose, Van de Ven (2007) promoted the engaged scholarship approach, and Bartunek (2007) the relational scholarship approach.

The concepts of Action Research promoted by Lewin appear as well during the same period in the works of others on different grounds or disciplines such as education, philosophy, psychology, and social grounds.

In one instance, Action Research concepts are evident in the educational and philosophical works of John Dewey and the anthropological works of the anthropologist Sol Tax. At another instance and in parallel to Lewin, a group of scholars at the Tavistock Institute for Human Relations used Action Research while working on post-World War II disorders suffered by soldiers. On the social justice, civil rights, and democracy fronts, similar traces of Action Research concepts could also be found in the works of Myles Horton and his collaborators, the founders of Highlander in Tennessee. Again, and this time on oppression and institutional change Paulo Freire, Budd Hall, Marja-LiisaSwantz, Orlando Fals-Borda, and others used Action Research concepts. Finally, similar work was promoted by Chris Argyris, Donald Schön, Reg Revans, William Torbert, Peter Reason, and John Heron in a wide variety of private and public sector companies (Cassell & Johnson, 2006; Pasmore, 2001; McKernan, 1991, 8-9; Collier, 1945, Lippitt & Radke, 1946).

To conclude, the literature review on the origin and development of Action Research reveals that despite the multidisciplinary and diverse foundational basis of Action Research, what seems to combine all is the key question of how to generate knowledge that could be used for both addressing the practical issues faced by those concerned in a given situation and creating a social change. In other words, the primary underlying reason for the development of Action Research methodology is the observed gap between theory and practice and the need to bridge that gap.

### **3.2 The Bridge as Evidenced Through the Definition**

A further attempt to clarify the distinct ability of Action Research would be carried out next through a review of existing literature on the definition of Action Research.

Literature reveals quite several definitions for the term Action Research which altogether come to draw a complete picture.

On the management sciences front, the definition of Action Research set forth by Rapoport (1970) focuses on the collaboration concept and the aims of Action Research. According to Rapoport (1970), Action Research has a dual aim: first, address the practical concerns of people facing an immediate problematic situation by focusing on developing new ways of bringing change; and second, contribute to the goals of social science by promoting learning to ensure that the change process is sustainable.

By the same token, different authors present Action Research as a form of inquiry undertaken by participants which is collective, collaborative, and self-reflective, where the participants in the research are in a common social situation, and where the purpose of the inquiry is to “improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out” (Kemmis&McTaggart, 1990 p. 5; McCutcheon &Jurg, 1990).

Action Research is defined as a collective effort by many authors by considering Action Research as a form of applied research that involves problem or specific practice-related issue identification through a teamwork effort, which many scholars believe helps the participants achieve both individual and community goals. In other words, the participants in the research would grab a better understanding of or learn about the specific practice-based issue as they work on the goal of improving the justice, rationality, and understanding of the educational and social practices through a teamwork effort. As such, Action Research connects research with theory by making the research participants key players in the research process that ends with learning and contribution to the knowledge base of the participants (Mckernan, 1991; Wilson, 2013; McTaggart&Kemmis, 1990).

The collaborative aspect of Action Research on the other hand sets forth first the involvement of participants in the process as researchers. Some researchers refer to this aspect as its participatory characteristic where the participants perceiving value in the intended change in the situation do not only play an active role in the research and the change process, but also demonstrate a high level of commitment to the process. For this to be secured, however, participants should perceive themselves and be regarded as equals to each other and the researcher (Meyer, 2000).

Furthermore, and alongside the participatory role of the participants, Bryman and Bell (2011) highlight the role of the Action Researcher working together with the research participants in the process of problem identification and solution development. The role of the Action Researcher, in turn, revolves first around extending the needed aid and experience to the client on one hand, and the generation of new theories on the other. However, for this to be successful and yield the expected results, there is a need for a close and trustworthy relationship between the Action Researcher and the research participants. It is only through such a relationship that the Action Researcher would be able to develop a first-hand understanding of behavior and be able to ensure the collaboration needed to arrive at the intended results. Additionally, the role of the action researcher is to feedback on the findings to contributors during the study and to involve them in the decisions on the next phases of the study. Thus, another feature that helps promote Action Research as an approach that bridges the gap between research, practice, and theory is having the Action Researcher, the one that holds the theory, get a deeper first-hand understanding of the situation being researched about and deriving new theories from the results of the action in collaboration with the research participants (Baskerville, 1999; Shani &Pasmore, 1985; Gill & Johnson, 1991; Meyer, 2000).

As for the self-reflective dimension of the Action Research approach, it comes to underline the role that reflection plays as the connecting link in the chain of activities involved in the Action Research process and makes the process a cyclical chain. Self-reflection is the step that keeps the plan, the action, and the observation moving as a cycle. Another feature that evidences how Action Research bridges the gap between research and practice is based on the fact that the

research process does not end with the results, but rather reflects on the results to plan and take further action accordingly (Carr&Kemmis, 1986).

Based on the above sample of definitions, one can see that Action Research is concerned with the practical aspect rather than theory, and aims at developing practical work rather than just generating knowledgeable facts, presents itself as, once again, a research methodology that bridges the gap between theory and practice (Elliott, 1991).

### **3.3 The Bridge as Evidenced Through the Process**

Putting the collective, collaborative, and self-reflective features together presents Action Research as a two-directional or cyclical process having research and action on each side, further reinforcing the distinctive ability of Action Research to bridge the gap between research, practice, and theory.

Literature is rich with a wide variety of models for the Action Research process given its dynamic nature. Nevertheless, most models share some common elements.

In general, the Action Research process starts with understanding or gaining knowledge of the problem (research), moves on to planning and acting or initiating a change or improvement based on the outcome (action), and then back to understanding the outcomes of the change and acting again. A cyclical process where the participants act as co-researchers as they collaborate with the Action Researcher. A process that through the direct involvement of the participants ensures not only the efficiency of the participants and the delivery of better results, but also an environment of mutual benefit and support (Dick, 2002; Watts, 1985).

Lewin (1951), for instance, discussed the cyclical concept of Action Research as a spiral involving a series of activities beginning with initial idea identification or diagnosis, moving to fact-finding, to planning, to action, and ending with evaluation of outcome to restart again with developing a better plan and implementing it in a cyclical motion. This advances understanding of the situation and formulating a theory as close as possible to the actual situation. A process that naturally bridges the gap between theory and practice (Precupețu, I. et al, 2007).

Lewin highlighted four approaches to this spiral cyclical process. The diagnostic approach sets the required action plan for the following stages. The participatory that ensures participants' involvement in the problem identification, data gathering, and research execution. The empirical collects and stores the data. And finally, the experimental studies the efficiency of the techniques applied in different situations and which some see it as a weakness since the results are usually situational or contextual (Marrow, 1977; Adelman, 1993; McGill, 1973).

Though theory formed an integral part of Lewin's search for understanding, it did not make the process a static one. Indeed, with Lewin, the process left room for the evolution and refining of theory over time with the unfolding of data throughout the process (Marrow, 1977).

Somehow like Lewin, Moroni (2011) in turn sees Action Research as a five-phase process. The diagnosis phase employs tools such as comparative analysis or surveys to define the problem. The planning phase develops the action plan through interventions. The action phase focuses on the attainment of the intervention. The assessment phase uses quantitative and qualitative techniques to gather data and feedback. And last, the reflection phase pinpoints the reached results and shares the experience.

Some other examples of Action Research models include but are not limited to the following. Stringer (2007), for example, presented the model as a simple interacting spiral with *look*, *think*, and *act* components whereby the participants observe, reflect, and then take some sort of action during each stage before moving to the next stage. Bachman (2001) instead mentions gathering information, planning actions, observing and evaluation those actions, before reflection and planning for a new cycle based on the insights gained in the previous cycle. As for Riel (2019),

progressive problem-solving through the Action Research model takes the participant through four steps in each cycle: planning, taking action, collecting evidence, and reflecting.

In addition to the above models that depict the bridging ability of this methodology, several other scholars have mentioned in their works some shared features as well. Among these, Peter and Robinson (1984) mention problem focus, action orientation, cyclical process, and collaboration/participation; while Susman and Evered (1978) added the future-oriented and situational aspects to the collaborative and diagnostic features. In their turn, Shani and Bushe (1987) highlighted four “key emergent processes” as the salient features of Action Research such as (a) the emerging socio-task system, (b) the co-inquiry process, (c) the integration process, (d) experimentation process. Elden and Chisholm (1993), who carried out an analysis of five contemporary Action Research cases, identified (a) contextual focus, (b) purposes and value choice, (c) change base, (d) participation, and (e) knowledge diffusion, as the five shared features of Action Research.

Hence, content analysis of many publications on Action Research while focusing on the process of it uncovers once again how Action Research liaises research, practice, and theory. A procedure or a process of systematic investigation that first focuses on enhancing an individual's work and addressing community issues; and next, allows practitioners to observe through the use of research practices their learning technique critically and systematically (Lewin, 1946; Stenhouse, 1981; Adelman, 1993).

Indeed, some scholars underscore this characteristic of Action Research and see it as one of the implicit aims of Action Research methodology. A characteristic that fosters the development of self-help competencies of the participants where those who experience real problematic situations develop their problem identification and solving competencies (Susman and Evered, 1978).

Based on these qualities, some scholars defined Action Research as a form of Insider Action Research given that it is research undertaken by the practitioners themselves to bring a change. A process that is more efficient given that the practitioners have a deeper understanding of the nature of the work as well as the performance and evolution (Coghlan, 2001; French, 2009).

“The participatory and democratic process of Action Research brings 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” (Reason & Bradbury, 2001 p. 9).

It is indeed this peculiarity of Action Research that sets it apart from other research methodologies. While Action Research involves the active participation of the participants, the other methodologies exclude the participants from the process (Gill and Johnson, 1991).

In addition, and while still looking at the Action Research process, one other way of seeing Action Research as a bridge between research, practice, and theory is the emphasis that it puts on and the credibility it gives to the beliefs, dialogues, decision, and achievement by the participants as they collectively examine their mutual problems (Mills, 2011). To put it differently, the empowerment or the action tool is given to the participants to get them directly involved in using the outcome of research to initiate a social action be it through problem identification or facts gathering or acting to solve (Palmer and Jacobson, 1971).

### **3.4 The Bridge as Evidenced Through the Stance**

Having reflected on Action Research's ability to bridge the gap between research, practice, and theory through the review of literature on the origin, the definition, and the process, it would be worth as well to explore this characteristic through the literature found on the stance or the philosophical base of Action Research.

Some argue that Action Research has a unique and different kind of epistemological base which presents it as capable of bridging the gap between research, practice, and theory (Susman and Evered, 1978) while others disagree.

In general, the epistemological and ontological views in research, have to do with the distinct way in which research is performed. Also, they determine the legitimate, valid input to theory or knowledge whether it is a named development, validation, confirmation, generation, or creation (Peter and Olsen, 1983).

Positivists, for instance, stand against the interpretivists in that, unlike the latter, they are not interested in the interventions as they see that a contradiction to the scientific goal of the study and they believe that reality has an objective characteristic. Interpretivists on the other hand, consider reality as contextual and constructed (Hirschman, 1986; Susman & Evered, 1978).

On another note, while the objectivist perception of epistemology accepts access to the external environment objectively and considers that natural and social reality has a free presence before human being cognition; the subjectivist perception does not accept such access and sees reality as the human cognitive procedure (Johnson and Duberley, 2000).

Along these lines, many researchers have discussed the epistemological and ontological stances of Action Research as opposed to the scientific approach of positivistic philosophy.

Some saw a clear contradiction of Action Research with the principles of positivism and empiricism basing their arguments on the fact that from an epistemological point of view Action Research is not scientific (Riordan, 1995; Reason & Torbert, 2001; Schon, 1983; Elden & Chisholm, 1993; Susman & Evered, 1978). Others saw Action Research as a scientific approach in that it involves interventions to investigate organizational and social issues faced by participants and deliver solutions through systematic and scientific data gathering (Bargal, 2008; Coghlan, 2011).

Looking at Action Research through the lens of positivism, however, one would not expect Action Research to contribute to knowledge. Yet if this was so, then Action Research would be deprived of its aim of producing knowledge. But viewing Action Research as a kind of science with a different epistemological base that supports the knowledge-producing ability and self-help competencies development, then one would accept Action Research as that bridge that would connect theory and practice (Susman & Evered, 1978).

Susman and Evered (1978) argue that, as social science, Action Research does not aim at the formulation of universal laws as much as it centers on situation-specific insights. The intervention of the Action Researcher in each problem situation is to enhance the self-help action-taking competencies of the individuals, to facilitate learning at the organizational level, and then to advance theories about the new organization and the range process that produced it.

Such a viewpoint was not welcomed by all scholars, however. While scholars like Elden and Chisholm (1993) supported the view through their definition of Action Research as an enabling science, others did not. Karapin (1986), for instance, doubted the possibility of having social science researchers use positivist methodologies in their work. Others like Baburoglu and Ravn (1992) argued that the relationship between practical knowledge and scientific knowledge produced through Action Research is vague and that whether Action Research is a synthesis of "action" and "research" or a mere juxtaposition of action and research is not easy.

In counteract, these researchers introduced normative Action Research as a new scientific concept that can produce scientific organizational knowledge. They built their new concept on new normative planning approaches, which they believed serve as a new basis for scientific knowledge of organizational research: active adaptive planning, normative planning, and interactive planning. While these approaches differ from conventional planning approaches in that



they do not see the future as mere an extension and extrapolation of the present and the past, these researchers believed that social action guided by an imagined, desirable future overweighs in importance the fragmented problematic present (Emery & Trist, 1972; Ozbekhan, 1970; Ackoff, 1975).

The normative planning process takes the future as the starting point. It encourages the stakeholders of the system to question the self-imposed constraints and assumptions as well as surpass the conservative definitions of what is possible and realistic to create a more desirable situation. Susman and Evered (1978) elaborated on the link between normative planning approaches with Action Research debating that the latter is future-oriented as it focuses on coming up with solutions for the practical issues faced in a given situation.

As such, exploring the literature on the epistemological and ontological views of Action Research, in turn, does not fail to underscore the unique properties that Action Research as a research methodology possesses to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

How does Action Research bridge the gap between research, practice, and theory? This guiding question prompted the current work. The literature is rich with different perspectives and positions on Action Research. Despite the wide array of opinions, much of the literature on the features, characteristics, and advantages of Action Research, supports either explicitly or implicitly, the notion that Action Research can bridge the gap between research, practice, and theory.

This manuscript is the outcome of a content-based review of the literature of articles published on the topic of Action Research using Google Scholar. The review was carried out by dissecting the contents of the publications thematically. In particular, the review addressed the origin, definition, process, and stance of Action Research to compile in one report the supporting evidence that emerges from these themes on the distinct feature of bridging the gap between research, practice, and theory.

Looking at Action Research through the lenses of its application in different settings or industries or the lenses of its origin, development, and philosophical base; the current work concludes that in light of the increased concerns about the ability of traditional research to impact practice, it is marked that Action Research was initially devised to bridge the gap between research, practice, and theory. While conventional or traditional research focuses on theory and undermines the role of the practitioners or fails to provide the practitioners with the needed support, Action Research comes to close this gap in more than one way (Walshe et al., 1995).

First, Action Research achieves a clear integration between various social science disciplines such as sociology, psychology, economics, econometrics, and operational research, in a way that it is not common to find on the ground among managers due to the higher level of specialization involved in jobs. Second, Action Research matches together the problems faced by managers and the problem addressed by social scientists. And third, Action Research creates a social integration between social scientists and practitioners by bringing together the social scientists with their academic interests and inclination to make contributions to knowledge and the practitioners with their career interests (Thomas, 1993).

In the end, Action Research remains a unique research methodology that not only guides practitioners to provide an understanding of the practice-based workplace and achieve an improvement of the situation being investigated, but also incentivizes practitioners to work better on their perceived problems, be more effective, support each other while working collaboratively, and develop their skills (Wilson, 2013; Watts, 1985).

Moreover, due to the participatory nature of Action Research and the inclination to directly address real organizational problems, it proves to have the potential to bridge the gap between

theory and practice whereby the Action Researcher keeps his or her academic goals in mind while doing something useful.

Through a multi-dimensional systematic review of the existing literature on Action Research, the significance of the current work lies in its contribution to the knowledge base of both academicians and practitioners. First, it provides a thorough compilation of existing literature on the origin, definition, process, and stance of Action Research. Then, it describes in one report the supporting evidence on the distinct feature of bridging the gap between research, practice, and theory. Finally, it gives insight to the practitioners on the value of Action Research as a tool to initiate and lead a change in their organizations to cope with the ever-changing environments they operate in.

In brief, what sets this work apart from other manuscripts related to Action Research or to the ability of Action Research in bridging the gap between theory and practice is that it does not study the subject matter in a thematic approach or through case studies. While Action Research is so far described by either its application in various settings, industries, fields, or disciplines or its philosophical base, its models, its origin, and development taken one at a time; the current article uses all these all together to answer the question “How does Action Research bridge the gap between research, practice, and theory?”

## 5. REFERENCES

- Ackoff, R. L. (1974). *Redesigning the future*. New York, 29.
- Adelman, C. (1993). Kurt Lewin and the origins of action research. *Educational action research*, 1(1), 7-24.
- Akbar, S., & Hossain, M. A. Draft: October 2009.
- Baburoglu, O. N. and I. Ravn: Normative Action Research. *Organisational Studies*, 1992, 13, 19-34.
- Bachmann, L. (2001). *Review of the agricultural knowledge system in Fiji: opportunities and limitations of participatory methods and platforms to promote innovation development*. Margraf Verlag.
- Bargal, D. (2008). Action research: A paradigm for achieving social change. *Small Group Research*, 39(1), 17-27
- Bartunek, J. M. (2007). Academic-practitioner collaboration need not require joint or relevant research: Toward a relational scholarship of integration. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(6), 1323–1333.
- Baskerville, R. L. (1999). Investigating information systems with action research. *Communications of the association for information systems*, 2(1), 19.
- Bleijenbergh, I., van Mierlo, J., & Bondarouk, T. (2021). Closing the gap between scholarly knowledge and practice: Guidelines for HRM action research. *Human resource management review*, 31(2), 100764.
- Bryman, A. and E. Bell. (2011). *Business Research Methods*. Oxford University Press.
- Burns, A. (2010). *Doing action research in English language teaching: A guide for practitioners*. Routledge

Carr, W., & Kemmis, S. (1986). *Becoming critical Lewes*. Falmer Press). *CROSS, KP (1987) Teaching for Learning, Bulletin of the American Association for Higher Education*, 39, 3-7.

Cassell, C., & Johnson, P. (2006). Action research: Explaining the diversity. *Human relations*, 59(6), 783-814.

Coghlan, D. (2011). Action research: Exploring perspectives on a philosophy of practical knowing. *Academy of Management Annals*, 5(1), 53-87.

Coghlan, D., & Casey, M. (2001). Action research from the inside: issues and challenges in doing action research in your own hospital. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 35(5), 674-682.

Collier, V. P. (1995). Acquiring a second language for school. *Directions in language and education*, 1(4), n4.

Corey, S. M. (1953). *Action research to improve school practices* (pp. xii+-161). New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University.

Dick, B. (2002). Postgraduate programs using action research. *The learning organization*.

Dickens, L., & Watkins, K. (1999). Action research: rethinking Lewin. *Management Learning*, 30(2), 127-140.

Eden, C., & Ackermann, F. (2018). Theory into practice, practice to theory: Action research in method development. *European Journal of Operational Research*, 271(3), 1145-1155.

Elg, M., Gremyr, I., Halldórsson, Á. and Wallo, A. (2020), "Service action research: review and guidelines", *Journal of Services Marketing*, Vol. 34 No. 1, pp. 87-99. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSM-11-2018-0350>.

Elden, M. and R. F. Chisholm (1993), "Emerging Varieties of Action Research: Introduction to the Special Issue", *Human Relations*, Vol. 46, pp. 121-142.

Elliot, J. (1991). *Action research for educational change*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Emery, E. E., & Trist, E. L. (1973). *A social ecology*. New York: Plenum.

French, S. (2009). Action research for practising managers. *Journal of Management Development*.

Guertler, M. R., Kriz, A., & Sick, N. (2020). Encouraging and enabling action research in innovation management. *R&D Management*, 50(3), 380-395.

Gill, J. and Johnson, P. (1991), *Research Methods for Managers*, Paul Chapman, London.

Hendricks, C. C. (2017). *Improving schools through action research: A reflective practice approach*. Pearson. One Lake Street, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458.

Hirschman, E. C. (1986). Humanistic inquiry in marketing research: philosophy, method, and criteria. *Journal of marketing Research*, 23(3), 237-249.

Jefferson, R. N. (2014). Action research: Theory and applications. *New Review of Academic Librarianship*, 20(2), 91-116.

Johnson, P., & Duberley, J. (2000). *Understanding management research: An introduction to epistemology*. Sage.

Karapin, R. S. (1986), "What is the Use of Social Science? A Review of the Literature", in F. Heller (ed.), *The use and abuse of social science*, Sage London, pp. 236-265.

Kelemen, M., & Bansal, P. (2002). The conventions of management research and their relevance to management practice. *British Journal of Management*, 13(2), 97-108.

Kemmis, S., & McTaggart, R. (1990). *The Action Research Planner* Geelong: Deakin University Press

Khurana, A., Runge, V. M., Narayanan, M., Greene Jr, J. F., & Nickel, A. E. (2007). Nephrogenic systemic fibrosis: a review of 6 cases temporally related to gadodiamide injection (Omniscan). *Investigative radiology*, 42(2), 139-145.

Kieser, A., & Leiner, L. (2009). Why the rigour–relevance gap in management research is unbridgeable. *Journal of Management Studies*, 46(3), 516-533.

Lewin, K (1946), "Action research and minority problems", *Journal of Social Issues*, 2, pp.34 - 46.

Lewin, K (1947), "Frontiers in group dynamics", *Human Relations*, Vol. 1, No.5, pp.143-153.

Lewin, K. (1951). *Field theory in social science: selected theoretical papers* (Edited by Dorwin Cartwright.).

Lippitt, R., & Radke, M. (1946). New trends in the investigation of prejudice. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 244(1), 167-176.

Manfra, M. M. (2019). Action research and systematic, intentional change in teaching practice. *Review of Research in Education*, 43(1), 163-196.

Marrow, A. J. (1977). *The practical theorist: The life and work of Kurt Lewin*. Teachers College Press.

McCutcheon, G., and Jurg, B., (1990). *Alternative Perspectives on Action Research*. Theory into Practice Volume 24, Number 3 Summer

McGill, M. E. (1973, August). ACTION RESEARCH DESIGNS FOR TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT. In *Academy of Management Proceedings* (Vol. 1973, No. 1, pp. 542-549). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.

McKernan, J. (1991). Action inquiry: Studied enactment. *Forms of curriculum inquiry*, 309-326.

Meyer, J. (2000). Using qualitative methods in health related action research. *Bmj*, 320(7228), 178-181.

Mills, N. (2011). Situated learning through social networking communities: The development of joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and a shared repertoire. *Calico Journal*, 28(2), 345-368.

Moroni, I. (2011). Action research in the library: method, experiences, and a significant case. *Action Research in the Library: Method, Experiences, and a Significant Case*, 1-24.

Neumann, J. E., & Hirschhorn, L. (1999). The challenge of integrating psychodynamic and organizational theory. *Human Relations*, 52(6), 683-695.

Ozbekhan, H. (1970). Towards a General Theory Planning, in *Perspective of Planning*, E. Jantsch (ed.), 111-125. Paris: O.E.C.D

Palmer, P. J., and Jacobson, E. (1971). Action-research: A new style of politics, education and ministry, New York: National Council of Churches.

Peter, J.P. and Olsen, J.C. (1983) 'Is marketing science?', *Journal of Marketing*, 47: 111–25.

Pasmore, W. (2001). Action research in the workplace: The socio-technical perspective. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of action research* (1st edn, pp. 38–47). London: SAGE.

Peters, M., & Robinson, V. (1984). The origins and status of action research. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 20(2), 113-124.

Pfeffer, J., & Sutton, R. I. (2006). Evidence-based management. *Harvard business review*, 84(1), 62.

Precupețu, I., Zamfir, C., Stănescu (coord.) *Cercetareacțiune - Enciclopediadezvol- tării sociale*, Ed. Polirom, Iași, pp. 105- 110, 2007.

Rapoport, R. N. (1970), "Three Dilemmas in action research", *Human Relations*, Vol. 23, pp. 488-513.

Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (Eds.). (2001). *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice*. Sage

Reason, P., & Torbert, W. (2001). The action turn: Toward a transformational social science. *Concepts and transformation*, 6(1), 1-37.

Riel, M. (2019). Understanding collaborative action research. *Retrieved October,3, 2019*.

Riordan, P. (1995) 'The philosophy of action science', *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 10 (6): 6–13.

Schon, D. (1983) *The reflective practitioner*. New York: Basic Books.

Shani, A. B., & Bushe, G. R. (1987). Visionary action research: A consultation process perspective. *Consultation: An International Journal*.

Shani, A. B., & Pasmore, W. A. (1985). Organization inquiry: Towards a new model of the action research process. *Contemporary Organization development: Current Thinking and Applications*, Scott, Foresman, Glenview, IL, 438-448.

Simmons, M., McDermott, M., Eaton, S. E., Brown, B., & Jacobsen, M. (2021). Reflection as pedagogy in action research. *Educational Action Research*, 29(2), 245-258.

Somekh, B., & Zeichner, K. (2009). Action research for educational reform: Remodelling action research theories and practices in local contexts. *Educational action research*, 17(1), 5-21.

Stenhouse, L., (1981). What counts as research? *British journal of educational studies*, 29 (1981), 103-122.

Stringer, E. T. (2007). *Action research* third edition.

Susman, G. I, and R. D. Evered (1978), "An Assessment Of The Scientific Merits Of Action Research", *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 23, pp. 582-603.

Thomas, A. B. (1993), *Controversies In Management*, Routledge, London.

Tranfield, D., Denyer, D. and Smart, P. (2003) Towards a methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review. *British Journal of Management* 14: 207–222

Ulvik, M., Riese, H., & Roness, D. (2018). Action research—connecting practice and theory. *Educational Action Research*, 26(2), 273-287.

Van de Ven, A. H. (2007). *Engaged scholarship: A guide for organizational and social research*. Oxford University Press on Demand.

Van de Ven, A. H., & Johnson, P. E. (2006). Knowledge for theory and practice. *Academy of management review*, 31(4), 802-821.

Walshe, K., Ham C., Appleby J. (1995). Given in evidence, 105, 28-29

Watts, H., (1985). When Teachers Are Researchers, Teaching Improves *Journal of Staff Development*, 6(2), 118-27.

Wilson, V., (2013). Research methods: Action research. *Evidence Based Library and Information Practice*, 8(4), 160-162.