Why Should Mainstream Social Researchers Be Interested in Action Research?

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The essay tries to argue why conventional researchers are obliged as researchers to be interested in certain forms of action research. The 60 years of ignorance have been illegitimate. The essay starts by listing two commonly encountered arguments paraphrasing Karl Marx and Francis Bacon via Kurt Lewin. It tries to show why a certain simplified reading of Marx cannot provide the necessary arguments. It then presents different variants of action research in order to single out approaches that according to this author require attention from mainstream social researchers. The action research approach emerging as central, by demonstrating its presence and effectiveness within mainstream research as well, is immanent critique. The method of research methodology is immanent critique. Immanent critique has to be demystified, however. When it is brought down to earth, immanent critique is really the kind of dialogical and experiential learning approach associated with apprenticeship learning and with organisational learning. This conclusion, making self-reflective practitioner-research the “hard-core” of action research, even internal to mainstream research, also requires a revision of the experimentalist-as-interventionist credo of action research.

Key words: action research, counter-public spheres, immanent critique, method of methodology, practitioner research, research methods

The purpose of this essay is to answer one question: Why should conventional social researchers be interested in action research? My general background for trying to provide an answer is 1) being a philosopher with a spe-