

**Master's Thesis**

**Technical Vocational Pedagogy**

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**May 2012**

**Improving My Professional Practice and Students' Learning  
Skills through Action Learning in Economics Education**

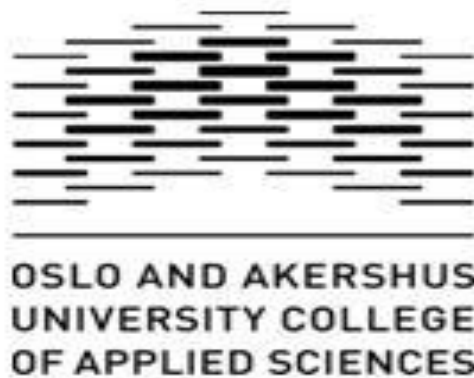
A Pedagogical Action Research Conducted at Dr. JG-MUST

South Sudan

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my late brother Thon Wuor Kuany whose untimely death coincided with the time I was preparing to start Master's studies in Norway. Unexpected challenges left to me by Thon will always open doors for success both for me and the children that I am taking care of.

## Acknowledgement

This work should have been impossible to accomplish without support from following people and institutions.

First of all, I am indebted to my supervisor **Mustafa Trond Smistad** for his advice, diligent and critical comments that enabled me to accomplish this study. Dr. Trond, you are one of the caring academics. I recognise and acknowledge thoughtful contributions and invaluable feedback made by Professor **Johan Houge-Thiis** during the entire course of study.

My sincere appreciation to all participants and staff of Dr. John Garang Memorial University of Science and Technology for accommodation and provision of necessary practices that facilitated collection of data leading to this report; you will always have place in my heart to remember.

Special thanks to Dr. Tulpesh Patel for his critical check on my formal English that in turn encouraged me to improve my discourse analysis and communication skills and present this report with convictions

My heartfelt acknowledgement to members of Action Research Critical Family (ARCF) like Elfatith, Noeline and Siddig for their superb supports and thoughtful peer evaluation throughout this project and in the same way, I appreciate the contribution made by my friends in this course: Nhial Kun, Ochan Martin, James Gatbel and Kyarizi Lovance. I owe you!

The two Institutions of Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (OAUC) and Dr. John Garang Memorial University of Science and Technology (Dr. JG-MUST) deserve recognition and appreciation for their vision and continued cooperation through NUCOOP in educating me and making this study program a success. You have done your parts and it is my turn to payback.

My sincere gratitude to my family and especially my wife **Rachael Akoi** for giving me time to study and complete this report with morning and evening hello that have always inspired me to study with smiles. Thank you so much madam!

Last but not the least; I thank Almighty God for my life, health, wisdom and everything I have now and in future.

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## **Declaration**

I **Malual David Wuor Kuany** hereby declare that this report is my original work which has never been presented in anyway by any candidate for Master's Degree or any other academic award.

The views in this report are purely mine and do not necessarily represent the views of administration of Dr. John Garang Memorial University of Science and Technology where the research was conducted.

**15 May 2012**

## Acronyms

AL: Action Learning

ALS: Applied Learning Scenarios

AR: Action Research

ARCF: Action Research Critical Family

CMS: Church Missionary Society

Dr. JG-MUST: Dr. John Garang Memorial University of Science and Technology

ELC: Economics Learning Community

ESE: End of Semester Examinations

OAUC: Oslo and Akershus University College

ME: Mirror Exercise

MKO: More Knowledgeable Other

NUCOOP: Norwegian University Cooperation Program

PAC: Privacy Anonymity and Confidentiality

PART: Pedagogical Action Research Tradition

PTA: Parent Teachers Association

R&D: Research and Development

RL: Research Logbook

SLS: Students' Learning Skills

TVET: Technical Vocational Education and Training

VSG: Vision Support Group

## **Abstract**

Being aware of dynamic learning environment especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the need to develop and promote learner centred approaches, this study underscores the significance of an Action Learning in Economics education specifically in improving my professional practice and at the same time contributing to Students' Learning Skills more explicitly for the Students of Economics at Dr. John Garang Memorial University of Science and Technology (Dr. JG-MUST). To accomplish this task, I adapted Qualitative Pedagogical Action Research Approach within an Action Research Tradition (ART) with methods such as Group Discussion and Dialogue, Reflective logs, Applied Learning Scenarios, Unstructured Interview Conversation, Participants Observation and Online Web Search. In the implementation of these methods, two learning environments were considered. First, the classroom in which discussions and presentation of group reports and lessons were conducted. Second, the participants' workplaces and business centres where theory gained from classroom discussions was put to practice.

My interaction with participants reveals that Action Learning is integral to pedagogical approaches in improvement of my Professional Practice and provides an opportunity for learners to gain insight of both theory and practice in economics education. Applied Learning Scenarios and mentorship methods have been established by this study as enormous attributes in motivating students to be active participants in the learning process.

Based on this study, I am convinced that my senses are opened and awareness heightened and my Professional Practice and Students' learning skills have significantly improved.

## **Key Words**

Pedagogical Action Research, Action Learning, Professional Practice, Applied Learning Scenarios, Mentorship, Learning skills

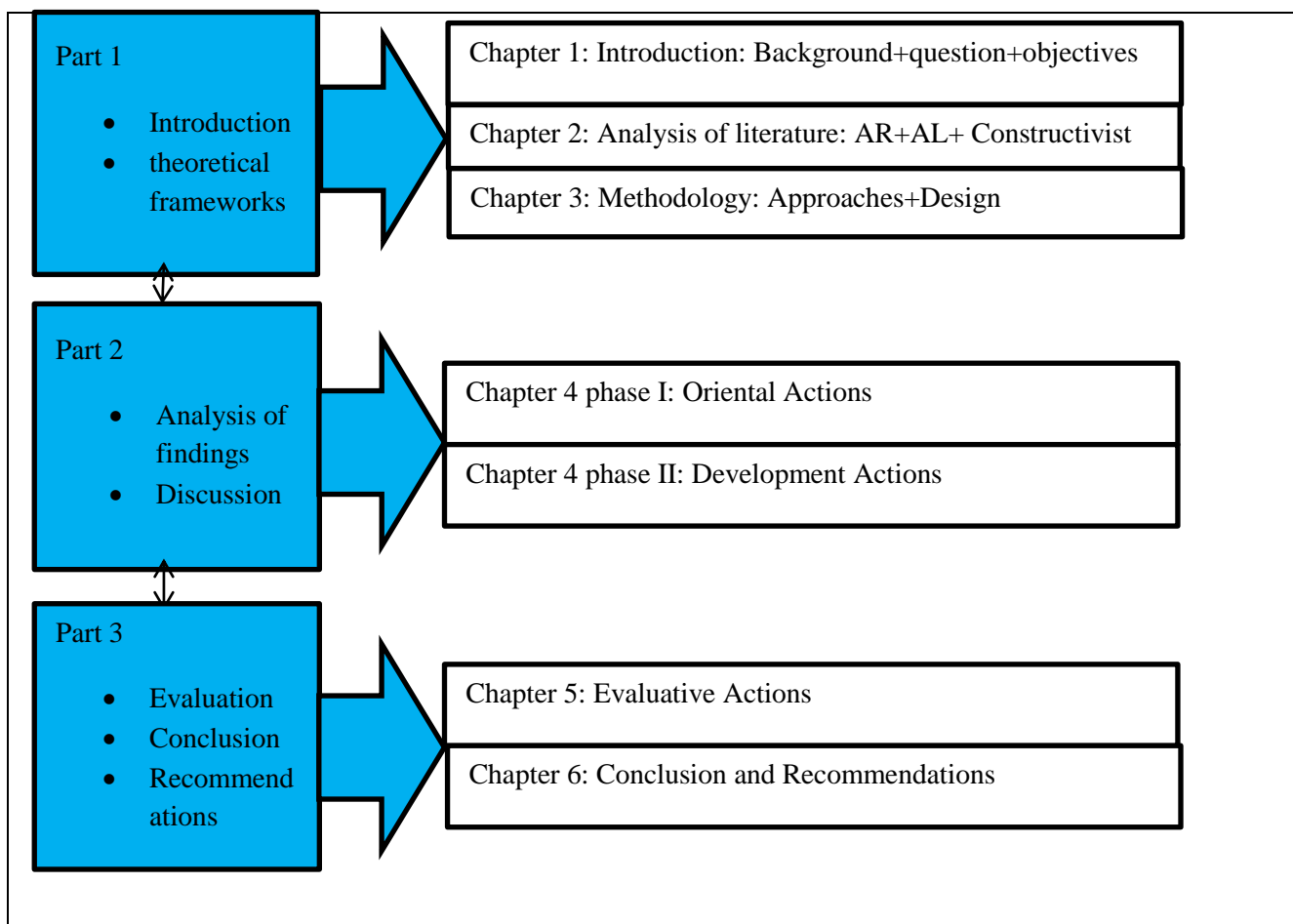
## Organisation of Master's Thesis

This study is organised in three main parts:

1. Introduction and theoretical framework
2. Analysis of findings and discussion
3. Evaluation, Conclusion and Recommendations

These parts are illustrated in the table below

**Table 1: Organisation of Master's Thesis**



The three main parts of this report are categorised into six chapters anchored to each other. Chapter 1 gives background of the study, my personal background in education, my ontological values and how I perceive creation of knowledge or learning process, the research topic, problem statement, objectives, scope and significance of the study. This chapter also

presents brief goals of education and background of Technical Vocational Education and Training in South Sudan.

Chapter 2 is the Analysis of the literature with focus on learning, Action Research, Action learning and the Learning Theories that support construction of knowledge.

Chapter 3 specifies the methodology and subsequent methods employed in this study. It presents how these methods were used in addressing research question. It is in this chapter that research design and research work plan are presented.

Chapter 4 presents analysis and discussion of the findings from the field and shows how the methods were used in the collection of the data. It indicates how data was transcribed and the results obtained from the transcription.

Chapter 5 provides evaluation of the entire thesis. Here I evaluate if the research questions are answered and ascertained if the objectives are met or not.

Chapter 6 is the conclusions and recommendations drawn from this study.

A Reference list and Appendices are inserted at the end of this report to indicate the sources used in this study and provide avenue for further readings.

## **Chapter 1: Background of the Study**

### **1.1 Thesis Title, Description and Justification**

#### **1.1.1 Thesis Tittle**

The tittle of my Master's Thesis is: Improving My Professional Practice and Students Learning skills through Action Learning in Economics Education, A pedagogical Action Research Conducted in South Sudan

The term Professional Practice as use in this Thesis means my ideal practice in facilitation of teaching and learning activities in Economics subject. This practice is embedded in my attitudes and mind-set and my interaction with the environment.

Students' Learning Skills (SLS) in this study refer to skills that could facilitate learning and active participation. These skills include Dialogue and Group Discussion skills, Active Participation skills, Research skills, Self-evaluation skill and listening skills.

Pedagogical Action Research in the context of this Thesis refers to Action Research within education domain and focuses on learning methods and improvement of my practice as a professional teacher.

#### **1.1.2 Description and Justification**

This study presents an attempt to improve my professional Practice and Students learning skills through an Action Learning strategy. This is because in the last few years of working with education institutions in South Sudan, I experienced that my practice was not skills based and static in teacher centred learning methods. I also experienced that students show limited learning skills that would enable them link the theory and practice through engaging with workplaces. There is evidence that students are not exposed to the world outside school setting before finishing their studies (Atari, 2009). Atari argues that the long civil war in South Sudan is responsible for lack of established connection between school and workplaces. My experience shows that Atari's assertion is relevant in the sense that the long civil war resulted to under development of industries that could place students to practice theory in the workplaces. To find answers to this dilemma, I decided to work together with the learners(students) so as to improve my professional practice especially in the facilitation of learning activities involving interplay between classroom and workplaces and also to enable students improve their learning skills through Action Learning.

My study project is in line with the education requirement of learning and training as mandatory responsibility of institution of learning. University education is geared toward educating young adult into their desired carries however, it is not only educating the learners but rather preparing them holistically in academics, socially and employability as acknowledge by (Greenwood & Levin, 2000; Norton, 2009). Norton claims that university institutions are tasked by respective countries to educate and prepare learners for jobs. Norton puts it that “ ... we have been urged to prepare students for employment and to be entrepreneurial in global market” (Norton, 2009, p. 1). Taking the argument of Norton into account and acknowledging that university is the final stage of structured learning, University education is obliged to prepare learners for job and to this, a connection between classroom and workplaces is crucial in my view. Learners ought to be prepared in all areas to perceive the world in their own ways through constructive ideas and active participation. This project therefore, provides an opportunity to study the link between school and workplaces and to provide ideas on how the interplay between these two components could be achieved.

In South Sudan, Economics is a teaching subject in secondary school and higher education. At secondary school level, the subject is referred to as Commerce while at university level; it is subdivided into Microeconomic and macroeconomics. In most cases students taking economics at all levels do not necessarily get exposed to the workplaces as part of interplay in learning. This implies that independent thinking and construction of learning using experiential learning is compromised. In this study, I facilitated learning activities with students taking Microeconomics as part of their Diploma courses in economics related studies such as accounting, human resource management and business administration in Dr. John Granag Memorial University of Science and Technology. The study was organised in the sense that allows students to draw learning from both classroom and workplaces. Group Discussion, field visits and unstructured interview conversations were part of the methods used in this project.

## **1.2 The Influence of Ontological and Epistemological values**

Before going further into my research problem statement, questions and objectives and the entire discourse analysis of this study, it is my view to first clarify on how I perceive the world and how I understand creation of knowledge. This understanding of the world and creation of knowledge is embedded in two terms such as Ontology and Epistemology. These two terms describe my philosophy of learning and living values which influence my day-to-day activities including this study.



### **1.2.1 Ontology**

In their books *Action Research Living Theory* (2006) and *Doing and Writing Action Research* (2009), Whitehead and McNiff define Ontology as a study of being, existence or reality. In my view, Ontology is the relationship between me and my environment in which I live. The environment where I live includes learners, teachers or facilitators, community members and business society. In interacting with the environment, I consider my ontological values such as democracy, equality, independence, teamwork, participation and cooperation. These ontological values influence my daily activities and actions including this study because I adapted methods that encourage interaction and participation of members involved in the Action Learning activities. These methods include Group Discussion and Dialogue, Mentorship, Unstructured Interview Conversation and Reflective logs. I look at environment and the world as evolving with positive changes in every step and that my actions affect the environment in which I live.

### **1.2.2 Epistemology**

In the view of McNiff and Whitehead (2009), epistemology is the theory of knowledge that deals with the scope of knowledge. It addresses questions like: What is knowledge? How is knowledge acquired? What do people know? And how do we know what we know? In my view, I believe that knowledge is constructed in every action taken by the doer and it is evolving based on the environment and the challenges to individual. In this study, I acknowledge that every learner has the ability to construct his or her own learning provided that an opportunity is available for him or her to do so. This therefore enabled me to use Group Discussion and Dialogue and Applied Learning Scenarios in order for me and all participants to learn and acquire knowledge in different ways.

In this study, both ontological and epistemological values influence me to argue that the interplay between classroom and workplace experiences provides opportunity for learners to construct learning through Action Learning as a strategy in economics education.

### **1.3 An Overview of Previous Researches**

Under this section, I present the build-up projects and explain how they anchor to this study. The purpose here is to underscore how these studies contributed significantly to the development of my capacity to conduct Research and Development project herein referred to as Master's Thesis.

### 1.3.1 Undergraduate Research

In 2006-2007, I conducted Bachelor's Degree dissertation entitled *Factors Affecting Child Education in South Sudan; A case Study of Juba Town Council*. The study revealed that attitudes of both parents and children toward education plays major negative role in education. Most Parents with little education or nothing at all pay less attention to child's education. They do not really support children adequately in schools. Students themselves showed less interest in education citing lack of parent's support in term of scholastic materials. My interpretation of this scenario is that both parents and children from poor background have little attitude toward education Malual (2007). The underlying factor was the lack of practicality in education. Parents were seeing no practical contribution from students even after finishing Secondary School or University. This situation provoked me to contribute in making changes. My little contribution in solving this was to work together with youth and sensitised local population on the need for child education and involvement for parents in school learning process. I was also motivated by one of the school's Parent Teacher Association (PTA) activities. The parents in this school work hand-in-hand with the school teachers in order to make education for children a success. No figure pointing at each other in this case. The responsibility is shouldered by parents, teachers and the pupils themselves. More interestingly, students were given high freedom to determined their learning activities and cooperate with teachers in identifying possible learning strategies. I feel more reluctant to describe this as child centred learning approach; however it gives sense of moving toward more diversified students' learning approach and a glimpse of vocational education. When I reflect on this study, I realised that the community school relationships need to be strengthen and one way of doing this among others is to introduce learning approach that encourages learners to be active participants who could construct learning not only in the school setting but also at workplaces.

### 1.3.2 Facilitation of Teachers' Learning Activities

Between February 2009 and August 2010, I facilitated learning activities for high school teachers in Jonglei State which was sponsored by Africa Educational Trust UK<sup>1</sup> in conjunction with Kyambogo University Kampala<sup>2</sup>. We together used project base learning approach with hope of improving learning for both teachers and students. The approach was

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<sup>1</sup> Africa Educational Trust is a charity educational organisation funded by and based in United Kingdom with branch offices across Africa. This organisation is taking part in teacher capacity building in South Sudan

<sup>2</sup> Kyambogo University is one on of the leading higher education institutions based in Kampala Uganda. It has collaboration agreement with Africa Educational Trust in teacher capacity building in South Sudan

forth coming but was marred by insufficient practical work and applied learning in the desired field. It was also marred by lack of learning resources search as books and digital tools. Above all, I had insufficient experience in facilitating applied learning. The teachers were more willing to encourage the students to participate in determining learning methods and perhaps get more involved in the learning process. I noticed that understaffing of our schools account for part of failure by teachers to use student's centred approach of learning. In my case for example, using collaborative learning approach with secondary school teachers was made possible with small number of participants. During my interaction with secondary school teachers in Jonglei State, I realised that there was a need to improve methods of learning. Therefore, this study provides and an avenue of improving my practice by introducing learning strategy that would motivate learners to participate in the learning process.

### **1.3.3 Reflective Projects**

Between September 2010 and April 2011, I made some reflections in my work experiences as a teacher. These reflections helped to decide on conducting an Action Learning project with an attempt to improve my practice and to help my students improve their learning capacity as a team.

Before conducting this Research and Development project, a pre-requisite project known as project 3 was developed at the beginning of 2011. This project focused on the likely implementation strategies of R&D. It is good to review how this project resulted to the final thesis herein.

In my project 3, there were six possible objectives proposed to be accomplished in Research and Development project. In the field, I dropped three of these objectives after consulting with the participants as per their immediate needs. Some objectives were in cooperated with others depending on similarities. For example, financial literacy capacity and entrepreneurships were in cooperated to Students' Learning Skills because skills include financial management and entrepreneurship. The preparatory research that I made in project three enabled me to improve my mind-set and acknowledge how the interaction between me and my environment influence the daily activities that I undertake.

## 1.4 Problem Statement

The problem statement of this Research and Development Project is how to apply an Action Learning strategy in economics education with specific reference to improvement of my practice as a teacher of economics and to further investigate how this strategy could lead to Students' learning skills development.

The background to this problem is based on my experience in teaching economics since 2004<sup>3</sup>. I observed mismatch in school learning objectives and workplace requirements. Teaching in school follows rigid curriculum made by the government which does not correspond with the dynamic changes in economic environment (the workplaces and markets.) in time. Changes in the labour markets are quick and happen any time. For example, computer skills were not job requirements in South Sudan 10 years ago but it has become part of the minimum job requirements now. Also in my view, there is high rate of unemployment in the country either due to lack of job opportunities or insufficient skills possess by the school graduates. This implies that not all university graduates do find jobs after studies which pose big threat to educational institutions and the teachers like me.

At my personal level as well as other teachers, the job competition in higher education requires self-reflective study. The competition demands skilful performance of duties and specifically teaching with focus of preparing learners for jobs and other life challenges. To cope with this competition, I decided to improve my practice not only by advance studies but also by carrying out self-reflective study with focus on teaching methodologies.

The interplay between classroom and workplaces as used in this study means the relationships between the two learning environments (classroom and workplaces) that would promote Students' Learning Skills development and improvement in the learning approach.

The Learning skills development as in this report is associated with positive mind-set in learning through ideas sharing and commitment to learning in groups and cooperation among the participants.

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<sup>3</sup> In 2004, I started teaching economics as untrained teacher. I then went to university in Uganda to study education at bachelor degree level. Economics and Geography were and are still my teaching subjects.

## 1.5 Research Question

In relation to the research topic and problem statement above, the outstanding question which this research investigates is: how appropriate<sup>4</sup> is an Action Learning Strategy in economics education? This major question leads to three follow-up questions:

- A. How can Action Learning strategy improve my practice as a teacher of economics?
- B. How could economics learning activities be organised to in cooperate both classroom and workplace experiences in higher education?
- C. What are strengths and weaknesses of an action learning strategy in enhancing students' learning skills development?

The implication of this major question is that Action Learning strategy may or may not be applicable in improving my practice and contribute toward students' learning skills development. My experience shows that teaching is dominated by teachers through lecture method while students remain as observers of learning instead of being active participants. During the field study, I found that an Action Learning strategy which promotes group discussion, mentorship and use of ALS enables students to be active participants in the learning process. In this regards, the learners and I conducted Applied Learning Scenarios which were geared toward enabling students to own the learning process. Group Discussion and Dialogue, mentorship scheme, unstructured interview conversation among other methods were used in order to address these questions.

## 1.6 Research Objectives

The overall objective of this project is to introduce an Action Learning strategy in teaching and learning of economics so as to improve my practice and contribute to students' learning skills development. In pursue of this general objective; the following specific objectives were met.

- A. Integrating Action Learning strategy into learning methods so as to improve my practice as a teacher
- B. Applying and examining the roles of Action Learning strategy in teaching and learning of Economics in Higher Education
- C. Establishing how Action Learning could lead to Development of Entrepreneurial Skills among the learners of economics

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<sup>4</sup> Appropriate as used in this report refers to importance of Action learning in enhancing learning and promoting students' centred approach.

## 1.7 Significance of the Study

This project is based on self-reflective study and use of teamwork in pursue of improving learning both for myself and learners. The significances of this research might vary from one reader to another depending on individual perception and understanding of the learning process. The significances listed below are what I belief to be relevant in my own perspective and also the feedback from the learners themselves.

- a) At individual level, this study provides an opportunity for professional development in the sense that my practice as a teacher has improved and will keep on improving. I have made some stride in improvement of my teaching skills and I could facilitate learning interactively with my students which was not the case before. I enhanced the understanding of organization of learning and develop new perspective of learning that recognises teamwork and cooperation as the new name of the game in the classroom.
- b) Methodologically, this report might be useful to academics who would wish to recognise the link between classroom and the workplaces and identify the significance of student-teacher cooperation in learning. This study would contribute to the development of literature in academia.
- c) The participants who participated in the study claim that they have improved their learning abilities and information sharing as they mentioned in the learning logs during evaluation period. This in my view; is one way of promoting independent thinking of learners and influence the processes of active participation in learning

## 1.8 Scope of the Study

The study was conducted in my workplace; Dr. John Garang Memorial University of Science and Technology, Jonglei State, South Sudan. Only 21 students of business studies were voluntarily involved in this study. Three teachers (I inclusive) who have the same desire of improving professional practices were part of the collaborative team thus; making the total number of participants 25. Resources such as text books in the library and online research, telephone calls, emails, Skype and other communication tools were useful during the research activities. Only qualitative methods such as Group Discussion and Dialogue, Participant Observation, Online research, Mentorship and Unstructured Interview Conversations were used in this project. Team members specially the learning groups at Oslo and Akershus

University College of Applied Sciences (OAUC) and supervisors formed crucial part of the collaborative learning unit. The study took six (6) months of data collection and another 4 months for data presentation, analysis, interpretation, discussion and report.

### **1.9 My Bite in the Society: The Introduction of Action Learning**

Say has it that an ant you can only eat an elephant by “*one bite at a time*” By my bite; I am referring to the contribution that I can make in accordance with society’s need. There are many possible options where I can make a difference in community development and change but they cannot be done at the same time. Therefore my bite in this context is to introduce Action Learning strategy in order to improve my own practice as a teacher and to help my students work together as a team so as to improve entrepreneurial abilities especially for students taking business or economics related studies. The choice of this bite is in line with my profession as teacher of Economics. The driving force behind this choice is the mismatch of learning goals in school and the workplaces (outside world). There is huge discrepancy in my view about what is taught and learn in school and what exactly happens outside school. The university graduates (I inclusive) who are expected to be creative and well equipped with practical skills for specific tasks find it difficult to cope with workplace requirements. I interacted with colleagues who have made it possible to be good entrepreneurs and I found their experiences relevant to mention in this report. Some of them claim that they had incapacity building with their employees which enable them gain needed skills for employment while others struggled on their own to gain skills needed for jobs in the labour market. In order to help my students gain right skills while still in institution of learning, I agreed with them to conduct an Action Learning so as to promote acquisition of skills through the interplay between classroom and workplaces.

#### **1.9.1 Why I’m Concerned About this Bite?**

There are many reasons why this bite is relevant to me.

- a) To improve the learning: When I reflected on my teaching activities in the last six years, students have often acted as observers in the learning process rather than taking learning as their own. This created situation where the students are unable to perform well in the industry.
- b) There is clear mismatch in what I taught in my class and the practical needs of the industry. The business community need knowledge and ability while my lesson bears

theoretical knowledge. In this regard I decided to improve the learning by applying Action Learning strategy.

### **1.9.2 How did I select this Bite out of many?**

Without doubt, the community needs are many and so are the bites that individual can. I arrived at this research topic as result of:

- a) Reflection on my experiences in teaching economics subject to fellow entrepreneurs and as the acting Dean of Students (DoS) in Dr. John Garang Memorial University of Science and technology. I have always wondered about how to improve my practice. This is high time I improved my practice through AL.
- b) Brain storming with students and teachers to find out if this bite suites their needs and indeed the need of the community.
- c) The mismatch between school teaching and the work place requirements

### **1.10 The Goals of Education in South Sudan**

To understanding education system in South Sudan, I ventured into the goals of education as contained in Chapter II of Draft Education bill 2010. My intention was to understand if the Action learning strategy is in line with these goals. Some of the Southern Sudan education goals that caught my attention include:

- a) Enabling the education system to contribute to the full personal development of each learner and to the moral, social, cultural, political and economic development of the nation at large, including the advancement of democracy, human rights and the peaceful resolution of disputes;
- b) Promoting student learning according to each learner's maximum intellectual capacity and according to the learning standards of Southern Sudan;
- c) Encouraging independent and critical thinking skills in learners at all levels;
- d) Providing opportunities for and encouraging lifelong learning;
- e) Cultivating skills, disciplines and capacities necessary for reconstruction and development;
- f) Recognizing the aptitudes, abilities, interests, prior knowledge and experience of learners;
- g) Promoting enquiry, research and the advancement of knowledge;
- h) Enhancing the quality of education and educational innovation through systematic research and development on education, monitoring and evaluating



of education provision and performance, and training educators and education managers;

Goss (2010)

### **1.10.1 My View about Goals of Education in South Sudan**

In my view, goal (c): *Encouraging independent and critical thinking skills in learners at all levels* is what my Research and Development Project would contribute to. I do believe that independent thinking would encourage skills development among my learners and the entire current and future population. To do this, it is my view that learners and I understand the relevance of independent thinking and skills development. I have taken this opportunity to improve my practice in an attempt to develop critical thinking and encourage my students to develop concepts of critical thinking. If student's work is discussed and challenged by the peer, there are chances that the reflection that the student in question may make can help him or her to develop critical thinking and sound judgement. In this study, Action Learning is organised in the sense that allow students present their ideas in group and a chance of members to review and discuss the ideas presented. This in my view provides chance for critical thinking and further improvement for all the learners. If this particular goal is achieve a mong the learners, then it would be the basis for skills development and indeed the promotion of Technical Vocational Education and Training in South Sudan.

### **1.11 Historical Background of Technical Vocational Education and Training in South Sudan**

Before conducting this research study, I was wondering why vocational education is not common in South Sudanese news, more so there are limited schools to learn vocational skills. In an attempt to clear my doubts, I ventured to talk to some elders and intellectuals who have the synthesis of colonial era and the present day. The history of Technical Vocational Education and Training as some of elders told me is rather inconsistent right from British colonial administration to present.

Generally, the historical foundation of education in South Sudan owes its origin to British Colonial administration and White Roman Catholic and Protestant Church Missionaries. During this colonial era, South Sudan was divided into three main regions of Upper Nile, Bar el Gazal and Equatoria. The Christian Church Missionaries Societies operated in some parts of these regions during wet seasons due to in accessibility of some areas. This division

brought along with it the imbalances in education system. There was no unified curriculum and each missionary group strived for its own success in converting indigenous into their denomination.

Even with the interruption of political changes and power struggle in Sudan; Missionaries managed to establish vocational schools such as Wau, Torit and Lanya technical schools. The main vocational activities in these institutions include: carpentry, brick laying and other construction related trades for promotion of missionary activities (Atari, 2009). The trainings were meant for missionary work but indirectly built skills for the indigenous population. The trainees of these schools would go on to train others specially their sons or relative through apprenticeship.

Changes in political regimes and military conflicts in the entire Sudan discouraged the Church Missionaries Societies (CMS) and this had severe impact in the history of Technical Vocation Education and Training in South Sudan. Both Anya-nya I and SPLA/M wars of 1955 and 1983 respectively have had drastic damage to the most needed infrastructure including education facilities. The Anya-nya I war led to closure of Missionary sponsored Technical Schools and foreigners were frightened by war and fled for their lives. The village and alimentary schools that use to feed Technical schools with students were cut off or destroyed by the rebellion and skilled trainers ran in rescue of their dear lives elsewhere. Upper Nile region of South Sudan did not have Technical schools during colonial era. The area was remote and closed off during rainy season thus; might have scared off the missionaries from establishing genuine training institution there.

Some glimpse of TVET life return when Addis Ababa Peace Agreement (AAPA) was signed between the government in Khartoum and the then rebel led by General Joseph Lagu in the South. Torit Technical, Wau and Lanya among others returned to functioning but there was significant lack of skilled teachers in these schools. In an attempt to appease South Sudanese, the government in Khartoum offered support and ordered resumption of all Technical Vocational Schools in the South. More so University (University of Juba) was established in South Sudan for the first time since Adam. This was enormous development in the history of South Sudan. The university remains the leading provider of higher education to date.

The 21 years civil war led by Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) under auspices of Dr. John Garang de Mabior against Khartoum Government nearly brought the life of TVET to an end. The schools were destroyed, population fled and there was no support

from the government in Khartoum either. The schools were used as barracks and eventually destroyed by bombs. With signing of Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, there were hopes of putting Technical Vocational Education as priority but it has been put to foot of all development programs.

In my home state (Jonglei State), there is only one recognised Technical vocational training centre that is Panyagor Vocational Training Centre. The communities have not been sensitised about the contribution that vocational training brings to the development. Some individual voice it that the government is reluctant in promoting Technical vocational Education and training.

I personally value Technical Vocational Education and Training due to its ability to inculcate skills and change of people's lives and general infrastructure development and use of Action Learning strategy. It is my desire and intention to contribute toward development and of vocational skills and encourage development of Technical Schools in the region. To do this, I decided to introduce Action Learning.

## Chapter 2: Analysis of Related Literature

### Introduction

This part of report presents my analysis of established literature so as to improve my understanding of learning and its theories.

McNiff and Whitehead propose that the researcher should engage critically in the relationship between what is known and the idea under investigation (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009). The idea under investigation in this study is the interplay between classroom and workplace experiences using Action Learning. I acknowledge the significance of engaging with literature in order to link the idea under new study with established views of scholars. However, in the course of engaging with the existing literature, I found it frustrating to engage into every article written about Action Learning in education and an Action Research approach thus, I filtered the searches by identifying the key words and ideas that have links with my ontological values and perception of knowledge creation. Therefore, the key words such as *Learning, Action Learning, Action Research, and learning theories* were used in search for relevant information regarding learning and its organisation. The following thematic analysis presents my understanding of the available and relevant literature in relation to this study.

### 2.1 Learning

Under this subsection, I engage with the definition, organisation and barriers of learning.

#### 2.1.1 Definition

There are several concepts of learning but in this study, I chose Chinese concept of learning because it looks at learning as being constantly constructed by learners as they play, interact with peer members, learning in classroom, at workplaces and in all day-to-day activities. In Chinese concept, learning involves two characters including *study and practice* constantly (Senge, 2000). These two characteristics suggest that learning is mastery of way of self-improvement (Senge, 2000). Self-improvement in this case could be interpreted to mean improvement of individual ideologies in regard to ways of doing things and contribute to higher attainments as desired by individual. Senge's use of Chinese concept in education shows recognition of interplay between study and practice. I recognise this idea in the sense that it promotes the link between theory and practice with an intention of Self-improvement which is the core call for an Action Learning strategy in Economics education and especially

in this study. Practice based approach of learning requires involvement in performance of activities and it includes observation and hands-on practically. During Action Learning field activities, discussions were parts of the actions and members tried to practice what they learnt from the group in their daily activities.

In this study, learning is defined as a process of acquiring skills and values by learners through social interaction and construction of learning. Stephen Billett agrees with my experience of how learning is organised when he postulates that learning takes place at home, play grounds, schools, workplaces or in any activity undertaken by individual (Billett, 2010a).

### **2.1.2 Organisation of Learning Activities**

Base on my experiences in education, learning activities are organised formally in set of standards and levels stipulated in curriculum by the government or institution of learning. Informally, learning is embedded in daily activities or through apprenticeship. Modern learning is being supported by computers that enhance learning of both adults and young either in school or at workplaces. I agree with some researchers who argue that learning is organised to suits the needs of the learner in all setting including schools and workplaces (Garrick, 1998; REIJO, 2000; Veen & Vrakking, 2006). In the past few months of this Research and Development (R&D) project, learning was organised to suit the needs of participants either in group or as an independent learner. In most instances, individuals came together to share experiences as a team and learn from each other. Senge argues that the learning communities should involve both learners and teachers who by virtue of their common interest come together and organise ways of learning that could be through group discussion, lecture or role-play aim at developing skills (Senge, 2000). In my experience, coming together by learners and teachers promotes mutual relationship that encourages learning as a team and this learning might result to acquisition of skills or knowledge for individuals to perform particular duties. In case where teacher is involved, learning may be organised in cooperation between the learner and the teacher.

### **2.1.3 Barriers**

Learning barriers may occur from within the learner through his or her defence mechanism and mental resistance (Illeris, 2009). Illeris asserts that the learner has crucial role in preventing barriers in learning by focusing on the learning process. During the field study, I experienced that learning can be affected by the environment, motivation, attitude of the

learner or other social factors within the learning community. To address this problem, the learning activities were conducted in the learning environment which the group members agreed to be conducive for learning. The participants set the objectives for learning and agreed to attend group discussion or mentorship activities whenever necessary.

## **2.2 Action Research**

Under this section, I analyse and discuss the origin of Action Research. In addition, I have analysed the sets of Action Research in order to improve my own understanding of the term Action Research approach and to examine how it is used in education. The purpose of this section is to provide scholarly understanding of what an Action Research is; its origin and how is it structured.

### **2.2.1 Definition of Action Research**

Action Research has been defined by Kurt Lewin as cited in (McNiff, 2012) and (Smith, 2001) as comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social actions and research leading to social change (McNiff, 2012; Smith, 2001). Lewin presented his idea in the cyclical form including identifying a general or initial idea, reconnaissance or fact finding, planning, taking first action step, evaluate, amended plan and taking second action step. The spiral continues till the desired outcome is reached. Social change as used in this definition could be interpreted as an imperative aspect of Action research in the sense that each individual is obliged to change if the living or working situation is appalling or unacceptable. In this study, the goal is to improve my professional practice as a teacher of economics and to contribute toward students' learning skills development through interplay between classroom and workplaces. In my view, the implication of Lewis definition is that; to change professional practice requires reflective in-depth understanding and review of personal current and previous experiences, aspirations and interest in performing tasks. This reflective study requires critical peer assessment in an organised group setting. The peer members in this study included the teachers and students who by virtue of common interest; agreed with me and came together to share ideas geared toward social change leading to improvement in teaching and learning of Economics. The central duty of peer group was to analyse the possible requirements for change and to make provision for necessary steps in implementing the desired change.

Reflecting on my past experiences both as student and a teacher, I felt that something should be improved or else my practice would be at stake! It was until this study that I came to

reflect on my professional practice and tried to find ways of improving it and advance more on my practice.

Action Research could as well be defined as interactive and systematic inquiry that involves collective responsibility, collaboration, self-reflective practices, critical questioning and mainly undertaken by the participants who have similar interest (Aagaard & Svensson, 2006; Greenwood & Levin, 2000), McCutcheon and Jung (1990) and Rapoport (1970) as cited in (Masters, 1995; McKernan, 1988) respectively. Collaboration and collective responsibility could be interpreted as free and unconditional interaction among the peers involved in the study of particular subject. In this study, groups were formed to share ideas and to critique members' opinions in anticipation of change and this was made possible by the cooperation among members throughout the research project.

The crosscutting themes in the definitions discussed above so far is that Action Research is a rigorous work that involves participants or social change group at community level. It entails collective responsibility by all members involved through collective participation and individual member contribution among others. Another common feature of Action Research that seems crosscutting is the knowledge creation and acquisition of new skills to perform given tasks. This, in itself is the aim of an Action Learning strategy that would evolve change in practitioner's practices. Jean McNiff claims that Action research involves data collection by participants themselves, active participation, power sharing with recognition of democracy in group activities, collaboration among members or critical community and reflection in the process, (McNiff, 2012). In my view, these characteristics are embedded in how group members perceive themselves as a unit that could enforce changes in social setting. During this study, members of the Economic learning Community (I inclusive) conducted Applied Learning Scenarios (refer to 4.2.3 for ALS) to enable every member involve in data collection for group discussion. This data was relevant in group work because it provided information for members to discuss in an attempt to construct learning individually and as a group. Cooperation among members helped in fostering the progress of group activities and synthesis of information relevant for group learning programs.

### 2.2.2 Historical Background of Action Research

With the concept of Action Research definition as in 2.2.1 above, it is necessary for me to analyse briefly the origin of Action Research to provide basic background information that could support this study.

The origin of Action Research seems not clear yet, however, it is widely believed to have been coined by John Collier and Kurt Lewin; (Aagaard & Svensson, 2006; McKernan, 1988; McNiff, 2012; Norton, 2009; REIJO, 2000; Smith, 2001). Kurt Lewin was working in the United States of America during World War II when he developed interest in integrating research and education to enhance the development of democracy in the society (Aagaard & Svensson, 2006). According to Aagaard and Svensson, Kurt organised and trained participants in group dynamic and at the same time creating new understanding for solving problems and creating better cooperation in organisation, (Aagaard & Svensson, 2006). Lewin's idea seems to apply in modern education where the interplay between previous experiences and the current situation could yield better results for students and improvement in teachers' practices. I have experienced in this study that Action Research approach in educational research provides foundation for improvement in individual practice as well as group practice. Lewin's idea has been accepted by other scholars as genuine, (Altrichter, 2008; REIJO, 2000) when they claim that cooperation is an ideal component in individual or organisational success. In this study, cooperation has been imperative in team work and collective responsibilities among group members. The members cooperated in identifying the areas of interest and finding possible remedy to challenges that each of the group members faced.

Another account to the background of Action Research stems from McKernan. Jim McKernan holds story of American commissioner on Indian Affairs by the time. McKernan quoted Commissioner Collier to understand the influence of Action Research in term of the relationship between the administrator and the layman in administrative chain. Collier as claim by McKernan believes that since the findings of the research must be carried into effect by administrators and layman, and must be criticized by them through their experiences, both administrator and layman should themselves participate creatively in the research process,(McKernan, 1988). The implication of this statement is that Action Research (AR) need inclusiveness of all the affected people involved in social change. While Collier was describing Action Research in the field of administration, his idea could be applicable to classroom teacher like me in the sense that it gives ideas of how significant it is to involve the



participant in the whole process since they will be the one to appreciate or critique the outcomes of the research that involves social change.

In my view, there is predisposition in the origin of Action Research that creating social change is the driving force in doing self-reflective inquiry. The origin articulates that the primary concern of Action Research is to improve one's own practice and then the practice of the community he or she belongs. What I think comes first is the improvement of individual practice because without improvement of individual practice, the society needs and values may be jeopardised.

### **2.2.3 Stands of Action Research**

The purpose of this sub-section is to understand the different stages involved in Action Research approach and to give my view on how each stage is applied in Action learning which is the main focus of this study.

In the views of Peter Reason and Hillary Bradbury, there are three stages of Action Research ranging from individual to community (Reason & Bradbury, 2008) . These include:

*First Person Action Research* which involves investigating and developing personal practice in specific trade. The practitioner asks him/her-self with such question as how do I improve my practice? And it is geared toward improvement (Norton, 2009) and (Whitehead 1989) as cited in (McNiff, 2012). This stage involves two main research strategies such as Developmental Action Inquiry and Action Living Theory.

*The Second Person Action Research* is the investigation and development of group or peer practices. It includes strategies like Action Learning, Co-operative inquiry and Developmental Action Inquiry. This part of Action Research approach is where my choice for introduction of Action Learning as a strategy of teaching and learning in economics is embedded.

The third and the final form of Action Research in the views of Reason and Bradbury is the *Third Person Action Research*. This is the research at the wider range. It is the research at community or government level. It may be a research carried out by entire university, organisation, and society or government ministry to improve certain conditions which are affecting everyone in the setting, (Reason & Bradbury, 2008).

These three stages of Action Research are interrelated to each other. In the case of this project, I conducted self-reflective studies in three projects anchored to each other. The first project was based upon my understanding of my-self and the professional service as a teacher specialising in teaching and learning of Economics subject. The second project was to identify possible improvement or changes in my practice. After these two projects, I conducted the third project which was intended to prepare for the implementation of one chosen development strategy. In this case Action Learning was chosen as an ideal method of improving my practice and to engage learners in active participation in learning. To accomplish this method, Action Research approach was adapted as the main methodology. Therefore, this research could fall under *second person action research* as stipulated by Peter Reason and Bradbury (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). In this regard, Action Learning is seen as a subset of Action Research approach.

### **2.3 Action Learning**

Before defining and discussing Action learning, it is my opinion to point out that Action learning is a subset of Action Research thus; Action Research is a general approach while Action Learning (AL) is a specific learning strategy involving cooperation among the team members. Some scholars such as (Zuber-Skerritt & Dick, 2009) often use the two terms together when referring to research that involves improvement of individual practice. This means that Action learning is not one man task but rather a collaborative study involving members who wish to share their experiences with intention of learning from each other using Action research as a lead approach.

#### **2.3.1 Definition of Action Learning**

It appears to be no unified definition of Action Learning available in the literature as per as I am concerned but the definition offered by Reg Revans seems to appeal to some scholars such as (Zuber-Skerritt & Dick, 2009, p. 6). Revans defined Action Learning as the approach to people's development through the attempted resolutions of real life problems (Revans, 1998). Revans went further to explain that no learning without action and no action without learning, (Revans, 1998). Chris Eames and Richard K. Coll (Eames & Coll, 2010) are in agreement with Reg Revans by arguing that combining practice and theory would increase learning of students more especially when cooperative education system is used. Let me highlight some relevant aspects of Revans' definition. These expressions include: '*real life problem*', '*no learning without action and no action without learn*'. In my view, the real life problems are the ones in which the individual or group of individuals live with. These

problems might vary from person to person but the fact is that they are daily problems that exist in individual's life. The normal human respond in my view would be to eradicate these problems but one must ask the critical question 'how' can I solve this or improve on this or that? The open ended question '*how*' implies individual's search for solution or remedy to the existing problem. In this study, I am looking for ways of improving my practice and to contribute to Students' Learning and Entrepreneurial Skills Development. The second aspect of Revans' definition is what he described as *no learning without action and no action without learning*. Taking the example of apprenticeship as a practice that involves both learning and actions simultaneously, if an adult or instructor is taking actions of performing certain task, the person looking on does not just learn by seeing but rather by touching, feeling and practicing which are some articulations attributed in Revans' definition. The *no action without learning* as said by Revans might imply that individual does not need to take actions without considering the outcomes of his or her actions. This could mean that one need to observe, plan and then take actions in order to succeed.

Action Learning is sequential and involves more than just a step (Zuber-Skerritt & Dick, 2009). The sequences vary from individual to another, however the common one as acknowledged by Zuber-Skerritt and Dick include recognisance of one's own situation and experience, making considerable plans for innovative improvements, taking actions, interpret the results and make plans for the next actions. In the views of Zuber-Skerritt, Dick and Revans, Action Learning is characterised by on job training (learning by doing), group work (team work) and it is meant to address common problem within the group system or to solve problem of individual after critical study of the problem.

### **2.3.2 The Origin of Action Learning**

The purpose of this subsection is to provide the background of Action Learning and also elaborated on the stages involved in this learning strategy. Professor Reg Revans is arguably the founding father of the Action Learning strategy and perhaps remains the right scholar to claim the origin of Action Learning even after his death in 2003. Revans formulated the theory when he challenged himself about the different between cleverness and wisdom. He developed the Action Learning strategy in pursuit of getting answers for questions such as what, where, who and how. Information available on International Foundation for Action Learning,(IFAL, 2012) website (<http://www.ifal.org.uk/origins.html>) articulates that Professor Reg Revans was working for the National Coal Board in United States of America when he was tasked to write educational plan for the workers in 1945. He developed the

concept of Action Learning with intention of improving working capacity of the workers at the time. The term Action Learning as coined by Revans is subjective thus; has seen similar names like Experiential Learning, Learning By Doing, or Workplace Learning (Billett, 2010b; REIJO, 2000; Zuber-Skerritt & Dick, 2009). These common names make the origin of Action Learning more questionable. However, Revans' description, explanation and illustrations, makes him in my view to be the commendable founder of Action Learning.

Revans articulates in his book: *The ABC of Action Learning* that individuals have to change themselves to change what goes around them (Revans, 1998). What goes around individuals varies from group to group or from individual to individual. Perhaps the central point in this view is that, every person is responsible to change his or her existing situation that is not appealing. Taking the idea of Revans and apply it in my case for example; I experienced mismatch between what I taught in the classroom and the requirements from workplaces outside the school. This prompted me to ask: how can I improve my practice as a teacher of Economics? This dilemma was not only felt by me; the students too were concerned thus; we formed a team which we called Economic Learning Community (I have discussed this in chapter 4).

Professor Revans illustrated his theory with equation:

$$L = P + Q$$

Where *L* implies learning or capacity of the individual who is in need of changing what goes around him or her. I understand this as the capacity to identify, analyse, document and prioritise possible solutions to the existing problem whether individually or collectively. This capacity could be improved through personal practices and also through collaboration with others.

*P* in Revans argument stands for programmed learning or what is already known about the situation by the members or individual affected by the situation. It include the impact of the current problem on the development, what is already known about the attempted solutions and why the said solutions failed to materialise, the causes of the current problem and possibility of eradicating such problem. In this study, my experience in teaching since 2004 both in Uganda and South Sudan influenced me to reflect on possible changes in teaching and learning of economics. The methods which I used before conducting this study were teacher

centred with no link between school and the workplaces. In order to address this, I proposed change in methods and teaching skills and this prompted me to conduct this study.

*Q* is the critical question that tries to find lasting solutions to the problem. My question in this research as inspired by Revans is: How can Action learning improve my practice and contribute toward students' learning skills development?

To justify his equation, Revans went on to identify three interrelated processes which might necessitate the possible explanation of the theory. These processes include system *alpha* which is the inquiry into the issue under consideration such as the history of the issue, what has been done and possibly the outcomes of the attempts made. The second system is what Revans called *Beta* which is the rigorous exploration of the resolution of the issue through reflective study and actions. The last system according to Revans is the *Gamma* which refers to group interaction to facilitate critical reflections and learning (Revans, 1998). In my view, these systems give me the reasons why Action Learning is such a lucrative strategy in improving my practice and perhaps the practice of those involved in the process. First of all, I asked myself to as: How is my practice now? Why is it in such a way? When I found that my practice needed improvement, I venture to the second step of critical questions: How can I improve this practice? And at the third level, I asked myself on how I could collaborate with my environment to realise positive changes.

### **2.3.3 Action Learning as a Subset of Action Research**

The term sub-set as I understand is commonly use in mathematics to refer to set whose elements are part of the elements of another set. I am not using mathematic here but I am using this term to express my understanding of the characteristics of Action Research and Action Learning. The characteristics of Action Learning are embedded in the general characteristics of Action Research. In other words, characteristics of Action Learning are found with in Action Research circle. The elements or forms of Action Research approach include: Action Learning, Developmental Action inquiry, Living Theory, Cooperative inquiry among others, (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Let me illustrate this in term of a set below

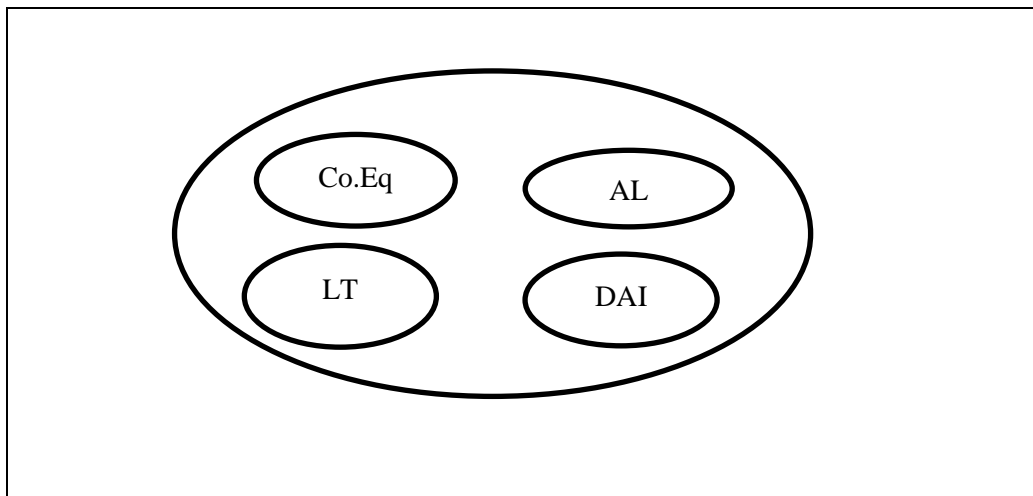


Figure 1 Action Learning as a subset of Action Research adapted from (Reason & Bradbury, 2008)

Key: AL- Action Learning, DAI- Developmental Action Inquiry, Co.Eq- Cooperative Enquiry and LT- Living theory.

In the above figure, Action Learning is one of the four elements of Action Research. Action Learning itself has characteristics that distinguish it from other elements of Action Research.

- It is a learning by doing; (Billett, 2010a),
- It is done in groups of peers or with More Knowledgeable Others and
- It is intended to address issue that are common to all members involved.

These characteristics therefore; make Action Learning different from other elements of Action Research but remains as a subset of Action Research.

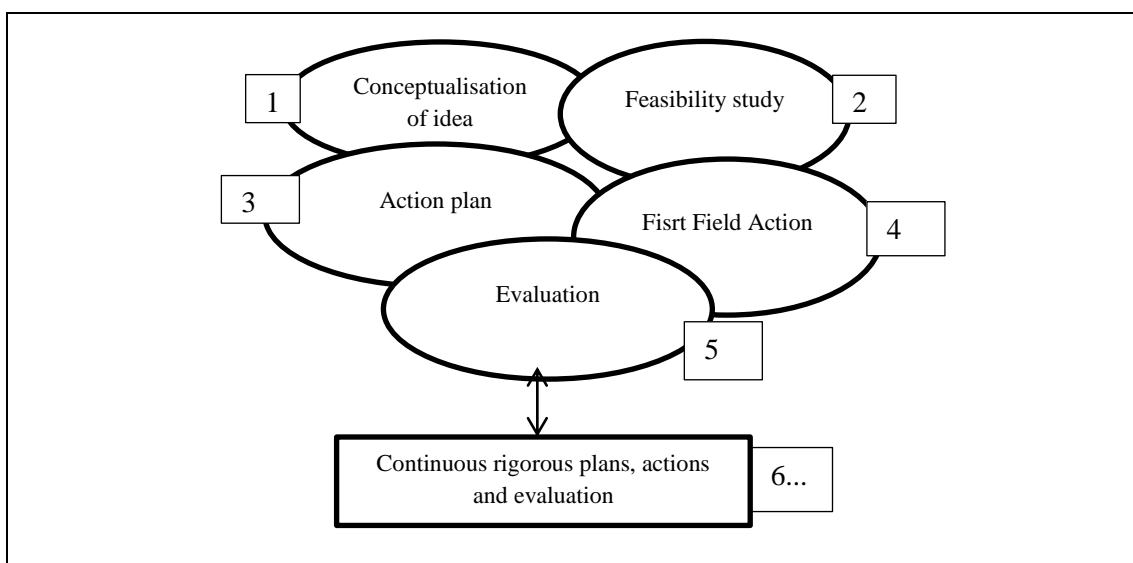
Zuber-Skerritt and Dick appear to have championed the interconnectedness of Action Learning (AL) and Action Research (AR) when they pioneered the ALAR that gives support for the use of Action Learning and Action Research simultaneously. While Zuber-Skerritt and Dick fancy the use of Action Learning and Action Research, they seem to have done little in pointing out the likely differences between the two. Zuber-Skerritt in her interview with Mary Farguhar, (Zuber-Skerritt & Dick, 2009, p. 25) describes Action Learning and Action Research as “interdisciplinary field” and also method for learning and development applicable to individual, organisation or society. I agree with this view in the sense that Action Research involves academic element since the researcher may act in fulfilment of academic requirement for award of degree or any other qualification, while Action Learning is solution oriented more noticeably carried out to answer specific problem and not

precondition for academic satisfaction. These two could be combined in case the problem is affecting all members of the group. In this study, my practice as well as improving learning of my students are the major concern and thus; the use of Action Research as an approach to facilitate implementation of Action Learning in economic education became inevitable.

In summary, Action Learning is part of Action Research and it is done in a group of members who have common issues to address. This study addresses the dual issue including improvement of my professional practice as a teacher of economics and Students' Learning and Entrepreneurial Skills Development through interplay of classroom and workplace experiences.

### 2.3.4 My Steps of Action Research and Action Learning

Action Research and Action Learning involve a series of interrelated steps to perform certain tasks. These steps vary from one person to another or group to group. The figure below shows steps that were taken during this study (explanation is given after the figure).



**Figure 2 Action Research and Action Learning circles (from my Research Logbook)**

Step 1: Conceptualisation of ideas: at this stage of Action Research and Action Learning, I questioned myself with reference to my practice. I asked questions like: Is my practice service based? Are my students achieving the required skills? I'm teaching in line with community needs? Are my lessons connected to workplace needs? In fairness; this was the stage of information gathering to form one idea that I took to the next step involving the learners. Cohen and Manion argues that the immediate thing is the intention to intervene in certain thing which is not promoting development objectives, (Cohen & Manion, 1994). In this study, the starting point for intervention is self-reflective questions and evaluation of the

already existing situation before taking any other step. In this regard, Cohen and Manion's view of Action Research provides basis for undertaking Action Research with reference to ideal need of the intervention.

Step 2: Feasibility study: feasibility study in this report is used to mean analysis of the risks and chances for success before making final plan and action. At this stage, I involved my students and in discussing the idea and to evaluate if they could accept to take part in making the change. After establishing the chances of making improvement, I then moved to the next step in circle.

Step 3: Action plan: this stage consists of making step by step action plans with objectives and means of achieving the set objectives. All Participants were crucial at this stage by providing time frame for the actions and necessary information required for the actions.

Step 4: The field Action: at this stage, I took actions depending on the action plan in step 2 and the imminent changes arising from actions in the classroom or outside the classroom. Modification of the plans and actions at this stage was imminent because changes go with experiential learning with in the field

Step 5: Evaluation: while evaluation is embedded in all stages of Action Research and Action Learning, there was a stage where I sat alone or with members to reflect on the actions taken in the in the classroom or at workplaces. The evaluation entails the points of strength and weaknesses of the previous actions and provide avenue for future plans and course of actions.

Step 6: Continuous Rigorous plans, actions and evaluation: Action Learning in my view does not stop at the point of evaluation. The evaluation as mention above is meant to ascertain whether the objectives have been achieved. Continuous rigour of plans, feasibility study, actions and evaluation give room for further improvement. Some scholars claim that continues planning with series of steps makes Action learning a cyclic process of plans and actions (Ary, Jacobs, & Sorensen, 2010, p. 513; Norton, 2009). All steps of the Action Research and Action learning are interrelated thus; to accomplish one stage, I had to look at all other stages so as to keep track of the plans and objectives.

## **2.4 The Learning Theory**

Under this section, I present the concept of learning and the theories of learning in relation to Action Learning which is the focus of this study. I considered Individual learning and Group



learning with reference to Constructivist theory because it is relevant to my epistemological understanding of knowledge creation which involves construction and practice.

### **Individual and Group Learning with Reference to Constructivist theory**

Perhaps; the major learning theories could be summarised to Behaviourist theory, Cognitivist theory and Constructivist theory (Illeris, 2009). These theories are relevant in learning depending on the context in which they are applied. In this study; I have reviewed constructivist theory because its focus is on learner as an active participant in the learning process. The learner is believed to construct his or her learning alone or through interaction with peers and the teachers or elders within the learning sphere. Constructivist theory is believed to have been coined by Psychologists Piaget, John Dewey and Vygotsky in earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century (Hein, 1991)<sup>5</sup>. In regard to this report, I have only discussed Vygotsky's views of constructivism in relation to individual and group learning (Action Learning) which is the focus of this report. This theory defines learning as reflective process and further stresses that by reflecting on individual or group experiences, new knowledge is constructed. In the last few months of self-reflection study; I realised that reflection did not only influenced me to improve my practice but to analyse and make imagination for future actions. Self-reflection has helped me with my students during this study to correct the past mistakes and plan well ahead to avoid inconsistency and solving problems by ad hoc. Constructivism applies both to learning theory and epistemology (Hein, 1991). This implies that learning is constructed depending on how people learn and the nature of the knowledge learnt by the people. In practice, when I involved my students in the learning group or in short term Applied Learning Scenario (ALS) scheme, those who participated have often demonstrated sense of critical thinking when given task to do compare to learners who deliberately waited for finished material from other participants. It is my impression that learners construct for themselves knowledge individually or in small group of learners who understand their main objectives of the group. Individually, the learner constructs knowledge when he or she reads, work, or make self-reflection. Prove of this can be seen if the learner is subjected to perform particular task without the help of others such as teachers or peer group. Collectively, the learners did brain storming in small group discussion which in this research is called Economic learning community (ELC). During this group work; ideas were challenged and some corrections were

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<sup>5</sup> Hein, P. G. E. (1991). The Museum and the Needs of People: Constructivist learning Theory. Retrieved from <http://www.exploratorium.edu/IFI/resources/constructivistlearning.html> on February 14, 2012

made and through reflection, individual learner in the group was able to make some conclusion of learning. It was in this collective discussion where the learners were able to learn some communication skills and share information.

Kaaur (2000) as cited by Faugli argues that the pedagogy of constructivism includes learning by doing, learning through interaction, learning in rich environment, learning at high order thinking level and learning in teacher supported environment (Faugli, 2003). My experience in the field strongly relates to Kaaur argument in the sense that learning was organised to encompass all forms of learning methods such as group discussion, field trips and mentorship among others. Learning by doing involves hand-on hand-off in performance of tasks. It is the composition of thinking, feeling, acting and watching. All these are components of experiential learning. There were stages where the learner needed some assistance from peer members or what Vygotsky called More Knowledgeable Others (MKO)<sup>6</sup>. In Vygotsky's view, learning takes place at two main levels:

Inter-psychological level which stipulates that the interaction the learner have with other learners or with MKO is essential in knowledge development. My experience in this case is that group interaction is an essential aspect of learning in the sense that learners adapt to group learning style and they know that each other's success depends on collective contribution from all members. The members supported each other during group discussion and follow-up by emails and telephone calls when they were unable to meet at some days. The second level is Intra-psychological level which refers to self-learning through reflection and trial and error method. In Vygotsky's view, the learner reflects on the past experience in order to create some learning. In addition, the learner may try on his or her own to learn something that he or she did not know before using trial and error method. This support the argument of experiential learning or learning by doing coined by (Billett, 2010a). In this study, Learners wrote their reflections in form of learning logs and made new plans or means of dealing with situation.

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<sup>6</sup> Vygotsky's idea of Proximal Zone of Development and concept of More Knowledgeable others can be found on this link <http://www.learning-theories.com/vygotskys-social-learning-theory.html>

## Chapter Summary and Synopsis

### Summary

Learning is a complex process achievable through different pedagogical approaches. The use of Action Learning is seen in this study as imperative in promoting the interplay between classroom and workplace experiences and that the cooperation between learners and teacher provides fluency in Action Learning strategy.

### Synopsis

In chapter 2, the following have been analysed for the purpose of understanding and building my capacity.

- Learning
- Action Research
- Action learning and
- Learning theory

## Chapter 3: Methodological Framework

### Introduction

In an attempt to improve my professional practice and contribute toward improvement of Students' learning skills through Action Learning, this chapter presents synthesis of methodological approaches used during data collection, documentation, transcription, discussion and reporting. Before describing the methods used in this thesis, I would like to remind the readers of this report that the problem statement of this study is *how to apply an Action Learning strategy in economics education with specific reference to improvement of my practice as a teacher of economics and to further investigate how this strategy could lead to Students' learning skills development.*

This chapter begins with my presentation of Reflective Critique which is a crosscutting theme in this study. The main approach which is the understanding of Action learning as a form of Qualitative Action Research approach is given before the subsequent methods used in this research. The chapter then closes with ethical values. The outlines of main issues discussed in this chapter include:

- 3.1 Reflective Critique
- 3.2 Action Research as a Qualitative Methodology
- 3.3 The Methods used in this Study
- 3.4 My Procedures for Data Transcription and Analysis
- 3.5 Reliability and Validity
- 3.6 Research Limitations and Possible Solutions
- 3.7 Research Design
- 3.8 Logical Work Plan and Time Line
- 3.9 Research Ethical Issues: How did I consider them?

### 3.1 Reflective Critiques

The purpose for this section is to present how I deal with my own thinking, presentation of ideas and how this thinking influence daily activities including this study. My supervisor has on many occasions challenged me to think critically and present my argument logically. This

did not discourage me but rather motivated me to study the idea of Reflective Critique and here I present my take on this theme.

Reflective Critique refers to being aware of thinking and how individual thinking changes overtime (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009). McNiff and Whitehead argue that reflective Critique enables the researcher to analyse both communicative and written discourses without slipping into unreflective discourses. In this study, I used Reflective critique on my actions and the comments provided by peer members and my supervisor. Before taking any comments into consideration, I ask questions like: How does this comment fit in my study? Why making this comments? Why are my students not writing their logs? What can I change from this lesson in order to improve next discussion? What lesson have I learnt? These reflective questions provide opportunity for improvement in the actions to come and also enable me to continuously reflect on the past activities.

### **3.2 Action Research as a Qualitative Methodology**

Qualitative Research involves the understanding of the phenomena and answering questions mainly conducted at workplaces or in daily activities of individual or group of individuals (Flick, 1998). This means that Qualitative Research is aim at improvement of the work or living condition. In this study, Qualitative approach is used to apply an Action Learning for improvement of practices. My choice for this approach is inspired by number of scholars including (Flick, 1998, 2006), (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009) and (Norton, 2009) who argue that Qualitative Research involves analysis of unstructured information from interviews, photos, documents videos, notes, logs and email messages. The intention of my choice to use this qualitative approach is to gain an in-depth understanding of how I could improve my practice and to explore the strategies that would promote learners' involvement in learning. This could not be achieved without the use of qualitative methods as suggested by the said scholars. Action Learning as a form of Action research uses methods such as observation, unstructured interviews and document analysis, Mentorship among others.

### **3.3 Methods used in this Study**

Under this section, I discuss the methods chosen based on my ontological values and used during the research process from data collection, analysis, discussion, conclusion to recommendations. Each method is defined with brief discussion of why and how it was used and presents its strengths and weaknesses. The following methods were used in this study

1. Group Discussion and Dialogue
2. Continuous Reflective Logs, Research Journal, Books and other Document Analysis
3. Mentorship
4. Unstructured Interview Conversation
5. Participants Observation
6. Online Search

### **3.3.1 Group Discussion and Dialogue**

Group Discussion and Dialogue is one of the methods used in this Action Learning strategy where members of the team shared ideas and experiences with purpose of making improvement to respective practices. I chose this method because it encourages idea sharing and construction of knowledge through participation. Group Discussion and Dialogue is believed to be one of methods commonly use at workplaces like schools, companies and other organised institutions (Flick, 1998; Schwarz, 2005). Flick and Schwarz acknowledge that discussion in group could help the members to plan their activities, solve disputes and promote better understanding among the members. In this study, participants (I inclusive) agreed to use Discussion and Dialogue so as to share ideas related to business, discuss academic issues as in the study curriculum and build team spirit among members. More so, the method gives an opportunity for participants to learn from each other and to be active rather than being passive participants (for data collected using group discussion, refer to 4.2.1.). Discussions were done in groups (see 3.3.1.1) on weekly basis as agreed by members. Dialogue provides fluency in Group Discussion or between two members in the group as claim by, (Freire, 1996; Inglar, Bjerknæs, Reidum, & Tobiassen, 2002). These scholars argue that dialogue aid the process of Group Discussion since it provides understanding between members if they can communicate freely with each other. In this study, dialogue was a key point in discussion and in trying to resolve major group issues that could have not been possible without dialogue.

#### **3.3.1.1 Group Formation**

During this study, members of the Economics Learning Community (ELC) formed three small groups consisting of eight (8) members each. The members were selected on random counting system where members are selected based on the numbers they counted at random. The maximum number of count was three (3) thus, members started counting one (1) up to three (3). Those who counted one (1) formed group one (1), members who counted two (2)

became the participants in group two (2) while those who counted three (3) constituted group three (3).

### *3.3.1.2 Organisation of Group Activities*

The major group of all 21 students and three facilitators (teachers) organised to meet together to share experiences in two ways. First, group discussion were organised in the classroom to discuss given topic as per the curriculum set by the university. The second form was Economics Learning Community (ELC) discussions which were organised outside the classroom (workplaces). These outside group activities helped learners to share ideas and experiences related to learning and skills development. Topics such as Small Income Generating Activities, Financial Management, Customer Care Service, Business Establishment and Management among others were discussed by the members. Each group had learning facilitator selected by the members themselves. The facilitators were tasked with the responsibility of organising the venue for discussion and give information to members well in advance. The facilitators were temporary selected thus; every meeting was facilitated by different facilitator each time. It is in my view to acknowledge that though this organisation was intended to link the classroom and workplace experiences, it could not be assumed to have reached the level of Cooperative Education involving Institution, Employers and Students making agreement for the learning. However, it does provide an opportunity for improvement in Economic Education System toward Cooperative Education if I and other experts could continue with this process in future.

The challenges involved in Group Discussion and Dialogue method include insufficient time for all members to discuss and unexpected circumstances where a group member might abstain without giving prior notice to other members. Failure of one member normally results into weakness of the group members to accomplish the task which has not been attended to by the other member as a result of failure to turn up for the meeting. Also the participants might not express their opinions explicitly compare to individual interview.

To solve some of these anomalies, I and group members resolved to confirm presence at least three hours before the meeting. Also topic of discussion was shared by members in the sense that two or three members handle one subtopic leaving others to discuss other subtopics.

### **3.3.2 Continuous Reflective Logs, Research Logbook, Books and other Documents Analysis**

#### ***3.3.2.1 Continuous Reflective Learning Logs***

I maintained log writing throughout the period of data Collection, Transcription, Analysis, Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendation. The three column learning log consisted of information both in the classroom and outside the workplaces. The first column contains the title of the activity or activities of the day, second column shows the lesson or experience learnt and finally the third column portrays my reflection(s) on the lesson learnt (see appendix E). The reflections on the events of the day were first recorded in the research logbook before writing the weekly log. Participants had their learning logs written though not quite often and I had access to their logs especially during individual member consultation or mentorship (Refer to sample of participant logs in appendix F).

The learning log helped me to keep track of what was done, the lesson learnt and possible future plans in the research circle.

Based on my experience, the only noticeable shortcoming of reflective log is the time required to write log weekly. Drawing summary of daily activities and making reflection could take 2-3 hours every Saturday which was such a long time given the busy schedule of mentor session with participants and other personal social activities like sports over the week.

#### ***3.3.2.2 Research Logbook***

My consideration to use Logbook was inspired by Joane Rebbeck (Rebbeck, 2005) who argues that logbook necessitate the keeping of data and information collected during research project. Based on my experience, the Logbook enabled me to keep track of the day to day activities as Rebbeck claims. Research Logbook in this study is short handbook that I used to record my plans and other research activities. The Research Logbook supplemented the learning logs in the sense that sketch planning, drawing and program notes were all recorded in the Research Logbook before transferring the information to weekly logs. I used Research Logbook also to record my interview conversations with participants, sometime take minutes during meeting and write the attendance of the participants. Each activity recorded in the Research Logbook was marked with date, Month and the Year. I used to give participants my Research Logbook whenever they needed it so that they read what I write and perhaps build trust between participants and myself.



Research Logbook is one of the essential tools used in this study due to its usefulness in record keeping. I have not experience any shortcoming of Research Logbook and subsequently do not have anything to write against it at this level. However, like any other book, Research Logbook might get damage, lost or tear some pages if not taken care of.

### *3.3.2.3 Books and other Document Analysis*

I read a selection of books, Journals, Articles and Reports which are related to this study. These documents were selected on the basis that they are within Pedagogical context or are with Qualitative Action Research tradition that recognises reflective study and continuous analysis of individual practice geared toward improvement.

My usual approach to reading such documents is to read the abstract or executive summary to gain brief inside as claim by the author. If the document is of relevant content to my topic, the second step is to read the table of content to look for specific topic(s). Having identified the relevant topic(s) or subtopic(s); I then open it, read and take notes of main attributes with in the message communicated by the author. Such attributes may be the key word(s) that captures the meaning of the message. Each source of the information obtained from the book is provided in this report as shown in the Reference List. Where direct quotation is taken from the book, I have indicated the page number of the book where quotation could be obtained. For the case of students' documents that might not have table of content, I ask the participants to show me where description of each activity is indicated. Such documents are usually short and could be read from page to page.

Books, Education Journals, Government Reports and Students documents used in this study provided enormous and fantastic information which contributed in the discourse and final writing of this report. I established information provided by other scholars (refer to reference list) through books and Journals which helped me to use references appropriate for this study. The government report provided the background information of education system in South Sudan.

The shortcoming of Books and other Document Analysis is that apart from time consuming, the information contained may be suitable at certain time other than the current situation.

However, I tried to use my critical thinking and sound judgement ability to identify out-dated and irrelevant information that might not be acceptable this report and only selected

information that I believe is up to-date could be suitable in this study. I chose to study books published by well-known publishing companies and journals authored or reviewed by peers.

### **3.3.3 Mentorship**

After observing that some participants were not active during discussion, I suggested to participants the possibility of using mentorship scheme to support individual learners. It was accepted and implemented based on acknowledgement that it would enable all members to participate. Mentorship in this study is defined as a process of supporting learners in building confidence and trust in individual ability and to encourage active participation of learners in learning process. I used this method during the Action Learning activities to provide an opportunity for the learners to consult me whenever they deem it necessary and to have social interaction in form of unstructured interview conversation. Some common questions during this meeting include the use of internet for academic purpose, log writing and presentation of individual report during group presentation.

This method was organised in two ways. First the learners could come to me on campus during break or after classes. This was meant to allow lengthy discussion and in-depth unstructured interview conversation with the learners. Secondly; I could visit the learners at their workplaces on appointment. This arrangement was a suggestion presented by one of the group members and I found it useful to implement.

The method was useful in improving communication skills and helped me clarify some learning issues to students. It aided the follow-up of the discussion and it gave me opportunity to observe the learners at their workplaces. Also the learners were able to interact freely since it was one to one communication.

### **3.3.4 Unstructured Interview Conversation**

In this study, an Interview is defined as a process of conversation between or among people with purpose of getting information. Research interview is based on daily conversation between the researcher and the participants (Flick, 1998; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009a; Norton, 2009) and Merton and Kendall (1946) as cited in (Flick, 1998). These scholars agree that the interaction between research and respondents could be organised in form of conversation with no structure of question but rather that the first question asked by interviewer might result to more questions depending on the answer given by respondent. Norton further argues that Research Interview could be structured or unstructured and that unstructured interviews in particular are intended to gain insights about respondents' world

and their experiences (Norton, 2009). In this report, I used unstructured interview so as to obtain in-depth understanding of learners' views in regard to the process of learning in small group, lecture and presentation approaches. The second aim was to establish if Action Learning has in one way or the other helped the learners improve or gain entrepreneurial skills that would foster development of needed skills for job before or after completion of studies.

The interviews were conducted on campus and at workplaces. Questions and subsequent answers were recorded in Research logbook (see 3.2.2.2). Prior to university end of semester examination, I conducted unstructured interview with students to establish learners' confidence in doing written examination as part of evaluation of this AL.

The use of unstructured interview created opportunity for me to find more information than it should have been in the case of structured interview. It also helped in building confidence in the learners to interact with me freely which in my view plays significant role in the learning process.

However, this method is some time misleading because the follow-up questions after the answers given by the interviewee may be influenced by the answer given. This may result into long and unnecessary interview. It also requires long time which was not always available for me and even the respondent.

To avoid these problems, I used evaluative or probing questions such as: did you mean that.....? Can you explain more? Have you done this or that? The proving questions were meant to verify the statements made by the interviewee so as to avoid miss conception of the ideas.

### **3.3.5 Participant Observation**

Participants' Observation is one of the methods in Qualitative studies as in (Flick, 1998, 2006; Norton, 2009). These scholars agree that Participant Observation involves physical presence of the researcher at the scene or at the work place of the participant. My experience has been in line with the scholars' assertion. I observed learners during group discussion on campus and during the work activities at the workplaces. I informed the Learner about my presence during the workplace activity observation so as to inform their employers prior to the visit.

I used this method purposely to explore the natural scene and have first-hand information as lively as the situation unfold. The participant and I had the same access to the event or the activity thus; making it possible to obtain fresh information.

Though this method is useful, I faced difficulties in fulfilling the two roles as a participant and at the same time as a researcher especially during group discussion and presentations. As a member of the group, I was expected to contribute but with my intention to use observation as a method of data collection, it was difficult to do the two activities at the same time.

However, I resolved this problem by trying to prioritise and observe one group participant at a time when he or she was speaking. Also some participants could take photos using my digital camera some time when I appear to participate in the way that could not allow me use my camera. I later use photos taken to reflect on the day activities and draw meaning that would form part of the information in the learning logs.

### **3.3.6 Online Web Search, Emails and Telephone Conversation**

#### **3.3.6.1 Online Web Search**

Online Web Search as used in this study involves the use of internet service for data collections and analysis. I used my Computer laptop and desktops available at OAUC for access to websites in order to find e-books that were necessary for this study. I mainly used the website of Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences ([www.hioa.no](http://www.hioa.no)) to get the books and journals related to Qualitative Action Research and Action Learning. I also used [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) some time to search for selected key terms. Before going online, I always ensure that the specific area of search is defined by key words, Author or Book title. This was meant to minimise unnecessary searching that would result to chug of information that might be difficult to filter.

The disadvantage to this approach is embedded in the use of internet service. For example, when I was in the field collecting data, there was insufficient internet service in the area and I could not access library database or any website for information related to my topic. I solved this problem by acquiring mobile internet modem which to some extent minimised the problem of insufficient internet service.

#### **3.3.6.2 Emails and Telephone Conversations**

These are related parts of online communication where messages could be sent and receive depending on the availability of the network or internet service in particular area. My

Personal Computer connected to mobile internet in South Sudan assisted in sending emails and sometime makes calls using Skype to Skype and Nonoh to telephones. I subscribed to both Skype and Nonoh as a backup plan so as to avoid interruption in the phone network service that might occur sometimes.

I used email messages and telephone conversations during this study to contact the research participants during the data collection and also to communicate with my supervisor. Email in particular was used to send logs, draft reports and to receive feedback from the supervisors and participants. Use of email and telephone service encourages collaboration with other researchers especially colleagues doing the same research as Veen and Vrakking (2006) observes. My experience suggests that this tool is essential in that the message is store and can be read at any time when I deem it right to do so. The feedback from peer members and supervisor channelled through emails can be retrieved any time.

Although this method is used in this research, it has shortcomings as well. Finding relevant information online requires time and constant availability of internet service. I experienced situation of not following one track because every headline on internet was eye catching thus, could divert the attention. Lack of constant internet service was another problem associated with online research. Without internet, online research could not proceed thus; limiting the chances of getting information online at the time it was need.

To guard against these challenges involved in online research, I only searched on the links to university websites and leading Action Researchers' websites because they are reviewed by peers and guided by ethics and goals of the institution.

### **3.4 Procedures for Data Transcription and Analysis**

This section presents the steps that I took in transcribing the data and make analysis to obtain meanings relevant for this report. Transcription is defined by Graham Gibbs as a process of writing up the information obtained from the field (Graham, 2007). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009b) define transcription as means of transforming data from one form to another. The implication is that data could be transformed in different ways but with care of keeping the idea or meaning as communicated by the respondent. It may not be the process of writing up only as Graham asserts but it is the comprehensive steps taken in coding, comparison, analysis and interpretation of the data obtained from field using various methods. I took four steps in transcribing data in this report.

- 1- The Raw Data
- 2- Grouping Data from Individuals, Group Data and Secondary Data
- 3- Coding the Data
- 4- Transcribing and Analysing Data

### 3.4.1 The Raw Data

The Raw Data collected using the methods such group discussion and dialogue, interview, mentorship among others (refer to 3.2 where I have presented these methods) appears inform of logs, photographs, minutes, notes and students' reports. This Raw Data is expressed in term of individual opinion, group views and my personal reflection on the day-to-day lessons. The Raw Data was then grouped, coded and transcribed as explained below.

### 3.4.2 Grouping Data from Individuals, Group Data and Secondary Data

At this stage, I classified data into three categories. The first category consists of data collected from individual participant obtained using methods such as observation, unstructured interview and mentorship. I collected this data together and level it as **Individual Data (ID)** which expresses individual opinions other than group. The second category consists of data collected from group during group discussion, report, group interview or during classroom session. This kind of data reflects group views which is not expressed as individual opinion. This data was labelled as Group Data. The third category shows the data collected from secondary sources such as government reports, text books, journals and websites. This data was labelled as Secondary Data (SD) which indicates opinion of the writer(s) at that time and could be relevant for reflection in this report.

The purpose for grouping or categorising the data was to enable me to identify the information that answers particular research question(s). It was also intended to identify data that makes the same of similar meaning so as to avoid repetition.

After grouping the data into three categories, I then went on to code the data with reference to Research Questions and Objectives as below. The purpose for coding the data into A, B and C was to link the data to the research questions and objectives and to transcribe and analyse that data in line with the objectives.

### 3.4.3 Coding the Data

In this study, three (3) capital letters were used to represent the views of participants and mine in regards to the research questions and objectives (refer to questions and objectives on

1.5 and 1.6 respectively). The letters were selected on the basis of consistence since the same letters have been used in objectives and research questions.

**A-** Reflection on how I have improved my professional practice

**B-** Views of participants in relation to organisation of learning activities both in classroom and workplaces (learning in groups, use of Applied Learning Scenarios, Mentorship)

**C-** Participants' views on strengths and weakness of Action Learning strategy in learning skills development (learning in groups, use of Applied Learning Scenarios and Mentorship)

### **3.4.4 Data Transcription Process**

I am aware that each study may take different approach of transcribing the data. In this study, the data was transcribed after coding it in three levels because there is considerable difference between transcription and analysis of data obtained from individual and that obtained from group in the sense that the former reflects the views of an independent participant whereas the latter is used to transcribe and analyse collective views of participants in their respective groups. The third level (see below) of data transcription and analysis varies from the first and second levels in the sense that the ideas obtained from secondary sources reflect the views of the owners in specific context that differs from this project.

The three levels used in the Data Transcription Process include

1. Transcription and Analysis of Data from Individual Participant
2. Transcription and Analysis of Data from Group of Participants
3. Data Transcription and Analysis

#### **3.4.4.1 Transcription and Analysis of Data from Individual Participant**

Under this section, I present how the data obtained from individual participant was transcribed.

Transcription and Analysis of Data obtained during mentorship, observation and unstructured interview with individual participant was done separately before the results were combined with the results of data from other participants for further interpretation. In this study, letters **B** and **C** (as in 3.3.1) were used to identify information obtained from the participant on such a date and day as specified in Research Logbook. The information from individual participant was analysed separately to draw meaning before collective meaning from all participants. Pictures or photos at some points were interpreted to describe the activity which the learner

conducted. The collection of meanings from different participants at this level was grouped and regrouped in to families<sup>7</sup> of **B and C** for further interpretation. Data from observation was first recorded in the Research Logbook (RL) before transcription relating it to results of interview to construct meaningful statements. The statements in form of outlines were written on stickers in groups that seems to form similar meaning and then scrupulous analysis was conducted based on A, B and C as explained above.

The trigger involves in transcription and analysis of Individual Data is that individuals often have different ways of expressing opinions thus, constructing uniform statement posed challenge to me.

#### *3.4.4.2 Transcription and Analysis of Data from Group of Participants*

Here I describe the transcription of data obtained from group of participants during group discussion, classwork and group report.

I chose this form of data analysis and transcription because the information expressed in group might significantly vary from individual views thus; I decided to treat this information differently but later on relate it with data collected using other methods.

Data obtained from members during group discussion or presentation of group findings was transcribed and analysed before selecting the key points for further analyses with the results of data collected using other methods. Data collected from group discussion, collective interviews and team presentation was summarised and categorised into specific group (**A, B and C**) that would make meanings. Words with the same or similar explanation were used to identify the ideas and concepts expressed by group members.

This approach necessitates transcription of data at relatively short time compare to other methods. However, the shortcoming of this transcription approach is that some vital information might be left out since it generalises the group views compare to transcription of data obtained from individual. It is also difficult to ascertain if all participants participated equally.

#### *3.4.4.3 Data Transcription and Analysis*

This is transcription and analysis of data obtained from secondary sources such as government reports, textbooks, journals and websites. Data under this category was grouped and related to the views of participants into **B and C**. During transcription, I made

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<sup>7</sup> Category that makes similar or the same meaning



comparison, summary and critical reflection (involving how and why) of the ideas presented in relation to this study. This approach of data transcription and analysis helps in critical engagement with my views and enabled me to improve my analytical capacity and judgement. It is good to acknowledge here that this approach is tiresome and time consuming and the ideas expressed in the reports or books may be misleading.

### **3.5 Reliability and Validity in this Report**

Under this section, I explain the Reliability and Validity of this report based on my experience and the literature.

#### **3.5.1 Reliability**

Joppe (2000) as in Golafshani (2003) define reliability as the extent to which the results are consistent overtime and that the results of the study can be reproduced under similar methodology. Scholars like (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009b) and (Jonathan et al., 2005) agree with Joppe when they assert that reliability is a prerequisite for validity in research and that it shows whether the results could be replicated using similar methods. Reliability as used in this study is the extent to which the procedures or the methods for data collection, transcription and analysis could be replicated to produce the same results by any other Action Researcher. In order to replicate the results of this study one should consider the following three points:

First, the researcher should be an Action Researcher who believes and understands the Action Research Tradition (ART) and value self-reflective study with improvement of professional practice as the main goal.

Second, the researcher in question should consider team work and active involvement of learners as prerequisites for replication of the results of this study.

Third, the researcher should follow the validation procedures explained below and minimise the limitations of this research in order to obtain similar or the same results of this study.

The methods of data collection and transcription procedures would yield similar results if the researcher follow step by step procedures used in this study.

#### **3.5.2 Validity**

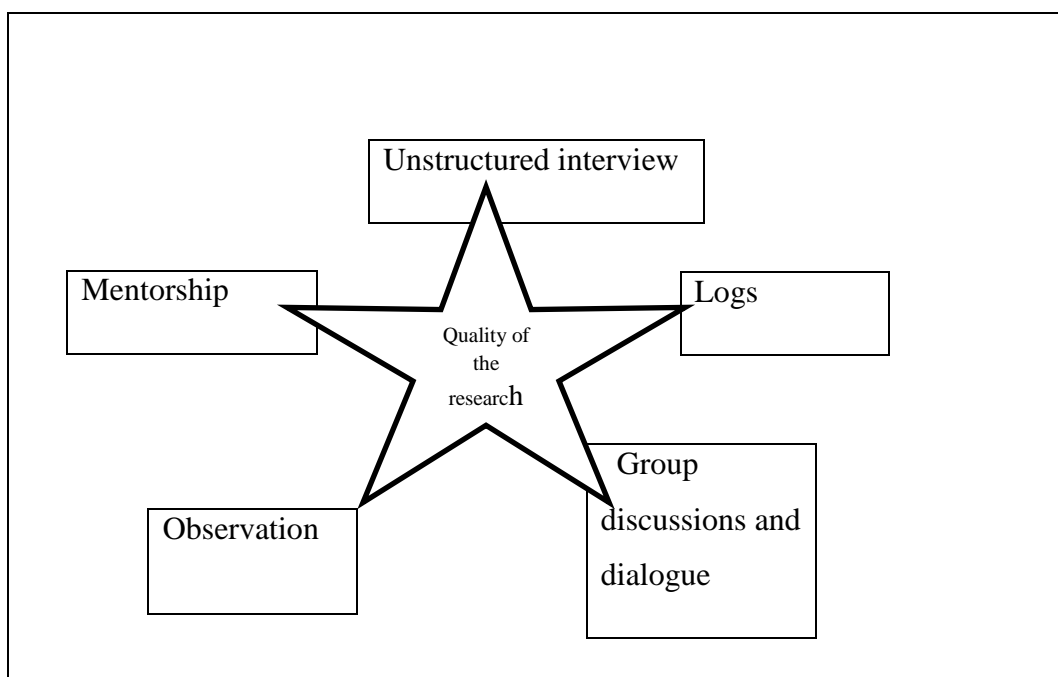
The Validity as used in this study refers to the rationality and consistence of the methods used to yield the given results. There seems to be argument among scholars regarding the degree

of Validity of the data and the results of study, (Altrichter, 2008; Lisa, 2002; Martyn, 2007; Olsen, 2004). Some scholars have suggested that Validity of the results is dependent on methods used for data collection and trustworthiness of the researcher for example (Jonathan, et al., 2005) argues that Validity depends on the way participants were selected, how data was collected and analysed. Others assert that Validity determines whether an investigation yields the correct answer (Graham, 2007). In this study, care was made to validate the results by applying three main validation approaches:

1. Methods and Data Triangulation as means of Validating Results
2. Investigators Triangulation and Validation through Community of Academics
3. Communicative Validity

### 3.5.2.1 Methods and Data Triangulation as means of Validating Results

Martyn argues that triangulation involves the use of different methods to view particular action in different ways and to test whether these methods could yield similar results (Martyn, 2007). The purpose of triangulation is to find detailed and vibrant picture of the phenomenon being investigated. Therefore, in this study, some methods were triangulated so as to validate the results. Observation, unstructured interview, mentorship, group discussion and dialogue and reflective logs were all used to examine the Validity of the data and the results (Refer to figure below).



**Figure 3 Method Triangulation**

Mentorship in particular was used to share the views with participants in order to test if the data they had given in other methods was matching with the results of interview during mentorship. Results of the mentorship were compared with data from observation, group discussion, logs and participants' document analysis and there is considerable similarity in the data from these methods which in this report is regarded as Validation of the results. In triangulation of the data, observation was used as a crosscutting method to other methods employed in this research simply because every activity conducted during the data collection involved observation of participants whether in group or during mentorship session.

In my view, data triangulation using different methods is a remedy in validity of the results since it provides an opportunity to investigate the phenomenon in different ways. However, not all methods may yield the same results and thus, the results might be confusing to validate. Communicative validity helped me to avoid this trigger.

### **3.5.2.2 Investigators' Triangulation and Validation through Community of Academics**

#### ***3.5.2.2a Investigator's Triangulation***

This is one way of data triangulation involving more than one evaluator so as to crosscheck the results from two evaluators as (Lisa, 2002) explains. Lisa claims that Researcher needs to work with peers to examine if the results matches or valid. I took Lisa's concept and collaborated with two other facilitators in order to validate the results. However, before we could compare our results, one of the facilitators got some other assignments outside this project that did not allow him to continue with us. I compared and reconciled the recoded information with my colleague with aim of try to understand if we had the same information or not. The results came out to be similar especially on the role of Action Learning in connecting classroom experiences with workplace experiences.

I also asked the co-facilitator to always read my logs, data collection methods and requested him to tell me what he understands from these logs and methods used. The purpose of this peer review was to evaluate the research process including data and methods of collection and interpretation and subsequently validate the results.

#### ***3.5.2.2b Validation through Community of Academics***

Apart from Co-facilitators in the field, I have Community of Academics whom I refer to as Action Research Critical Family (ARCF) consisting of three members. These members are researchers who endeavour to underscore Action Research approach in their respective

projects. We have been together as a family for nearly two years (2010-2012) and we engage in critical examination of each other's projects. We meet to share ideas every week and could communicate to each other when need arises at any time using Skype, emails, or some time share ideas in online Facebook forum called *Action Researchers*. I ensured sending my work to the ARCF and often, they give feedback on areas that need clarifications. This critical engagement did not only help in identifying areas that needed more explanation of points but also strengths in the report and justification of why and how I did some activities and I conclude that it is one way of validating the research process.

### **3.5.2.3 Communicative Validation**

In an attempt to use this method of validation, I was guided by (Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh, 1993) who argue that testing the knowledge claim could be done through conversation and dialogue with people who participated in the activity. They further argue that interviewer's interpretation of data from interviewee is valid if the interviewee confirms the interpretation. In this process, I attempted to validate the results by going back to the informants for second or third time to verify if the information given in the first dialogue remains the same or changed. I considered any information that was not confirmed by the responded as invalid while the information confirmed as valid and necessary for further consideration in data analysis.

## **3.6. Research Limitations and Possible Solutions**

This part of the report presents the challenges that I faced during the research period and how I attempted to address these challenges.

My own inexperience in conducting an Action Research was one of the problems. I did not have confidence at the beginning of data collection with the fear of being wrong when taking an action. I used quantitative method when I conducted the undergraduate dissertation research thus; I had no experience of an Action Research methodology. However, the support given to me by my supervisor, Critical Action Research Family (the validation team) and some colleagues in the institution where I conducted this research gave me a lift and courage to proceed and overcame the fear of unknown.

The nature of the research Problem statement itself was an obstacle. The Problem Statement has dual purpose: *First, improve my practice as a teacher and second, contributing toward students' learning skills development through Action Learning* (refer to 1.4 for more information about problem statement). This dual problem was at first proving to be difficult

to pursue. Improving my practice is wide and contributing toward students learning skills development is even wider and was difficult to achieve within six month research period. It needs long time for learners to build trust and confidence in what they do and also consider themselves as potential entrepreneurs and work on their own with hope of managing their entrepreneurial activities. This dual nature of my problem statement meant that I engaged in two activities concurrently. In an attempt to solve this potential problem, the participants helped me to define the area of their needs in regard to learning skills development. These needs were fostered using active participation in the group activities and individual project. The participants had workplaces which enabled them to practice the skills that they learnt theoretically during the group discussion and dialogue. Some of them established cooperative groups that enabled them to contribute capital for setting up small scale businesses as an attempt to own businesses and an ideal interplay between classroom and workplaces. I realised that improvement of my practice is embedded in research, group discussion, and relationship with students, mentorship, team teaching, and use of varied teaching methods and involvement of students in learning process. It was not six month work; it is lifelong practice that could not be achieved in six months as I had thought earlier.

Limited resources including internet service was another problem that I faced during the period of data collection. One of the objectives was to foster students' participation in learning but due to limited learning resources such as reference books in the library active participation was partially hampered. However, we had to adapt to the situation and share the available researches as possible as we could.

Another problem was the validity and reliability (refer to 3.4) of the data. This was my worry even before I went to the field for data collection because I did not have idea of how to validate the results and make research process replicable. To solve this, I endeavoured to search for literature on Validity and Reliability and I found three validation methods as in 3.4.2 so as to view the information in different ways and to crosscheck with other methods. The mentorship method enabled me to brain storm with the participants in an attempt to examine if the information that they shared in the previous discussion was the same or changed.

Inaccessibility to information sources such as government policies on education was another challenge that I faced. The nature of my research did not require secondary data but I wanted the government policies to understand how the teaching and learning were embedded in the

educational goals. Getting these policies proved difficult and took long time to obtain a copy. To solve this, I contacted the relevant state authorities to gate access to the policies which was successful in the end.

Though transcription assisted me to draw meanings and conclusion from sentences or words as described in section 3.3, some vital information might have been left out due to errors in grouping and regrouping of words for meanings. Like any other part of this report, I had to pay careful attention to the transcription process so as to avoid leaving out vital information.

### **3.6.1 Implication of Research Limitations on the Overall Results**

As you have might have noticed in the limitations above, most of the challenges have been resolved from within me or by the group members. However these challenges might have both positive and negative implications on the overall research results

#### ***3.6.1.1 Positive implications***

It provoked me to be vigilant and consistent in all steps of Action Research circle (refer to 2.3.4) and this improved my capacity to plan, priorities and implement research activities with confidence. I call this a positive implication on overall results in the sense that my mental capacity was improved thus; improving the quality of research report.

I thought of collaboration and cooperation with Co-facilitators and Academic community and these resulted into validation of the results which is a positive implication on the overall results.

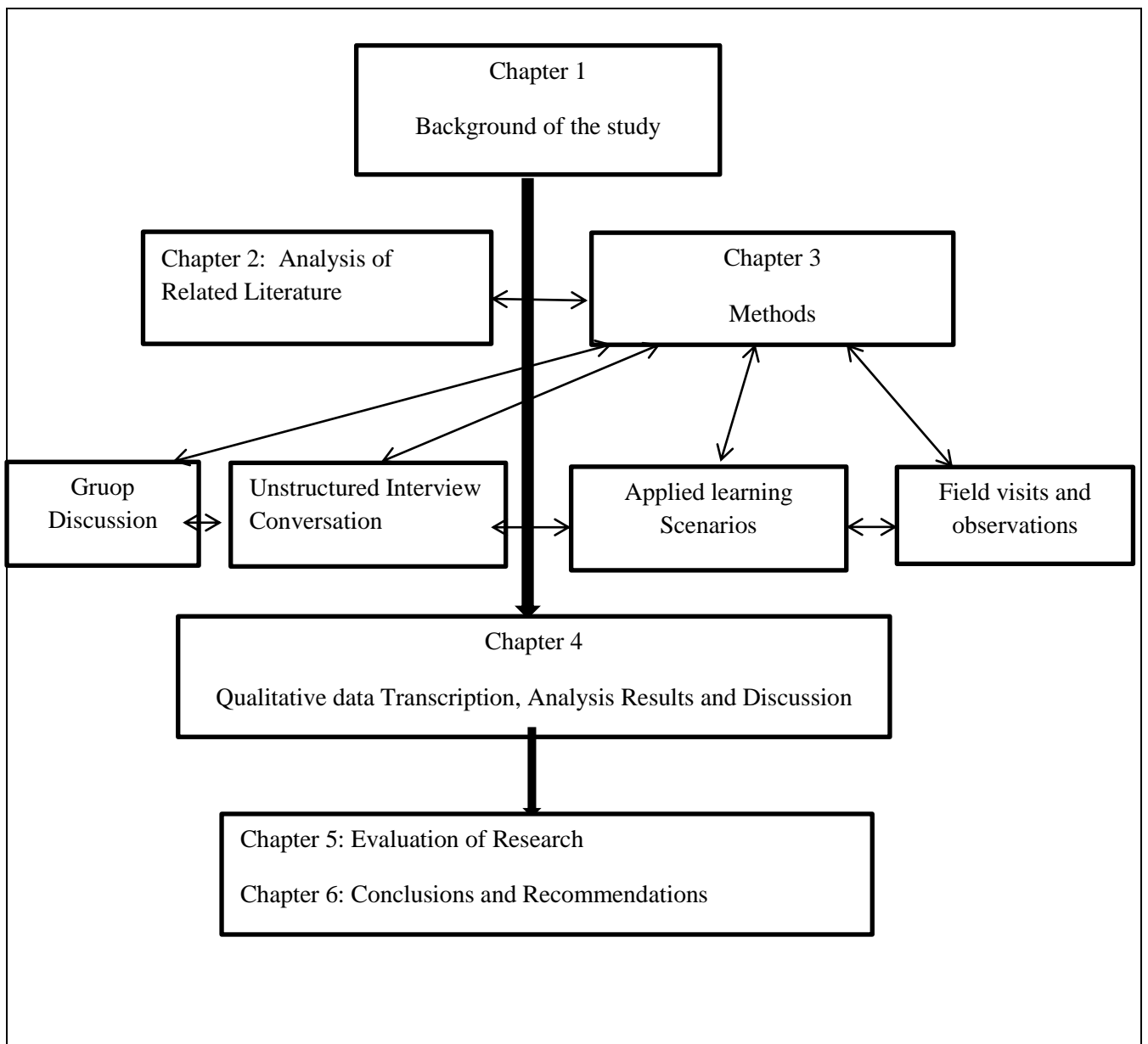
#### ***3.6.1.2 Negative Implications***

The Research Limitations such as limited information sources, my inexperience in Action Research Tradition (ART) and lack of experience of the participants in active learning methods might have hampered the quality of this study because some of these problems such as inexperience in qualitative research were not resolved at the onset but rather remain as challenges up to the final stages of this report. I admit that these challenges need time to be resolved and that it was not possible for me to resolve them in short period of time. They remain part of the problems that I need to resolve as I continue with lifelong reflective study initiated by this project.

### **3.7 Research Design**

By Research Design, I mean the plan of the activities from beginning to the end (from chapter one to the last chapter on conclusion of the research).In this study, the design was

tentative and subject to changes as the activities unfolded. This research was designed in the sense that the research components (objectives, problem statement) were not jeopardised. Chapters were presented in chronological order with brief introduction of overall purpose and objectives of the research in Chapter 1, Analysis of Related Literature in chapter 2, Research methodology in chapter 3 and data analysis and discussion in chapter 4, Evaluation of research in chapter 5 and finally the conclusions and recommendations in chapter 6. The figure below illustrates how the research was designed.



**Figure 4 Research Design**

### 3.7.1 Group Discussion

Discussions were conducted twice in a week on Tuesday and Thursday every week. Each group had set of regulations that guided the activities of the group. During each meeting, a

chairperson and secretary were selected to chair and take minutes of the meeting respectively. Each member in the group had duty of making log and presents his or her ideas of the given topic of the discussion. The members could agree on the topic of discussion in the following week and also decide on the venue and time for the next discussion. The regulation provided that any member who may have commitment that could not allow his or her participation in the meeting should inform any one member of the group prior to the time of discussion. Topics of discussion ranged from daily business activities in the market to topics set in the university curriculum.

### **3.7.2 Unstructured Interview Conversation**

The research was designed in the sense that interviews were conducted purposely to gain in-depth understanding of learners view regarding learning in groups, active participation in class activities, development of entrepreneurial skills and what they thought about the teacher. The interviews were unstructured and were conducted any time when I had the opportunity to interact with the learners.

### **3.7.3 Applied Learning Scenarios and Field Visits**

In an attempt to involve students in learning and encourage them to be active participants, I introduced Applied learning Scenarios strategy. This strategy requires learners to choose research topic and conduct research as individual or in group. The learners were given one week and later one month for the first and second of Applied Learning scenarios respectively to conduct the research and give report to the major group. The learners used both Quantitative and Qualitative approaches in their own choice. The learners visited business centres, ministries and schools to collect information they needed for the learning scenarios.

### **3.8 Research Ethical Issues: How did I Consider Them?**

Research ethical issues as expressed by Norton (2009), are set of standards that are professionally accepted to guide researchers when conducting investigation leading to publication of results. Norton's expression is how I understand ethical issues however; ethics vary from profession to another or community to another community. There appears to be many ethical issues expected from Researcher but the common ones as suggested by Flick and Norton (Flick, 2006; Norton, 2009) are Honesty, objectivity, responsible mentoring, legality and openness. In order to conform to research ethical standards, I observed the following:



### **3.8.1 Research Introductory Letter**

I obtained an Introductory Letter from Akershus University College (HiAk) before it merged with Oslo University College to form the current Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (see appendix A). The purpose of this letter was to introduce me as a student of the issuing University to the administration of the host institution<sup>8</sup> and the participants. I presented the introductory letter to administration of the host university which in turn issued an acceptance letter.

### **3.8.2 Acceptance Letter**

The administration of the host institution offered me an acceptance letter on July 4, 2012. This letter acted as official permission from the university for me to consult students and lecturers who would wish to participate in the research process. Appendix B shows the acceptance letter from Dr. John Garang Memorial University of Science and Technology.

### **3.8.3 Consent Form and Voluntary Participation**

In the view of Norton (2009), Consent form is one of the pre-requisite of ensuring research ethics and boosting morale and trust from participants. I designed and issued consent form to be filled by the participants at will. This form contains the purpose of the research and gives options for the participant to withdraw his or her right to participate when he or she deems it necessary. Some participants did not mind about the consent form arguing that the research was based on teaching and since they are already learners in the school, there was no need to sign consent for. Some articulate research to personal benefit thus; it was imperative to get involve with or without signing the consent form. However it was optional to sign the consent form as I intended it.

### **3.8.4 Privacy, Anonymity and Confidentiality (PAC)**

Under this ethical issue, I took control of information relayed by the participants and ensured that it was kept confidential. Latanya (2002) advises that keeping information as confidential as possible is a key attribute of a researcher. I ensured that all information collected using any methods was kept secret and not for discussion with colleagues during coffee break or any other time. Photos were taken on authorisation of participants. The names have not been mentioned in this report except in the case of logs and consent forms where the participants agreed to include their names. Though the student's logs bears names, I did not use such names in transcription of the data so as to keep privacy of the informants. However, I have

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<sup>8</sup> Host institution in this case is Dr. John Garang Memorial University of Science and Technology where the research was conducted. This is also my work place.

inserted the photos taken during the research as we agreed in the group to share photos for academic purposes.

### 3.8.5 Acknowledgement of others' Contributions

Consistently, I have acknowledged the contribution of other scholars by availing the source of the quotation or illustration so that the readers could find more on their own. It was also necessary to recognise authors of the books used by showing their views in the text or providing link to the sites or source of the information. The contribution of the participants has been made vibrant whenever necessary without mentioning the name of the participants purposely to recognise their invaluable contribution in this report.

### 3.9 Logical Work Plan and Timeline

In an attempt to follow all activities sequentially, I made tentative Logical Work Plan and Time Line. This plan was tentative in the sense that changes were anticipated and indeed they did happen at some points during the research period. Apart from keeping track of activities, the Work Plan and Time Tine helped me to improve my capacity to schedule, prioritise and monitor the progress of the activities. The Work Plan was crucial to me in the sense that it gave information on when to discuss, provide mentorship or when the assignment was due. It assisted in reducing wastage of time and other resources during the research period.

The challenges to this plan included unpredictable weather changes that resulted to cancellation of group activities and dependence on group work that were sometime delayed due to poor attendance by participants. It was also influenced by the daily activities of the university where the research project was conducted.

**Table 2: Logical Work Plan and Time Line**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Responsible Person/Institution</b>	<b>Expected outcome</b>	<b>Critical assumption</b>
Obtaining Research Introductory letter	Feb 10 <sup>th</sup> -28 <sup>th</sup> 2011	2 weeks	HiAk	Official Introductory Letter	Official recognition from HiAk
Development of Concept Paper	Feb 10 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup> 2011	1 week	Myself	Scrutinized concept paper	Ability to use communication skills

Acceptance letter/message	March 1 <sup>st</sup> - 31 <sup>st</sup> 2011	4 weeks	Dr. JG-MUST	Acceptance letter/message	Official recognition from Dr. JG-MUST
R&D proposal ( project 4)	March 21 <sup>st</sup> – May 9 <sup>th</sup> 2011	8 weeks	Myself	Final project 4 proposal report	Communication skills
Preparatory meetings • With Staff(Dr. JG-MUST) • Participants	June 27 <sup>th</sup> - July 8 <sup>th</sup> 2011	1 ½ weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myself</li> <li>• staff</li> <li>• Participants</li> </ul>	Agreed minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperation between myself and various groups</li> <li>• Personal commitment</li> </ul>
R&D Phase 1 • Interactive interview • Introduction of Action Learning • Assessment of Applied learning scenarios • Feasibility evaluation	July 11 <sup>th</sup> - 15 2011		Participants including myself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General level of learning skills</li> <li>• Workable IGA</li> <li>• Acceptance of Action learning approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperation between myself and focus group members</li> <li>• Personal commitment</li> </ul>
Phase 2 • Applied learning scenarios level 1	July 18 <sup>th</sup> - August 19 <sup>th</sup> 2011	4 weeks	Participants including myself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills</li> <li>• A projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperation among participants</li> <li>• Personal commitment</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching</li> <li>• Progress report in form of logs</li> </ul>					
<p>Phase 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applied learning scenarios level 2</li> <li>• ALS evaluation</li> <li>• Teaching</li> <li>• Progress report</li> </ul>	August 22 <sup>nd</sup> - September 30 <sup>th</sup> 2011	5 weeks	Participants including myself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills</li> <li>• Progress report</li> </ul>	Cooperation among participants
<p>Phase 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluation</li> <li>• Examinations</li> <li>• Meeting field Staff</li> <li>• Progress report in form of logs</li> </ul>	October 3 <sup>rd</sup> - Nov. 30 <sup>th</sup> 2011	8 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Myself</li> <li>• staff</li> <li>• Participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills</li> <li>• Progress report</li> <li>• Evaluated IGA</li> </ul>	Cooperation between myself and various groups
1 <sup>st</sup> Research draft	December 2011	4 weeks	Researcher	R&D draft 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absolute commitment</li> <li>• Group discussion and other factors constant</li> </ul>
2 <sup>nd</sup> Research project Draft2 Discussions and improvement	January 5 <sup>th</sup> - March 31 <sup>st</sup> 2012	12 weeks	Researcher, group members and supervisors	Improve R&D project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readiness of group members</li> </ul>
Documentation of Research project	April 1 <sup>st</sup> -30 <sup>th</sup> 2012	4 weeks	Researcher	Final copy of Maters thesis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other factors constant</li> </ul>

final copy						
Research project submission and defence	May-June 2012	8 weeks	Researcher	Successful Research Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An informed defence</li> </ul>	

## Chapter 4: Actions in the Field

### Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss various actions taken in an attempt to improve my professional practice and to contribute to Students' Learning Skills Development through Action Learning (for more information, refer to thesis title at 1.1.1 and problem statement at 1.4). Actions are defined in this study as any or set of activities purposefully undertaken with the aim of getting results and making improvement in my practice and contributing to Students' Learning Skills Development through an Action Learning strategy.

Field as used in this study refers to the learning environment both in the classroom and outside classroom (workplaces).

The chapter is organised in series of two phases anchored to each other. Each phase consists of Actions and Reflections as discussed below.

4.1 Phase I: Oriental Actions (OA)

4.2 Phase II: Development Actions (DA): The interplay between classroom and workplaces

4.3 Chapter 4 summary and Synopsis

### 4.1 Phase I: Oriental Actions (OA)

This phase of the research is the opening stage consisting of activities that were intended to make foundation for the research. It includes improving my own personal mind-set, getting acceptance from the host institution and meeting the participants for the research. I discussed these actions with reference to the stakeholders who provided the much needed facilitation for the implementation of these research and development project.

#### 4.1.1 Action One: Mind-set as a key to Improvement of My Practice

By Mind-set, I mean my own attitudes and values such as integrity, democracy, equality, respect, punctuality, clarity and dialogue skills that could facilitate the conduct of Research and Development (R&D) project. In my view, the personal mind-set<sup>9</sup> that provides road blocks could not provide flourishing acquisition of acceptance, winning approval from

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<sup>9</sup> Mind-set in this report refers to believes, values or attitudes that could either endanger or provide fluency and prosperity of the research project.

participants and involving colleagues in the same profession to participate in the research project. In this case I tasked myself with responsibility of improving my dialogue skills, group discussion facilitation skills, politeness, honesty and clarity in my presentation and indeed presenting my dream in conviction. In order to improve my mind-set, I reflected on my ontological values and asked reflective questions such as:

- a) I'm skilfully prepared to conduct and facilitate group meetings?
- b) How can I approach the administration of the host institution?
- c) What do I need to present?
- d) Do I have all necessary support documents needed?
- e) What information do I need to present to the participants in the first encounter?

In an attempt to find answers to these critical questions; I reflected and ventured into making necessary contact with the university administration in anticipation of getting acceptance letter. I presented research Introductory Letter (see appendix A) that was written by Akershus University College. The purpose of this research letter was to introduce me as master's student of the said University and to acknowledge that the research is intended for academic purpose and a partial requirement for award of Master's Degree in Vocational Pedagogy.

The administration responded by issuing an acceptance letter (see appendix B) which acted as a key to getting participants. The essentiality of the acceptance letter was that it underscores the need for professional development and fulfilment of university's commitment to promoting Research and Development (R&D) which is a core function of Institution of Higher Education in South Sudan. The letter endorsed me as a member of the University as well as giving me freedom to associate with teaching staff and students in the course of data collection. Flick argues that the researcher need to contact the administration of the community he or she intends to conduct research so as to give the go ahead formally, (Flick, 2006). Flick view is relevant in my perspective in the sense that the key to getting research participants especially in Pedagogical Action Research Tradition (PART) is the Institution's Administration. Without official acceptance from the university administration, I should have not had access to the participants thus; making Flick's view significant to me.

The preceding study which I conducted earlier in 2011 gave me an opportunity to build the capacity that I needed to facilitate learning, group discussion and use integrated learning methods in teaching of economics. My task at this stage in the field was to reflect on my

previous experiences and to draw learning from such experiences in order to facilitate learning.

Having obtained the acceptance letter, I evaluated my steps and concluded that it was right time to contact the learners who would be willing to participate in the research.

#### **4.1.2 Action two: First Meeting with Participants, What were the Outcomes?**

This action contributes in answering Research Questions A and B with respective objectives (refer to 1.5 and 1.6). The particular answer provided at this stage is that cooperation and involvement of participants in planning the learning activities could facilitate improvement of my practice and also motivate students to be active participants in the learning process.

After the first action, another vital part of orientation phase was meeting the students and some staff in the department of Economics and Management Sciences (EMS) to participate in the research processes. Here I present what we discussed in the first meeting with

- 1- Students and
- 2- Staff

##### ***4.1.2.1 Meeting with Students (July 12 2011)***

Referring to the participants in 3.2.1, the fact that these students were studying economics as foundation course of their study did not grantee free acceptance to participate in the research. Therefore, I called for meeting with students to introduce the concept and intention of the Research and Development project. After introducing my-self to them and likewise each student introduce her or him-self to all members, I made it explicitly that the research requires active participation in learning and would involve personal construction of learning based on practices at workplaces or in the classroom. This was not intended to scare the participants but rather to make them aware of the requirements for the Research and Development project. All other necessary requirements for participation in the research project such as writing logs, working in groups, conducting market research or surveys were communicated to students so as to make an informed choice.

After explaining the concept to the learners, I asked them to reflect on this topic for few minutes before we could engage in further dialogue as a group (see minutes on Appendix D). They responded with enthusiasm to participate in the R&D and we spend the next hour brainstorming on the following:



- a) The consent form
- b) Economic Learning Community (ELC)

**a) The Consent form**

This was envisaged to make agreement between researcher and the participant and to guarantee the participants of confidentiality of the data that they would provide in the course of research. Consent form is used to formalise the work agreement between researcher and participants; (Norton, 2009). Norton advances the argument that the participants need to be protected and should first of all be informed formally of why they are asked to participate. In this meeting, I presented the idea of concern form to the learners based on my experience of the research ethics and the explanation put forward by Norton. The consent form stipulated it undoubtedly that every participant had right to withdraw from the research at will without any prejudice. They reacted positively (see minutes appendix D) by accepting to sign the concern form. However, the form was not signed on that day I thought it would be relevant not to sign it before they begin to participate in the group activities so I delayed the signing of concern form to later date.

The form might have provided trust between the participants and the researcher (my-self) and it was yardstick in the pursuance of better learning methods and fulfilment of the research objective.

**b) Economic Learning Community (ELC)**

The term Economic Learning Community (ELC) in this study is defined as group of individual (teachers and students) who by virtue of their common interest converge together to share varied experiences and ideas both in the classroom and workplaces. The economic learning community was formed as a result of group discussion in the first meeting in order to streamline the learning process and to extend learning environment from mere classroom to workplaces.

The aim for this community was to share experiences, ideas and to bring diversity to learning methods that have always been confined to classroom. ELC also provided an opportunity to bridge the gap between teachers and learners since they all became members of group whose success depend on each other. The members of the Economics Learning Community in the first meeting agreed to share ideas related to learning skills development such as how to start small income generating activities, financial management, cooperative management

strategies, market demand and supply, making business profile, advertisement, customer care service, business resource mobilization, characteristics of entrepreneurs among others.

Meeting Co-facilitators (July 15 2011)

After meeting with students, I decided to meet the Co-facilitators with intention of introducing the concept of Action Learning and team teaching to them. I gave two staff invitation letters and they accepted to meet with me on the day that could be convenient to all of us. We later on met and I agreed to work as a team and attend group discussion when possible. I deserve to note here that the facilitators had other responsibilities that they expressed with concern in case one fails to attend meeting so that it should not be seen as a neglect of duties.

#### *4.1.2.3 Action three: Engaging with Economic Learning Community*

This 3<sup>rd</sup> action tries to contribute answers to Research Question **B** which reads: *How can learning be organised to cooperate both classroom and workplace experiences in higher education?*

Here I present my interaction with the group members as we tried to organise our learning activities by establishing ground rules for the group to function.

In the third meeting involving all participants except those who were absent with apologies, I learnt that seventeen (17) members of the ELC including staff had work experiences especially in business which was pivotal point of group learning. These members shared their experiences and ideas for the entire group which created bond for members in the in ELC. Members who did not have jobs or businesses shared their ideas and ambitions for establishing businesses. The common attribute was that all students were pursuing business diploma related courses thus, making Economics Learning Community a crucial flat form and dynamic learning forum.

In this discussion, I learnt that members were willing to work together as a team and eager to engage in critical discussion<sup>10</sup> leading to enhancement of skills necessary for entrepreneurial operations. An imperative part of participants' engagement is what Ann Webster-Wright called experiencing the phenomenon, (Webster-Wright, 2010). Webster-Write claims that engagement in crucial activities that provoke students to learn is imperative in knowledge

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<sup>10</sup> Critical discussion is the discussion involving in-depth understanding of the concepts presented by members in the group. It includes questions that seek clarification of points.

construction. The phenomenon in this aspect is related to previous experiences possess by the members of the group. The maturity of the members shown by the ages was a clear manifestation of respect and working for purpose and vast experiences in business and other related social and economic services. The members were driven by the desire to learn better and overcome eminent challenges both in academics and workplaces.

The dilemma of learning in group was embedded in getting to work as a team with tight schedules in school and workplaces (see more on arguments against group work on 4.2.1.2).

### **The Group Ground Rules**

After spending considerable time on the foundation and formation of An economic Learning Community, the members agreed to form guiding principles commonly refer to as ground rules (Schwarz, 2005). Schwarz claims that ground rules apply to both teacher and learners in the group and advises that there is no immunity to teacher or any other member in the group. This view is useful to me in an attempt to promote cooperation in learning.

In this study, the ground rules were intended to act as glue that bond the participants and strengthen the relationship among the members. Ground rules are significant aspects of group discussion as a model of teaching and learning (refer to 4.2.1). Based on the observation during discussion and in the later conversations with learners, there was common agreement on the following outline of ground rules.

- a) Explicit presentation of in-depth personal experience and research
- b) Social and moral integrity in group activities
- c) Active participation of all members
- d) Making decision for next steps
- e) Shared responsibilities of group activities
- f) One speaker at a time

Schwarz (2005) argues that ground rules reflect the opinions and choices of the members and that it is an absolute responsibility of the members to review and continue reviewing at will. In this study, the members agreed to review the ground rules whenever they deem it fit to do so. However, the first time this group review the ground rules resulted to no change in the rules. In an economic class, rules and regulations help in keeping time, respecting each other, active participation and presentation of ideas.

The negative implication of ground rules and regulations is that some members may not live to the rules and the group does not take iron-hand to rebuke the wrong doer immediately. Forcing member to contribute in discussion when he or she is not ready could be estimated as time wasting since the member in question is not contributing at will. Fortunately; during this study, such cases did not cropped up and if any they have been dealt with individually without the notice of group members.

#### **4.1.2.4 Phase (I) Summary and Synopsis**

As you might have noted in this phase, my intention was to enlighten the readers of this report on how I started the research project with all but the relevant account of steps taken. I take into account that each reader has different background and possibly experiences in starting a research project; I hope to have shown you my utmost procedures in this study. Description of further actions is provided in the parts of this research to follow.

#### **Synopsis**

In this first phase of chapter 4, I have presented and discussed:

- Action one: Mind-set as a key to improving my practice
- Action two: First Meeting with Participants, What are the Outcomes?
  - The Consent Form
  - Economic Learning Community (ELC)
- Action three: Engaging with Economics Learning Community and;
- The Group Ground Rules

## **4.2 Phase II Development Actions: The Interplay between Classroom and Workplaces**

This stage of the Research and Development project is the continuation of first phase and it is the Interplay between Classroom and Workplaces. It contributes in answering Research Questions B: *How can learning be organised to in cooperate both classroom and workplace experiences in higher education?* And Research question C: *What are strengths and weaknesses of an Action Learning strategy in enhancing Students' learning skills development?* (For more insight about research questions and objectives, see **1.5** and **1.6** respectively).

At this phase of Development Actions, I present data based on the coding and transcription procedures described in 3.3.3 of chapter 3. Letters such as **A**, **B** and **C** are used at this level to merge information that corresponded to the research questions and objectives represented by this letters (see 3.3.3)

Webster-Wright (2010) claims that data analysis involves an intensive iterative process. This could be interpreted to mean that there is need for critical engagement and drawing meaning by the researcher based on the views of participants. In this regard, I analysed the data obtained using learners reflective logs, observations, mentorship conversations, group discussion, interactive conversational interviews (unstructured interviews), document analysis and personal reflective logs. I spent tremendous amount of time reading and transcribing the data and relating it to both research questions and objectives before making final conclusion on the implication of the reflection and transformation of the information given. The Development Actions phase constitutes the following outlines:

- 4.2.1 Group Discussion as a learning approach in Action Learning: The lesson I learnt
- 4.2.2 The classroom that learns: the take of the group and Senge's view
- 4.2.3 Applied Learning Scenarios (ALS), the case of small income generating activities
- 4.2.4 Mentorship: an ingredient in tertiary education
- 4.2.5 Phase II summary and synopsis

#### **4.2.1 Group Discussion as a Learning Approach in Action Learning**

Under this section, I present group discussion as method of learning. I have also discussed the views of learners about group discussion and introduce *Round* in group discussion as shown in the outlines below

##### 4.2.1.1 Presentation of Data from Group Learning

##### 4.2.1.2 Group opinions on Group Learning Strategy

- Arguments for
- Arguments against

##### 4.2.1.3 The Round

##### ***4.2.1.1 Presentation of Data from Group Learning***

Referring to data analysis procedures as in 3.3.3, this section attempts to provide answers to Research Questions **B** and **C** and the respective objectives **B** and **C** as reiterated in 4.2 above.

Group Discussion is used in this research as an integral method accepted by group members to share their experiences, ideas and to promote active participation of learners (See 3.2.1). To transform the data collected using group discussion, it was relevant that I considered the idea of data transformation postulated by Giorgi (2003) as cited in (Webster-Wright, 2010, p. 90). Giorgi claims that keeping the original text and making interpretation in line with the original idea of the learner is a key aspect of data transformation. My own approach to analysis of the original text and draw meaning from it was embedded in two main categories as shown in 3.3.3

- 1- The first category concerns with transformation, analysis and discussion of data collected from individual through such methods like logs, field visit and mentorship scheme. Information in this category reflects individual opinion about given phenomenon rather than the group.
- 2- The second category is the transformation of the data collected from group members during discussion, presentation or as contained in group log. Such information is generated as collective opinion not necessarily individual thoughts. In some instances where each member of group draws his or her own conclusion from group work, I endeavoured to make comparative analysis between or among statements made by the learners.

#### Category 1: Analysis of Individual Learner Opinion about Learning in Group

The analysis is presented in form of table where the first column shows the original transcript from the Learner, the second column contains extracts from the original transcript, third column indicates the summary of the extracts while the fourth column is my reflection based on the summary of extract. Tables have been used during the analysis of information obtained from individual learner while Paper Tags<sup>11</sup> were used in transformation and analysis of data collectively presented by group members. The letter B represent hypothetical name of the learner so as to conform to anonymity and confidentiality. Q and A represent question and answer respectively as in the table below.

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<sup>11</sup> Paper tag in this study refers to labelling of piece of paper to give collective meaning to information gathered from different sources. Yellow or pink pieces of papers were labelled in transcription of the data which was then transformed into meaningful statements.

**Table 3: Analysis of Individual Learner opinion about Learning in Group (from my Research Logbook)**

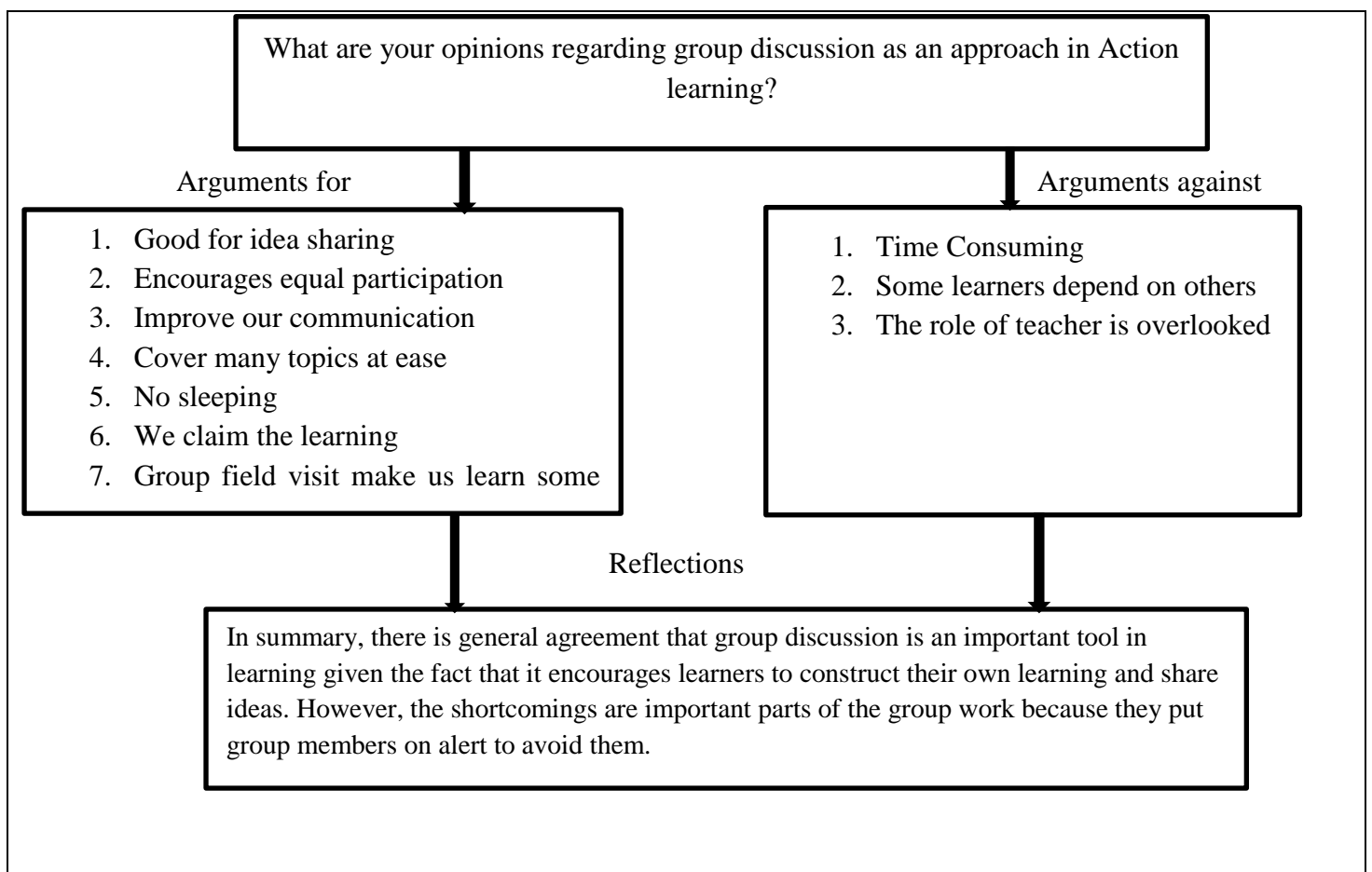
Original transcript from learner B	Extract of the main points	Summary of the extract	Reflection
<p><b>Q.</b> What is your opinion on group learning?</p> <p><b>A.</b> It is a good idea, we learnt from each other and we are able to organise our work together with lecturer. More so; we learnt some computer skills when we work in the group because one member who has computer may help us to use the computer at some point. It makes all of us to be teachers</p>	<p>The main attributes of these responses include learning from each other, determining learning and learning outcomes and sharing of resources.</p> <p>Skills development through practices</p>	<p>Active participation for the learners</p> <p>Construction and ownership of learning</p>	<p>I think the implication of learner B's opinions on group learning indicates that, group learning enables learner to construct his or her own learning based on the tools and information available.</p> <p>The statement that group learning makes "all of us to be teachers" could be interpreted that the learner organises and owns the learning when he or she is given the chance to determine and participate actively in learning process.</p>

In the context of the information in the table above, though the learner used "we" in the communication, the information was personal and it was not the views of the group because I asked the learner to give only his opinion not to talk on behalf of the group. The same question has been answered by other learners in similar way during the face-to-face interview. This gave me an impression that learners acknowledged the significant role of group discussion as a tool in Action Learning. What remains unanswered is whether such

group learning does not need the presence of teacher even if he or she contributes relatively less.

#### 4.2.1.1 Group Opinions on Group Learning

After conducting three group meetings, I asked the members to share their opinions in regards to group learning as an alternative teaching and learning method. They came up with two major claims of group learning as shown in the figure below.



**Figure 5 Group Opinions on Group Learning (from Research Logbook)**

#### **Arguments for group learning**

The learners' views in regard to group discussion as a method in Action Learning strategy could be generalised to show explicit relevance of the strategy. The view that “no sleeping” could be translated to mean that the learners no longer sleep during the discussion because of active involvement in discussion. Cases of sleeping are common in lecture and other non-participative methods of learning. During group work, I observed that learners were eager



to present their ideas depending on the topic of the discussion. This was an indication of enthusiasm to learn.

The fact that most of the learners joined the Economic learning community (Action learning team) voluntarily might have influenced them to prove their fates by actively contributing in the group discussion and short term research<sup>12</sup>. One of the key advantages of group discussion is that it helps in changing in what David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson called “changing paradigms of teaching”(Johnson & Johnson, 1999, p. 169). Reflecting on my classroom experiences, there were some points where I perceived teaching as transfer of knowledge from teacher (me) to the learner (student) but this is no longer the case in the modern paradigm of teaching. The learner is responsible for the construction of learning and to work in group is seen in this study as an ideal learning condition. Howard Gardner advances that learners do learn better in social setting. To maintain his words:

*Many individuals learn more effectively, however, in a group setting, where they have the opportunity to assume different roles, to observe others' perspective, to interact regularly, to complement one another,(Gardner, 2009, p. 109)*

Taking Gardner's view, giving students to learn in their own free style would aid the learning process. The learners role is unlimited by methods thus, he or she has the freedom to choose the method he or she prefers. My role as a teacher in the new paradigm of teaching has become facilitation of learning thus; acting as member of the group instead of being an instructor. In Johnson and Johnson's view and support from Howard Gardner, a learner is seen as an active constructor, discoverer and transformer of own knowledge (Johnson & Johnson, 1999). Construction of knowledge is only possible if the learners are given freedom to associate with teachers and other learners and to interact freely in a learning sphere.

Learners argue that group discussion helps in coverage of many topics in short time with in school calendar. This may be true in the sense that each student was given the course outline for the entire semester in order to prepare in advance. However, in my view, learning is not about the coverage but what is actually learnt in the given topic. Group discussion provided an opportunity for me to continuously evaluate the learners as they present their findings.

Learners also claim that group discussion is a relevant strategy in improving communication skills particularly writing, listening and speaking. In this case peer evaluation helps in

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<sup>12</sup> Short term researches were intended for applied learning scenarios intended to help the learners to construct their own learning from the field.

identifying the communication errors such as misspelling and punctuations among others. Similar claim has been echoed by my validation group whom I worked together for two years of this master degree study at OAUC. The group acknowledged that peer evaluation helps in improving communication skills and more especially the grammar, paraphrases and structuring of documentation.

In lecture presentation, I used to dominate the presentation of the lesson in term of speaking thus; giving less chance for my students to speak. However, after introducing integrated method of teaching, the learners got the chance to speak and present their own ideas which in this case might have influenced the learners to claim that they improved their communication skills.



The picture (name withheld) inserted (left) describes one of the participants presenting her group views in general group presentation as participants listen in the following figure on August 19, 2011

**Figure 6 : Group Work Presentation on August 19, 2011**



In this kind of presentation, learners of the same group had freedom to supplement what their representative had said. Equally; the participants of other groups could question the views presented for clarity or any other contribution to the topic.

**Figure 7: Group Members Listening to Presentation, August 19, 2011**

### **Arguments against group learning strategy**

Although the group members widely believed that group learning is of great importance in teaching and learning of economics, they did also suggest the shortcomings in execution of discussion. These include:

**Time consuming:** Participants believed that group discussion takes a lot of time for each member to present his or her views in relation to given topic of discussion. My reflection on this claim is that time management proved to be great challenge to some members. Group discussion expected to take 2 hours sometimes overlaps the time allotted. In this case, some learners got discouraged to participate in discussion. However, the same learners came up with time management plan requiring a time keeper during the discussion so that each member keeps his or her time. In my view, this solution involves some shortcomings in the sense that the time keeper may only concentrate on keeping time for others and forgetting the primary purpose of the discussion and team work. It also means that the member presenting the topic would hurry with the discussion and may leave some relevant parts of the topic unattended to. The solution to this was to have not more than four participants presenting their reports in single meeting so that time is adequately managed.

**Some learners depend on others:** Learners claim that group work put burden to some members in the group because some participants may not contribute as much as others. This brings disparities in learning with some participants dominating the discussion while others become passive. In an attempt to resolve this imbalance, I introduced the concept of Round and mentorship (see 3.2.3 and 4.2.1.3 respectively). The round was intended to encourage all members to present their work according to time table and to enable every participant to say something during group discussion. Round system demands that all participants should speak their views in every meeting. The group members agreed to use Round and attend mentorship scheme so as to participate actively during group discussion. The mentorship scheme was meant to build trust and confidence of the learner to present his or her work to group members without hesitation and also for me to get insight of the learner by interacting with him or her at the time that the learner prefers.

**The role of teacher is overlooked:** Group members believe that group learning as an Action Learning strategy does to some extent compromise the duties of teacher who is supposed to teach the learners. Action learning that advocate for active participation of the learner is seen to deny the teacher from executing the professional duties and continue to dominate the learning process. I personally disagree with this believe because the learner is responsible for learning not the teacher. Teacher in this case is a facilitator of learning. Free interaction

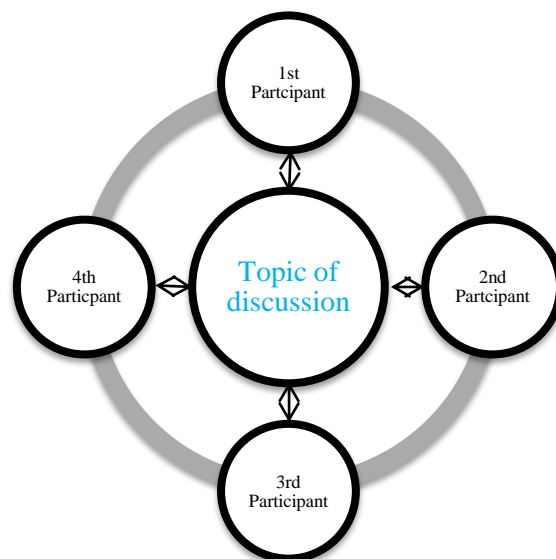
between teacher and learner is the core purpose of Action Learning in modern times, thus; team work is emphasised for the success of both learner and the teacher. To solve this problem, I emphasised to the learners to look at teachers as members of the team whose duty is to facilitate and contribute toward learning the students. I also encouraged my students to develop social relationship with teachers so as to create friendly environment conducive for idea sharing and learning.

#### 4.2.1.3 The Round

After the participants (I inclusive) observed that some participants could not contribute during the discussion regularly, system of round was introduced so that all members express their views.

It appears that there is no substantial information available in literature in regard to use of *round* as a method in education. The term seems to be associated with political dialogue and commonly refer to as roundtable talk between or among the parties involve.

**Round** as used in this report refers to the system where all group members make comments or contribute during the discussion. One person begins followed by the other in a circle. This practice helped us to work together as a team and ensured participation of all members.



**Figure 8: The Round (from my research Logbook)**

In this figure, each member contributes to the topic of discussion defending his or her perception. It does not matter who starts the discussion but rather all members participating actively. Round helped the group members during this study to encourage each other to

participate. The chairperson and the secretary were appointed in the round system thus; student who chaired the last meeting did not have the chance to chair the meeting that follows. This ensures participation of members in the leadership of the group. The disadvantage of round was that, some learners could repeat what the other one as already said especially during the summary of the discussion.

#### **4.2.2 The Learning Classroom: the take of the Group and Senge's view**

In an attempt to involve my students in determining learning environment and to find answers for Research Questions A, B and C, (refer to 1.5 where I have presented the Research Questions), I introduced the topic: *Learning classroom* to the participants. In this section, I discussed the learners' views in relation to the views of Peter Senge on learning classroom. My personal reflections are embedded in the conclusion of this section.

The learning classroom in the view of Peter Senge is a continuous gathering of teachers and students whose common purposes are to share knowledge and experiences in pursue of learning. It does not necessarily refer to room or specific location where teachers and students regularly meet but any environment that gratify learning, (Senge, 2000). Senge argues that the learning classroom consists of three prime components including teacher, students and parents. Senge acknowledged the importance of each component in the learning sphere in particular teachers and students. To maintain his words:

..... every school must have, as part of its core purpose, the promotion and development, the care and security .....of importance-of its teachers. Second, teachers must act as stewards for all students, fostering their relationships with each other and with the base of knowledge. Stewardship means holding a commitment to the entire learning community of the school, not just "my classroom" and "my students." Third teachers themselves are continuous and lifelong learners, with their knowledge their knowledge of the subject, and of the craft of teaching, evolving throughout their life time.(Senge, 2000, p. 12)

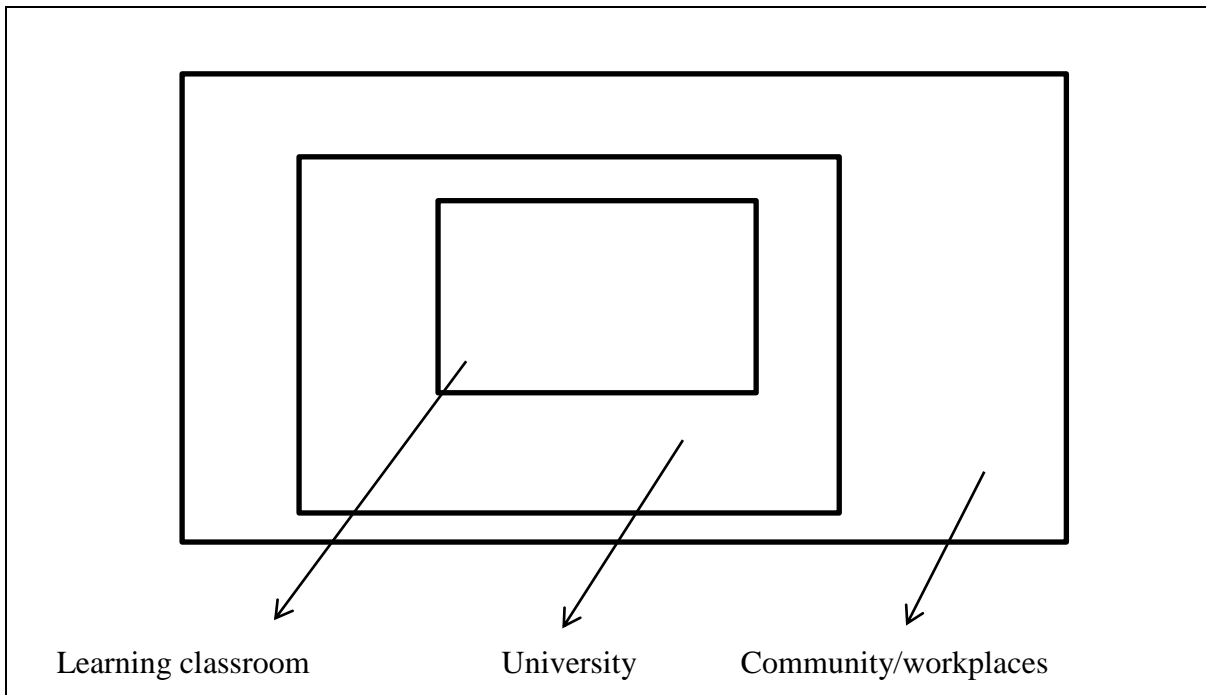
In this view, Senge recognises the role that teacher plays not only in learning but in building social relationships among students and the teacher. This relationship promotes mutual cooperation and trust that are significant components in learning. The view of my students in regard to learning classroom is more similar to Senge's view. However, students believed that determination of learning activities and the learning environment is solemnly the role of the teacher in question. They attributed that teacher is the host hence it is he or she that has the responsibility of learning classroom. This concept changed later as the discussion

unfolded. In groups, I asked students to set up their sitting plan and to decide if they would discuss the next topic in school or outside school. I let the students chose the chairperson of the discussion and secretary to take the minutes. After conducting some discussions in the school compound and some time outside school, I asked students to brainstorm on the concept of learning classroom targeting the role of teacher and students in creating learning classroom. There appears to be general agreement among the students that cooperation between students and the teachers was a relevant aspect of learning classroom. They defined learning classroom to consist of three important parameters including the teacher, students and the learning aid.

The learners agreed that learning takes place anywhere with actions and reflection but insisted that school classroom is a vital learning environment for group. Learners argued that parents play key role in learning more especially at secondary and primary education levels; something that Senge seems to agree. Learners also articulated that student has the responsibility of learning with or without teacher. Learner's responsibilities according to the members include attending lesson in person, availing some learning aid such as scholastic materials, build relation with fellow students and cooperate with teachers, do regular course works and participate in organisation of learning space.

The role of parents seems less vital at tertiary education level. In my view, to create favourable learning classroom, both parties (teacher and Students) need common understanding of the environment and materials they need for learning. Teacher in this case guides the learners on requirements needed for learning; for example, when I introduced the concept of learning classroom to the learners, I ensured that we work together as a team and specify my roles as a guide and an active member of the group. I ensured that cooperation with learners was vibrant and accounted for. The importance of Senge's concept of learning classroom is that all stake holders (teachers, school administration students and parents) take part in planning of the learning. This however is applicable in primary and secondary education but less imperative in university education. At university, students are mature and they make decisions that may not need support of the parents. In some instances, parents are sometimes students at the university thus; making them accountable for their learning solemnly. Figure 3 below depicts the views of my students in relation to learning environment and stake holders involved as adapted from Peter Senge (2000).

**Table 4: Learning environment and stakeholders, Adapted from Senge (2000, p. 13)**



In this table, learners interact in the university setting consisting of administration, teachers and the learners themselves. Learning could be organised in classroom, fields or play grounds among others. Workplaces also provide an opportunity for learners to interact with workers. In this study, learning was organised in some time in classroom and workplaces. This was meant to diversify learning environment to give group members ample time to share ideas both in the university and outside the university.

#### **4.2.3 Applied Learning Scenario (ALS): The case of Small Income Generating Activities**

Under this sub-section, I analyse and discuss the term ALS and give experience of learners after their participation in this scheme. I have also presented the steps needed to start small scale business base on the feedback from learners in the interplay between classroom and workplace. I asked the group members to discuss this so that I ascertain if there was evidence of learning taking place using applied learning scenarios and to establish if this section contributes in answering the research Question B (see 1.5 and 1.6)

Applied Learning Scenario (ALS) as used in this study refers to short term research projects conducted by learners with purpose of improving analytical and research capacities and to link classroom experiences with the workplaces. The scenario gives first-hand information to the learner and he or she is able to analyse, interpret and give meaning to the findings. At this level, I asked the learners to form small working groups of 2-3 learners to help each other

during the research period and compile report together. The topic of discussion in line with the agreed discussion topics was *Small income generating activities with in the local market or area*. Methods such as observation, unstructured interview were used during this scheme. The findings which were discussed in the later week included the following income generating activities:

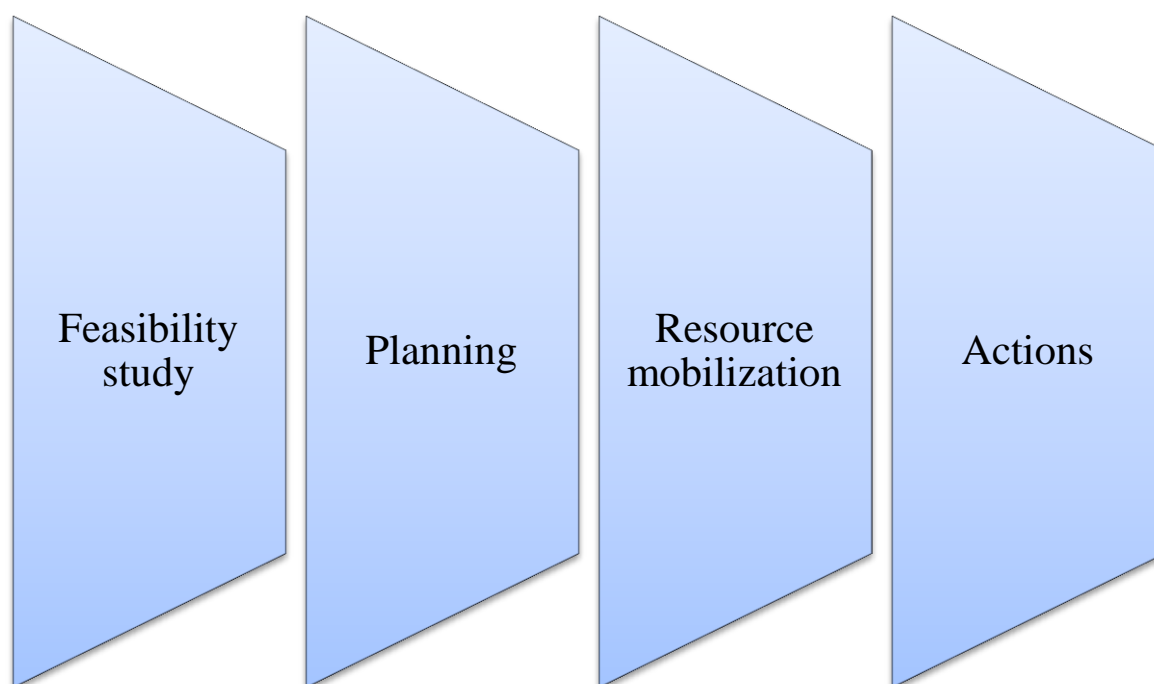
- Farming (Poultry keeping, crop faming among others)
- Transportation
- Brick-laying
- Dry cleaning service
- Cyber café
- Running restaurant or working as waiter/waitress

The group members discussed these small scale income generating activities giving reasons why each of these could generate income. Together we further presented the views on the current demand and supply of these activities within Bor town and the surrounding areas. The learners agreed that it was a challenge to participate in the field research or researching on own activities at workplaces. Learners acknowledged that ALS fully engage the participants in learning since it is practical and demand physical presence. In my view, Applied Learning Scenarios are essential aspects of learner's active participation in learning process and it gives the chance for the learner to interact with the communities in which the learner lives. It also helps the learners to map areas of opportunities that may grantee establishment of small scale business and entrepreneurship skills development.

Although ALS is such imperative tool of learners' participation, it may not be successful in some instances. Weather changes were reported as obstacles to the conduct of the ALS. Some members may not participate at equal rate with others thus; creating imbalance in group functioning. To avoid this obstacles, I introduced monitoring and peer evaluation exercise where the peers evaluated each other's work and crosscheck with the rest of the group. I personally endeavoured to conduct my own research on the same topic to gain an insight prior to learners' presentation. This helped me to ascertain if the learner had conducted the research or not.

After presentation of findings, we together came up with steps that could be necessary in starting small scale income generating activities as shown in the figure below.





**Figure 9 Steps in starting small scale income generating activities. (From Research Logbook)**

In this figure, we believe that feasibility study plays crucial role of eye opener and it makes the foundation to start the business. Feasibility study as used in this report refers to assessment and evaluation of the existing options by establishing the cost and other requirements to state the business. The weights given at the end of feasibility study may influence the choice of the business to be undertaken.

After evaluating the results of feasibility study, we believed that the second step is to make the plan of the chosen activity. Planning include when to start, who and how many to start with, the available income and where to operate the small scale business. Evaluation and consistent reflection is imperative in this area.

“The third step according to the group is to mobilise resources necessary to start the business. Resources such as land, capital and human resource are essential in this case. We noted that this stage takes time and it success may signal progress in the entire business activities.

The final step in our view is to take the actions or implement the plans made. This stage of actualisation needs revision of the plan and resources before implementation. Continues evaluation is needed during the course of performance to ascertain the progress of the business.

In summary, applied learning scenarios provide evidence based learning for students and influence them to gain experiences of conducting learning activities outside classroom. It builds relation among group members since they work as a team glued by mutual interest.

#### **4.2.4 Mentorship: An Ingredient in Economics Education and Bridging the Gap between Classroom and Workplaces**

This part contributes in answering all the three Research Questions (refer to 1.5)

After analysing the use of applied learning scenarios above, I reflected on how this learning strategy could be supported so that the learners continue to participate and construct their own learning either individually or as group. In order to do this activity, I introduced Mentorship scheme to the learners. Under this section, I have provided the definition of mentorship, its organisation, why I call it an ingredient in Economics Education, and the challenges that I encountered during the implementation of mentorship scheme.

Mentorship in this study is defined as a method of assisting the learners to build confidence, improve cooperation and communication skills. It is a process aimed at helping student gain self-assurance in the daily learning activities (refer to 3.2.3).

Mentorship scheme in this research was organised in two forms: First, it was conducted on campus especially after classes or at the time when both of us (student(s) and my-self) were free of other duties and could come to share at given time. This face-to-face contact was meant for not more than two students unless otherwise. Mentorship on campus included discussion on particular topics of learning the learner (s) may face difficulties, use of internet as learning tool and academic writing skills among others. During this face-to-face contact, I used to refer some cases to fellow teachers who may have expertise in such area as requested by student. The second part of mentorship scheme was often conducted at workplaces of the learner(s). Prior permission was made by the learner so as to inform the management of his or her work place. This kind of visit helped me to observe the learners at workplaces and also gain access to discuss some time with the managers at workplaces.

My experience is that mentorship scheme is an ingredient in Economics Education in the sense that it encourages the learners to speak out the challenges they face to the mentor and together may find alternatives to overcome the challenges hence improvement may be made in the learning process.

Mentorship enables learners to build better relationship with the teacher which crucial in one way or the other in the learning process. It builds confidence in the learner since he or she has the assurance and cooperation with the teacher.

During this study, learners who participated in the mentorship scheme have often called me “great friend” in learning on or off campus. In mentorship, the Mentor acts as adviser,



counsellor and role model to the learners. In fact this scheme helped me to understand my students much better than teaching in the classroom.

However, mentorship scheme involves immense challenges. These include the longer time required to have in-depth understanding of learners concerns and to allow the learner ask questions that could enable them to learn. With many students requiring

**Figure 10 Mentor and Learner sharing ideas**

mentorship, I found it challenging to attend to them at the time that they needed the service.

Mentorship may also make students to always rely on the mentor instead of consulting their fellow students.

#### Learners’ views on mentorship scheme

During interactive conversation with my students, they underscored the significance of mentorship scheme as it helps the learners to get more information from the teacher because of being the only two talking to each other. They believed that mentorship build trust and cooperation between the mentor and the student which is significant in teaching and learning. Students believed that by inviting the mentor to visit the work place, the learner builds confidence and better relationship with his or her manager.

#### My experience of mentorship as a student-teacher (2004-2007)

During my Bachelor degree study, I was given mentor together with other students. This mentorship scheme helped me to build cooperation with my mentor and group members. I used to share personal challenges with the mentor who could in turn give advice for me to overcome challenges academically and socially. It helped me build cooperation with other students under the same mentor. Mentorship made me actively participate in social activities such as sports and cultural gala because my mentor encouraged me to participate in all

activities as they provide opportunities for learning. Mentorship scheme in this study has been an important method in building cooperation; trust and confidence among my students and to enable them participate actively in the learning process.

#### **4.2.5 Phase (II) Summary and synopsis**

The essential articulation of this phase was the critical engagement of the learners in the learning process. Different experiences in Pedagogical Action Research approach might have different format of presentation of data. In this phase as you might have read, the data was presented, analysed and discussed concurrently. This is how I have presented my data and reflection. It is my view that the ideas under this phase as well as other phases and chapter is presented in my style of presentation and I hope the readers find it logically arranged.

#### **Synopsis**

The outline below is the list of the main points discussed under this phase II

- Group discussion as a learning approach in Action Learning: What did I learnt?
- The classroom that learns: the take of the group and Senge's view
- Applied learning Scenarios (ALS), the case of small income generating activities
- Mentorship: an ingredient in tertiary education

## **Chapter 5 Evaluative Actions (EA): How Can I show that my Research is successful or failed?**

### **Introduction**

After analysing and discussing the actions in the first and Second phases as in previous chapter, I reflected on the progress and challenges encountered in the research process. My conclusion brought me to the next level of the research consisting of follow-up of my students and evaluation of the entire Research and Development project. Chapter 5 is what I called Final Evaluative Actions. The aim of these actions is to find whether the research has been successfully done or not. The evaluation was based on the following five counts

5.1 Mirror Exercise (ME)

5.2 Revisit Exercise to Validate the Results

5.3 End of Semester Examination

5.4 Way forward: The life of Economic Learning Community after R&D

5.5 Are My Research Questions Answered?

5.6 Phase III Summary and synopsis

### **5.1 Mirror Exercise (ME)**

Mirror Exercise (ME), a term coined by Jack Canfield and Janet Switzer in their book: *The success Principles* in which they claim that individuals need to acknowledge their successes daily or when they occur by evaluating what each individual has done. I personally did not come across this term until one of the participants borrowed this book from me and one week later, the learner introduced to the group the term Mirror Exercise as a mean of evaluation. I was surprised! The learner claims that he had practice the Mirror Exercise after reading the concept from the book and that he found it relevant to share with all participants. Canfield and Switzer maintain that Mirror Exercise “gives your subconscious mind the positive strokes it needs to pursue further achievements and it helps change any negative beliefs you have toward praise and accomplishment, which puts you in an achieving frame of mind,”(Canfield & Switzer, 2005, p. 200). The intention of the mirror exercise as I understand is to acknowledge ones contribution to personal development in everyday life. In the context of this study, the Mirror Exercise was used by participants to evaluate activities and acknowledge the successes made and plan for the next actions that would avoid further failures. After adopting this method of evaluation, I realised that Mirror Exercised helped me to evaluate the learning activities in the sense that learners were evaluating themselves prior

to group discussion or classwork activities. This exercise helped the learners to build confidence in their work and foster progress academically. The questions under ME include: What did I do in the day, how did I do? Was it successful or not? What could be done to improve it? What were the weaknesses involve? Did I participate actively? All these questions enable participants to evaluate the learning activities and support the process of writing weekly learning log.

Though useful, Mirror exercise was greeted with mix reaction by the group members, some argued that it is kind of showing off to others that you have done this or that which is unacceptable socially. Some argued that Mirror Exercise is the repetition of learning log. However, in my view Mirror Exercise motivates learners than the learning log. It gives stamina to the learner to move to the next level with conviction and confidence.

## 5.2 Revisit Exercise to Validate the Results

Cognisant of the discussion of Validity (refer to 3.4), I present under this section; the actions which I took to validate the results of the data collected during group discussions, field visits and mentorship, observations and interview. This was part of the Communicative Validation exercise (see 3.4.3) to test if the first actions results were consistent with the results of the last actions.

### Field visit and Mentorship

Under this method, I visited some learners at their workplaces as follow-up exercise. I carried my logbook-checklist containing the previous encounter with the learner. I interacted with the learner asking the same questions of last encounter and crosscheck if there were discrepancies or similarities in the results. This helped me to ascertain the consistence of learners progress. The table below shows the logbook-checklist of the two encounters with one of the learners (name withheld).

**Table 5: Field visit and Mentorship (from Logbook)**

First encounter 2/09/2011	Second encounter 4/10/2011	My reflection
Mentor: What is your view about ELC?  <i>Learner: It helps us to share different ideas in group.</i>	Mentor: How about group discussion?  <i>Learner: Group work is going on well and we are</i>	Though this learner did not explain much, he seems to be

<p><i>It also plays important role in building relationship useful for learning and knows each other better. I think we shall pass this paper very well in examination because we are learning more as a team.</i></p>	<p><i>learning some entrepreneurship skills together. Ground rules are keeping us together</i></p>	<p>consisted in the understanding of economic learning community of group work. He acknowledged the significance of ELC in both encounters thus; confirming his understanding of the working group. In other words, he has defended his understanding of group learning.</p>
<p>Mentor: What do you think about Applied Learning Scenarios (ALS)?</p> <p><i>Learner: It gives an opportunity to interact with the community and also it helps in understanding the available market opportunities for one to explore if he needs to start business.</i></p> <p><i>ALS also allows us (me) involved in the research. But it is hard to do because some time you move from place to place looking for information or working instead of being in the classroom. The time required may not be available because there are other subjects to study other</i></p>	<p>Mentor: What are your views about Applied Learning Scenarios?</p> <p><i>Learner: I think they help us to learning in the field and we are involved.</i></p> <p>Mentor: What challenges do you experience when conducted the two ALS?</p> <p><i>Learner: some time you may not get the information you need on time and we have may course work assignments that need a lot of time. But generally when we work in group of two or three people (learner) it is easy to cover up.</i></p>	<p>I think economic learning community has raised concern to this learner in the sense that he believes to have been involved in active participation of learning. Continuation of this practice in future would yield maximum engagement of my learners in learning process and it will create learning environment where all learners are active team members.</p> <p>The major constrain to this learning system is the time which the learner has consistently maintained. There may be no immediate solution to this but proper prioritisation of activities would help minimise this</p>

<i>than economics.</i>		problem.
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In table the above, I conclude that the learner has been consistent in keeping his logs and research notes that helped him to reflect on the learning and to come up with such understanding. His views and the views of other learners in my view conclude that the use of Applied Learning Scenarios, discussion in economic learning community and use of learning logs have been significant in teaching and learning of economics and indeed improving students learning capacities through participation.

### 5.3 End of Semester Examination (ESE)

After working with students for one semester, it was time to conduct semester examination as per the university calendar.

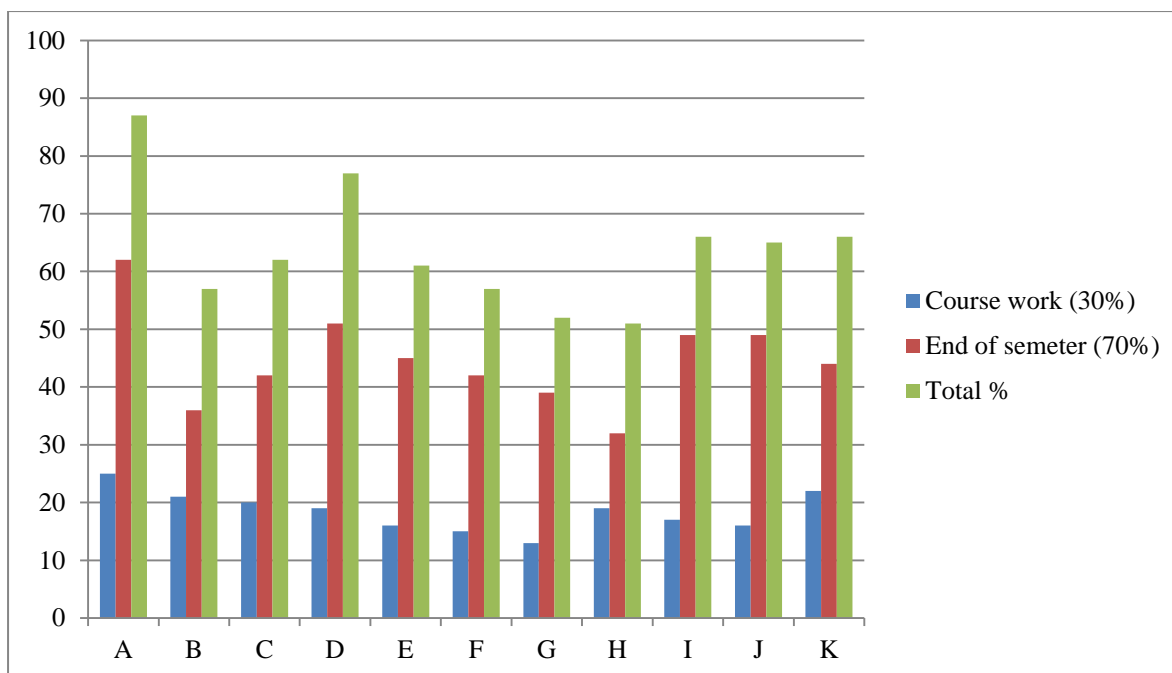


The examinations were meant to assess students' readiness for next semester modules. Students who failed/or did not sit the examination had the right to sit for supplementary or substitute examinations respectively at the beginning of the following semester. The picture (left) was taken during the examination time in November 2011. I set the examination paper and then presented

**Figure 11 Students Sitting for an End of Semester Examination** it to the department for final scrutiny before handing it over to examination department.

For the purpose of this study, I have presented and analysed the results of some learners who were involved in the Economics learning community activities. Two results are presented here (course works assignment and end of semester). Letters such as A, B, C etc., have been use in this analysis to represent students regardless of names or scores. Their results are presented on bar graph as shown below.





**Figure 12: Bar Graph showing results for selected students' in Economics class, end of Semester 1, 2011**

In this figure, results were remarked as pass or fail. Any student scoring below 50% was required by the senate to sit supplementary examination. However, as shown in this graph, all students scored above 50% (C) and passed by the senate. When I asked the students to explain why they passed, their responses suggested that active participation in the learning might have been a driving factor of their successes. Learners who were involved in Applied Learning Scenarios (ALS) scheme believed that they passed the course work assignment because of their presentation of personal views of particular research. In my view, examination of Action Learning strategy as a method of teaching and learning economics needs continuous assignments and the results should be cumulated during entire course. The end of semester examination is significant part of assessment to ascertain if the learners deserve promotion to the next level of studies.

#### **5.4 Way forward: The life of Economics Learning Community after R&D**

This section presents the way forward for the economics learning community after I finished the research project in Jonglei state. It provides explanation for how members should continue even after I have left for Norway to finish my studies.



In the final meeting conducted on November 3, 2011, members of Economic Learning Community agreed to carry on with the discussion and sharing of ideas that are essential for progress in their learning as students and for their respective businesses outside school. The group agreed to work as a team and provide advice to each other as it may be deemed necessary. In order to work as a

**Figure 13: Members of ELC at the last Meeting November 3, 2011**

team, the members agreed to have leadership with chairperson and a secretary for the group whose duties were to organise and inform members about the venue and time for the next meeting. Two members were selected to facilitate the group discussion and to ensure that members got information in regard to when and where the meeting will take place. On my side, I pledged commitment to continue working with group through emails and Skype for those who may be in position to access such services. In the last few months, this cooperation has been successful and I think the learners will continue to discuss and share their various experiences. The implication of this cooperation is that members realised their potentials to learn from each other and I think it is worthy to be member of such group. In future this cooperation may result to business community through experience sharing and it may boost the learning and academic successes for all members and by so doing, they will be able to build entrepreneurship skills necessary for management and operation of small scale businesses.

## 5.5 Are My Research Questions Answered?

Two questions (A and C) of my research have been fully answered with their respective objectives achieved while one question (B) is partially answered and the objective to some extent achieved.

### 5.5.1 Research Question A

*How can Action Learning strategy improve my practice as a teacher of economics?*

This question has been answered in three ways

Firstly, my attempt to conduct Oriental Actions as in 4.1 was aim at improving my capacity to collaborate and cooperate with both the University Administration and Participants. This created conducive atmosphere for me to conduct my research project and I am convinced that my professional practice especially the dialogue skill is significantly improved.

Secondly the use of methods such as mentorship, discussion and Applied Learning Scenarios or field visits were meant to in co-operate new methods of teaching and learning economics and subsequently improved my ability to use variety of methods in learning process which I conclude as an improvement in my professional practice.

Thirdly, I am able to work as team member and reflect on my daily practice and make accountability of what I do and how I do it as result of this study. This therefore is an indication in improvement of my own practice.

#### **My Professional Practice in the Past and Present**

Still in an attempt to reflect if I have improved my professional practice and attitudes, I made comparison between the Past and the Present as in the table below

**Table 6: My Professional Practice in the Past and Present**

<b>Past (2004- 2010)</b>	<b>Present (2010-2012 and beyond)</b>
Instructor of learning	Facilitator of learning
Used teacher centred approaches of learning	Use Students centred approaches of learning
Non self-reflective teacher	Use daily self-reflective practices as a facilitator of learning
Belief in self-intelligence as opposed to	Belief in both self and collective intelligences

collective intelligence	
Used limited connection between classroom and workplaces	Develop and use wide range concepts of Classroom-Workplaces relations

### 5.5.2 Research Question B

*How can learning activities be organised to in co-operate both Classroom and Workplace experiences in higher education?*

This question is partially answered in the sense that the question requires holistic approach that involves all stakeholders in learning Process including Parents, Students, Institution of learning and the employers of learners which has not been the case in this study. This bond was not created during this research thus; letting me to conclude that the question is not answered as I expected it. The part which is not answered requires questions like: How Can Students under Action Learning be evaluated and graded by employers? How can employers be trusted in evaluation of learners when they are not mandated by the University Senate or Examination board? These questions let me conclude that there is still long way before final answers and found for this question. However, the question is partially answered in that

- The use of Applied Learning Scenarios (ALS) (refer to 4.2.3) provides an understanding of how learning intended to have the interplay between Classroom and Workplace experiences could be organised
- Use of Mentorship as a way of ensuring that students actively get involve in learning and that the cooperation between learner and tutor is imperative in learning process is seen in this study as a step in organising Action Learning activities.

### 5.5.3 Research Question C

*What are strengths and weaknesses of an Action Learning strategy in enhancing Students' learning Skills Development?*

This question is answered in 4.2.1.1 and 4.2.3 above. In summary, the strengths of an Action Learning strategy is that the students are involve in the learning process and they gain experience by conducting learning activities like Applied Learning Scenarios(see 4.2.3) and practice group discussion and presentation in small groups (refer to figure 2 and 3).

Action Learning approach encourages team work and collective intelligence among the team members. This cooperation enables team members to do what an individual might not do single handed. I believe that without Action Learning or group work, learners might not know the significance of cooperative learning and that they would not value Collective Intelligence as a force in modern education.

On the other hand, Action Learning has its own weaknesses embedded in the methods used under this strategy. First, Group Discussion (see 4.2.1) has its challenges which undermine the significance of an Action Learning Strategy in the sense that not all participants may be active in the learning process thus; making Action Learning approach a doubtful strategy for some learners. Action Learning strategy requires that the learners be engaged in industrial work specifically in an area where they wish to specialize however; there are limited employers who could offer this opportunity at the mean time in South Sudan. This implies that there is a need to have places where learners could practice as they are monitored by both the academics and employers.

## **5.6 Chapter 5 summary and synopsis**

Realistically, every individual or group of individuals has got a specific way of evaluating and validating the project and I am not an exception either! My way of evaluating and validating the result that I obtained from interacting with the learners was based on some practical exercises. I carried out revisit trips to workplaces of learners so as to conduct evaluative conversations meant to crosscheck the data obtained in the previous interview or discussion.

### **Synopsis**

The following are the key points discussed in Phase III

- Mirror Exercise (ME)
- Validation of results
- End of Semester examination
- Way forward: The life of Economic Learning Community after research

## **Chapter 6 Conclusion, Recommendations and Final Concluding Statement**

### **Introduction**

This part of the report presents the conclusions and recommendations based on discourse analysis in the previous chapters and my reflection on empirical knowledge. The conclusions and recommendations represent my understanding of roles of Action Learning strategy in Economics Education and generally the learning process.

### **6.1 Conclusions**

As discussed in this report, my primary aim is embedded in the improvement of my professional practice so as to contribute to Students' Learning Skills (SLS) development through An Action Learning approach. My conclusions of this study are explained below

#### **6.1.1 Improvement of My Professional Practice from Instructor to Facilitator of Learning**

Referring to table 6 above in which I have presented comparison of my practice in the past and present, this study concludes with convictions that my professional practice has greatly improved from instructor to Facilitator of learning and I am convinced that my practice shall never be the same again. I have improved my methods of teaching from teacher centred to student centred approach and I am convinced that my role in the learning process is no longer perceived as instructor of learning but facilitator of learning. Understanding of my practice with intention of improving it was the core reason of this study and I am convinced to conclude with convictions that my practice has improved and I will continue with reflective study to achieve more because this study has opened my senses and awareness heightened.

#### **6.1.2 Use of Group Discussion in Learning Process**

Group Discussion and Dialogue was used in this study as a method of learning to promote active participation and idea sharing among the learners (refer to 3.3.1 for more information) This study therefore, concludes that Group Discussion and Dialogue under Action Learning approach plays an enormous role in encouraging students to participate in the learning process. It also develops cooperation between the learners and teachers or facilitators which in this study is seen as relevant attribute in learning process. Based on my field experience, learning group provides an opportunity for learners to share ideas and create their own

learning through group activities and the tasks given in the group also provide challenges to learners and thus, learn from research on the particular topic. Learners tried to communicate in group discussion which is not the case in lecture method where teacher is the sole presenter of lesson. This study therefore, concludes that the use of Group Discussion as a learning strategy does not overlook the responsibility of the teacher to teach but rather complement the learning process.

### **6.1.3 Applied Learning Scenario (ALS)**

As presented and discussed in 3.7.3, this study concludes that the use Applied Learning Scenarios in Economic Education compels learners to participate in the learning process and create their own learning through practice. It engages the learners to construct learning and present account of their learning to fellow learners and teachers in particular field. My impression of this approach is based on the opportunity that students get to interact with the market and or workplaces for the purpose of construction of learning. The use of ALS in this study is seen as a move toward learner centred approach of learning and an opportunity to engage learners in cooperation as a team and with teachers. ALS is an essential attribute in learning process because it presents opportunity for learners involved to gain entrepreneurial skills as they practice in the field and during group discussions.

### **6.1.4 Conclusion based on the Interplay between Classroom and Workplaces**

Few years ago, I did not imagine if at any point my students would have their lessons facilitated at workplaces but this study gave me an opportunity to experience the glimpse of the interplay between classroom and workplaces in economics education. The study concludes that the relationship between theory and practice is mutual in the sense that practice and theory complement each other. During the study, discussions were based on the field experiences and how to apply the theory to practice. Learners who had workplaces were better off in learning compare to those who had no place to apply the theory. My impression of this learning approach is its ability to motivate learners to be active participants and construct learning with or without the assistance from teacher.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

These Recommendations are intended for three groups who have played significant roles in this study through their various contributions.

### **6.2.1 Recommendations to Participants (Students and Co-facilitators)**

It is my desire to recommend to all the Students and Co-facilitators who participated in this study to continue sharing ideas in small groups for the purpose of improving individual practices. This opportunity of idea sharing as I experienced in the last few months could elevate academic achievement of students and the teachers in their quest for academic excellence

I also recommend to Co-facilitators to continue working as a team and embrace team teaching and self-reflective study with major aim of improving professional practice. I recommend reflective studies to participants of this study because it anchors the past with the present and enables the practitioner to plan for future.

Use of Applied Learning Scenarios by the participants could also provide fluency in building the interplay between the theory and practice which is a core value of job oriented education. I recommend the use of ALS to all those who participated in this study so as to achieve more in individual practice and always aspire for better improvement in practice.

I recommend the use of mentorship scheme to facilitators so as to understand the students and their academic aspirations and develop better relationship necessary for cooperation in learning process.

### **6.2.2 Recommendations to Stakeholders in Education**

I recommend to learners, employers and Government/Institutions of learning to recognise and encourage active participation of learners in the learning process including development of curriculum, choice of methodology and the learning environment. This in my view is achievable with full recognition of the learners as pivotal in the learning process.

I also recommend to the stakeholders to acknowledge the significance of the interplay between classroom and workplace experiences in promoting skill based learning needed for jobs and skilful performance of professional duties.

### **6.2.3 Recommendation to OAUC and Dr. JG-MUST**

I recommend to Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (Norway) and Dr. John Garang Memorial University of Science and Technology (South Sudan) to provide avenue for development of Action Learning strategy and also encourage self-reflective study for staff who would wish to improve their professional practices. This could be done if there is formal collaboration agreement between the two institutions.



I also recommend the strategy of Staff-student exchange program so as to promote cooperation and sharing of experiences which could elevate learning attainment not only for staff and students involved but the entire education system.

### **6.3 Final Concluding Statement**

Though with challenges such as my own inexperience in conducting Pedagogical Action Research, the nature of Problem Statement, Limited Resources and Inaccessibility to Information sources, this study concludes that Action Learning is an ideal approach in economic education suitable for improvement of Professional Practice and it is a core factor in promotion of Students' Centred Learning approach. I am convinced that Action Learning provides fluency in the learning process more especially in integrating Classroom and Workplace experiences.

On personal note, this study would always inspire me and any other practitioners who might recognise the relevance of this approach to aspire for improvement in Professional Practice and promote group work and collective intelligence as key to Teaching and Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## List of Appendixes

### Appendix A: Introductory Letter

**AKERSHUS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**



February 18 2011

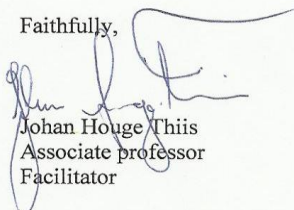
#### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

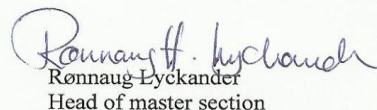
**RE: Mr. David Malual John Wuor Kuany**  
Registration number: HIAK293167

This is to certify that the above reference is a Master's student at Akershus University College Norway. Mr. Malual is studying Master's in Vocational Pedagogy (MaVP) with main trade in Economics and entrepreneurship as trade specific. As part of study program, he is expected to conduct a field research lasting 6 month (June-December 2011) in his home county. His research is entitled: ***Financial literacy capacity and youth entrepreneurship in South Sudan***

Any assistance accorded to towards his research effort will be highly appreciated

Faithfully,

  
Johan Houge Thiis  
Associate professor  
Facilitator

  
Rønnaug Lyckander  
Head of master section

Akershus University College  
Faculty of Technical and Vocational Teacher Education  
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Phone nr: +47 64 84 90 00 Fax nr: +47 64 84 90 01. Email: postmottak@hiak.no. Web: www.hiak.no

## Appendix B: Acceptance Letter from DR.JG-MUST

Dr. John Garang Memorial University of Science and Technology, Bor, Jonglei State,  
Academic Affairs Secretariat

Mrs. Nyiel G. Kuol,  
Coordinator for Diplomas Program,  
Faculty of Economics and Management Sciences.

Date: 04/07/2011

Dear Madam,

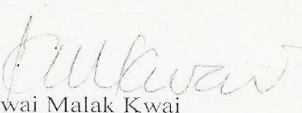
**Subject: David Malual's research and collection of data**

I am writing to introduce to your esteemed faculty our colleague David Malual and to also request collaboration with him over collection of data for his master degree research project on Action Projection in teaching social sciences, especially economics.

Mr. Malual is a student of master degree in Vocational Pedagogy (MaVP) with main trade in economics and entrepreneurship at Akershus University College in Norway. As part of his study program he has been sent to us to conduct a field research lasting for six (6) months from June to December, 2011. His research title is **financial literacy capacity and youth entrepreneurship in South Sudan**.

I am therefore requesting your good office to assign Mr. Malual a course of Micro-economics to teach to your diplomas' students in the next second semester that will start in August, 2011 so that he can collect while teaching the data he needs for his research project. Thanks in anticipation.

Yours Sincerely,

  
Kwai Malak Kwai

Secretary for academic affairs



Cc: Vice Chancellor

Cc: David Malual

Cc: file

## Appendix C: Consent Form

Can Action Research and Action Learning (ARAL) improve My Practice and Youth Financial Literacy Capacity and Entrepreneurship?

### **An Action Research in teaching and Learning of Economics**

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Dear VSG Member,

#### **RE: Action Research Consent Form**

*Having read and probably understood the purpose of this Action Research, I would like to you to put your interest of participating in written consent/agreement.*

1. I have read and understood the concept of this research and it is worthy participating.
2. I understand that my involvement is voluntary and I am extremely free to participate or leave without giving any reasons
3. I agree to participate and contribute to this study as long as there is confidentiality.

Signature and Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D: Sample of Minutes

### Minutes of the first meeting with Participants

Date: 12 July 2011

Venue: Economic classroom Dr. JG-MUST

Time: 05-06 PM local time

Expected duration: 1 hour

#### Agenda

- 1- Personal introduction
- 2- Introduction of Action Learning
- 3- How to write learning log
- 4- Brainstorming on methods of teaching and learning economics.
- 5- Ways forward

#### Deliberations

**01/12/07/2011:** The meeting started at 5:15PM with welcome phrases by the researcher. He introduced himself as a master's student from Norway and on his research period that will end in December 2011. He introduced himself also as staff member of faculty of Economics and Management Sciences at Dr. JG-MUST and former Dean of Students at the same University.

All the participants introduced themselves starting with name, the course each is studying and the economic activity he or she does for living. Some participants did not have economic activities while others mentioned what they do. The researcher then asked any one participant to take minutes of the meeting.

**02/12/07/2011:** The researcher introduced what he meant by Action learning as learning where members come together to share ideas and learn from each other. He further said that Action Learning involves researching on particular topics as set in the university curriculum and that the learners are active participant in the learning process. He said that involves sharing experiences from classroom and workplaces and that those working will provide relevant experience on how economic activities are linked with classroom theory. The

researcher noted that he is a member of the group and he should not be seen as researcher but member and facilitator of learning. He provided all his contacts including emails, telephone contact, Skype address and his office location on campus. He then welcomed members for reactions.

### Participants' Reactions

The concept of learning in groups or Action Learning was generally welcomed by members and they were happy with it and promised to participate in the discussion. Some members asked for clarifications on the time for this activity and class sessions. The researcher clarified that the topics taught in the classroom will be the same topics for discussion in the Action learning activities and the members are free to add more topics.

**03/12/07/2011:** The researcher introduced learning log as a document where the daily learning activities are recorded for reflection and future reference. He gave out log template with three columns including Activities, lesson learnt and reflection. This concept was welcomed with mix reactions with some members saying it is new idea and they welcome it while others said it would take a lot of time to do. The research promised to work with participants on how they could write their learning logs. Each participant was given log template as an example to guide him or her.

**04/12/07/2011:** the researcher asked the participants to say the methods that they know for teaching and learning economics. The only method mention was lecture method. Some suggested the advantages and disadvantages of lecture method. The researcher explained other methods such as group discussion and use of learning scenarios as other methods of teaching and learning of economics. This part was not completed and was suspended for next discussion.

**05/12/07/2011:** Participants agreed to form Economic learning community as suggested by researcher. The aim for this community was for members to come together and learn from each other under the researcher's Action Learning. Other way forwards include

- Meeting twice in a week
- Agreed to form 3 small groups each with 7 members in the next meeting

The meeting was attended by 19 students and the researcher. Two members were absent but had communicated their apologies.

The meeting ended at 6:25PM

Minutes taken by

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## Appendix E: Sample of My Research Weekly Log

### Week 9 log (August 15-20, 2011)

In this week, I invited students who may have some difficulties in various areas to come for consultation. The turn up was impressive and it seems paying off. The students also presented their Applied learning Scenarios/field research which in my view was good start to ownership of learning by learners themselves. The Applied Learning Scenarios project was given to learners to do research in only one week (August 12-19, 2011).

Date	Activity	Experience/Lesson learnt	Reflection
15/8/11- 18/8/11	Individual consultation on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logs writing</li> <li>• Use of internet for research</li> <li>• Action Learning</li> <li>• Business ideas and Income Generating Activities</li> </ul>	Log writing is still a major challenge to some learners. In fact; some do not even attempt to write their logs. Many students turn up for individual consultation	I think consultation time is good indeed since students are able to express their concerns without fear from peer groups. I should give more time for consultation.  Log writing needs more attention and practice.
19/8/2011	<b>Presentation of Applied Learning Scenarios/field research:</b> The most supplied commodities in your local market (see photo below)	Some group made exceptional presentations. However they didn't provide photos to prove their claims of the most supplied commodities in the local markets.  Some presenters seem unfamiliar with research techniques and presentation skills.	I should encourage my students to use visible data or take pictures during their field research.  More field researches should be given since students get more



			motivate in caring out research. Through practices, learners will acquire good presentation skills.
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*Learners attending to Group work presentation session, August 19, 2011*

## Week 14 log (18<sup>th</sup> -22<sup>nd</sup> September, 2011)

### Introduction

In this week, the university gave 7 days to students as their mid-term holiday. This means the normal classroom activities were suspended for a while. However, I and the members of VSG didn't suspend our regular Action Learning activities. We agreed to continue with regular meeting of idea and experience sharing.

The only noticeable activity this week was VSG meeting to share ideas and experiences on small scale financial management. Small scale financial management in this regard is the financial management at personal level or financial management at household or family business level. It excludes financial management at major levels such as wholesale or major industries, organisations or government.

Date	Activity	Lesson learnt/experiences	Reflection
20/9/011	<p data-bbox="217 958 754 1059"><b>VSG sharing ideas on small scale financial management</b></p> <p data-bbox="217 1115 754 1496">The aim of this activity was to help VSG members share their varied financial experiences geared toward improving member's financial management practices. The discussion took place as planned and the minutes of the meeting were taken by the group secretary as agreed by the VSG members.</p>	<p data-bbox="770 1115 1153 1496">It was so interactive discussion and all members seemed motivated and much willing to describe their financial management experiences. In fact the use of <b>ROUND</b> was effective during this discussion.</p> <p data-bbox="770 1518 1153 2002">Some members came to realise that they needed financial management experiences from others in order for them to go forward and improve their own financial management practices. Some VSG members were considering starting their own small scale businesses so as to practice financial</p>	<p data-bbox="1169 1115 1535 1406">I think this topic may need to be repeated once more. The time caught us short and some members were still willing to present more experiences.</p> <p data-bbox="1169 1462 1535 1697">The use of <b>Round</b> in group discussion is proving worthy. Members are getting use to the round system and they are always prepared for it.</p> <p data-bbox="1169 1765 1535 1955">Some members who didn't come with their written logs should be asked to present their logs.</p>

		<p>management.</p> <p>One of the facilitators who attended the discussion presented his financial experiences in the way that motivated members to share their experiences. He challenged all VSG members to plan well in advance and avoid financial wastage. He quoted <b>Jack Canfield</b> in his book of Success Principle with <b>Even + Response = Outcome</b> He explained that our responses to even today are responsible for the outcomes tomorrow. (Canfield &amp; Switzer, 2005)</p>	<p>The participation of the facilitators should be encouraged so that VSG members also learn from facilitators.</p>
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## Appendix F: Sample of Student's Learning Log

Name of the Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Activity	Lesson Learnt/Experience	Reflection

Facilitator: Malual David

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