

**Clausen, K., & Black, G. (2020). The Future of Action Research in Education: A Canadian Perspective. McGill-Queen's University Press**

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## BOOK REVIEW

Clausen, K., & Black, G. (2020). *The Future of Action Research in Education: A Canadian Perspective*. McGill-Queen's University Press.

Reviewed by **Robyn Herman-Woltz**, University of Windsor.

Clausen and Black (2020) identify evidence-based practice and collaborative problem solving as key features of Action Research in Canada. *The Future of Action Research in Canada: A Canadian Perspective* (Clausen & Black, 2020) is organized in the following 4 subject groups: (1) The historical roots of action research in Canada; (2) The individual and action research; (3) Small and large group reporting/collaborations; (4) Participatory action research. This review will overview these 4 main themes of the book while highlighting how Clausen and Black present Action Research as having evolved over the decades.

Part of what Clausen and Black (2020) communicate in the introduction and Part A of this publication is an overview of the history of action research in Canada. In Part B, there is a focus on how individual teachers engage in action research. Part B explores how individual researchers approach data collection and reflection in order to work toward the implementation of change, which could span provincial, national, or global reform or the modification of one's own teaching practice. Part C examines the collaborative researcher. This category emphasizes the idea of working together toward change, synthesis of findings, consensus building, and community-based learning. The authors show how collaborative research can lead to findings that contribute to positive change in educational policy. Participatory Action Research (PAR) is the focus of Part D. PAR emphasizes the active involvement, collaboration, and empowerment of all participants. Clausen and Black (2020) describe PAR as a "professional development cycle" (p. 249).

Global development is at the core of this approach to research. Within the Canadian context, action research has been used in a variety of educational settings to find ways of addressing specific challenges ultimately leading to an improvement on strategies and solutions in the classroom. Action research has evolved into a valuable tool for educators, researchers, and others; it allows them to be involved in the improvement of educational practices and processes. Clausen and Black (2020) further discuss this evolution by identifying changes in Action Research throughout the decades. Action research began to appear in Canada during the 1960s and 1970s. During this beginning stage, action research was heavily reliant on global developments in education. It was originally a grassroots approach used to investigate issues in the classroom with the intended outcome of improving instructional methods.

Action research in the 1980s and the 1990s gained some ground in academia and within educational institutions. Teachers and researchers began to collaborate to investigate issues and implement a variety of changes within the classroom. From the 2000s to the present, action research has increasingly incorporated technological development and has focused on how these advancements are used in the classroom. There is also a more visible focus on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Indigeneity (EDII) within Education. These three periods of transition in the history and evolution of Action Research gave way to the current prevalence and widespread use of Action Research in educational spaces.

Due to the intrinsic nature (i.e., reflection and collaboration) of action research in Canadian education, there is an innate capacity for continuous growth and impact. I identified seven main aspects of action research in Canadian education as examined in this publication. (1) Teacher growth: Action research encourages growth through reflection and professional development. Although there is an aspect of reflection in all chapters of this book, Quigley (Chapter 1), Laitsch (Chapter 5), Donohue (Chapter 6), Adams (Chapter 12), and Sharma (Chapter 16) place particular emphasis on reflection as *the main* requirement for progress and growth in the action research process. Action research assists in encouraging teachers to identify and deal with challenges that exist in the classroom and ameliorate teaching methods to increase their efficacy. (2) Ministry policies: Action Research has the potential to influence the creation and revision of policy in education. Morin (Chapter 4), Donohue (Chapter 6), Lau (Chapter 9), Halwany et al. (Chapter 10), and Adams (Chapter 12) all examine how Action Research can influence the field of education; it can impact legislation and the direction of the curriculum. (3) Integration: This includes the emphasis on cross-curricular explorations, including the incorporation of technology in education. Action Research might, for example, provide insight into how educators can leverage technology for teaching and learning. Another example of integration is the incorporation of social justice. Social justice becomes a central focus of Action Research as its main purpose is to address systematic inequalities and injustices; arguably, Action Research in education is addressing these same things by collaboratively developing solutions based on the engagement with various groups. Whether this happens intentionally or unintentionally depends on the study, but Social justice is often undeniably an influence. (4) Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Indigeneity (EDII): Action Research aims to provide practical responses ensure that education responds to the diverse needs of our students. In the same way that Social Justice framing can be found in many of the chapters, EDII is evident in most chapters. Those that emphasize these ideas most are Koops (Chapter 7), Eyre (Chapter 15), Sharma (Chapter 16), and Jordan (Chapter 17). (5) Community involvement: This is another area where the importance of collaboration is highlighted in Action Research. Schools are the only important group involved in Action Research in education. There is also importance on the involvement of the community and other stakeholders. Community and stakeholders want the research to address real-world issues and produce results that are meaningful. Their involvement enhances the validity, credibility, and sustainability of the research outcomes; (6) Holistic education: There is an emphasis on fostering a holistic approach toward a common goal of improvement. This is not only apparent in essays on Indigenous education, but can be seen as a theme in many of the chapters in this publication which is why it is such a prominent theme in Action Research; (7) Global insights: Action Research in Canada provides a platform

within which the interconnectedness of education allows for identification of best practices that help in understanding how we can incorporate more effective teaching and learning strategies.

Action Research in Education in Canada is a collaborative form of research that can involve everyone within an institution – educators, administrators, and other professionals. Action Research, according to Clausen and Black (2020), is a systematic inquiry that aims to improve teaching and learning through the use of collaborative techniques, reflection, and solution-based change. Ultimately, the goal of Action Research is to improve education by fostering constant improvement by working with those who are closely involved in the education system. ■■

#### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE:

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**Robyn Herman-Woltz** is a PhD student with the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. Herman-Woltz holds a Master's of Education from Nipissing University (2017), a Bachelor of Education from Nipissing University (2010), a BA (History) from Laurentian University (2008), and BA (Political Science) from the University of Windsor (2003). She is currently working as a sessional instructor with the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor, and as a Special Projects Coordinator to the Deans of Law at Windsor Law. Her current research is focused on the systematic exclusion of Indigenous women in education as well as the representation of Indigenous women in film.

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