DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH METHODS

Week 2, Lesson 2: Development Research-Development Work Continuum and Action- Research in Development Studies

Development Research Methods
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What we will cover in today's lecture

1. How are research and practice linked in development studies?
2. What is Development Research-Development Work Continuum?
3. What is action research? Significance of action research in development studies

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Development practice & Development Studies

- As discussed in the first lecture, the *objectives* of practitioners and researchers, and the *time scales* within which they work for their respective research and associated activities, differ.

- The traditional province of a practitioner lies in *action, a tradition of relevance* and that of the Development Studies academic lies in *understanding, a tradition of rigour.*

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Development practice & Development Studies

Development Practitioner	Development Studies
1. Changing or facilitating change in the world 2. Continuous contact with people and situations 3. A framework (project, programme, organisation) within which findings can be operationalised 4. A basic orientation which sees people as subjects of their own development, not as objects for research by outsiders	1. Uncovering the patterns of cause and effect which frame, facilitate, or constrain the changes we may all wish to see 2. Independence from institutional agendas and biases 3. Access to and knowledge of the wider literature 4. More time and space for reading and reflection 5. Analytical and formal research skills

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Need for linking research and practice in development studies

- Relationship between research and writing on the one hand, and development policy and practice on the other.
- The criticism that too much of the development literature has been excessively descriptive and insufficiently analytical.
- Need for a robust *theoretical and methodological basis for development research*.
- Need for analytical methods and techniques *to make development practice rigorous and systematic.*

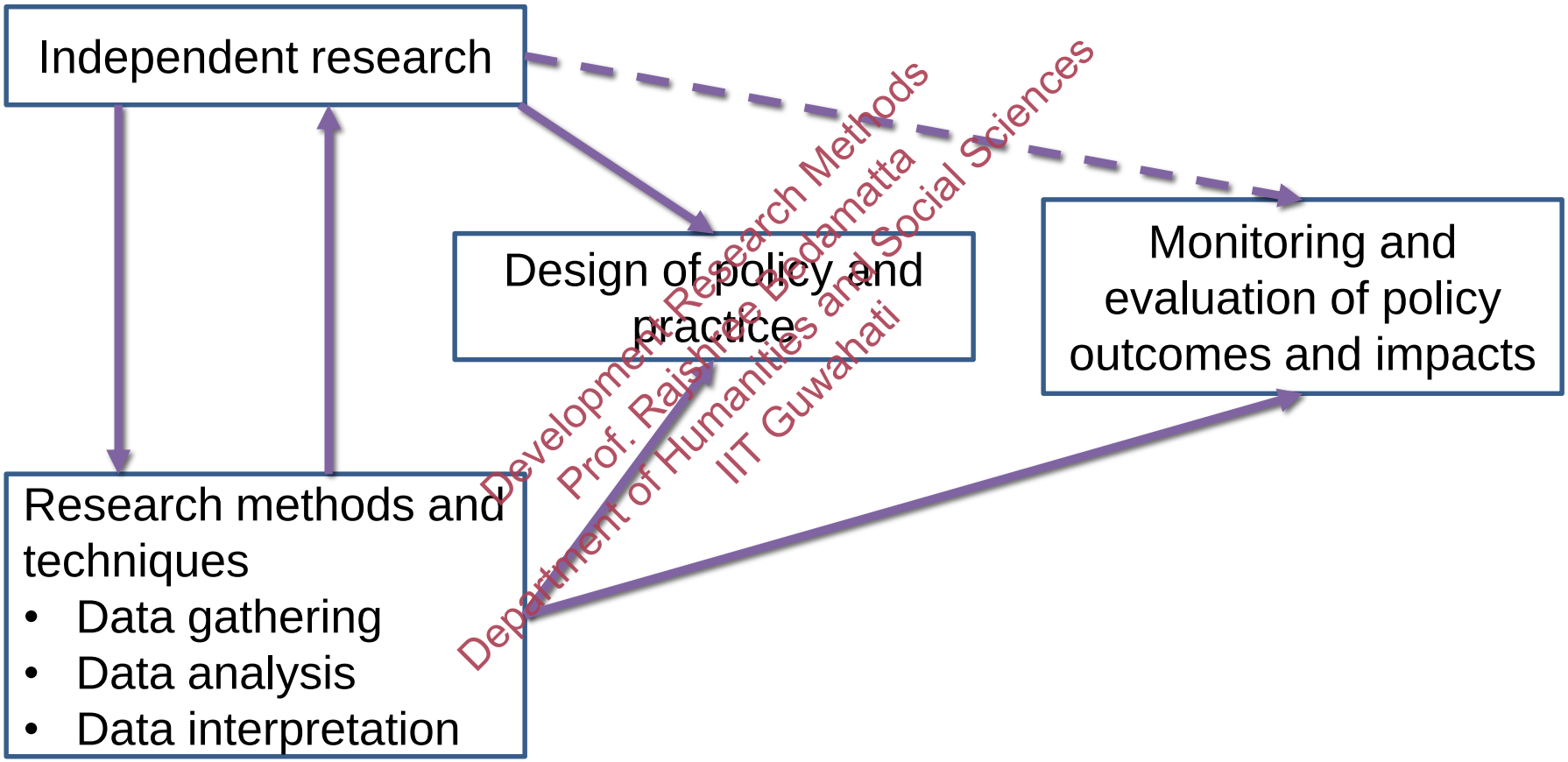
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Position of research theory and methods in the design of policy, programmes and projects

- Practitioners often perceive a need to achieve ‘results’ very quickly. This increases the significance of reliable data gathering and analysis.
- The *generation of primary data*, the *critical assembly of secondary data*, and the application of *analytical methods in interpreting data*, in the process of designing and evaluating policy programemes and projects involves a **research related approach**.
- The need for policy-relevant results from research undertaken within a limited timeframe does not reduce the need for a rigorous and systematic approach
- Longer-term research concerning critical view of both data and of analytical methods and techniques (concerns which are often not found in the work of practitioners)

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Development Research: Activities, Policy and Practice



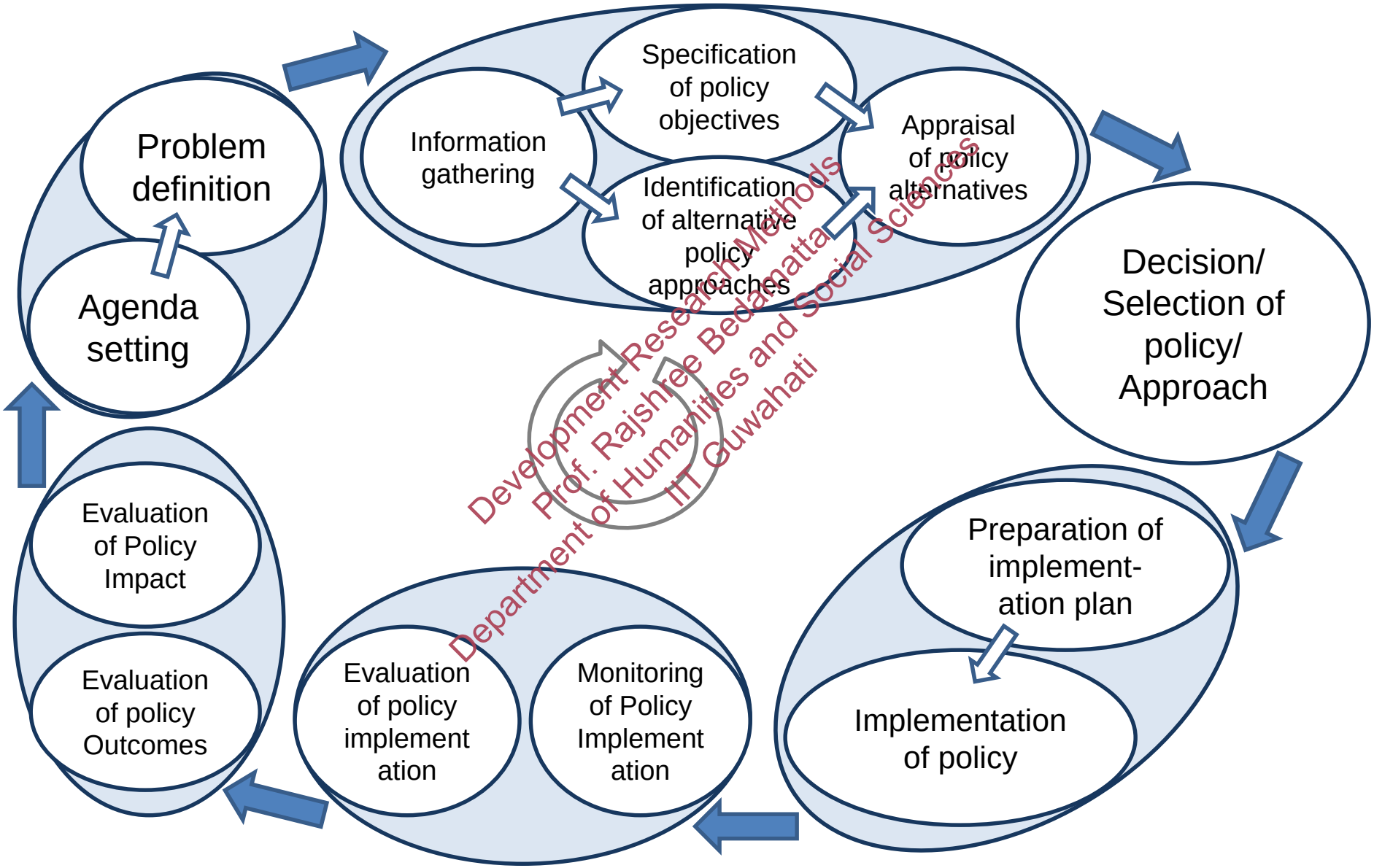
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The Development Research-Development Work Continuum

- A cycle of action-reflection cycles
- Approaching development as a result of complex interaction between many influences
- The relationship between research, policy-related research, systematic policy management, and the political process.
- Continuity of development strategies conceptualized within different political philosophies or ideologies without timely monitoring, evaluation and modification can affect development.

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A suggested 'Policy cycle' for Policy Management



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Action Research in development

- Action research is about practitioners creating new ideas about how to improve practice, and putting those ideas forward as their personal theories of practice.
- This is different from traditional social science, which is about official researchers producing theory, which practitioners apply to their practice.

Social Science questions	Action Research Questions
What is the relationship between teacher motivation and teacher retention?	How do I influence the quality of teachers' experience in school, so that they decide to stay?
Does management style influence worker productivity?	How do I improve my management style to encourage productivity?
Will a different seating arrangement increase audience participation?	How do I encourage greater audience participation through trying out different seating arrangements?

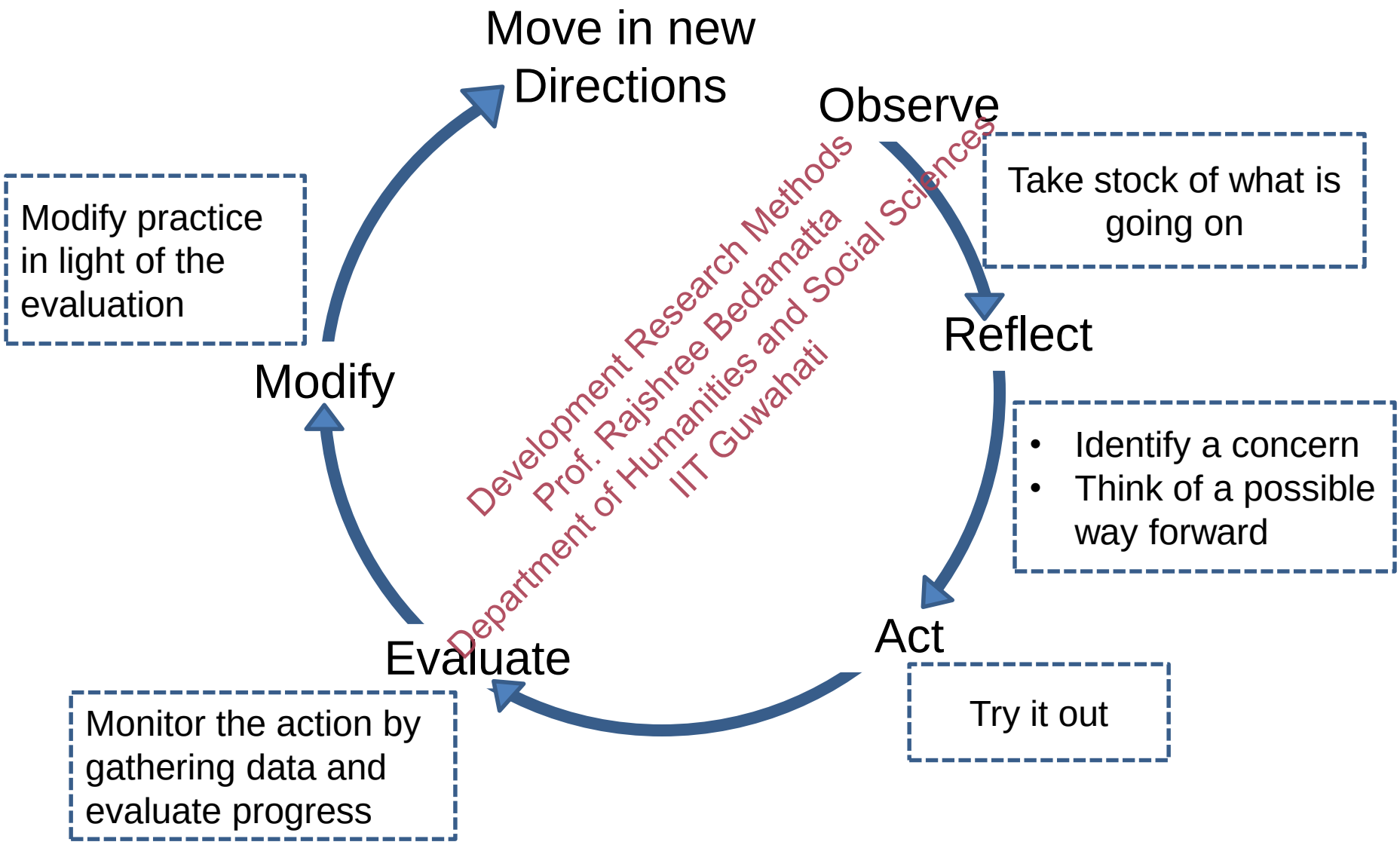
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The Underpinning Assumptions of Action Research

Ontological assumptions	• Action research is value laden • Action research is morally committed. • Action researchers perceive themselves as in relation with one another in their social contexts
Epistemological assumptions	• The object of the enquiry is the 'I' • Knowledge is uncertain • Knowledge creation is a collaborative process
Methodological assumptions	• Action research is done by practitioners who regard themselves as agents. • The methodology is open-ended and developmental. • The aim of the research is to improve learning with social intent.
Social purposes of action research	• It aims to improve practices through improving learning • It aims to promote democratic evaluation of learning and practices. • It aims to create good social orders by influencing the education of social formations.

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Action Research Process/Action-reflection cycle



Why Do Action Research

- To contribute to new practices (the action focus of action research). Influencing policy formation and implementation
- To contribute to new theory (the research focus of action research. Influencing thinking and discourses
- Asking the question, 'How can this situation be understood in order to change it?'
- The importance of practitioner knowledge.
  - *Practical sustainability*
  - *Theoretical sustainability*

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When to use action research

- To evaluate whether what you are doing is influencing your own or other people's learning, or to ensure that it is.
- To improve your understanding, develop your learning, Influence other's learning, etc.

When not to use action research

- To draw comparisons, show statistical correlations, or demonstrate a cause and effect relationship

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References used for this lecture

- Andrew Sumner, “What is Development Studies?”, *Development in Practice*, Vol. 16, No. 6, 2006.
- Michael Edwards, “Development Practice and Development Studies: Working Together”, *Development in Practice*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1996.
- Andrew Sumner and Michael Tribe, International Development Studies: Theories and Methods in Research and Practice, 2008, Sage Publications.
- Vandana Desai and Robert B. Potter, *Doing Development Research*, 2006, Sage Publications.
- Becker, S., Bryman, A. and Sempik, J. (2006) Defining ‘Quality’ in Social Policy Research: Views, Perceptions and a Framework for Discussion. Suffolk, UK: Social Policy Association
- McNiff, J., & Whitehead, J. (2011). All you need to know about action research. Sage Publications.

For a comprehensive literature on the topics covered in this lecture it is also suggested that students go through the reference list of the above cited papers.

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