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ALARPM is a strategic network of people interested or involved in using action learning or action research to generate collaborative learning, research and action to transform workplaces, schools, colleges, universities, communities, voluntary organisations, governments and businesses.

ALARPM's vision is that action learning and action research will be widely used and publicly shared by individuals and groups creating local and global change for the achievement of a more equitable, just, joyful, productive, peaceful and sustainable society.

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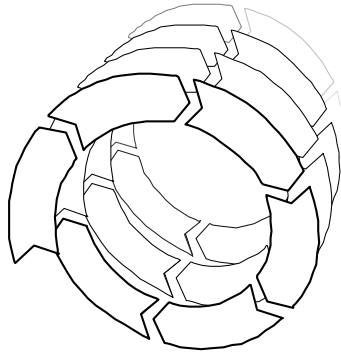
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Editorial

This issue offers the reader different action research stories, told in different genres. There are narratives, letters, critiques, conversations and a story with a sad ending.

On a very personal note there is a contribution by the President of ALARPM. The message is clear: Action learning/research is about learning from one another. It is a global challenge and all of us are challenged to create a collaborative web of scholars and practitioners.

One article honours this challenge in a very practical way. Through his report on conversations with action research activists, Shankar Sankaran demonstrates how networking is done. He leaves us richly resourced with an array of Web addresses. It is up to us to get virtually connected.

The story with a sad ending serves as exemplar for those who embark on an action research-based study, only to find out that it does not work always out as they have planned. Contrary to this, a story is told about the evidence of action research in the field of health care, one about using action research for empowering youth leaders, another about using action research for change management in organisations, and one on the welcoming of a new born action research baby.

Enjoy the bed-time reading!

Erratum:

The editors wish to acknowledge that Mary Farquhar's interview with Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt, published in the last issue of the *ALAR Journal*, 10(2), October 2005, pp.3-28, is a reprint of an article published in *The Learning Organization*, 9(3), 2002, pp. 102-124, with the kind permission of the editors of TLO. See www.emeraldinsight.com/tlo.htm

Message from the President of ALARPM

ALARPM

*Creating more equitable, just, joyful, productive,
peaceful and sustainable societies.*

Friends

In the past year I have travelled widely and continue to meet people whose work is closely aligned with the values and processes inherent on our organization. I sat talking with Jack Whitehead in Bath and we contemplated the fact that there are now individuals and groups around the world engaged in action learning or action research processes, many of them engaged in wonderful work that contributes greatly to their communities or nations. Jack posed the question, "How can we get to know where and who these people are? And how can we put them in contact with each other?" His underlying premise was, I assume, that we have so much to learn from each other.

The issue of creating connections between individuals and groups engaged in action research/action learning has been a conversation now in a variety of quarters and continues to percolate across local, state and national boundaries. As I explore this topic personally I'm confronted by a series of questions: What would people gain from linking with other individuals and groups? How might we facilitate the processes of increasing people's awareness of others with whom they might develop supportive relationships? Who would do this work, and how would they accomplish it?

I'm conscious that there are now many groups, organizations, associations and networks already engaged in

this process at local and national levels, providing the means for people to extend the power of their work and wisdom. At the international level, the ALARPM World Congress provides one way for people to gain insight into the wide range of projects and processes through which action research and action learning are able to enrich people's lives. I urge you to attend it if you possibly can.

The participatory processes inherent in action research and action learning hold the promise of increasing people's quality of life through enacting truly empowering and democratic processes. For me, though, they hold the promise of providing the means by which we can diminish the grinding poverty that still binds the lives of many people in developing nations. I am hopeful that movements toward creating international links between groups with interests in action research and learning will fundamentally provide for this possibility. It is this that inspires me with the hope that we might truly be able to accomplish the intent of the statement that heads this message to you all. I hope you will join me in finding ways to accomplish it as you continue your membership in this association.

With peace, joy and principled intent,

Ernie Stringer

President, ALARPM

**Now it is action research, now it
is not. Doing action research as
part of a Masters by research
degree**

Anna Bloemhard –

Introduction

This is the story of a Masters by Research project that, from an action research perspective, failed. My proposal involved exploring how practitioner's spirituality informs the care given to the elderly and dying. I wanted to employ action research because I believed that it was well matched to the research aims. However, by the very nature of action research being responsive, my research journey took some unexpected and twisted turns. The most significant setback was that halfway through the data collection, the interest of the participants in the project waned significantly and in order to continue with my research I had to abandon the theoretical framework of action research. Instead I choose to use social constructionism, which did not impose the constraints of well-defined, iterative cycles of action and reflection. It is argued that several issues may have played a role in the demise of the initial group's action research focus. However, one of the reasons may have a sense of stagnation, because the group was not able to move beyond the dominant perspective in the industry of employing spiritual care as a clinical intervention.

Rationale for Choosing an Action Research Perspective

The research question for my Masters project was to explore how the lived experience of spirituality informs care giving by practitioners in aged and palliative care. I was interested to facilitate a dialogue and the creation of what Reason (2004: 2) calls "communicative spaces" with practitioners in the field. The initial exploration of the research topic with local directors of nursing homes was met with great interest.

I decided to choose a methodology that concurred with my own post-modern theoretical perspective and with the nature of this research project. Action research, I believed was imminently compatible with the research aim as both were concerned with what Reason and Bradbury (2001: 11) describe as "developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purpose". Dick (2001: 25) adds that action research aims to appreciate and improve a "social practice" in an iterative process. I thought that a research process, which, according to Wadsworth (2001), allows for responsiveness and co-creation of knowledge would be respectful and adaptable enough to include the potentially differing voices of the research participants.

A further point that was well-matched was that inherent in the action research process are values, which according to Winter et al. (2001:54) "are common to all social work practice, those of empathy and empowerment". Action research, these authors continue, is also "democratic", "transformative" and "illuminative"; attributes that are also crucial requirements for researching the meaning and value judgments associated with spirituality. Furthermore there is already an abundance of action research projects where social concerns are also seen as having a spiritual dimension (see Reason & Bradbury 2001; Heron 2004).

Participation

After I had gained the ethics approval from Southern Cross University, I publicised my research proposal in local aged care facilities and invited voluntary participation with the aim to form a core action research group. Soon after, a group was formed with eight voluntary participants who all worked in the field and were keen to contribute to an exploration of spirituality and aged care. Predominantly from a religious background, it soon became clear that the understanding of spirituality in this group was mostly based on a Christian worldview and involved for many members a relationship with God. We met twice within the space of one month, but a third meeting that was to take place five months later (a regrettable time gap that was necessary for personal reasons) never took place, despite my repeated efforts to make contact at the time. It also proved to be difficult to arrange interviews to find out what had happened, after five months some participants had moved on, others were unavailable or busy.

Grappling with the reasons for this stagnation at that time, I contributed the folding of the group to the time gap and a lack of interest to pursue the issue any further. It was clear that it would not be possible to continue involving these practitioners in an action research process or what Winter et al. (2001:7) explain as "a process of change which is based in professional or communal action - thereby closing the gap between theory and practice".

Participation, of course, was voluntary and I accepted that I couldn't enforce further meetings. (Dick 2001:22) agrees that it may be difficult in action research "to achieve participation" and "to maintain relationship", especially if the researcher is not located in the field and also has an ulterior motive, such as completing a degree. Zuber-Skerritt and Perry (2001) elaborate on the possibility of fulfilling the dual requirements of a university study by making the research story the core action project *and* conducting action research with the intention of change and improvement in a

social situation as a secondary action research project. However, for me this posed a question of priority; my curiosity concerned the chosen topic of spiritual care giving and my interest was in employing a methodology that served that purpose.

In order to continue the research and complete my data collection, I now had to solicit participation from other sources. Because I had talked about my research publicly on several occasions, two other opportunities presented themselves. I was invited to interview practitioners in a Tibetan Buddhist palliative care service and later to work with a group of volunteers. This provided me with two more groups of participants in a process of 'theoretical sampling' which according to Kitzinger (1995:300) provides information with "a wider variety of settings". Many of these participants in the later stages of the research were oriented towards Buddhism or did not affiliate with any organised religion; this complemented the mainly Christian perspective on spiritual care so far.

It was with great regret, that I had to abandon the action research focus in favour of a methodology that would allow an exploration of spiritual care, without the constraints of employing a well defined research 'set' and without the desire to improve a social practice, which characterise most action research projects. In search for the best match, I chose to employ the theoretical perspective of social constructivism, as this is similarly concerned with providing open and 'communicative spaces'. A grounded theory approach to data collection and analysis was chosen, which would encourage further theoretical sampling. Lincoln and Guba (2003:273) assert that social constructivism invites a reciprocal inquiry, which is a "profoundly spiritual concern" and involves a deep interest in the "freeing of the human spirit". Furthermore, Reason and Bradbury (2001:22) have also argued that it is important to come to a place "where the spiritual meets social inquiry" by including the more esoteric

aspects of the lived experience with the "aim of human flourishing".

The Social Construction of Reality

Upon careful analysis of the data from the first and consequent theoretical samples, an interesting picture began to emerge. Only in hindsight, I came to understand that an action research approach – as all qualitative research – does not necessarily invite new insights and innovative thinking just because it values participation, reflection and dialogue. From the experiences in the initial focus groups, I learned that action research accounts could very well reconfirm the dominant thinking patterns of a given social reality. Postmodernism has exposed that subjective narratives could very well continue to validate and legitimise work traditions that are overlooking the intrinsic ontological and epistemological assumptions and truth claims of those practices (Kvale 1995).

Lived Experience of Spirituality

I used a grounded theory approach to the analysis of the data findings and noted that the data from the initial group presented a predictable perspective on spiritual care, which consisted for example of saying prayers or giving time and attention to clients. Thoughts about spiritual care concurred with a conventional, clinical pattern, which focused on how to best provide for the needs of the elderly. Spiritual care was described by these participants as 'saying prayers', 'giving a cuddle', 'doing poetry readings' or 'playing music' for the spiritual comfort of a client. Even a superficial overview of the academic literature revealed that the current language used in research on spirituality is also mostly clothed in medical terms such as assessment, interventions and other practices, which are seen as beneficial for the clients (Soerens 2001; Hodge 2004; McEwen 2004; McSherry et al. 2004).

Consequent focus groups and interviews which, as mentioned before, had a more Buddhist or non-religious

perspective on spirituality presented a different perspective. Their understanding of spirituality was less theistic and more concerned with the daily practice of spirituality. In care giving, a major theme that emerged concerned 'being present with the client' was described in terms of 'a reciprocal process', 'being respectful' and 'being engaged' with a client. This is in line with Kellehear's (2002:173) observations, which argue that spiritual care should foster "the honour and integrity of a person's social identity and social self-image". He suggests using a "health promoting approach" to spiritual care, which involves participation and mutual exchange (Kellehear 2002:171). From this perspective, according to Stanworth (2002:193), spiritual care demands a personal, authentic involvement and the "courage" to step into the unknown. Confoy (2002) adds that it also concerns a willingness to examine one's own values and beliefs, a process that focuses on self-awareness, reflection and the ability to change.

Insights

It took me over a year to realise that the first focus group's demise may have had other reasons than lack of interest and time constraints. As a keen action researcher, I was focused on implementing action/reflection cycles with the specific aim to improve current practices. What may have been less obvious to me and the participants in the first groups was that there was a distinct lack of a 'spiritual language' for reciprocal, inclusive spiritual care. Furthermore, although I did try on several occasions, the challenge of naming and deconstructing the dominant narrative of interventionist spiritual care felt, paradoxically, very 'interventionist'.

Further theoretical sampling involved participants who were more versed in the language of spirituality and this made it possible for both the researcher and the researched to explore models of spiritual practice in a very different way. Wilber (1998:7) concurs that you need to experience spirituality rather than talk about it, "to appreciate its rich

complexity". Underhill (in Baird 2001: 52) explains this very clearly:

We know a thing only by uniting with it; by assimilating it; by an interpenetration of it and ourselves... Wisdom is the fruit of communion; ignorance the inevitable portion of those who 'keep themselves to themselves' and stand apart, judging, analysing things which they have never truly known.

Returning to Action Research

Action research and social constructivism both make it possible to explore and question what Kvale (1995:21) calls "all grand narratives and theoretical explanations". I had no other reasons, other than the loss of the original action research group and my need to finish a Masters project, to favour social constructivism over action research. In fact, Lincoln and Guba (2003:267) now advocate the "commensurability of axiomatic elements that are similar or resonate strongly ... such as constructivism and participatory inquiry". However, by abandoning the constraints of an action research methodology, it became easier to explore and deconstruct the two different approaches to spiritual care without having to be concerned about improving or changing these practices.

I have learned that action research may not always be suitable if the research is driven by the need to complete a thesis – unless action research itself is the focus of the project. I have also learned that the composition of the action research group itself is vitally important for the success of the project. In action research, the researcher is in the vulnerable position of having to rely on the participation, insights and experience of the members of the group. At the same time, the researcher's desire and need to move beyond a certain point where change and insight may be possible, skilful as it may be, would in this case have been far too interfering into the group's process.

Yet, I also feel that I have come back full turn to a position

from which I could now embark on a truly emancipatory action research project. Alas, having learned so much, it is far too late to introduce new materials into my thesis. However, I hope to find the opportunity for future action research projects that look at how to extend the language of the currently prevalent, clinical approach to spiritual care to include what Rumbold (2002:15) calls respectful "practices [of spiritual care] that nurture and create transformative experiences" for all involved.

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Engaging and empowering youth leaders Arthur Orsini –

Abstract

This paper outlines experiences gained in a collaborative approach to involve teenagers in the development of a sustainable transport program. The fundamental lesson learned was that it was beneficial for youths¹ to be engaged in a topic before being educated on it. Mentoring, training and support were the primary characteristics in building rapport with youth leaders. This non-coercive process enabled the youths to shape the *look and feel* of the outreach directed at their peers. The youth leaders were empowered to select and adapt objectives to suit their character and community. The programme co-ordinator's main role was as a mentor – facilitating collaboration between other youth groups, resources and colleagues. Overall, the program was designed to build upon incentives that the youths valued; skill-building, environmental awareness, social interaction and a broader understanding of program issues.

Note: This paper was presented at the ALARPM Annual Conference: "Telling Our Stories", University of Technology, Sydney, NSW, 1st October 2005.

Introduction

This paper outlines some of the findings from a project to reduce vehicle-trips to secondary schools in Vancouver, Canada. The project was initially piloted as an extra-curricular initiative in ten schools. It was developed in collaboration with student leaders as an off-shoot 'club' of

the Environmental Club. A programme co-ordinator was employed by a local environmental non-profit organization. Although not on staff at any of the pilot schools, the programme co-ordinator took on a role similar to the 'lead teacher' of a school club.

Early program efforts aimed to encourage students to walk or cycle to school on specific event days: Earth Day, Clean Air Day, Cycle in the Rain Day, etc. Successes of up to 40% fewer car-trips to school demonstrated the potential effectiveness of the program. However, the reduced car-use did not extend beyond the special event days.

The student leaders were largely responsible for the subsequent redirection of the program into a more systematic approach to build sustainable transport options into the culture, mindset and circumstance of the school. Those teenagers were sufficiently empowered in the program material to critically reflect upon their earlier efforts and make strategic recommendations. As a non-compulsory extra-curricular activity, the students' ongoing commitment to planning, reassessment and advocacy to their peers suggests that they were intellectually and emotionally engaged in the project - rather than 'educated' on it.

The Need to Engage Youths in Social and Environmental Work

Education for sustainable development is a dynamic concept that utilizes all aspects of public awareness, education and training ... which will empower people of all ages to assume responsibility for creating and enjoying a sustainable future (UNESCO 2004).

Sustainable development is largely concerned with what might be described as the policies, programs and practices of the 'adult world'. Education for sustainable development creates an arena for children and youths to intersect with

that adult world. However, *public awareness, education and training* do not venture deep enough into the experience of learning in order to engage young people. By actively involving children and youths in their own education – i.e. empowering them in the planning, action and critical reflection of educational components – responsibility is shared while building students' capacities to become active participants in their education.

By and large, sustainable development runs counter to popular culture's advertisements encouraging consumer purchasing and brand identity. North Americans live within a space where advertising is the wallpaper: It is inescapable both where one looks (e.g. media, magazines, TV) and where one is (e.g. billboards, posters, clothing). On average, North American youth watch almost one full waking day's worth of TV per week (Teenage Research Unlimited 2004, cited in Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth 2004). And to use the auto industry as but one example, huge sums of money are spent on enticement: American auto manufactures spend up to US\$314 per vehicle on advertising (Hoover 2004). This money is spent on marketing campaigns meant to grab attention and maintain brand loyalty.

Without a comparable budget, engaging youths in sustainable transport cannot compete as a marketing campaign. Different tactics are needed in order to connect with youths in order that they *even consider* 'being educated' on a topic opposing popular culture. Something more creative than 'marketing' is needed in order for *education for sustainable development* to reach out to youth and compete with *education for mass consumerism*.

Empowerment and Collaboration with Youth Leaders

The quality of education is not to be measured by its length and breadth, but only by its depth. What counts in study is depth, not extent (Vinoba 1996:21).

Reaching out to youths is a non-coercive process of mentoring and relationship building. When a team of youth leaders is engaged in a topic they are more inclined to become advocates who reach out to other youth. They are better able to craft the look and feel of program initiatives while considering broad-visioning objectives. They make activities participative and fun because otherwise, the materials would be boring and an embarrassment to be associated with. When youths become engaged in a topic, the 'educator' can become a mentor who models a reflective practice of planning, action and critical reflection.

This form of education can be compared with leading an interpretive walk. Regardless of the topic or neighbourhood, leading a walk requires an awareness of participants' moods, energies, dynamics, interests and pacing. To be effective, it must be entirely non-coercive. Participants *must* be engaged when on an interpretive walk or else they will just physically (or emotionally) walk away. More so, reaching out to youths is like 'leading' an interpretive walk *through the participants' very own neighbourhood*. In many ways the youths are experts on many aspects of 'the walk' therefore can – *and should* – share the lead.

Similarly, when 'educators' relinquish control and trust in the capabilities of participants, the stage is set for participative action research: The flexible involvement and critical reflection of participants (Dick 2005). In this sustainable transport program, the primary goal was to change attitudes and circumstances so that students

increasingly walked, cycled and took public transport to high school. Such a broad overall goal granted a great deal of latitude for objectives to reach that goal. Student leaders were considered experts with local conditions and therefore their genuine involvement was integral to the planning, action and critical reflection of strategies. The program co-ordinator's role was comparable to that of an independent study 'teacher'. A key task was facilitating, mentoring and overseeing efforts derived from the students' own deep and personal interests in the issues. However, with no academic grading offering incentive, progress was derived from intrinsic motivation.

Cool Factor

Motivation was associated with another important goal that emerged early in the development of the program. In addition to sustainable transport outcomes, direct attention to foster the skills and capabilities of the youth leaders beyond the program issues became apparent. Time and effort dedicated to the students' skill-building was rewarded with a level of effort and satisfaction sufficient to make the program 'cool'. As articulated by one teenager, promoting sustainable transport is dependent upon *'lowering the social risk of being seen on a bike'*.

Taking Time

However, building a team of healthy, active and empowered youths requires a great deal of time and involvement. An early challenge requires that a program co-ordinator demonstrate her or his commitment to youth empowerment in the first few meetings. Conversely, the recruiting process in secondary schools is often limited to a brief, hectic, lunchtime meeting. Such a scenario is too short to develop rapport with participants, and with much of the agenda required to describe the proposed program, it fails to model the intended youth empowerment process.

Social Conditions and Respect

Finally, the social conditions of recruiting students cannot be ignored. Students are drawn to events and activities for diverse reasons and attention was made to avoid creating cliques that alienated non-members. Some students were initially brought to meetings by their friends with no prior knowledge of the topic. Others came out of a personal interest in the issues. Such a social dynamic required that emotional and physical space be created for both individuals and groups to feel welcome and included.

This problem had been addressed in a manner that seemed counter-intuitive: If people were too busy for a 'useless' short meeting, then a longer first meeting was needed. That choice to not simplify or reduce a first meeting within a busy schedule demonstrated the importance of developing a healthy relationship prior to delegating tasks. The *start-up workshops* were three to four hours in length and gave ample time to social interaction and full participation. Components were arranged to include rational, structured, expressive and conceptual activities that address diverse learning styles (Du Toit & Van Petegem 2005).

The evaluation questions explored the students' comfort level and ongoing interest in being a part of this group. Responses often included the words 'fun', 'informative' and 'friendly'. It became a very easy and enjoyable workshop to facilitate because it established the key intention of developing a respectful relationship between, and among, 'adult' and 'youth'. This was all the more valuable because respect is something that many teenagers have *not* come to expect.

Skills Developed by Youth Leaders Through the Project

Given the proper opportunities ... youth[s] can always make a significant contribution to the development of the communities in which they live (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993:29).

When 24 youth leaders from across the Greater Vancouver region were asked what they expected to gain from participating in a program to reduce car-trips to school, their responses were categorized as follows:

- enhancing leadership skills 56%
- increasing environmental awareness 33%
- making new friends 26%
- broader understanding of the program 26%

Enhancing Leadership Skills

Engaging students in the planning, action and reflection of the program's development creates significant opportunities for participants. Youth leaders participating in this program were interested in learning skills not typically covered in the classroom; communication skills such as active listening, non-verbal communication, feedback, visual clues, and 'making assumptions'. Other tools covered were action and event planning, fundraising, poster making, drama, theatre improve, bicycle maintenance, and the construction of chopper bikes.

Increasing Environmental Awareness

Reducing car-trips to school has a fundamental goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. However participants were eager to gain a more critical understanding of why this 'green behaviour' was so difficult within modern society.

There was a great deal of enthusiasm in subversive elements of critiquing the dominant car-culture. Other issues opened for discussion included road safety and traffic fatalities, loss of farmland due to sprawl, disproportionate allocation of public funds for road infrastructure, soaring rates of childhood asthma and obesity, loss of children's independence within their communities, oil and warfare, oil tankers and spills, smog, climate change, confinement of large mammal species within highway corridors and loss of breeding range, financial debt of car-owning youths, gender-bias in chauffeur-moms, securing oil from the Middle East, and escalating public transport fares. For many youths, these alternative worldviews offered a fresh look into the fishbowl that is our popular culture.

Making New Friends

Not only were participants able to make new friends from within their own community, they were also introduced to like-minded youths in nearby communities. Workshops brought together youths from different parts of the region (city and suburbs) to share perspectives on local topics, such as average walking distance to school, transit frequency, bike theft, and ratio of car ownership in their communities. But of course, there was no mistaking the clear and deliberate intention to make the work enjoyable.

Broader Understanding of the Program

Of course the participants wanted to know more about the program that they were considering. Topics briefly covered were program goals, support to be expected from the program co-ordinator, student leaders' decision-making roles, the time frame for activities, and a calendar of events. A basic framework of the program was presented in the metaphor of a large national map: "We can see the major lakes and cities, but until we/you get active on this, it's hard to see the significant features that we actually experience within our community."

Roles and Responsibilities of the Program Co-Ordinator

In addition to the above-mentioned attributes of the job, the program co-ordinator's responsibilities included recruiting youth leaders, mentoring in their training, supporting the program implementation in schools, and acting as a catalyst with and between other groups and initiatives across the region.

Recruiting

In recruiting new youth leaders, the program co-ordinator needed to understand overall goals and intentions in order to introduce the program to potential participants, teachers and principals. It was equally important to be able to take a lead at initial meetings and workshops without being established as the primary decision-maker.

Although the overall goals had been established early in the program it was understood that local program objectives could not be determined in advance. Each youth group was made responsible for choosing and adapting program resources to suit the character of their group and community. It was critical that potential recruits were clearly made aware of the legitimate decision-making power they could gain in this initiative.

Moreover, the program co-ordinator's role in recruiting tended to diminish over time. Once the program began, youth leaders themselves played an important role in recruiting new leaders within their school.

Mentoring and Support

Be the change you seek in the world
(Mahatma Gandhi)

The program co-ordinator needed to model what they were asking the youths to be. Foremost, this meant demonstrating enthusiasm and support for the cause, and to the group. Sincerity was the most important characteristic: Dedicating time to youth groups cannot be faked. The youth participants needed to know that time had been budgeted to return to follow-up meetings and show support at events. A commitment had to be made to recognize the youth leaders *as competent adults* with credible ideas, plans and reflections.

The mentoring of youths facilitated mentoring amongst youths. Peer mentoring ultimately worked to reduce the 'fingerprint' of the program co-ordinator on each groups' efforts. Within the overall program goals, youth leaders needed to be empowered to make creative adaptations and decisions to implement program objectives. There was really no other effective way: An adult who claims to understand the rapidly evolving essences of 'cool' amongst a youth audience, doesn't.

The sharing of 'power' also modelled a sharing of roles. This was maintained by routinely renegotiating responsibilities within the group to dismantle emerging hierarchies. As a result, each participant had the opportunity to gain leadership skills by managing a group task.

A great measure of support was created by not trying to treat youths like adults. Sometimes gatherings were structured around more social agenda items such as watching a relevant film, going on a group bike ride or holding a meeting at an ice cream shop. When compared with the *work-life* of adults, these gatherings seemed quite unorthodox. For many people meetings, workshops and presentations are unabashedly boring: Adults seem to have

become comfortable in the presence of a dull speaker and will calmly endure it. In fact, an enthusiastic speaker who invites interaction could very well generate embarrassment amongst participants. The sentiment often is: It is up to the listener to rouse his or her own interest and engagement with a presentation. This is not so with youths where a boring or un-engaging speaker is “a waste of time”.

Catalyst

One area where a program co-ordinator’s knowledge and experience is most valuable can be in the critical reflection around a broadening perspective. The youths may be experts in their local community, but a program co-ordinator’s experience can also be a strong asset. Their expertise – including resources, journals and colleagues – can be the catalyst that enables youth leaders to achieve much more than they could in a classroom setting.

A program co-ordinator can act as a liaison between regional youth groups working on the same program. Email *could* serve this purpose, but social opportunities truly require a gathering. And gatherings not only offer an opportunity for the sharing of ideas; they also help each participant identify their place and identity within a movement. This is especially important in social and environmental programs that run contrary to popular culture. (For example, there is little social risk in belonging to a ‘*cars are cool*’ club. The same cannot be said for a ‘*reducing car-trips to school is cool*’ club.)

By the same token, the program co-ordinator can be a catalyst in the opposite direction. A youth program co-ordinator working in the ‘adult’ world can also invite youth leaders onto task forces and review committees at an organisational, or governmental level.

Conclusions and Critical Lessons Learned in the Process

Effective outreach requires participation from the target audience. When working to reduce car-trips to secondary schools, student leaders can play an essential role in any initiative or awareness-raising campaign. Moreover, involving youth leaders in the planning, development and critical reflection of a program strengthens both the program and the ability of the 'target audience' to take a lead in the implementation.

The critical lesson learned in educating youth leaders was not so much to teach, as it was to engage and empower. By developing a program model without prescribed objectives, the program co-ordinator was able to take the time to recruit, support and mentor youth leaders in a manner that was appropriate to each school community. The program planning and implementation were collaborative and followed a cyclic process of action research.

The result was that student groups derived a level of commitment and satisfaction that was strengthened with each activity they developed. In addition to addressing program goals, the youth leaders enhanced their leadership skills, environmental awareness and program planning. When the youth leaders became engaged in the topic, they became strong advocates who generated broad-minded, relevant and 'cool' outreach campaigns for their peers. And they made it fun to watch, and even more fun to be a part of.

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Action research in healthcare: What is the evidence? Ian Hughes –

Abstract

Systematic reviews of action research in healthcare have been conducted in the United Kingdom and the USA. The UK Health Technology Assessment review studied action research in a variety of settings including hospitals and nursing homes, providing a definition of action research in health, and a list of 20 questions judged to be useful in evaluating the quality of action research proposals and reports. In the USA, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality commissioned an assessment of community-based participatory research in health. This rigorous review found that while a significant number of studies achieved high ratings for one of research rigour or community participation or health outcomes, few achieved high ratings for the quality of research and participation and health outcomes. A third review was not well conducted, and its findings appear unreliable.

This paper combines and discusses these systematic reviews to raise questions about the quality of action research currently conducted in healthcare settings, and the quality of knowledge produced by research grounded in different paradigms.

In health care settings, action researchers in the participatory paradigm (Reason & Bradbury 2001) work in close proximity, and often in collaboration, with researchers using positivist or interpretivist approaches. While the number of participatory research reports is increasing, and attention is shifting from paradigm wars towards sorting out the strengths and weaknesses of different research approaches for varied purposes and research tasks, it may be too early to report that peace has been declared between positivist, interpretive and participative paradigms in healthcare research.

Since the 1990's new health care systems known as evidence-based practice, evidence-based medicine and evidence-based healthcare have been developed to support health professionals in providing the best available care. Evidence-based medicine has been defined as "the conscientious, explicit, judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients" (Sackett, Rosenberg, Gray, Haynes & Richardson 1996). From medicine, these principles expanded into other health professions as evidence-based practice (EBP) and more recently, to include service development and management in evidence-based health care (Ottenbacher, Tickle-Degnen & Hasselkus 2002). Evidence-based practice asserts that making clinical decisions based on best evidence, from the research literature and clinical expertise, improves the quality of care and the patient's quality of life.

Most texts on evidence-based practice present a set of levels or hierarchies of evidence which were established initially within evidence-based medicine (Holm 2000; Madjar & Walton 2001; Moore, McQuay & Gray 1995). Although wording may differ slightly, the constructions are similar to the following table:

Table 1: Hierarchy of levels of evidence in evidence-based practice

Level	Description
1	Evidence obtained from systematic reviews of relevant and multiple randomised controlled trials (RCTs) and meta analyses of RCTs
2	Evidence obtained from at least one well designed RCT
3	Evidence obtained from well designed non-randomised controlled trials, single group pre-post, cohort, time series or matched experimental studies
4	Evidence obtained from well designed non-experimental research
5	Opinion of respected authorities based on clinical experience, descriptive studies or reports of expert committees

This hierarchy of levels of evidence clearly prefers 'multiple well-designed randomised controlled trials' over other forms of evidence such as 'non-experimental research', 'clinical evidence' or 'descriptive studies'. Participatory action research approaches would be included under 'non-experimental research' or 'descriptive studies', ranked as inferior in the quality of knowledge they produce to the 'gold standard' randomised controlled trials.

Action researchers in health are responding to this challenge in a number of ways. One is to organise randomised controlled trials of action research. Amanda Hampshire and her colleagues in the UK conducted a randomised control trial of the use of action research in primary health care (Hampshire, Blair, Crown, Avery & Williams 1999). Twenty-eight general practices were randomly allocated to two

groups. Action research to improve pre-school child health services was facilitated in 14 clinics, by facilitating practice meetings and providing written feedback. The other 14 practices received written feedback alone. Health professionals reported improvements in all 14 action research practices, and none of the others, but formal measures did not show any statistically significant changes. The authors conclude that action research is a successful method of promoting change in primary health care, but measuring its impact is difficult.

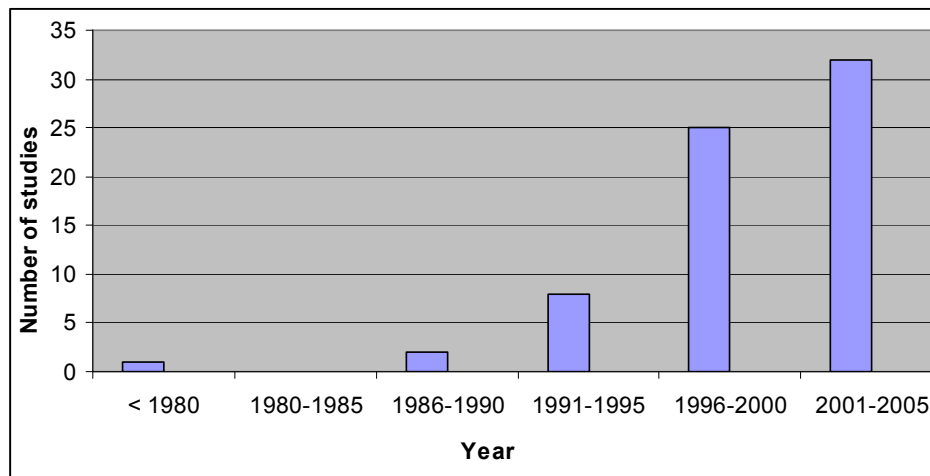
While Hampshire and her colleagues demonstrate that it is possible to apply randomised controlled trials to action research, and they illustrate one way to generalise action research findings, by combing the results of several case studies, there are difficulties imposing the required degree of control on collaborative or participatory projects, in which the research design can be changed by the participants during the conduct of the study. Hampshire's study treated action research as an intervention, but did not measure the knowledge generated or the learning embodied in the action research process. Difficulties in making statistical measures of the effectiveness of interventions to improve the quality of care is well recognised, and by no means limited to action research.

The largest and most systematic review of participatory action research was prepared by the RTI Evidence-based Practice Center at University of North Carolina for the US Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Their full report is available on the Web. They define Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) as "a collaborative research approach ... designed to ensure and establish structures for participation by communities affected by the issue being studied, representatives of organizations, and researchers in all aspects of the research process to improve health and well-being through taking action, including social change". They identified 1408 published articles which satisfied at least one of their inclusion criteria, and after

systematically excluding articles that did not meet all criteria, they reviewed 185. Several reports claiming to be Community-Based Participatory Research did not fit their systematic definition, reflecting well known difficulties in defining action research. Their systematic literature search illustrates the increase in the number of CBPR studies, especially after 1996. They identified a total of 11 studies in all years prior to 1996, and 24 in the three years from 2001 to 2003 (Viswanathan et al. 2004:59).

Viswanathan and her colleagues systematically reviewed each article with regard to the quality of research method and the quality of community involvement. They also asked whether CBPR projects achieved their intended outcomes.

Figure 1: Publication dates of CBPR articles



(Source: based on Viswanathan et al. (2004:59) with estimates projects for 2004-2005)

To assess the quality of research methods, they reviewed four randomized controlled trials, four quasi experimental studies, two single group pretest and posttests and one non-experimental design, all of which were considered CBPR. There is an inherent difficulty in systematic judgment of the

quality of CBPR. Whereas we might consider a randomized trial in which studies were allocated between a CBPR approach and traditional research methods, because CBPR requires that the community identify the health problem to be addressed, and be involved in designing and conducting the research, the two approaches would almost certainly yield very different interventions and recruitment strategies, leaving little for comparison other than a final outcome measure.

The review rated the quality of reported research elements on a scale from 1 (lower quality) to 3 (highest quality), but did not establish a cut-off score for acceptable quality. On this 3-point scale, 50% of CBPR studies were in the highest band, scoring more than 2.5, and none were rated below the half-way mark (Viswanathan et al. 2004). The reviewers commented that some CBPR achieved high scores for research quality, but they found very few complete and fully evaluated CBPR interventions, partly because page length limitations in journals lead to incomplete documentation.

Of the same studies, only one third achieved quality ratings for participation higher than 2.5, and none rated below the half-way mark (Viswanathan et al. 2004). Studies which rated high for research quality did not achieve such high scores for participation, and from other data in the reviewers found evidence that high-quality scores in community collaboration are associated with low-quality scores for research. Despite this trend, the review uncovered several examples of outstanding research combined with community participation throughout the research process (Webb, Eng & Viswanathan 2004). My conclusion is not that high levels of participation produce poor quality research, but that attention to the quality of both research and participation, with adequate resources to enable this, and strategies to enable full reporting (such as detailed on-line reports supplementing published peer-reviewed papers) are needed.

Overall, stronger or more consistent positive health outcomes were found in the better quality research designs. CBPR can also lead to unintended positive health outcomes, and positive outcomes not directly related to the measured intervention. Some research benefits of community involvement include greater participation rates in research, increased external relevance, decreased loss on follow-up and increased individual and community capacity.

Review of the evidence for action research requires a clear understanding of the purposes and assumptions which guide action research practice. As Reason and Bradbury point out in their *Introduction to the Handbook of Action Research*, "action research has been ... promiscuous in its sources of theoretical inspiration" (Reason & Bradbury 2001:3). The handbook includes chapters that draw on pragmatic philosophy (Levin & Greenwood, Chapter 9), critical thinking (Kemmis, Chapter 8), the practice of democracy (Gustavsen, Chapter 1), liberationist thought (Fals Borda, Chapter 2), humanistic and transpersonal psychology (Rowan, Chapter 10; Heron & Reason, Chapter 16); constructionist theory (Lincoln, Chapter 11; Ludema, Cooperrider & Barrett, Chapter 17), and systems thinking (Flood, Chapter 12; Pasmore, Chapter 3). While there are many theoretical approaches to action research, it is confusing and misleading to mix models from different professional settings, paradigms and theoretical frameworks in a single study, as Meyer, Spilsbury and Prieto (1999) do in their review. They take a definition of action research from a critical theory approach to educational action research (Carr & Kemmis 1986), claiming that this is a rejection of both "positivist and interpretative (sic) views of science" (Meyer et al. 1999:38), they incorrectly place this within "new paradigm research" emerging from a "participatory worldview" (Reason & Bradbury 2001). They then discuss generalization of findings within a positivist paradigm, and go on to report a systematic review grounded in the same positivist tradition. This kind of epistemological confusion

makes it difficult to engage in clear analysis and critique of action research.

In their systematic review of 75 action research reports Meyer and her colleagues sought to identify factors that facilitate or inhibit change in health care practice through an action research approach. They identified nine key barriers, five of which were identified in more than 25% of studies. From this they argue that findings related to the process of change in a single action research study "appear to hold true in other settings" (Meyer et al. 1999). As 55% of findings were supported in only 25% of studies, this conclusion does not seem well supported by their own evidence.

Action research is employed in many healthcare settings but its scope and role in this context is not clear. It is practised under a variety of names, for various purposes. This paper has drawn on three systematic reviews of action research in health, to look at the evidence supporting the use of action research in healthcare.

Only three systematic reviews were identified. One of these (Meyer et al. 1999) was not well conducted, and its conclusions may not be reliable. Another (Hampshire et al. 1999) indicates that action research can be a useful change intervention, but did not measure the knowledge generated or the learning embodied in the action research process. The largest and most systematic review (Viswanathan et al. 2004) indicates that it is possible for a single study to demonstrate high quality research, participation and outcomes, but that few studies achieve this trifecta. In the studies reviewed, there was a tendency for high quality research to be associated with good outcomes, but lower quality participation.

These three reviews demonstrate that systematic review of action research is possible, and that action researchers can learn from the appropriate adaptation of systematic review methods. The contrast between a well designed and well

resourced study (Viswanathan et al. 2004) and another of lower quality (Meyer et al. 1999) illustrates that effective and high quality participation, action and research requires appropriate levels of funding and other resources. Evaluating the quality and effectiveness of action research is more complex than evaluation of other research approaches because of its triple purposes. To measure the quality of participation, the quality of research and the quality of action for change, we need three sets of measures.

This paper has argued that it is possible to apply the kinds of systematic review used in evidence based practice to action research. (Viswanathan et al. 2004) show that it is necessary to adapt the methods of evidence-based practice and systematic review to do this well, and by implication, to turn the table of evidence (Table1) on its side, so that instead of a hierarchy with evidence obtained from systematic reviews of multiple randomised controlled trials privileged over other forms of evidence, we see a continuum in which various approaches, paradigms and forms of evidence are appropriate for different purposes, settings and tasks.

Note

I identified only three systematic reviews of action research. If you know of any others please send details by email to I.Hughes@fhs.usyd.edu.au

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Notes from the field – Action research conversations

- Shankar Sankaran

Note: This contribution was written as a letter to the journal *Action Research*. This version includes the feedback from the editors.

I had the pleasure of meeting several action researchers across the USA during my sabbatical late last year. The multiple purposes for my visit to the USA were to meet doctoral students doing their research in organizational change and development in Hawaii; interview prominent action researchers in the US about examining action research dissertations and to have discussions with action researchers on ways to increase conversations among action researchers around the world. I thought it would be good to share some insights from my visit with fellow action researchers as a letter to *Action Research*.

Some Lasting Impressions

While I had spent some time in the US before, when I was working in industry, this was the first time there as an academic and an action researcher. This was also the first time I was visiting the mid-West and the Eastern states.

What struck me most about my visit was the enthusiasm with which action researchers were willing to meet me and take extra efforts to make my stay comfortable. Davydd Greenwood at Cornell University arranged for me to give a talk to participatory action researchers and also put me up. He was kind enough to meet my wife and me at the airport and take us to dinner with his wife Pilar. Moreover, one of Davydd's former students, Akihiro Ogawa, who had read

about my conducting action research in a Japanese organization, was eager to meet me. He and his wife drove all the way from Boston with their new-born baby to listen to my talk and return the same night. They drove through the night so as not to upset the baby. I was very touched. During my lecture at Cornell I explained about the arduous journey that I took to become an action researcher in academia from a senior manager in industry. Participants commented that it was good to demonstrate that the path to becoming an action researcher is a rocky one.

Elizabeth Kasl at California Institute of Integral Studies had been very ill just before we landed in San Francisco but despite being weak and recovering from her illness made an effort to meet us at the Institute. Elizabeth had been initially concerned that coming from a business school my interest may have a solely commercial angle. She was surprised to find that this was not so and that I was really interested in the idea of contributing to action research. A similar doubt had been expressed by participatory action researchers at Cornell, who felt that PAR was about helping the disadvantaged and empowering them and wondered why business people were interested in action research. When I pointed out that many people who work in organizations are also sometimes disempowered and action research could empower them they seemed to be more comfortable. Davydd felt that my talking about action research in organizations could also help legitimate the use of action research in the business school at Cornell.

Mary Brydon-Miller at the University of Cincinnati arranged for two of her former students Drs Steve Kroeger and Tammy Schwartz to come out on a Sunday during the Thanksgiving holidays and take us out for breakfast on the day we arrived in Cincinnati. We had a great time with them and Tammy showed us some of the sights of Cincinnati. Carla Shafer at Cornell also took us to visit a famous gorge in Ithaca when we visited Cornell.

Both Susan Noffke at the University of Illinois and Randy Stoecker at the University of Toledo were surprised that we

took the trouble to make a day trip by bus all the way to their universities to meet them. The bus journeys were of a much longer duration than the meeting we had with them. In fact while I was visiting Susan she had an emergency to attend to but she made sure that while she was away I could spend my time usefully talking to another action researcher, Peter Kuchinke, who was interested in action research in business. Peter also knew Professor Mike Marquardt of George Washington University whom I knew previously and could not meet during my visit as Mike had to go away to Hong Kong. I was disappointed that I had missed Mike but meeting Peter made me feel better.

We were also honoured to be invited to action researchers' homes – Bill Torbert in Boston, Jay Rothman in Yellow Springs, Ohio and Hilary Bradbury in Los Angeles.

We also learnt that Jay taught at Antioch College where annual lectures were held in honour of John Dewey. While I was at Jay's place he described the work he had done for resolving conflicts between the police and the African-American community in Cincinnati called the Cincinnati Collaborative Process. This was interesting because Sydney had had a similar conflict between the police and the indigenous community recently. He also gave me a compact disc explaining the process he used that I could offer to interested parties in Australia.

The US Action Research Community

One of the differences I noticed between the action research community in Australia and the US was that they did not meet each other as often as we do in Australia. In fact Jay Rothman jokingly suggested that I should write a note about why the action researchers in the mid-West of US should try and meet each other. I suggested to Davydd Greenwood that a World Congress in the US might be one way to get them together but he felt that although Cornell could host such an event, Ithaca may not be a convenient location for most people especially due to the cost of flights to Ithaca.

I also found that many US action researchers tend to use the term Participatory Action Research or PAR rather than action research to cover all types of action research approaches. This may be because of the PAR movement that was started in Cornell by Bill Whyte. PAR also seemed to be struggling to find a place in mainstream research in academia. The book written by Herr and Anderson (2005) helps to address some of these issues. In fact some of the action researchers I met were inspired by the fact that Southern Cross University in Australia had accepted the idea of setting up the College of Action Research as a designated area of research strength and that we were engaging several schools in the University in conducting multidisciplinary action research.

Action Research Conversations

My question about how to get action researchers to have more conversations was prompted by a remark made by Peter Reason in September 2002 when he reviewed (Reason 2002: 225-229) a book edited by us from Southern Cross University on action research (Sankaran, Dick, Passfield & Swenson 2001) and remarked that if he had sat down with the authors of the book to have a conversation he might have understood their purpose in writing the book better. During my trip I was reminded of Peter's remark.

I ended up meeting twenty-five action researchers from outside Australia in 2004 and had many more conversations than I had planned. The concept of "small worlds" (Watts 2004) seems to work very well in action research circles. I have included a list of people I met, with information about them available from their websites as an appendix to this paper. I have also included a bibliography of some publications by the people whom I met at the end of this note.

I thought that by sharing my findings about increasing conversations about action research with fellow editorial

and advisory board members of *Action Research* whom I did not meet during my trip and readers of *Action Research* I might engage you in a conversation on how to progress with this idea further.

The following are some themes that came out of my conversations with action researchers in 2004.

Ambassadors of action research

My meetings with action researchers started long before I left Australia on this trip. It started with an email from Tricia Vilkinas of the University of South Australia in May 2004 asking us whether we would invite Dr. Victor Friedman from Israel to come to our University when he visited them to supervise a student using action science. Victor and I had met virtually ten years ago for a similar purpose when he advised me via emails on how to use action science when I was doing my PhD. I had not met him face-to-face until this invitation arrived. So I jumped at this opportunity to meet one of my *senseis* (gurus) face-to-face.

We had long and wonderful conversations with Victor in Tweed Heads as a guest of the Southern Cross Institute of Action Research (SCIAR) in July 2004 along with our staff and students. In fact he became our guest speaker at our first doctoral symposium for Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) students. Victor stole the show with a story about a school reform project in Israel that resonated with the audience. This was based on a research that was conducted among 'problem' school children but it became apparent that the problem also was caused by the teachers who acted differently with these children due to their 'stereotyping' these students. Later Victor met a group of dedicated action researchers from Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management (ALARPM) Association in Brisbane. Victor even agreed to attend the ALARPM National Conference held at Darwin (up north) as a keynote speaker. The Brisbane group of ALARPM continued to meet to

practice action science based on Victor's workshop even after his departure.

In August 2004 my paper was accepted for a Knowledge Management Conference held at Greenwich, UK, and I decided to use this opportunity to look up Peter Reason and Judi Marshall at the University of Bath. When I spoke about my proposed trip to the US, Peter recommended that I meet Elizabeth Kasl, Jim Ludema and Sonia Ospina who were doing action research projects that would be of interest to me.

One commonality among the people I met was their connections with the Sage *Action Research* Journal. So I thought that perhaps journals like *Action Research* do act as a link between action researchers. In fact I had also come to know many people whom I met before and during my visit through my connection with *Action Research*. So I thought I would explore this linkage through my discussions. There were differing views on this.

Do journals or books help in increasing conversations?

Davydd Greenwood felt that even though the *Handbook of Action Research* and journals such as *Action Research* and *Concepts and Transformations* have promoted increased awareness of action research they do not serve the purpose of increasing conversations as there is a 'dead space' between the authors and reviewers. The traditional blind review process does not allow for conversations between the reviewers and the action researchers who contribute papers, unlike the online journal *Action Research International* <http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/ari/arihomet.html> Discussion lists such as 'arlist' maintained by Bob Dick and the global dialogue initiated by John Gaventa through the Institute of Development Studies <http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/index.html> on Learning and Teaching Practices in Higher Education

<http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/networks/learnparticip/> do result in better conversations, but the conversations on these forums die off after some time.

When I met Hilary Bradbury she said that she had recently started the practice of sharing reviewers' comments for *Action Research* once the review was complete. And more recently we've seen reviewers' comments flowering into a separate paper - cf. Elizabeth Kasl et al's Reflections on Erica Foldy's first person inquiry into race relations (volume 3, issue 1, March 2005). Another angle for increasing participation with the journal began with discussions with Peter Reason and Judi Marshall at Bath. We explored how *Action Research* could help researchers who normally did not write for academic journals to publish their research. One idea that arose was that an experienced action researcher (perhaps a member of the advisory board on *Action Research*) would co-author papers with junior researchers who had not published and include their own critical account of the research. A group of academics from Southern Cross University are now putting together such a paper based on a PhD program, with five managers conducting action research to solve problems at their workplace. These managers normally would not write for academic journals.

A continuing question remains about *how the action research community* might achieve more transparency in the review process of, say, *Action Research*. We recently worked with the refereed journal *Qualitative Report* that has a more open review process. Although the reviewers initially review the paper 'blindly' to check whether it is appropriate for the journal and can be improved to be published in the journal the review then becomes more transparent and takes on a conversational mode between the reviewers and the authors and they work together to get the paper ready for publication. By this method both the authors and the reviewers are satisfied with the final paper. Perhaps by modifying the current review process of *Action Research* we could make it possible for authors and reviewers to

communicate with each other more freely, possibly using a website that simultaneously preserves confidentiality and commitment to rigorous standards.

Can websites be used to increase conversations?

From the conversations I had about the role of journals in increasing conversations it became apparent that electronic media like discussion lists and websites could increase the conversations between action researchers more rapidly than the print media. We do have a website offering action research resources at Southern Cross University, and the University of Bath has a website that is frequented by action researchers. Is there nonetheless need to create one common connection point for all action researchers?

I discussed the possibility of having a common website for action researchers to increase their conversations. Both Davydd Greenwood and Mary Brydon-Miller felt that web pages could help in increasing conversations but they take a lot of time and energy to maintain and could burn out the people who looked after them.

I met with a group of people including Nimat Barazangi and Carla Shafer at Cornell who are involved with the Participatory Action Research Network (PARN). They discussed how they could contribute to conversations between action researchers through their website. I suggested that since the action research websites at the University of Bath and Southern Cross University are providing certain services for action researchers, PARN could think of looking at other services that could be useful, such as setting up of an international database of action researchers on the PARN site with links to websites of these researchers to serve as a kind of a 'knowledge map' for action researchers. PARN is planning to organise a search conference in 2005 to discuss its future and explore this proposal.

Randy Stoecker, whom I met at the University of Toledo, felt that interactive web software may provide a better way of having conversations around the world than just a website where people looked for resources. Randy facilitates the online conference on community organising and development at the University of Toledo <http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/>

In Australia ALARPM serves as a networking organisation for Australian action researchers. ALARPM has been involved in holding several World Congresses of Action Research along with the Participatory Action Research Society. So my next question was how far professional organizations like ALARPM contribute to increased conversations among action researchers?

Do professional organisations provide networking opportunities for action researchers?

Davydd felt that the World Congress organised by ALARPM www.alarpm.org.au and the Participatory Action Research (PAR) Society serves as an effective platform for communication for action researchers around the world. ALARPM also serves as a focus for Australian action researchers to meet once in a while due to which a close community has been built up here. However there is no such single body in the US for action researchers to get together. A similar sentiment was echoed by Mary.

But it became apparent that action researchers do get together in other ways in the US. Lyle Yorks from the Teacher's College at Columbia University observed that since action research is not mainstream research in many universities in the US the action researchers tended to meet around their content disciplines. For example, at the Academy of Management (AoM) conference the Learning and Education people who are interested in action research get together before the conference. Bridget O'Connor at New York University (NYU) mentioned that the American

Educational Research Association (AERA) has a special interest group in action research

<http://coe.westga.edu/arsig/>

It seems to me that action researchers could make an effort to get together in meetings associated with events not specifically organised for action research but related to it in some way. For example Mary Brydon-Miller and Susan Noffke from the University of Illinois are planning to organise a Town Hall meeting of action researchers at the Qualitative Research Conference being held in Illinois in 2005. However there should be a way to communicate key points discussed at these meetings to other action researchers. Posting a note on an action research website or publishing a field note like this in *Action Research* could be one way to do this.

Six Degrees of Separation

Meeting with several action researchers during this trip was made possible only by contacts provided by other action researchers before or during my trip. Peter linked me with Elizabeth Kasl at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco and Sonia Ospina at New York University. Sonia suggested that I meet Lyle Yorks at the Teacher's College at Columbia University. Mary put me in touch with Susan Noffke at the University of Illinois and Randy Stoecker at the University of Toledo. Victor suggested that I meet Jay Rothman at Yellow Springs. Mary also asked Steve Kroeger and Tammy Schwartz to meet me in Cincinnati. And because Victor used the term 'action inquiry' at his workshop I contacted Bill Torbert at Boston College who had recently published a book on action inquiry. Both Davydd and Mary suggested that I meet Gary Anderson at NYU, who invited Michael Bronner and Bridget O'Connor at NYU, to the meeting. While visiting Susan I was introduced to Peter Kuchinke at the University of Illinois. Elizabeth introduced me to Dean Elias whom I could not meet but was able to talk to over the phone.

Not only did I make new friends in the US but I also came back with a list of action researchers I have not met in Australia such as Tom Denison at Monash University and Lyn Simpson at Queensland University of Technology, who were part of Randy's Community Informatics Network.

Examining Action Research Theses

Before I went on my sabbatical I had started working on publishing a paper about issues related to examination of postgraduate research theses (dissertations) at Australian universities. In fact the work on this paper started off due to our concerns about examining action research theses. As we started discussing about action research theses we found that, in our own experience as researchers, supervisors and examiners, we faced a multitude of problems with examination of any thesis. So we started discussing examining all theses and decided to follow it up by writing a second paper devoted to issues with action research theses. Hence I decided to talk about issues concerning the examination of action research theses with some of the academics I would meet during my travels.

I interviewed four action researchers about issues that arose out of examining action research theses (dissertations) and talked briefly with others whom I met as part of our data collection to publish the paper about examining action research theses. The data that we collected is being analysed now with a view to present a paper at the next World Congress of Action Research in 2006. But I will briefly mention about some interesting points I discovered.

I found that although the Australian and US doctoral research systems were different many of the issues regarding action research theses (dissertations) were the same such as securing ethics approval, how to write an action research thesis, what criteria are used to examine a doctoral thesis and how can you train or mentor examiners to examine a doctoral thesis. But I came back with the feeling that the developmental approach used by US universities through setting up an examination committee

that allows for intermediate communication between the students, supervisor (advisor) and examination committee could be a better approach for an evolving methodology like action research compared to the Australian system where the (external) examiners have no contact with students.

Summary

My visit to the US has resulted in some very interesting conversations with fellow action researchers that have opened my eyes to new ways of collaborating with action researchers globally. I have made many new friendships that will grow with time.

As people interested in promoting action research we should find better ways to help increase contact between action researchers, whatever school of action research or discipline we may belong to. Bill Torbert has predicted that in ten to fifteen years action research will become a predominant way of doing useful research. There is evidence that the medical community in particular is turning to participative methodologies and calling explicitly for PAR approaches in government funded research. Perhaps increasing our conversations and contacts can support the growing espoused interest with authentic practice. I invite feedback from other editorial and advisory members of *Action Research* about some of the ideas proposed in this field note. I plan to organize an open discussion on the topic of 'action research conversations' at the next World Action Research Congress being planned to be held in 2006 in Holland.

You can help me prepare for this in three ways:

- Write a letter to the editors of *Action Research* on what you felt about the various ideas discussed in this field note especially about ways to bring the action research communities closer together.
- Initiate a conversation about some of these topics in *arlist*
- Send me an email at ssankara@scu.edu.au for me to compile your views and summarize them in *Action Research* before we connect again at the World Congress.

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Action Researcher		Webpage
Anderson	Gary	http://education.nyu.edu/education/steinhardt/db/faculty/1405/Dept_design/0
Barazangi	Nimat	http://www.einaudi.cornell.edu/parfem/bios/barazangi.htm
Bradbury	Hilary	http://wsomfaculty.cwru.edu/bradbury/
Bronner	Michael	http://education.nyu.edu/education/steinhardt/db/faculty/1001/Dept_design/0
Brydon-Miller	Mary	http://www.uc.edu/uel/faculty.htm
Driskell	David	http://www.dcrp.cornell.edu/people/profile.mgi?fm=Driskell
Gozawa	<i>Joanne</i>	http://www.ciis.edu/faculty/gozawa.html
Greenwood	Davydd	http://falcon.arts.cornell.edu/Anthro/faculty/faculty_DGreenwood.php
Kasl	<i>Elizabeth</i>	http://www.ciis.edu/faculty/kasl.html
Kroeger	Steve	http://www.uc.edu/profiles/profile.asp?id=1735
Kuchinke	Peter	http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/hre/Faculty/kuchinke/kuchinke.htm
Marshall	Judi	http://www.bath.ac.uk/management/about/people/Judi%20Marshall/
Marsick	Victoria	http://www.tc.columbia.edu/faculty/?facid=vjm5
Noffke	Susan	http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/frp/n/s-noffke
O'Connor	Bridget	http://education.nyu.edu/education/steinhardt/db/faculty/1002/Dept_design/0

Ospina	Sonia	http://www.nyu.edu/wagner/faculty/facultyDetail.php?whereField=facultyID&whereValue=29
Reason	Peter	http://www.bath.ac.uk/~mnspwr/
Rothman	Jay	http://www.ariagroup.com/
Schwartz	Tammy	http://www.units.muohio.edu/eap/departments/ted/Schwartz.1.htm
Shafer	Carla	http://cu-ed100.com/cshafer/
Stoecker	Randy	http://comm-org.utoledo.edu/stoeckerfolio/stoeckerefolio.htm
Torbert	Bill	http://www2.bc.edu/~torbert/
Vargas-Mendez	Leonardo	http://www.psc.cornell.edu/faculty.htm
Yorks	Lyle	http://www.tc.columbia.edu/faculty/?facid=ly84

Editors' comment

Hilary and Peter are truly grateful to Shankar for taking the time (and spending the money!) to help connect action researchers across oceans and disciplines. Shankar's idea for transparent reviews, better use of websites and face to face meetings are timely. Indeed it provoked some thinking on our end and a commitment: With the second edition of the Handbook of Action Research coming into shape, we are eager to host a live and web mediated conference based at Case Western Reserve University. We'll draw on the proven web technology of the Case Center for Business as an agent of World Benefit. We want to make this happen as final drafts for the Handbook come due in summer 2006. The

conference will include open meetings to which all action researchers are welcome. In these we can dialogue on the topics that Shankar raises, action research practices and philosophies, and other issues besides. Using web technology (that has proven itself!) we'll provide free access for those who cannot travel to Cleveland. More information on the face to face as well as web meeting will be provided on relevant websites and from the editors.

Thanks Shankar!

About the Author

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We welcome profiles of people engaged in action learning or action research. You could submit your own or offer to write one on behalf of someone you know.

Using action research to provide the necessary 'stability' to manage the instability of organisational change

- Rod Sarah

Abstract

I was privileged to share this action research story about how my organisation sponsored a university-based Masters degree as part of a large-scale whole of organisation change program during the period 2002-2004. This story proposes that to achieve the instability that is organisational change, that 'stability' and 'stability-enabling structures' are an essential prerequisite for successful change, and that action research can contribute to the stable structures necessary to effectively manage the instability of the change process. The action research project is the basis of my doctoral research due for submission during 2006.

Introduction

I began my Doctoral research in late 2000 as a member of a research cohort with six other candidates. However, within the first 18 months of beginning this journey, all of us had all experienced the instability and uncertainty of organisationally based action research. Our experience of the temporary nature of organisational life as it relates to business action research projects has been reported elsewhere (Sarah et al. 2002; Molineux & Haslett 2002).

I subsequently 'restarted' a different action research study in late 2001, which endured and has been successfully

completed. Thus, some questions arose for me from this subsequent experience:

- What was different in this second study?
- How did we create the stability 'necessary' to create the space for learning and change?

The argument of my story is that organisational infrastructures can provide stability and continuity that is somewhat paradoxically necessary for organisations to change.

In the sharing of my story I told of the use of a Masters Degree and an action research doctoral research program as an example of organisational infrastructure to provide stability and continuity. The story is based in a medium sized student service organisation within the Tertiary Education Sector in Australia that is undertaking a major transformation to become an outwardly focused adaptive customer service organisation.

Creating the Continuity for Change

When leaders and change agents conceive of an organisational change process, stability is frequently akin as an initial and unwanted condition, with change as a desirable variation or destination. Stability and change are viewed as opposites. My experience challenges this contention – in that rather than an 'initial-condition', stability is an essential 'on-going condition' for successful organisational change. Rather than a 3-step "unfreeze-change-refreeze" program (Lewin 1951) or an eight-stage model of change (Kotter 1996), I am suggesting a 2-phase 'structure-change' model with a stable unchanging system acting as infrastructure. I am also suggesting action research can act as a prerequisite for successful change rather than just the creation of change.

Related to stability for change, I am also suggesting that you need continuity for discontinuous change to occur successfully. Using the language of the 'change-no-change' dialectic, no-change can be reframed as what is being retained and held onto – what is being conserved (Maturana & Bunnell 1999). What systems an organisation chooses to conserve so determines what is free to change, and thus conservation has to do with preference, desire and intent. Although something has ended, so something else more fundamental has been conserved. The host organisation has to contain 'continuity' and in doing so creates a space that is open for change to occur around what is conserved. In my study, the action research program was an essential element that was conserved and retained.

Overlapping Domains in Action Research–Sponsor as Researcher

One usual representation of the 'learning community' in an action research study is by the differentiation between researchers and researched or client, albeit in a participatory and democratic process. The phrase 'action research' implies a parallel balance between two competing constituencies.

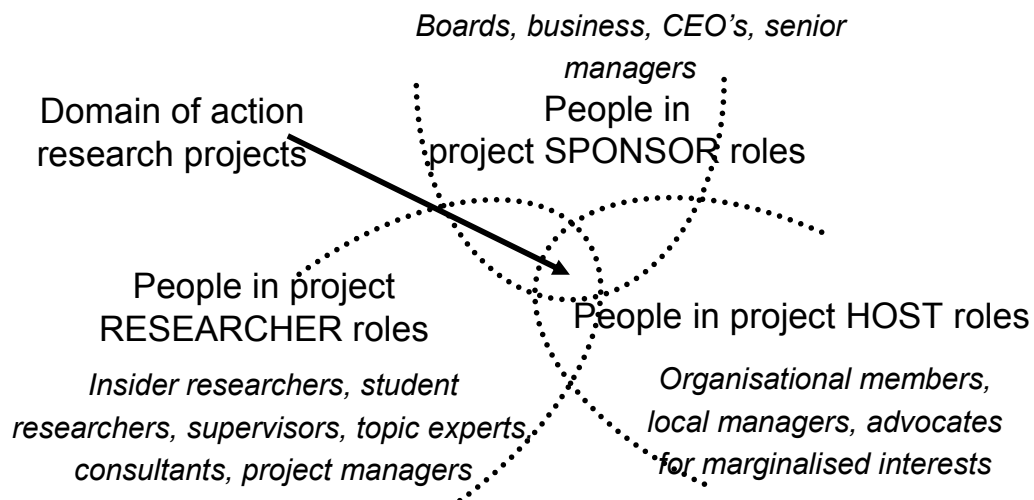
In my study, this could be shown as an inter-organisational relationship between the client organisation and the university. However, in this instance the research is being conducted by a researcher located within the client organisation, not located within the university setting or as an external consultant. This positioning of the researcher is referred to as insider action research (Coghlan & Brannick 2001).

I was thus looking for a different conceptual framework that extended this conventional differentiation. In a study of 13 cases, John Friend developed a structure of the relationship between the 'stakeholders' within this idea of a 'learning

community' and proposed a model containing three domains – the host domain in which the intervention is undertaken, the sponsor domain that in some instances stands aside from the organisation that is the host domain, and the agent domain which represents the separation of the 'client' from the researcher as an outsider (Friend et al. 1998).

I think his model more appropriately fits my experience. With some modification of labels to contextualise my research, these domains can be renamed and represented as in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Generic model overlapping roles (adapted from Friend et al. (1998) and Friend (2004))

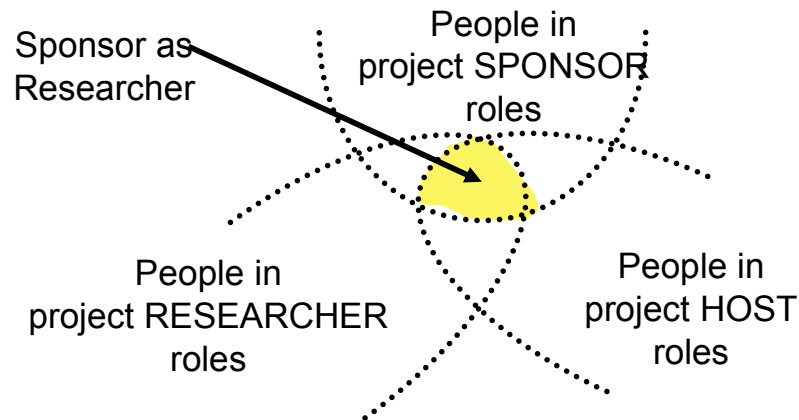


Here there is a relationship between a client organisation, as the host setting and the university as the deliverer of a Master of Management academic program of study. The university and the students who are undertaking a course of study and the PhD candidate represent the 'researchers'.

However, following our adaptation of Friend's framework (Figure 1), in this project the sponsor is also a researcher as a

student and is a member of the host organisation. Thus the host, sponsor and researcher occupy a single domain in what I have called 'sponsor as researcher' in Figure 2. What this project represents is an application of Friend's model in terms of overlapping organisational memberships, and it is this application of Friend's model acting as an infrastructure that has provided the enabling 'stability' for the Masters program to help manage the instability of organisational change.

Figure 2: Sponsor as researcher (adapted from Friend et al. (1998) and Friend (2004))



Within these stakeholder domains exist over-lapping roles and organisational membership. This not only provides insight into the design of sustainable research projects through time, but by having 'sponsor as researcher' as a central element of the organisational infrastructure it highlights what has been a core element of infrastructure essential to the sustainability of this change program. To

highlight just three examples of overlapping roles and membership including the essential 'sponsor as researcher' role:

- The management arrangements enable strong on-going connections with the CEO as a student researcher and sponsor of the action research study of the program, and as program host. It provides a vehicle for connecting the 'system' as the host organisation and the environment in which that organisation operates.
- I am the course coordinator and have multiple roles in this model – the personal interest in studying this program as intervention for my PhD research, a responsibility for course outcomes for my work colleagues as students, and also for the host organisation as my employer.
- The course director is seeking program and research outcomes for the university as the provider of the program, as lecturer seeking outcomes for the host organisation's student participants, and as a PhD supervisor is supporting and guiding me as a research student who is also acting also as course coordinator.

However, this 'sponsor as researcher' model just didn't emerge. While space prohibits a full explanation of its beginnings, a critical incident occurred some years earlier that highlighted the need for locally produced 'fact-based' valid research data and exemplars of practice. The decision was taken for our workplace becoming a catalyst for generating research. 'Sponsor as researcher' formalises the relationship of work as learning, and the workplace as a producer of new knowledge. The domain of university as the sole producer of knowledge is questioned, as is there a blurring of insider and outsider roles. Research and learning within a 'sponsor as researcher' framework is a new pattern of organisational and research practice.

Conclusion

While many elements of my organisation were retained and conserved from our past and our history, a Masters degree program and doctoral Action Research thesis are both examples of organisational infrastructures that provided stability through time to allow change to unfold. The title of my story asks whether we should challenge some well established notions of change management, organisational change and our understanding of the relationship between stability and instability. I am strongly suggesting we should engage with the concept 'sponsor as researcher' as a new and interesting addition to how we think about action research and change management.

Note

This story, and the feedback I received from the ALARPM conference, led to a subsequent paper presented at the 11th ANZSYS Conference in Christchurch, NZ in December 2005. A copy of the ANZSYS Conference PowerPoint presentation is available from the author – Rod.Sarah@campuslife.monash.edu.au].

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Enhancing widespread use of learning materials through participatory action research

- Bill Holderness

Abstract

Much time and money is invested in the production of good quality learning materials. This is right and proper since learning materials provide crucial support to teachers and learners, particularly in remote and disadvantaged schools. However, the extent to which new and appropriate materials are adopted and effectively used is often very disappointing. This article critically examines two South African research studies that investigate the development and use of their organisations' innovative environmental education materials. It then argues that the incorporation of participatory action research (PAR) in studies of this nature (or as a parallel, facilitated process) could have a significant impact on the extent to which new materials get used. The article analyses key elements of PAR and demonstrates how, at least in simplified form, PAR can be practised with learning materials countrywide, even by teachers in remote, under-served schools.

Introduction

Especially in developing contexts, teachers need to be supported by learning materials that are *appropriate* and of *good quality*. Such requirements generally receive attention from publishers working in conjunction with education officials and educators. Research studies that evaluate learner support materials tend to focus on the extent to

which certain quality criteria are met, and to recommend ways the materials might be improved.

However, questions of *implementation* are generally overlooked, or at least inadequately addressed. Some basic questions need to be asked: Are the educators clear about the materials? Are they convinced of their value and suitability? Do they feel motivated to use them in their classrooms? Will they be able to use them effectively in their particular contexts? Will they be able to make any necessary adaptations? Will they have the means and opportunities to give feedback to the originators of the materials?

These and other questions are crucial for effective implementation. Unless they are given attention, all the creative energy and dedicated efforts of the writers and publishers concerned may be of little avail - and potentially positive learning opportunities can be denied to the learners.

With concern about implementation primarily in mind, this article raises the question of how academics, research students (and their supervisors) could most profitably direct their energies when evaluating the *use* of learning materials - with a view to optimising application in the classroom. We explore this question by examining two recent South African research studies by students concerned about enhancing the quality and use of learning materials on a large scale.

Two Research Case Studies

It is noteworthy (and helpful for comparative purposes) that the studies selected share certain commonalities: they were undertaken by students registered at the same university and under the same supervisor; the main intentions and approaches of the students were not dissimilar. Both were concerned about evaluating aspects relating to the development, suitability, take-up and use of innovative environmental education learning materials in a large

number of schools. Understandably, both were written with a view to improving the quality and utilisation of the respective materials in classrooms.

While conducting their research, both students worked as officers within the organisations responsible for producing the learning materials. As the education officer for Cheetah Outreach, situated outside Stellenbosch in the Western Cape Province, Dawn Glover (2005:3) was responsible for the co-ordination of the project and participated as a writer. As National Director of Environmental Education in The Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA), based outside Howick in Kwa-Zulu Natal, Jim Taylor (1997:14) was responsible for, amongst many other duties, co-ordinating the production of the *Share-Net* materials. Thus both researchers had the benefit of 'insider' perspectives and relatively easy access to a large number of participating schools.

In terms of differences, the Glover study was presented as a Master's treatise which investigated one particular resource package – the AAWARE (*Animal Awareness for World and Regional Education*) Natural Science Teacher's Guide (AAWARE). She was particularly interested to discover how these materials were applied (or not applied) in more than 400 primary schools in the Western Cape Province. By contrast, the Taylor study was written as a Doctoral thesis which examined the development and countrywide use of WESSA's *Share-Net* materials.

We now examine each of the studies in more detail, keeping in mind the following question: How might the intelligent adoption and competent application of innovative learning materials in classrooms best be supported by research endeavours? In order to answer this question, we need to look more closely at aspects of the two research studies.

The use of AAWARE learner support materials

Glover's evaluative case study (2005) investigated the use of new learner support materials in the natural sciences at the intermediate phase level. The AAWARE materials (*Animal Awareness for World and Regional Education*) were the first resource package developed by the Cheetah Outreach organisation. The main aim of the materials was to assist teachers to incorporate environmental education in the classroom practice.

In her position as education officer for the organisation, Glover had relatively direct access to a large number (414) Western Cape schools. Given this situation, she was able to administer both 'pilot' and 'improved' questionnaires. Having convincingly justified the need to study the use of AWARE learner support materials (LSMs) (p.15), Glover conducted an 'interpretive case study' (p. 22) at three contrasted schools. After generating and analysing the data obtained from a combination of questionnaires, interviews and classroom observations, Glover identified certain factors inhibiting the use of AWARE materials and concluded that 'a long-term strategy should be developed to enthuse schools and teachers about the intentions and goals of the resource (Glover 2005:ii).

Certainly there can be many valid explanations for the lack of take-up of new learning materials, but the purpose of this article is to propose that the incorporation of *action research* processes could prove beneficial to investigations of this nature. They could reveal significant insights pertinent to promoting the use of the materials, and could increase the degree of commitment and application by the teachers involved.

Having been involved in identifying issues of concern to them, teachers can be motivated to reflect on those issues in action learning (AL) and to contribute to the researcher's central action research study. They can also participate in

recommending – and even trying out – revisions to the learning materials. For example, Glover or a co-researcher could have benefited by working alongside a few teachers at the three identified schools as they planned, acted, reflected on and then re-taught, using the AAWARE materials. Ultimately, the materials themselves could be revised and improved, through the process of ongoing interaction and feedback between the researcher and the identified practitioners.

This article proposes that action research (and participatory research, in particular) can be effectively employed to “evaluate and improve” the quality and appropriateness of learner support materials and to “optimise the use of” specific LSMs in the classroom.

Glover records honestly some of the disappointments, difficulties and frustrations she experienced trying to gather data. For example, from the survey methods she employed, she ultimately had 8 of the 12 pilot questionnaires returned and only 109 of the 293 final questionnaires (Glover 2005:25). She resolved that, given another opportunity, she would do things differently:

Due to the difficulty in the distribution, and the low return rate, of the questionnaires..., I should have administered the questionnaires personally to a smaller number of schools across a stratified sample from those who had received AAWARE. This would probably not have taken up too much more time, as firstly faxing out over 300 questionnaires and then following up on the receipt of those questionnaires by phone consumed many hours. Administering the questionnaires personally would have ensured that all questions were answered as fully as possible and any ambiguities could have been resolved immediately (Glover 2005:32).

The researcher concluded, therefore, that working with a smaller sample of schools would have been more fruitful.

Had she done so, the incorporation of action research could have become a viable possibility. Although AR was probably not what she had in mind, her preferred, recommended approach would have enabled its inclusion.

Researching the use of *Share-Net* materials

Our second case study (Taylor 1997) examined the development and use of Share-Net's 'informal' *Enviro Facts* worksheets that cover at least 60 environmental education topics (p.107) and are made available countrywide through the offices of WESSA (The Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa). Taylor's 'narrative study' or 'reflective review' went further than that of Glover's in grounding the investigation *within*, and as an integral part of, the processes of change.

The study set out to 'review and illuminate the Share-Net project' through a number of 'narrated' case studies (p ii). It identified and discussed emerging principles and patterns that could guide future resource development projects. As such, it stopped short of being an easily recognisable action research study. However, in essence it had many ingredients of action learning and participatory action research (PAR) such as have been identified by Mouton (2001:150-152):

To some extent the 'research participants' (teachers using the materials) were involved 'as an integral part of the research design'. Furthermore, the study used mainly qualitative methods 'in order to gain understanding and insight into the life-worlds of the research participants' and there was an explicit commitment to 'the empowerment of the participants'. The mode of reasoning was more inductive than deductive with the emphasis on participants and their world views, rather than on imposing any pre-set theory or explanation. The data analysis was viewed more as a collaborative effort between the researcher and the participants.

Because the study deliberately encouraged participation and involvement on the part of the subjects, it enhanced the chances of 'ownership' of the findings - another characteristic of PAR. The study demonstrated how emerging technology was used to support locally developed materials; it endeavoured to take seriously the problems teachers experienced when using the learning materials (p. 53), it took steps to respond to the diverse needs and contexts of the teacher participants (p. 62) and, in particular, it actively encouraged collaboration with teachers in developing and improving the learning materials.

As a consequence of this close interaction with teachers, Taylor (1997:107) found that local, collaborative resource development initiatives had, to some extent, lead to a 'closing of the gap' between producers and users of resources' and that this had been 'particularly evident through the many phases of trialling and re-development' that had occurred.

Although, like Glover, Taylor stopped short of applying action research in the strict sense of the word, his 'narrative study' demonstrated many of the principles of PAR. Indeed, one might classify Taylor's study as an example of 'systematisation' as described by Selener et al. (1997:36):

Systematisation is a continuous process of participatory reflection on a project's processes and results, undertaken by both project staff and participants. This systematic analysis generates lessons which are fed back to improve the project, thus strengthening the learning and organisational capacities of development organisations. The project experiences are documented and can be shared with other organisations.

Research approaches

The research approaches used in the above two case studies (Glover 2005; Taylor 1997) were variously described by the

researchers as 'an interpretative case study' (Glover 2005:22) and 'reflective review' (Taylor 1997: ii) It is interesting to note that at virtually no stage did they see themselves as 'action researchers' even though a central concern for them both was to improve their practice as providers of learner support materials within their organisations. Taylor refers to the approach in only this one sentence:

Aspects of the study have an 'action research' orientation (Carr and Kemmis, 1986) as I became involved in continuing daily challenges at work and attempted to enhance action through research and research through and in action (Taylor 1997:2).

Both researchers took pains to demonstrate in their studies that they wished to discuss, as honestly as possible, the strengths and weaknesses, shortcomings, and successes of their materials. They declared personal prejudices, priorities, preferences and passions that might lead to distorted and biased interpretations. Indeed, both studies succeeded in maintaining impressive levels of honesty, integrity and 'objectivity'.

As 'evaluative' and 'narrative' studies, their research approaches were sound and served well the purpose of providing overall 'assessments' and 'accounts' of the reception and take-up of new learning materials. And indeed, such accounts are necessary and can prove helpful to future material developers and to the planning and management of modes of delivery and training that accompany the introduction of new materials.

As with action research, the fact that their research was conducted by 'insiders' who were directly involved in the material production and day-to-day implementation issues, was not only acceptable, but also realistic, appropriate and even desirable. Indeed, the intrinsic motivation, professional concern and active participation of an 'involved participant' is likely to yield far more intensive

investigations, insightful findings and appropriate recommendations than one conducted by an 'outsider' to the project.

As a logical follow-on from the above assertions, this article strongly recommends that teacher participants who are expected to apply new learning materials in their teaching could make valuable contributions in matters relating to implementation. With minimal guidance, they would be able to reflect on their experiences and plan (as well as try-out and review) more workable and appropriate ways of using the new materials in their particular diverse teaching contexts.

By so doing, teachers would be engaging in the business of action research, particularly in matters relating to their daily practice. Their devised alternative approaches, 'experiments', experiences and insights could all prove invaluable to those responsible for designing, publishing and disseminating the material. It could also help to shape the in-service training and follow-up visits that support the introduction of materials in the classroom. Glover, in her study, concluded that workshops appear to made little difference to whether or not - or even how effectively - teachers used the *AAWARE* materials (Glover 2005:43 and 76)

However, this article raises the following question: If some teachers had played a more active role in designing and contributing to these workshops (especially in the light of their action researched pilot efforts), would there not have been more obvious benefits and carry-over in terms of material use in other schools?

The extent to which (participatory) action research can be managed and is feasible, especially given the constraints in teachers' time, competencies and energies, is a matter that needs to be considered - but is shown to be feasible in terms of field-based case studies described in the last section of

this article. At this point, however, certain theoretical issues need to be visited and clarified with a view to defining and refining what kind of 'participatory action research' (PAR) would be *suitable* for our central purpose (enhancing the use of learner materials) and *workable* in diverse developing contexts (with remote rural areas particularly in mind).

Incorporating (participatory) Action Research

It has been a major contention of this article that time spent researching and improving the use of learning materials would be well invested in facilitating and supporting action research amongst some, if not all, of the teachers who are using the new materials. By so doing, the practitioners concerned would be encouraged, to be honest about difficulties they experience and misgivings they have about the new materials. They would also have means of communicating their coping strategies to the materials producers. Such information could prove invaluable in making the learning materials more accessible and appropriate for teachers in diverse teaching and learning contexts.

Whether this can be included, or proves too cumbersome for inclusion in, a doctoral or masters thesis would need to be a joint decision of the student and supervisor. But it is likely to prove highly productive if – during the course of the investigation – some simple action research studies were initiated amongst the educators / teachers who are expected to use new materials. Certainly one would not want to overload the teachers with an additional burden. Already expected to master and apply new materials, with all that implies in terms of adjustments to current classroom practices and routines, educators cannot realistically be expected to conduct an 'action research study', of which they have, more than likely, little or no previous experience?

How does one overcome this problem and is it worth the effort to try to make it possible for educators to do so, in the

midst of their already demanding jobs? In other words, is there sufficient justification to take up additional time and energy of busy teachers in order to engage them in classroom action research? Will they benefit enough to make it worth their while – both in the short and long term - or would the producers (e.g. publishers) of the learning materials be the only ones to score? Indeed, can we be sure that the materials themselves would ultimately improve and that the producers would gain worthwhile and implementable insights?

All the above questions need serious attention. However, in this article they are circumvented by proposing that, at least in developing contexts, the concept of ‘action research study’ should be re-conceived as a ‘do-able participatory action research process’ – in which the ‘average’ teacher can engage. The manner in which this process is played out will vary from one situation to another – and one set of learning materials to another. (Possible examples from two large-scale projects are given below.)

What is important to keep in mind is that, as far as possible, the teachers need to be raised to the level of ‘co-researchers’, not so much in terms of co-managing the research process but in terms of co-generating problem solutions and new knowledge (Chesler 1991; Elden & Chisholm 1993). Particularly when researching the use of learning materials in remote and under-served schools, insider and local knowledge needs to be seen as important for scientific understanding as is the outsider’s technical expertise and abstract knowledge.

Because participation by the participants is seen as so crucial to the action research process, there can be justification for adding the term ‘participatory’. Since the inception of PAR, writers have argued (Elden & Chisholm 1993; Argyris & Schön 1991) that it is a new and distinctive variety of action research. Participation in knowledge creation and empowerment of participants are seen as major

characteristics which distinguish PAR from other types of action research.

With reference to our particular topic – the use of learning materials in the classroom – PAR would be strongly committed to the view that teachers can learn to be self-reflexive about their teaching roles and contexts, to critically analyse the suitability and quality of new materials and to be able to devise new solutions and new possibilities for action in applying their materials (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 323).

Of course one needs to be realistic in terms of the ‘average’ rural teacher’s lack of competency and previous experience in PAR. Therefore, as Babbie and Mouton have argued, the research techniques need to be simplified and popularized. Teachers need to be taught more economic and controllable methods of research, such as ‘simple methods of registering, counting, systematization and data analysis’ (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 324)

PAR allows and requires participants to build records of their own improvements or progress. It also encourages participants to develop ‘social verification and validation of data’ with or by participants. This can bring certain advantages: ordinary people validate the data being used and data can be immediately processed and ‘confronted’; likewise, it can be immediately corrected or verified by participants. (p. 329).

According to Reason (1994:329), social verification is also made possible through a ‘collective and dialogical method’. This refers to testing the coherence of arguments being presented by means of such ‘engaging activities’ as dialogue, discussion, consensus and ‘participant confirmation’. In terms of the last-mentioned, participants withdraw from the action periodically and check on one another’s information and interpretations in the context of group interviews and meetings (McTaggart 1991:177).

Validation in PAR can also be achieved by using 'triangulation of observations and interpretations' (McTaggart 1991:178). Normally, however, this method refers to the use of more than one method of observation or measurement to increase the validity of one's findings (Babbie & Mouton 2001: 329). Furthermore, a central characteristic of PAR is that it comprises cycles of action and reflection. It generally starts small and develops through the self-reflective spiral, consisting of cycles of planning, acting, observing, reflecting and then re-planning for further implementation, observing and reflecting. (McTaggart 1991: 75).

Ideally, PAR should be initiated in a representative sample of pilot schools from the earliest stages of classroom implementation. As the following section demonstrates, in terms of two large-scale projects involving new learning materials, this 'ideal' was found to be not an unrealistic pipedream.

Participatory Action Research in the Field

In interesting ways, elements of PAR were practised in two large-scale South African projects in which I fortunate to be involved: the one (Molteno) a materials development project; the other (PEUP) a school improvement and curriculum/materials development project. Both projects grew to involve very large numbers of primary schools across South Africa in the 1980s and 1990s and, in many ways, they were mutually reinforcing.

The Molteno Project (ISEA, 1988) developed, tried-out and tested innovative language teaching materials for primary schools in South Africa and beyond. This project made a concerted effort in the 1980s and 1990s to always take seriously the views, contexts and feedback of remote and marginalised second-language teachers of English, and was prepared to make revisions regularly to the trial editions of

both *Breakthrough to Setswana/ Xhosa* etc. for Grade 1 as well as to *Bridge to English* for the higher grades.

Although not as well resourced and thorough in its trialling approaches, the Primary Education Upgrading Project (PEUP) achieved an even higher level of practitioner involvement in the actual writing, dissemination and improvements made to learning materials produced for use across the curricula for grades 1-6.

Through such activities as writers' workshops for primary school teachers, college of education lecturers and PEUP Organisers, new learning materials were produced *locally*. For example, the *Khumisapuo* handbooks (for grades 1-3) comprised original Setswana language enrichment teaching materials produced by the teachers themselves for grades 1 to 3 classes across the region. Similarly, teacher-produced materials for all six grades were developed, trialled and improved over a number of years until they too were compiled into Handbooks for teaching across the curriculum (e.g. Holderness 1992 and 1993).

To some extent, 'participant confirmation' was experienced at the various training workshops organised by the Molteno Project. In a sense, the PEUP went far down this road through its numerous and regular school and classroom visits (mostly in remote rural areas), followed by regular and systematic Feedback and Planning meetings, organised at district, regional and 'national' levels (Holderness 1986).

During teaching and classroom visits, *data* (in the form of peer observations and personal record-keeping) was collected by fellow teachers and this was followed by *reflection* and *discussion* regarding what had happened. In the case of PEUP, these activities were usually facilitated at the above-mentioned meetings as well as Writers' Workshops and even National Conventions of teachers.

At such get-togethers, the suitability of current materials was critically reviewed and more suitable learning materials were generally developed. Moreover, plans for action were formulated until ultimately comprehensive curriculum reform was achieved with accompanying innovative learning materials being developed and evolved on an ongoing basis.

With reference to enhanced *utilisation* of teaching materials, the benefits of try-out periods in small samples of representative schools were considerable. The experience of both projects was that once teachers were 'clear' about new materials and convinced of their value, they would do much to promote their use by other teachers. In the case of the PEUP, this promoting often took the form of locally-based teachers voluntarily (for no extra remuneration) enthusiastically demonstrating the classroom application of the new learning materials to teachers in nearby schools (Holderness 2001)

What better strategy could there be to enhance the widespread dissemination and use of new learning materials? Moreover, PEUP's experience was that once sufficient numbers of teachers were enthusiastic about using the new materials, reputable publishers offered to help compile and disseminate commercially produced versions of these works. In doing so, the publishers took steps to ensure that the involvement of the team of practitioners was maintained. Consequently, the resultant series of publications generally enjoyed support from enthusiastic teams of practitioners, confident that the materials had grown out of, and would be well-suited to, their own local classroom contexts.

Conclusions

In the above case studies we have seen that there is much to be gained from incorporating the process of participatory action research in the production and utilization of new

learning materials. In her study, Glover expressed concern about the lack of take-up of new learner support materials by teachers and the apparent lack of impact on classroom use by holding training workshops.

While acknowledging that the primary purpose and approach of both Glover and Taylor were not to conduct participatory action research, this article contends that, had PAR been incorporated (or facilitated as a parallel but independent process), the use of their new environmental education materials would have been enhanced. Justifications for this contention were advanced from two main sources: the very nature of PAR itself and the field experiences of two large-scale projects: Molteno and the PEUP.

In essence, the article asserts that the more actively involved teachers are in the design, development, dissemination, trialling, revision and/or improvement of new materials, the more likelihood there is of enthusiastic, widespread and informed take-up of the new learning material. Or, as Kromberg expressed more than a decade ago:

The gap between educationists and publishers needs to be closed, or at least narrowed, if educational change is to be effected. (Kromberg 1993:3)

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Birthing an action research scholar - Pieter du Toit and Anthea van Zyl

Introduction

The University of Pretoria took initiative in 2003 to introduce an array of so-called priority courses that would ensure the professional development of all staff members – both administrative and academic. After a thorough needs analysis had been done, the University opted for addressing skills development by offering in-house training. Scholarly faculty of the University present most of these short courses. Some of these courses pertain to the professional development of academic staff. It addresses the broad fields of innovative teaching, sound research practices and locally relevant community service. Since the delegates attending the course (learners) are my colleagues, they are referred to as colleagues-in-training in this paper.

The Faculty of Education was assigned to offer a short course with the aim of research capacity building for young scholars, of which I am the programme co-ordinator. The course is credit bearing and follows a modular approach. It consists of the following modules:

- Professional development as research scholar (action research is promoted as tool for monitoring one's professional development)
- Writing a research proposal
- Qualitative research methods
- Quantitative research methods
- Publishing research articles

Each module is presented by means of two interactive workshops of four hours each. The sessions are scheduled at least four weeks apart, allowing for practical application of the course content by the colleagues-in-training. During the second session most of the time is utilised for critical reflection, peer assessment and feedback. An interactive and participative approach is followed. All the colleagues involved in offering the different modules are aware of the fact that we have to act as role-models to our colleagues. All aspects pertaining to cutting-edge staff development, such as innovative designing and developing of the curriculum for the training programme, the facilitating of adult learning, and assessing colleagues-in-training's mastering of set learning outcomes in an accountable way, are at stake. The basic principles of outcomes-based training, as implied in the newly adopted education and training system in South Africa are implemented (Olivier 1998).

I am responsible for presenting the first module on professional development. Action research is used to promote deep learning within this module. It is also used as a tool for promoting lifelong learning (Olivier 1998). This article reports a case study that followed from the training sessions offered in 2005, which formed part of this module. The focus of this module is on the professional development of the academic staff member as a research scholar. Critical reflection by means of action research is proposed as technique for monitoring one's research activities. Although the focus is on monitoring one's research practice per se, a holistic approach is followed. The colleagues-in-training also learn how to use action research for monitoring their teaching practice and community service work. The interrelatedness of these three domains is accentuated in this way. They are also sensitised regarding their responsibility to engage in teaching scholarship and scholarship of engagement.

Authentic assessment opportunities are used. Colleagues-in-training are offered the choice of three possible end

products that need to be submitted for the purpose of final assessment. They may submit a professional portfolio, an article for publication, or a paper to be presented at an appropriate conference. All of these should be based on the outcome of their action research project on their professional development. The first assignment complements this final product to be delivered, as well as the learning outcomes of the other modules. Colleagues-in-training should write an action research proposal to be submitted for the purpose of assessment.

Research Question

Since I use action research as an accountable way of monitoring my own practice as lecturer, staff development practitioner (facilitator) and mentor, many questions arise that need to be addressed through my investigation of my entire practice. The following question only is addressed in this paper:

What would the response of academic staff members be on the challenge of writing an article on their professional development as research scholars?

During the course offered in 2005, I invited the colleagues-in-training to give account of their professional growth in narrative format, which I could use as case studies. Two colleagues from the Department of Architecture and one from the Institute of Technological Innovation, all from the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology, indicated an interest. Since they were not newly appointed staff members, and did have some teaching experience at the time, they were requested to reflect back on their professional experience, prior to attending the training programme on research scholarship.

An amazing life history, including some significant incidents from her professional life, came from my colleague employed at the Institute of Technological Innovation. After submitting the draft, two discussion sessions were held with

her. The purpose of the discussions was to allow for improving the document. I use her contribution in two ways. In the first place I use some parts of the text of the life history as data for verifying my views on offering opportunities for effective adult learning. Most of what is used comes from the first part of her narrative, namely a reflection on her personal growth. Secondly I use the second part of her narrative, which mainly focuses on her professional development. The latter is used as integral part of this article. Therefore her name is added as co-author.

Research Design

Action research allows me to follow a mixed-method approach as proposed by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003). For this article the qualitative data being used is that of a narrative. The theoretical framework for my adult learning practice is mainly that of multiple intelligences (Gardner 1993), learning style flexibility (adapted from Herrmann 1995), and self-regulated learning, as discussed in a previous issue of this journal (Du Toit & Van Petegem 2005).

Narrative Analysis

Lots of metaphors are used in the personal section of the life history. My inferential reading of the text offered me the opportunity to establish how my colleague sees herself in terms of her professional development, which cannot be detached from personal life experiences, and how she is able to critically reflect on her development. To me, much in such a narrative is reflected about being an adult learner, taking responsibility for one's own growth. The text has two distinctive parts. She writes her narrative synchronic per paragraph. Each paragraph is then followed by a sub-

paragraph consisting of a critical reflection on that part of her narrative. As co-author she was in the position to read

and verify my interpretation of her text. In this way validity is ensured.

Consequently excerpts from the text are given, followed by comments by me and/or her self-reflection. Much of the personal life history is written in a metaphoric style. The very first paragraph of the story reflects her determination to be heard, to question things, to except people for who they are. At the same time it provides excellent reading material.

She screamed for the first time in the early sixties on a wintry morning in the birthing room of the dusty hamlet called Francistown, in the Protectorate of Bechuanaland (today known as Botswana). She was born inquisitive. Tiny and feisty, she asked incessant questions. Her father was with the veterinary service and also a big game hunter. Her mother was a nursing sister from Port Elizabeth

The reference to her inquisitiveness gives a sense of her understanding of what being an adult learner entails, and what is expected of a good researcher. In my training practice I facilitate the learning process in such a way that deep learning is promoted and that a questioning mind can be enhanced. There is also reference to the fact that time is of the essence in her professional and working efficiently is very important. Both these qualities are essential characteristics of a good researcher. Here quadrant A (the safe-keeping self) of the Herrmann model (1995) comes into play. This quadrant entails preferences for being planned, organised, structured, and methodical.

Coupled to her inquisitiveness is her love for reading meaningful literature. She refers to this in her narrative. Evidence of her eagerness to study and read is to be found

in the bibliography of more than 100 titles that she added to her narrative.

The fact that she opened up to me on such a personal level, is evidence of the reciprocity of our engagement in the

programme in all its dimensions. We both believe in the power of whole brain learning (Herrmann 1995). Apart from offering left-brain learning activities, which is divided into fact-based learning (the intellectual self) and sequential learning (safekeeping self), I provided for activities that stimulate right-brain learning, which allows for feeling-based learning (emotional self) and experimental learning (experimental self) as well (Du Toit & Van Petegem 2005). The very fact that she can write about herself in a creative fashion is evidence of intrapersonal and metaphoric thinking.

She reflects in the following way on this part of her life:

Reflection: A sincere and whole-hearted acceptance of all people as equal; a sense of enjoyment relating to black and white people with equal ease; a sense of peace with the pace and order of life and a relaxed mind-set that a divine purpose and plan was in place, both in nature and evident in the way people lived and functioned in that time.

Here I get a sense that she is familiar with a multicultural training environment, such as the one in which the training of young research scholars took place.

She continues with telling her story:

By now I had two younger sisters. We moved to Francistown where I started school; one of only four white children in a black school. I spoke Setswana, the lingua franca, fluently. My playmates and I – we had much fun, improvising in our games using rocks and leaves and sticks and pure believable fantasy for the rest. Two years later my folks decided to leave the land of our birth. Uprootment is a painful tearing process despite the excitement of moving. We relocated to Welkom a mining town in the Orange Free State province of South Africa Very few of the relational skills I understood and employed in Botswana meant anything at all in South Africa. The people were different; they were always in a hurry; and

inexplicably blacks and whites did not mingle; there was no space, just a lot of buildings and cars. The sad thing is that within three years I lost my ability to speak Setswana.....

She reflects on this part of her life in the following way:

Reflection: This was my first exposure to stress in an unfamiliar and confusing environment – I sensed a lot of mistrust between people. People did not say what they meant. They smiled, but their words often did not carry warmth. It was an emotionally unsafe place in which I found myself. It was my first sense of alienation and uprootment.

My deduction is that she appreciates trustworthiness. In the research context this trust translates to scientific and objective evidence. It also questions my practice. I need to ask myself: Is my training and mentoring practice exemplary of trust, a safe place to test ideas and make mistakes, and a place where emotional intelligence is nurtured?

The next paragraph spells out how she had to battle with the difficulties with the medium of instruction and how she had overcome that:

The next phase of the birthing process commenced with our relocation to a small asbestos mining town in the Northern Cape..... It was traumatic. Firstly because I found myself in a dual-medium school, technically, but the reality was that they taught in Afrikaans and gave me English textbooks. Academically I was lost because of this language barrier I resolved to learn to speak the language very well. I managed to do so through sheer discipline, much reading and trying until I got it right. At the end of my first year in that school I stood fourth in the grade in Afrikaans as subject. I did not look back.

In her reflection she refers to "A renewal of a sense of groundedness and focus once the initial barriers of language and adapting to hostel life had passed".

The essence of the next phase of her story is to be found in the following paraphrase and reflective paragraph:

Phase three of the birthing process commenced after I matriculated. I went on to study Social Work at the University in Potchefstroom (North-West University). The big wide world beckoned and I was eager to explore and discover I Disappointment struck in my second year - I was not able to continue my studies due to financial difficulties

Reflection: A sense that the world had much to offer, but I was not able to exploit everything. The notion of barriers, be they in family relations, money, friendships and other relationships, where choices were limited and good advice was not self-evidently available.

She continues by telling that she fell pregnant with twins, but lost them both after six months, about financial, physical, other personal battles, and several medical emergencies. On these hardships she reflects in the following way:

Reflection: Physical fragility was a new concept to me as I had always been fit, active and healthy. The trauma of the hospitalization and treatment remained with me for years to come and caused a deep-rooted distrust of medical personnel and a distaste for hospitals and medical procedures.

She then reports that they relocated to Potchefstroom for twelve years where her husband joined the Correctional Services. Much about her drive is to be read in the following part:

My first appointment was at an attorney's office, then I started work in the public library. I thrived from the word go. Books and people – they energized me. I loved my work and wished to qualify myself as a librarian, but that was never to be. Restlessness and a sense of dissatisfaction with the status quo became second nature Another relocation

came to yet another small town in the north of South Africa and at this time I was also employed by the Department of Correctional Services.

From her reflection on this section, one gets a sense of her level of emotional intelligence (Gardner 1993):

Reflection: Exposure to the criminal element came as a huge shock But in the midst of the waste of human life, there was resilience, a joy, a sense of justice, a code of ethics I have not encountered elsewhere in other levels of societyWhat I learnt and saw in these years had a profound affect on me as a human being and as a woman I became an expert judge of character. What made people tick fascinated me – and I still am! I listened to their stories and checked how much was corroborated in the files. I did small studies of my own – interviewing rapists, thieves and chancers

From all reflective paragraphs one gets a sense of her intrapersonal intelligence. From the very next piece of the narrative one can derive that setting goals and achieving them are a priority for her, as is typical of a self-regulated learner:

I moved into a desert, in my marriage, in my work. My life held a joyless, empty quality. The sense that I was floating along, aiming nowhere and going there slowly; that I was wasting precious life-time and not moving decisively with pro-active tread, persisted. The naturally energized and perpetually inquisitive, eager-to-learn and passionate woman that I am, fell prey to a deep and helpless sadness The marriage eventually dissolved twelve years after it had started

Reflection: Trauma and crises had two reactions in my case. I first went into emotional shut-down, where I withdrew from people and life in general I felt extremely unsafe around people I was forced to make decisions I could not

But I learnt to 'look at what I was doing, reflected on what I was thinking, and "sought creative ways to improve our situation" (Craig, 2004:327). Virtues such as patience, trust, sensitivity, honesty, flexibility and courage are only acquired through practice. I practiced till I got it right.

There is also evidence of her transcendental intelligence (Gardner 1993):

The divorce also triggered some serious soul searching my thoughts for the first time focussed on the transcendental. I needed to find out what the reason and purpose of my life was. I became a searcher. I read voraciously.

I desired to find an authentic connection to a life-giving Spirit, so I started praying I refused to live in fear any longer.

For the first time I gazed deeply into the darkness of my imperfect existence and I was confronted with my own brokenness. I took ownership for 'my poverty, my powerlessness and my neediness,' (Manning 2000:25).....

In her reflection she asks the following:

*Why am I afraid to dance,
I who love music and rhythm and grace and song and laughter?
Why am I afraid to live,
I who love life and the beauty of flesh and
the living colours of the earth and sky and sea?
Why am I afraid to love, I who love love?
(Eugene O'Neill in the play: The Great Brown God).*

She continues her story:

Once I was healed and saturated by loving-kindness, the second phase of my growth involved creative galvanization. I was galvanized to survive, to provide, to protect, to persevere But I kept moving forward steadily. Dorothy Craig (2004:326) is right when she says that, life research can be seen as 'an organized and systematic means of finding answers to questions,' and what I did not realise in these terms, but understand today is that, action research 'applies the findings ...to a specific practical situation in order to improve...,' (Craig 2004:327) I started studying part-time, doing various certificate courses, because at that stage a university education was out of my financial reach and practically impossible having a toddler to take care of and no support system close by. Years passed as I worked and studied. Eventually I lectured in Business Management and Hotel and Restaurant Management. The profile of students included people in their 20-40's, but predominantly the courses were targeted to people employed in business sectors. There was a practical component to the Hotel and Restaurant Management course, which I particularly enjoyed. It addressed the whole brain and many creative people who have a right-brain preference, work in the hospitality industry.

In her narrative she refers to the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI) Herrmann (1995), which fits my practice of catering for different learning styles. According to her learning preferences she has a triple dominant profile. She has as primary preferences for learning the B quadrant (safe-keeping self), the C quadrant (emotional self), and the D quadrant (experimental self). She has a low score for the A quadrant (intellectual self), indicating a low interest in fact-based learning. In the next part of her narrative she explicitly refers to her applying the principles of learning style flexibility in her own practice, and work that matched her brain profile. In her reflection one gets a sense of a turning point and becoming liberated:

Reflection: My sense of confusion was gone; a sense of accomplishment took its place. My idealism and youthful

ferveur are not gone, it is just tempered now; seasoned with self-knowledge and an intimate knowledge of pain, rejection, failure and the effect life on those that walk unsuspectingly. But the encouraging words of Brennan Manning (2000:119) who says, 'there is a real place for the impulsive and spontaneous, the lavish and impractical, the heroic and extraordinary, the unrestrained and incalculable burst of generosity...' and I believe these words to be true. Yet the more authentic I became, the less I wore a mask, the more I moved into the sphere of continuity of character, maturity, personality, liberty and reality. I live by grace. And it is strange, but acquaintances noticed the change have the right to be outrageous sometimes, to refuse a shabby, paltry life, to break out of the confines other desire to entrap me in, to embrace fresh opportunities and to accept ownership for errors in judgement.

This narrative paints the landscape of a personal development profile, which may seem laborious, but as most things of deep and lasting value – the growth and personal development of me as an academic, was acquired over time. Contemplative reflection has brought the following to the fore:

Circumstances, limiting as they were for me, just put off the inevitable, but reaching the goalposts – so to speak – years later than most other runners, has certain benefits. Age need not be a barrier in terms of intellectual development. Neither need age be a stumbling block in terms of access to academia or to the plethora of employment opportunities. It is not the ideal I accede, but the experience made me better, not bitter, I think. Entering academia in one's mid-forties may be a limiting factor to some, or give one distinct advantages, depending on your departure point. Some of these advantages include completion of child rearing responsibilities, a greater focus on productivity, emotional maturity and a wealth of life experience in various fields. A huge tacit knowledge base is another mentionable advantage.

In the narrative she touches on furthering her studies – a significant aspect of her professional growth and becoming a research scholar:

A year later I was able to acquire an administrative position at a South African university, which eventually allowed me the opportunity to read for a degree. I had dreamed of this for close to twenty years.

I chose a Bachelors in Information Science and Knowledge Management, majoring in Information Science and Publishing. The challenges posed in terms of time management, meeting deadlines, coping with a full day job, housework and a young child required expert juggling and a level of commitment that I often surprised myself at delivering. I attained my first degree with an average mark of 73% and completed it in three years despite working full time. I then went on to complete a two-year honours in one year, majoring in Competitive Intelligence, Sense and Decision-making Theory, and Knowledge Management.

As informal peer mentor and staff development officer of my colleague, I feel satisfaction in reading and analysing the narrative above. This part of the narrative is complemented by the following section, written by my colleague, which gives me a sense of achievement in being engaged in academic staff development. The following section, again, is excerpts from a critical reflection that forms the core of the next article to be published. While the focus on the "I" in the first section of this article was done by the first author (facilitator and mentor), the focus in the next section is on the colleague-in-training as the "I".

Reflection on Professional Development

Everyone needs professional growth opportunities and should take responsibility for improvement through reflection (Osterman & Kottkamp 1993). In the process they will enrich the professional environment. Reason and

Bradbury (in Craig 2004:335) suggest that first person action research addresses my ability to foster an inquiring approach to my own life, to act with awareness, to choose carefully, and to assess effects in the working environment.

I had first-hand experience of this when I attended the Education Induction Course presented by the Division for Education Innovation, responsible for informal training of academic staff at the University in January of 2004. This weeklong course allowed me, "through thoughtful analysis" (Schoen & Nolan 2004:29), to develop my abilities in mindmapping, defining quality in learning, adapting style for audience profile and multiple intelligences, using resources and technology/educational media, including a component on e-learning, more efficiently. The course also provided exposure to a variety of methods of facilitating learning, topics such as curriculum design and development, assessment methods, giving and receiving feedback, and the do's and don'ts of presentations.

In terms of professional development, sensible and thorough advice was given on monitoring my personal development as an academic, defining my teaching metaphor, using peer observation, planning for improvement once I had identified problem dimensions and evaluating the personal changes I implement as I go along.

Having a professional mentor I felt was important – someone who understands the realities, the dynamics, the challenges and the potential pitfalls of being a research scholar. By giving due attention to these aspects by means of researching it, I believe one can be able to maintain, develop and enrich one's teaching ability. For this purpose I see action research as the apt research approach. A very important part is that of being able to frame critical questions. Schoen and Nolan (2004:29) describes it as "a cyclical process, which is followed by the collecting of relevant data, the taking of well-researched actions and then reflecting on the effect of the actions".

Attaining a balance between the three primary academic roles Campbell (1997:360) refers to, namely teaching, research and community service, is no easy task to accomplish. Teaching and community service are more visible and the outputs immediate, but research is the quiet activity that happens behind a desk often during the lonely hours of night and only when an article is published or a paper is presented at a conference, does the internalized knowledge become visible and shared. Both teaching and research however are critical elements in self-development of good research scholars.

In terms of the development of a research scholar, Giamatti (1982:1278) mentions the following principles, which govern scholarly inquiry:

- The university and individual members of the faculty pledge themselves to the open, unimpeded, and objective pursuit of ideas
- to the exchange of ideas openly and without deceit; and
- to the full and wide dissemination, through teaching and written publication, of the results of scholarly inquiry.

This to me is a critically important point and I believe that in an environment, which fosters free inquiry there exists a “spirit of collegiality, a shared sense of respect for and trusteeship of shared values of openness and intellectual freedom” (Giamatti 1982:1278).

I then started reading widely – searching for a possible topic for a Masters. I was not interested in a lectured Masters, but chose to undertake the far more challenging research Masters. The topic that piqued my interest was found in April 2005 and it lay in the field of the collaborative relationship between universities and South African industry firms and the way research is marketed. While

attending the short course on research for young scholars I realised that action research could be used to monitor my progress. The action research process “provides a means for practicing professionals to examine their situation, environment, and interactions in a systematic manner in order to improve practice and effect change” (Craig 2004:335).

Moving onto the topic of action research and the role it plays in the professional development of a superb research scholar, I aspire to develop a deep and sophisticated understanding of the said topic under investigation. The delimitations of the focus area of this research project are on the drivers of knowledge transfer from the perspective of industry as buyers of R&D.

As a novice scholar I endeavoured to approach this project with originality and a healthy dose of scepticism, whilst immersing myself in as much literature on the topic as is possible. My natural gift of inquisitiveness, coupled with enthusiasm about intellectual puzzles and complex paradigms with practical implications, has provided the impetus for me to competitively strive towards greater and richer personal and professional achievements. This, I realise, could not be accomplished on my own. Action to change, stresses Visser (2004:440), “involves continuous interaction and feedback about the progress to obtain the ideal situation, which is often another level of equilibrium (implementation stage). When the new organization or meanings become part of the functioning of the system, the change has a sustainable impact (institutionalization stage)”. The research project commenced in May 2005 and concluded in May 2006. During this time a nineteen-page national survey was compiled, approved by the Research Ethics Committee, sent out to 380 participants across twelve industry sectors in South Africa (via personalised emails); concurrently 243 articles were synthesized, 17 books were read; follow-up phone calls were made, the surveys were received back, analysed by the Statistics Department at the

University of Pretoria and the final dissertation of four hundred pages was written. This project was partially funded by the National Research Foundation (NRF) via a focus area grant under the topic: The contribution of public science technology.

Whatever I do, I approach holistically. One cannot separate being an academic from being a mother, a friend, a counsellor, an athlete or a holidaymaker. The formative influences evident in your professional demeanour determine your approach to each activity, your needs and how you go about meeting them.

Conclusion

A young scholar who has internalised the principles of self-regulated learning will be able to respond appropriately, when confronted with a meta-learning experience such as that of critically reflecting on her own professional development as research scholar. Such an upcoming scholar is to be found in the colleague who wrote the narrative partly presented in this paper. This narrative was a giant first step towards the ongoing process of monitoring one's professional growth. The narrative reflects the emancipatory value it holds.

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About the Authors

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Noticeboard

In "Noticeboard" we bring you information about impending activities or resources, such as conferences, courses and journals. We welcome member contributions to this section.

**ALARPM 7th & PAR 11th World Congress
Participatory Research, Standards and Ethics
University of Groningen, The Netherlands
21 - 24 August, 2006**

The theme for this World Congress focuses and reflects on standards and ethics in participatory research practices: participatory action research, action learning, and process management. Moreover, it will focus on participatory research practices as processes of (self-) reflection and development of (professional) ethics.

Participatory research practices are meant to improve people's self-determination (empowerment) in the role of professional or citizen in all kinds of social domains. These are domains such as education, health care, urban and regional politics and development, organizations, arts and leisure. Inherently, those practices are meant to improve participatory democracy and social justice on the personal, local and global levels. Principal (scientific) and participant researchers, educators and learners, consultants and clients maintain subject relations.

So basically, those practices as processes of transaction have to meet the standards of direct democratic participation and critical reflection. Ideally, their results have to meet the standards of improving participatory democracy,

empowerment and social justice. Participatory research practices have “ethics first” as their motto.

Registration

Registration for the congress is still open.

Programme

Monday August 21

From 13.00 hours: Registration, Welcome

Tuesday August 22

Theme: Participatory research, standards and ethics

Key-note Peter Reason: standards in action research

Key-note Naomi Scheman: moral-ethical reflection

Wednesday August 23

Theme: Participatory /Critical Action Research.

Key-note Julia Preece : PAR in so-called Developing Countries

Key-note Yoland Wadsworth: Participation in AR

Key-note Harry Coenen: Relationship researchers - researched

Thursday August 24

Theme: Organisation Development

Key-note Øjvind Pålshaugen: ‘Actionability’ of AR in Organisations

Key-note Michiel Schoemaker: Human Resources Development

Key-note Sandra Schruijer: Professional Development

The latest programme information is available on:

<http://www.wcar2006.nl>

<http://www.alarpm.org.au/>

From the Committee's table
Yoland Wadsworth

Note: This section is an excerpt from a report compiled by Yoland. Due to the lack of space, only the first section of the report is published in this issue. The remainder of the report will be published in the next issue.

A general statement from ALARPM – as we engage with others around the world

In 2005 there was a world meeting of qualitative researchers in the USA. ALARPM committee member Susan Noffke helped organise an opportunity for ALARPM, action researchers and other AR organisations to meet to discuss the needs for a stronger global network. This is the statement president Ernie generated and the committee agreed would be useful to take forward. It is printed here for all ALARPM members' interest and remains a work-in-progress as not all agree with every fine detail. However it was helpful to have a working statement of this kind as we move forward in a world in which ALARPM might not be the only international association for action research and related methodologies.

ALARPM as an Organisation

Founded in 1991 ALARPM is an international organisation of individuals and affiliated organisations that focuses on action learning, action research and related approaches to professional and public life. Originally developed as an Australian organisation, ALARPM, through its world congresses and other activities, has developed the capacity to extend its outreach internationally.

The ALARPM membership now spans the globe – with membership from 20 countries representing Europe, India-Asia Pacific, Africa, the Americas and the Middle East.

It includes people from a wide variety of activities, professions, disciplines and interests, including teachers, facilitators, community workers, health professionals, trainers, volunteers, carers, agricultural extension officers, architects, academics, environmentalists, business people, managers, IT professionals and students.

Members of ALARPM's Committee of Management represent Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, South Africa, Sweden and the USA.

Vision

Our vision is that action learning and action research processes are widely used and publicly shared by individuals and groups creating local and global change for the achievement of a more informed, equitable, just, joyful, productive, peaceful and sustainable society.

A key intention is to encourage development across geographic boundaries, professional disciplines and community/organizational contexts, recognizing the common elements of the various strands, streams, settings and variants of action learning, action research and participatory processes.

What ALARPM Does

To work towards achieving its vision and to support its members, major activities include its:

- **World Congresses** (held in Britain, Colombia, South Africa, Australia, and the Netherlands)

- **Website** resources <<http://alarpm.org.au/>>**Journal** (ALAR)
- **Annual conferences**, and
- Support for local and national **activities, networking** and developments

What We Would Like To Do

ALARPM looks forward to the possibility of joining with likeminded groups to create a truly international network. It seeks to engage in conversations that explore possibilities for joint action to:

- Develop supportive relationships between groups and organizations.
- Advance development of the field
- Support the development of local and national groups

ALARPM offers an organizational base that will use its past experience to assist in exploring possibilities for an international organization that brings together existing groups and organizations for cooperative and collaborative arrangements and mutual support. To explore issues of:

- Purpose (what might such an organization set out to achieve)
- Activity (what might it do)
- Organization (how might it be organized, who would do the work)
- Membership (who would be members of the organization: Individuals? Groups?)

The ALARPM Management Committee would therefore like to extend an invitation to interested organizations, groups,

and individuals to engage in dialogue to explore these issues.

Local News from 2005

News from WA:

Early in the year Ernie Stringer and Ross Colliver ran a one day workshop on AR and eight people came. The meeting heard about participant's applications of AR in family/ child support services, management and environmental management, heard people's articulation of models of practice, and brought to the foreground people's question about AR. There was discussion of some of these, and a follow-up 2 hr session was run 4 weeks later to discuss the others. The five people that reconvened want to meet twice more to follow through putting into action ideas gained.

News from Denmark:

Gorm Simonsen reports that the Danish Action Research Network is in the process of collecting relevant Ph D courses, and is having an annual conference later in the year on the relationship between researcher and actors in the field - a part of the debate over AR's relations with 'traditional forms of science'.

News from South Africa:

Pieter Du Toit reports - "This is just to let you know that ALARPM - all the activities, conferences, projects, journal, but most of all the wonderful people that acted as mentors to so many South Africans - has been the impetus to establishing recently our own South African Association. On the 19th of April we were honoured by the presence of Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt who acted as our keynote speaker. The theme of the conference says much about who we are and what we do: "*Proudly South Action Research Scholars: A Launching Conference*". An array of contexts were represented, from the army, business, to universities. It was

attended by 85 delegates throughout SA. The mini-conference was followed by a founding meeting during which the South African Association for Action Learning and Action Research (SAAALAR) was established.

News from the USA:

Susan Boser, ALARPM Vic President (International) - 'I would like to report on the World Conference on Qualitative Inquiry in the US [in May]. Sue Noffke of the University of Illinois did an absolutely stellar job of structuring spaces for AR-oriented folks to present, connect, and explore interest in international networking.

First, regarding international networking: Bridget Somekh from CARN (Collaborative Action Research Network, based in the UK) met with Ernie and I to explore options for increased collaboration. Most specifically, CARN would have interest in jointly sponsoring the next World Congress (12/8) along with ALARPM. Bridget suggested that some ALARPM management committee reps might attend the World Congress they are co-sponsoring in the Netherlands, November '05, and continue this conversation.

In addition, one of the closing sessions was a 'town meeting' to talk about what kind of international networking is of interest. It was in this venue that the message approved by the ALARPM management committee was shared. One outcome that I would like to share was that folks from countries with significant resource needs made a strong appeal for the international networks to serve as a location where they might access support for AR development. Specifically they requested a mechanism for accessing literature, for funding for students and practitioners to attend conferences, and to facilitate connections with ARers who can access their own funds to speak or offer workshops in these countries.

Finally, nudged a bit by Ernie Stringer, conversations also took place regarding building a US national network. As a first step, Mary Brydon-Miller, Sue Noffke and I generated a list of the groups or networks already in place here in the US. Interestingly, such networks tend to be either institution-based (like CPARN) or discipline based (e.g., the Community Campus Partnerships for Health, or the special interest groups associated with American Sociological Association, or APA, or AERA to name a few.) This plan has gone forward and an Action Research Summit will take place at the University of Cincinnati, in Ohio, in March 2006. Look for the report in the next edition of ALAR

Other News from the Committee

Our journal: *Action Learning Action Research (ALARj)*

Lyn Cundy resigned from Editorship of ALARJ after producing 15 issues of excellent quality in our sturdy practitioner journal. In appreciation of her enormous contribution to ALARPM she was flown to the Sydney conference so that ALARPM could thank her properly on behalf of the membership. Our ALAR journals are elegant rich resources of mature and informative practitioner work and we can be proud Lyn's work is on the website (all copies of the *ALARj* except for the most recent 18 months) as a permanent open-access resource to the field and the general public. Unlike any other commercially-published journal, they do not require membership of a listserv, or academic library access to online journals.

Journal issues are popularly available on our website – something any person in any local service or community or developing country in the world can access and read at: <http://www.alarpm.org.au/journal/> > scroll down to the bottom of the page

Pieter Du Toit and Gail Janse van Rensburg have stepped in to co-edit the *ALARj*.

The Committee has been considering continuing the *ALARj* as the only international AR, AL and PM non-refereed practitioner journal, or going down a more academic route of becoming a peer-reviewed journal (or a more AR-style peer-mentored journal). Ian Hughes summarised the position we appear to have reached so far, viz - that there should be an action research journal which:

- Remains accessible to all practitioners
- Will publish good papers when authors choose not to go through a peer review process and
- Will also publish 1-2 peer-reviewed/mentored papers per issue.

The ALARPM Website

At the Sydney conference our beautiful new website was launched in Draft form. Many thanks to Erica Smith, Yoland Wadsworth, Ross Colliver, and our designer/consultants Hunter Nield and Dan Ireland.

Do have a look at it: <www.alarpm.org.au> as there are already a lot of resources on it - particularly see under the Resources tab, as well as the less recent Journal issues online for free (under the Journal tab). There is also an Action Research Case Study by Yoland Wadsworth under the Journal tab - scroll down to the bottom of the page.

Please overlook the teething flaws! - We are working on them (slowly!) as befits an entirely voluntary association.

Guidelines for Contributors

Contributions to the *ALAR Journal*

Through the *ALAR Journal* we aim to promote the study and practice of action learning and action research and to develop personal networking on a global basis.

We welcome contributions in the form of:

- articles (up to 10 A4 pages, double spaced)
- letters to the editor
- profiles of people (including yourself) engaged in action research or action learning
- project descriptions, including work in progress (maximum 1000 words)
- information about a local action research/action learning network
- items of interest (including conferences, seminars and new publications)
- book reviews
- report on a study or research trip
- comments on previous contributions

You are invited to base your writing style and approach on the material in this copy of the journal, and to keep all contributions brief. The journal is not entirely a refereed publication. It supports the idea of developing young scholars and offering them and practitioners the opportunity to publish. In future the journal will allow for two sections: One for refereed papers and a second for other contributions. Prospective contributors are requested to indicate if they

would like their contributions to be peer reviewed. All submissions, though, are subject to editorial review.

Contributions to the Action Research Case Study (ARCS) Monograph Series

Contributions are welcomed to the Action Research Case Study (ARCS) monograph series. The case studies in this refereed series contribute to theoretical and practical understanding of action research and action learning in applied settings. Typical length is in the range 8,000 to 12,000 words: about 40 typed A4 pages, double spaced.

Types of case studies include (but are not limited to):

- completed cases, successful and unsuccessful;
- partial successes and failures;
- work in progress;
- within a single monograph, multiple case studies which illustrate important issues;
- problematic issues in current cases.

We are keen to develop a review and refereeing process which maintains quality. At the same time we wish to avoid the adversarial relationship that often occurs between intending contributors and referees. Our plan is for a series where contributors, editors, and referees enter into a collaborative process of mutual education.

We encourage dual or multiple authorship. This may involve a combination of experienced and inexperienced practitioners, theoreticians, clients, and authors from different sectors or disciplines. Joint authors who disagree about some theoretical or practical point are urged to disclose their differences in their report. We would be pleased to see informed debate within a report.

Membership Information and Subscription Forms

ALARPM individual membership

The ALAR Journal can be obtained by joining the Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management (ALARPM) Association. Your membership subscription entitles you to copies of the ALAR Journal (2 issues per year).

ALARPM membership also provides information on special interest email networks, discounts on conference/seminar registrations, and a membership directory. The directory gives details of members in over twenty countries with information about interests and projects as well as contact details. The ALARPM membership application form is below.

ALARPM organisational membership

ALARPM is also keen to make the connections between people and activities in all the strands, streams and variants associated with our paradigm – including action learning, action research, process management, collaborative inquiry facilitation, systems thinking, organisational learning and development, for example, and with people who are working in any kind of organisational, community, workplace or other practice setting; and at all levels.

To this end we now have the capacity to invite organisational memberships – as Affiliates or Associates of ALARPM. We are currently trialling this new form of

membership with some innovative ideas which we hope your organisation will find attractive.

Affiliate and associate organisations

Affiliate and Associate organisations pay the same modest membership subscription as an individual member and for that they will receive:

- The voting rights of a single member; Member discounts for one person (probably a hard-working office-bearer);
- One hard copy of the journal and the directory (which can be circulated and read by all members, office holders and people attending meetings);
- The right to a link from the ALARPM website <<http://www.alarpm.org.au>> to your website if you have one. Our new website will be completed soon and your organisation may write its own descriptive paragraph to go with its link;
- Occasional emails from ALARPM about events or activities or resources that you may like to send on to your whole membership.
- Members of organisations who become ALARPM Affiliates or Associates may also chose to become an individual member of ALARPM for 40% the normal cost (so they can still belong to other more local and specialist professional organisations also...). We believe this provides an attractive cost and labour free benefit that your organisation can offer to its own members;
- And, if 10 or more of your members join ALARPM, your own organisational membership will be waived;
- Members of ALARPM Affiliates or Associates who join ALARPM individually will receive full individual membership and voting rights, world congress and annual conference discounts (all they need to do is name the ALARPM Affiliate or Associate organisation/network on their membership form).

Please note: members of ALARPM Affiliates or Associates who become discount individual ALARPM members receive an e-version of the journal and membership directory rather than a hard copy.

ALAR Journal subscription

A subscription to the ALAR Journal alone, without membership entitlements, is available to individuals at a reduced rate. Subscription for libraries and tertiary institutions are also invited. The ALAR Journal subscription form follows the individual and organisational ALARPM membership application forms.

For more information about ALARPM and its activities please contact us on:

ALARPM Association Inc
PO Box 1748
Toowong Qld 4066
Australia

Email: membership@alarpm.org.au
Phone: 61-7-3875-6869 (Margaret Fletcher)
Fax: 61-7-3342-1669

INDIVIDUAL MEMBER SUBSCRIPTION FORM

I wish to apply for membership of the Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management Association Inc.

Personal Details

<i>Mr/Ms/Mrs/Miss/Dr</i>		
<i>given names (underline preferred name)</i>		<i>family name</i>
<i>Home address</i>		
<i>Postcode</i>		
<i>Town / City</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Nation</i>
<i>Home contact numbers</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Fax</i>
<i>Email</i>		<i>Mobile</i>

Please send mail to: *Home* *Work*

Current Employment

<i>Position / Job Title</i>		<i>Organisation</i>
<i>Address</i>		
<i>Postcode</i>		
<i>Town / City</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Nation</i>
<i>Work contact numbers</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Fax</i>
<i>Email</i>		<i>Mobile</i>

My interests/projects relating to action learning, action research and process management are:

<input type="checkbox"/> Action Learning	<input type="checkbox"/> Manager & Leadership Dev
<input type="checkbox"/> Action Research	<input type="checkbox"/> Methodology/Methods
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Action/Dev	<input type="checkbox"/> Org Change & Dev
<input type="checkbox"/> Education/Schools	<input type="checkbox"/> PAR
<input type="checkbox"/> Environment/Sustainability	<input type="checkbox"/> Process Management
<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> Quality Management
<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitation of AR, AL, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> Rural/Agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> Gender Issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Justice/Social Change
<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Systems Approaches
<input type="checkbox"/> Higher Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Development
<input type="checkbox"/> Human Services (Health)	<input type="checkbox"/> Team Learning & Dev
<input type="checkbox"/> Learning Organisations	<input type="checkbox"/> Vocational Education/HR
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<hr/> <i>Please specify</i>	

Do you wish to be linked with a world network of people with similar interests and have your information included in our database and appear in our annual networking directory?

Yes *No*

Please complete payment details overleaf ▶▶▶▶▶▶▶▶

To apply for ALARPM individual membership, which includes ALAR Journal subscription, please complete the information requested overleaf and the payment details below. You do not need to complete the ALAR Journal subscription form as well.

Payment Details

Category of subscription (all rates include GST)

Mailing address within Australia

- \$93.50 AUD Full membership for people with mailing address *within* Aus

Mailing Address outside Australia

- \$104.50 AUD Full membership for people with mailing address *outside* Aus

Concessional membership within or outside Australia

- \$49.50 AUD Concessional membership for people with a mailing address within or outside Australia. The concessional membership is intended to assist people, who for financial reasons, would be unable to afford the full rate (eg. full-time students, unwaged and underemployed people).

Method of payment:

- Cheque/Bank Draft Money Order
 Visa/Bankcard/Mastercard (*please circle card type*)

Card No:

Cardholder's Name:

Cardholder's Signature: _____ Expiry Date: / /

Cheques, bank drafts or money orders can be made payable to ALARPM Association Inc. in Australian dollars. Please return application with payment details to:

ALARPM ASSOCIATION INC.
PO Box 1748, Toowong Qld 4066, Australia
Phone: (61-7) 3875 6869 (Margaret Fletcher, Secretary)
Fax: (61-7) 3342 1669
Email: membership@alarpm.org.au

ORGANISATIONAL MEMBER SUBSCRIPTION FORM

We wish to apply for membership of the Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management Association Inc.

- As an Affiliate Organisation (with primary purposes being action research, action learning, systems methodologies or a related methodology)
- As an Associate Organisation (with primary purposes that are not specifically one of these methodologies)

Organisational Details

<i>Organisation name</i>		<i>If incorporated</i>
<i>Contact address</i>		
		<i>Postcode</i>
<i>Town / City</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Nation</i>
<i>A/H contact numbers</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Fax</i>
<i>Email</i>		<i>Mobile</i>

Contact person/Please send mail attention to _____

Nature of Organisation

<i>Please say if your organisation is an Association, Society, Group, Network, Collective, Informal/Community, Set, Department, Business, Institute, Centre, Library or other configuration.</i>	
<i>How many members (approximately) does your organisation have?</i>	<i>Do you know how many are ALARPM members? Is so how many?</i>

What are your organisation's interests/projects relating to action learning, action research and process management?

Your organisation's focus is:

<input type="checkbox"/> Action Learning	<input type="checkbox"/> Manager & Leadership Dev
<input type="checkbox"/> Action Research	<input type="checkbox"/> Methodology/Methods
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Action/Dev	<input type="checkbox"/> Org Change & Dev
<input type="checkbox"/> Education/Schools	<input type="checkbox"/> PAR
<input type="checkbox"/> Environment/Sustainability	<input type="checkbox"/> Process Management
<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> Quality Management
<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitation of AR, AL, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> Rural/ Agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> Gender Issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Justice/Social Change
<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Systems Approaches
<input type="checkbox"/> Higher Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Development
<input type="checkbox"/> Human Services (Health)	<input type="checkbox"/> Team Learning & Dev
<input type="checkbox"/> Learning Organisations	<input type="checkbox"/> Vocational Education/HR
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	

Please specify _____

Do you wish to be linked with a world network of people with similar interests and have your information included in our database and appear in our annual networking directory?

- Yes
 No

Please complete payment details overleaf ▶▶▶▶▶▶▶▶

To apply for ALARPM organisational membership, which includes ALAR Journal subscription (2 issues per year), please complete the information requested overleaf and the payment details below. You do not need to complete the ALAR Journal subscription form as well.

Please note that the cost of organisational membership (affiliate and associate) is the same as for individual full membership. There is no concessional membership fee, but if an organisation has 10 or more individual members of ALARPM (or 10 or more who would like to be electronic -only members) then organisational membership is free.

Payment Details

Category of subscription (all rates include GST)

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\$93.50 AUD Full membership for organisations with mailing address *within* Aus

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Card No:

Cardholder's Name:

Cardholder's Signature: _____ Expiry Date: / /

Cheques, bank drafts or money orders must in Australian dollars and made payable to ALARPM Association Inc. Please return completed application with payment details to:

ALARPM ASSOCIATION INC.

PO Box 1748, Toowong Qld 4066, Australia

Phone: (61-7) 3875 6869 (Margaret Fletcher, Secretary)

Fax: (61-7) 3342 1669

Email: membership@alarpm.org.au

ALAR JOURNAL SUBSCRIPTION FORM

Address Details

<i>Mr/Ms/Mrs/Miss/Dr</i>		
<small>Contact Name</small>	<small>given names</small>	<small>family name</small>
<i>Organisation</i>		
<i>Address</i>		
		<i>Postcode</i>
<i>Town / City</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Nation</i>
<i>Contact numbers</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Fax</i>
<i>Email</i>		

Payment Details

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Cheques, bank drafts or money orders can be made payable to ALARPM Association Inc. in Australian dollars. Please return completed application with payment details to:

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