

A Reprint of
**"How do I learn how to do
Action Research?"**

Introduction

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*Do you find your-
self asking
questions such as
"How do I
do this better?"
and "How do I
help you improve
your learning?"*

The invitation to introduce the chapter "[How do I learn how to do Action Research?](#)" has provided me with the opportunity to reflect further on my learning about action research since I contributed to the 1992 book on *Creating a Good Social Order Through Action Research* with Jean McNiff and Moira Laidlaw. It has also highlighted the transformation in the communication of ideas brought about by computer technologies and the Internet.

If you find yourself in your classrooms asking questions such as "How do I do this better?" and "How do I help you to improve your learning?" I think you will recognize the value of the action planning processes described in this chapter. I think you might also feel a growing sense of confidence and security in embracing the experience of "I" as a living contradiction. The idea that "I" as a living contradiction is to be embraced and acknowledged as having great motivating power to change and improve our practice has stood the test of time and practice in our action research community in Bath, England. Another idea that continues to inspire teacher-researchers is that all individuals can create their own living educational theory in the descriptions and explanations they produce for their own learning as they ask, research, and answer questions of the kind "How do I improve my practice?"

"...all individuals can create their own living educational theory in the descriptions and explanations they produce...."

Perhaps the most important qualities to think about and feel in doing your action research are the values that inspire your commitment to your own and your students' learning. Jean McNiff writes passionately about these values in terms of the generative power of action research within our community.

Computers and the Internet have transformed the power of action researchers to communicate with each other in ways which we did not imagine in 1992. You can now view the results of teachers' action research on the web at <http://www.actionresearch.net/>.

Beginning action researchers might like to start with Moira Laidlaw's guide in the initial teacher education section. If you want to see the results of Master's and Ph.D. programs, you can download these from the Living Theory section. I am thinking particularly of the following:

- How can I create my own living educational theory as I offer you an account of my educational development? (Laidlaw, 1996).
- How do I as a Teacher-Researcher contribute to the development of a living educational theory through an exploration of my values in my professional practice? (Holley, 1997).
- How do I come to know my spirituality, as I create my own living educational theory? (Cunningham, 1999)

For those of you who are interested in the work of Donald Schoen on Reflective Practice and in developing an "epistemology of practice" to enhance professionalism in teaching, I would recommend Kevin Eames's thesis. Some of you may be interested in helping to support school-based teacher-researcher groups or school-university partnerships. The theses of Moyra Evans and Kevin Eames in the Living Theory section specifically address such issues. Finally, some of you may be interested in following the development of ideas on action research and living educational theories in the American Educational Research Association.

Action Research Homepage:
<http://www.actionresearch.net/>

The Writings section of the action research homepage contains a set of papers delivered at a symposium at AERA 1999 that explain how teacher-researchers are creating a new discipline of education from their inquiries into their classroom practices with their students.

I do hope that the reprint of our chapter will help to stimulate your own action inquiries. I also hope that it will encourage you to share your own living theories as we learn how to collaborate more effectively across international boundaries in the process of enhancing teacher professionalism.

Reprint: "[How do I learn how to do Action Research?](#)"

Chapter 3 of *Creating a Good Social Order Through Action Research*, by Jean McNiff, Jack Whitehead, Moira Laidlaw, and the Bath Action Research Group, pp. 27-38. Bath: Hyde Publications, 1992.

Copies of *Creating a Good Social Order Through Action Research* can be obtained from Jean McNiff. Please send requests to 3 Wills Road, Branksome, Poole, Dorset BH12 1NQ, UK.

Meridian: A Middle School Computer Technologies Journal

a service of NC State University, Raleigh, NC

Volume 3, Issue 1, Winter 2000

ISSN 1097-9778

URL: <http://www.ncsu.edu/meridian/2000wint/action/index.html>

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