# ALAR

## Action learning and action research journal

Volume 11 No 2 October 2006

ALAR Journal Vol 11 No 2 October 2006

*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.*

# ALAR Journal

**Vol 11 No 2 October 2006**

***ALAR Journal* is jointly published by the Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management (ALARPM) Association Inc, Interchange and Prosperity Press**

**It is an international publication incorporating the ARCS Newsletter and the ALARPM Newsletter**

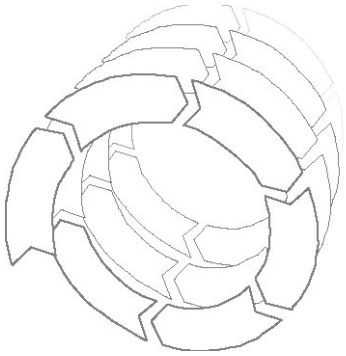
**Managing editor:** Margaret O'Connell

**Editorial team:** Margaret Fletcher, Susan Goff, Janet Kelly, Janet McIntyre, Eileen Pigott-Irvine, Shankar Sankaran, Jack Whitehead, Janette Young

**Editorial inquiries should be addressed to**
**The editor *ALAR Journal* at alar@alarpm.org.au**

**ALARPM Assoc Inc**
**PO Box 1748**
**Toowong Qld 4066**
**Australia**

**ALARPM's web address is**
**http;//www.alarpm.org.au**



**ALAR Journal**

**Volume 11 No 2**
**October 2006**

**ISSN 1326-964X**

## CONTENTS

**Editorial** 2
**A message from the President of ALARPM**
Ernie Stringer 3
**The reflexive employee: action research immortalised?**
Karen Day, Martin Orr, Shankar Sankaran and Tony Norris 5
**Should Australian AR theses be examined using a developmental approach adopted by US universities?**
Shankar Sankaran, Geof Hill and Pam Swepson 28
**A window on the process of doing a community based action research project**
Dennis Lim 49
**Book review: The Toolbox for Change: A Practical Approach**
Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt 70
**News and events: ALARPM conference 2007** 73
**Membership information and subscription forms** 82

**© 2006 The copyright of *ALAR Journal* articles is held by the author(s).**

# Editorial

This issue offers the reader different action research stories, told in varied contexts - a mark of the broad application of action research. In the words of the project participants in our first article; *knowing what we know now, and if we could do this part again, what would we do differently* (Day *et al*, p.20); we see also that action learning is prevalent, embedded in current processes (to be almost invisible), and adding value to what participants feel they can achieve in their work. This phrase shapes well the theme for this ALAR edition.

The next article draws out some of the tensions faced in examining action research theses, a timely topic for discussion. The broad applicability of action research, although one of its key strengths, makes it difficult to categorise and thus manage the examination process when it comes to marking action research theses. Members may like to engage in the discussion taking place online via the ALARPM website on this very issue. Go to www.alarpm.org.au for more details.

Subsequently, the following article is a window into a community based action research project undertaken by a Masters student. This is the first of our *mentored articles*, as we progress the journal's focus to support new writers in sharing their action research experiences with others.

We wrap up this edition with a useful review of *The toolbox for change* (in press) by Bill Synnott and Rose Fitzgerald, as well as details of ALARPM's 2007 annual conference to be held in Adelaide, South Australia.

Happy reading!

# Message from the President of ALARPM

**ALARPM**

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

From time to time when I'm teaching action research someone will ask "Ernie, is this research or is it therapy?" My response, in tune with the jocular tone of the comment, is to laugh and say "Well, it might be both!" There is, though, a serious undertone to this thought, because what is intimated is that action research has the potential to touch people's lives in a very immediate way. If carried out authentically and carefully, it enhances feelings in individuals that their experience, perspective and ideas are important, to be acknowledged, taken seriously and incorporated into the processes of reflection, analysis and action that are fundamental features this approach to inquiry. In this respect it is, indeed, therapeutic, so different from the objective, generalized research that dismisses people's experience and perspective as irrelevant to a rigorous process of inquiry. It enhances a person's feelings of well-being, providing them with a clear sense of the legitimacy of their viewpoints, and engages them in activities they feel to be directly relevant to their lives.

Research therefore becomes an activity that is not just the purview of the expert or the professional, but a process of inquiry in which people, particularly those from marginalized groups, can participate as full subjects of collective inquiry, rather than as dehumanised objects, as in

much conventional academic research. As a journal ALAR therefore seeks to embrace the intent of action research, providing a place within which practitioners, students, community members and others can be "given voice;" can have opportunities to tell their stories, to provide accounts of their experience, and have their activities recognized as legitimate and valuable.

It is my hope that you will hear the voices of the people that resonate through the accounts in this edition of ALAR; that you can truly hear the participants speak, be aware of the way they engage the processes of systematic inquiry that are characteristic of action learning and action research, and rejoice in the outcomes that truly make a difference in their lives.

Ernie Stringer

President, ALARPM

# The reflexive employee: action research immortalised?

- Karen Day, Martin Orr, Shankar Sankaran and Tony Norris

*Action research is a cyclical process of plan, act, reflect and learn, and adapt the planned activities to enhance the final outcome of what we endeavour to achieve. The process involves reflection and capitalising on the communities of practice that grow in a project environment. Although not all people involved in these projects take on the practices of action research, many see it as adding value to the way they work and long after a project has been completed, people are still practicing the principles of reflection, deliberately learning from our experiences and developing communities of practice to enhance our work. AR becomes a part of who we are and many of us can't help passing it on to others.*

When action research (AR) is conducted in a community, the objective is to develop new theory and to inform practice (Waterman, Tillen, Dickson, & de Koning, 2001). This assumes that action research principles and activities are adopted by researcher and participants to such a degree that the research can be performed. This paper explores the process and consequences of introducing action research in a health organisation with two different information technology (IT) project teams. It is a description and analysis of the methodology used and how people related to it as more (or less) than a methodology. Conclusions are drawn regarding the role and possible long-term implications of action research in health IT projects.

## Action research as a research methodology and a way of life

Action research has waxed and waned in popularity over the last century, depending on what researchers wanted from it, and the situation in which it was used. The concept 'action-research' was first used by Lewin who combined research, practice and change, when he referred to change resulting from research based on social action (Kock, 2003). In this way AR emerged as a tool for social change: research and practice are conducted simultaneously and the research subject is a participant in the research and in the application of new knowledge (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, & Maguire, 2003). There is usually an emphasis on the development of knowledge in the practical situation where a researcher and the researched (both acting as participants, partners and collaborators of change, research and new practice) participate holistically in the achievement of shared goals (Waterman, Tillen, Dickson, & de Koning, 2001). AR as a research methodology, has two key elements: a cyclic process, and partnership with the research subjects, respondents or participants (Dick, 2002).

With such a strong people focus, the most appropriate definition of action research has been presented by Rapoport (1970, p. 499), as aiming to:

> ...*contribute* both *to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework.*

This presents the idea that action research is not only a methodology, or simply a research process – it is a way of life, of working, that plays out in a mutually desired manner for all participants (researcher and researched) in a social research project. People choose to use AR for many reasons (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, & Maguire, 2003; Kock,

McQueen, & Scott, 1999). Reason and his associates have identified a number of core quality dimensions of action research (McArdle & Reason, 2006; Reason, 2006; Reason & Bradbury, 2001). These dimensions are summarised and extended on in the mnemonic D.E.V.E.L.O.P. described below. These core dimensions may well also encapsulate the core reasons that attract individuals and communities to action research. When we choose AR as a mode for conducting research we are doing so because:

- it is a **D**emocratic way of conducting research (everyone is involved and has a say)
- we use an **E**xtended epistemology
- our research is **V**alue oriented (the values of the participants are evident in the lived research)
- we take advantage of the **E**mergent nature of our complex research environment
- the research is **L**umpist (rather than splittist) in nature aiming at holistic research where links, connections and patterns are sought
- of the **O**rganic nature of complex social research
- AR is **P**ragmatic.

Baskerville (1999) describes the AR cycle as consisting of diagnostic and therapeutic stages, in which a problem is diagnosed and a therapy, solution or remedying response is enacted. Rapoport (1970) indicates that early action research was conducted by psychologists and psychotherapists, which draws a strong link to the therapeutic effect of this type of research – a problem is identified, the solution is mutually developed by all involved in order to 'heal' the problem.

The cycle usually includes four steps: (1) problem identification, or 'diagnosis'; (2) planning, or action planning; (3) action, also known as action taking or

implementation; and (4) evaluation, also known as reporting, assessment, and specifying learning (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, & Maguire, 2003; Waterman, Tillen, Dickson, & de Koning, 2001). The egalitarian approach of AR requires participants to be actively involved in the research project so that learning and action are democratised, where research becomes inclusive and non-political. As a project moves through the AR cycle, things change due to complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty, and the people involved should be flexible and responsive to changes brought about by the research and the associated actions (Kock, 2003; Orr & Sankaran, 2005, July, 2005; Waterman, Tillen, Dickson, & de Koning, 2001). It is the participants, together with the researcher who assess, plan, act, reflect, evaluate, and then write reports. In this way the employee is inducted into the practice of action research as a way of working.

The key to AR is the practice of reflection. As stated by Dick (2002), the two components of action research are action and critical reflection or deliberation. This reflection is deliberate and continuous in order for action research to be of any value. The insights gained from this kind of reflection contribute to the richness of the research, providing a broad, multi-dimensional perspective. Throughout the AR process, deliberate reflection is a companion to the research and informs practice (Bell, 1998; Dick, 2001).

Reflection is a composite of multifaceted reviewing of events, actions and activities. According to Orr's mnemonic we may R.E.F.L.E.C.T. (Orr & Sankaran, 2006a) consciously in a number of ways. We **R**eview thoughts, feelings, behaviour linked to planned and unplanned action; we look for **E**xceptions when everything appears to be going well; we consider the **F**uture impact such as identifying the next step in our activities; we **L**earn as we consider opportunities for building models and enhancing our understanding; we seek **E**xplanations when things are in apparent disagreement; and

we **C**hallenge assumptions and consider what **T**roubles or puzzles us about our observations. When we begin to reflect in this manner we are able to take multiple views on a single consideration in order to understand it better and inform our future practice (Hughes, 2006; Williams & Harris, 2001).

Reflection manifests itself in many ways, which range from group discussions to interpersonal one-on-one discussions to personal introspection as illustrated in Figure 1 below. In this way the AR cycle does not only loop around one project: it is a set of cycles that loops around the project and every component of the project, and is manifest in every episode of reflection throughout the course of a project. This approach is reminiscent of Checkland's soft systems methodology, which advocates a practice cycle and a research cycle that can be arbitrarily allocated according to the boundaries defined by the participants (Checkland, 2000; Flood, 2000).

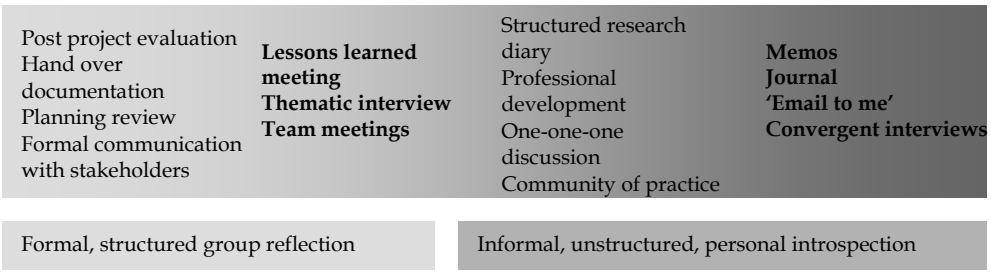



*Figure 1: Continuum of reflection available to action research participants*

The discussion below outlines how AR was introduced and used for research and practice in a district health board (DHB) in the Auckland region, New Zealand. First, as employees we (Day and Orr) conducted our doctoral research in the same information services department but used two different projects as the basis for our research.

We were interested in the ways in which people adapt to the changes brought about in healthcare by IT projects. We formed our own community of practice, and worked as 'research buddies', supporting one another. We introduced AR as a way of working to those project team members and the information services department and generated data accordingly. As we performed a general inductive thematic analysis (Thomas, 2003) of the change data from the two projects we discovered the theme regarding the adoption of AR practices as a way of working. We found that there was a mixed uptake by the different members of the two projects and for some, there appeared to be a lifelong impact on their work practice as health employees. The ways in which reflective practice were manifest are illustrated by Figure 1 and in more detail in Table 1.

## The first converts to action research

As researchers who had decided that AR was the methodology of choice, we were the first in what became a line of 'converts'. We began to reflect on our own role in each project and our separate research endeavours as we became more skilled at using the methodology. The AR cycle became a way of working for us and as we became more comfortable with the cycle as a process we saw our expectations change. It fundamentally influenced our thinking, our research and our roles as employees (Kock, 2003). We had initially expected to learn more about organisational change in terms of the technology: how people use the new technology, what the technology does to change the work environment. However, the observations we made were more about the process of adapting in a more abstract, embracing manner than we had expected. The technology became subjugated to the more pressing demands of assisting end users to incorporate it in their daily work. The project team members contributed materially to our research outcomes when they

took ownership of the AR principles in their own work practice.

As researchers we were involved in both projects. Day was change manager for both projects while Orr was clinical director for information services and therefore provided strategic influence for both projects. We each had a principal researcher role in one of the two projects and supported the other in the remaining project. Concurrent to our efforts to establish our own community of practice as 'research buddies' we introduced AR as way of working to the leaders of the two projects who endorsed its adoption by the rest of the project team.

## Introducing action research to others

*The context: an infrastructure project and a software implementation project*

The software implementation project was a clinical information system (CIS), which provided a single point of access to multiple clinical and administrative software products in order to simplify and maximise use of patient data. The problem faced by clinicians up until then was a disjointed electronic health record represented by several unrelated software products, each on its own providing a good platform for specific sets of information, but separate access meant unnecessary complexity in everyday clinical work.

The infrastructure project (IP) was conducted concurrently to the CIS project in the same DHB which had outsourced its IT function to a shared services organisation (owned by two participating DHBs). The IP established a single infrastructure for the two DHBs with the aim of standardising processes and technology.

The time line and milestones for the two projects is outlined in Figure 2, showing differences and similarities between the two projects. They were different in that one project was an infrastructure project and the other a software implementation. Also, the IP project team was constructed according to the matrix model of project management and the CIS project as a separate, designated group of project team members (Garrety, Roberston, & Badham, 2004) with associated satellite project teams in the clinical work environment of the DHB in which the software was being implemented. The CIS team already had strong working relationships and trusted one another, having worked on previous projects together. The IP project recruited team members from the IT department, and also included external contractors. These team members, for the most part, had operational working relationships but limited mutual project relationships, experience and trust. Both projects had multiple and interdependent milestones and at times the two projects were also interdependent. Their timelines were tight leaving no margin for scope creep and consequently applying a great deal of pressure on the project teams to deliver the agreed outcomes.

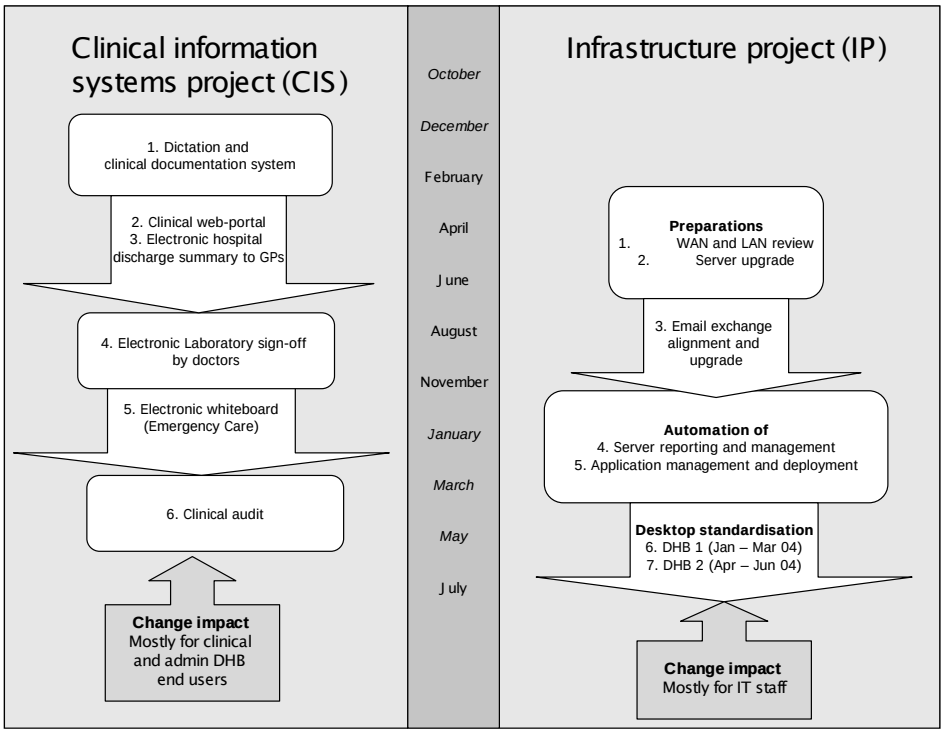



*Figure 2: Graphic of timelines and milestones of the two projects*

*Reflection, another component of the job*

Reflexivity involves becoming observers of others, ourselves and our actions in order to enrich our knowledge, insight and practice (Pillow, 2003). It is a dynamic process that links us as selves to our world, connecting relationships, insights and activities linked to our research and the wider environment. It is about the perspectives, assumptions and biases of all aspects of our research (Weber, 2003). People in the two project teams reflected in a variety of ways, settings, and processes for varying reasons, as illustrated in Table 1.

*Table 1: Many forms of reflection in the workplace*

**Continuum of reflection:** informal personal introspection to formal group reflection

| Model | Aim | Methodology | Mechanism | Outcome |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Learning review | Identify successes and opportunities for improvement | Review project performance at milestone achievement | Group meeting marking milestone achievement | Applying lessons learned for improvement for subsequent milestone |
| Written reflection by group | Provide handover for organisational continuity | Post implementation assessment by project team | Group discussion, group writing, meeting with stakeholders | Continuity of project objectives to stakeholders |
| Community of practice | Project learning for effective IT implementation | Identify learning needs, provide training as and when required, learning on the job, learning by participating in project | Monthly team meetings, technical training, participation in software development | Technical skills development, collective continuous improvement |
| Reflexive practice<br>• Group<br>• Individual | Learning and continuous improvement by critical and creative reflection | Select topic of discussion, explore themes arising from practice | Monthly structured group discussion<br>Weekly/ad hoc discussions | Action orientation to team, strategic and thematic problem solving<br>Action oriented to personal and team improvement and problem solving |
| Professional development | Individual development | Reflect on professional project role | One-on-one discussion weekly and ad hoc | Iterative learning and application of new insights |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Thematic interview | Learning and insight by critical and creative reflection of recurring themes | Identify recurring themes in daily project activities, explore them in depth | Semi-structured interview, one-on-one | Iterative learning related to specific individual needs |
| | Written reflection | Review events and/or activities, plan for next cycle | Document thinking and observations | Structured reflection journal, memo writing, emails to self | Incorporate learning in next milestone, cycle, event, activity |
| | Initial unframed reflection | New emergent insights from critical and creative reflection with no initial predetermined questions to impose limiting structure or assumptions on interviewee | Consider all aspects of any theme that emerges during initial period of 'unstructured' reflection<br>Process of emergence and convergence | Convergent interviews, one-on-one. Structured in CIS project by **R.E.F.L.E.C.T.** mnemonic | New insight to inform future reflection |

One can see in this table that reflection in both teams, and for the researchers, ranged across the full continuum indicated in Figure 1 above. Different project team members participated in reflection in different ways – one person changed her way of working to actively incorporate reflection as part of how she goes about her job, while another person attended the reflection sessions (in the CIS team) in the spirit of solidarity with the team, and contributed although he did not naturally enjoy reflecting on his practice in this manner. For the IP team, people participated in reflection such as lessons learned only if their business-as-usual work demands allowed them the

flexibility to attend the meeting. The demands on the IP participants' time were extreme at times which resulted in limited opportunity to consciously reflect on their activities and roles in the project.

Although interviews are traditionally considered an effective way of generating qualitative data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), they are also a reflexive platform for participants (Orr & Sankaran, 2006a). The convergent interviews were conducted with the CIS team by its principal researcher. The participants were interviewed individually and were asked to reflect on their project experience using the mnemonic R.E.F.L.E.C.T. as described above. These interviews were viewed by most of the participants as a cathartic experience, vaguely difficult because there were no initial cues or cures, but the thinking that occurred as a result of the interviews led to new insights in their practice, insights that they took back to their workplace right away.

The semi-structured interviews conducted with members of the IP team towards the end of their project, were constructed from a thematic analysis of the data generated during the project (from individual reflexive practice, written individual reflection, learning reviews, professional development discussions, and written reflection by the group). Cues were given for the themes and the participants were invited to reflect and comment. Most of those interviewed participated comfortably - some had evidently given thought to their contribution prior to the interview as evidenced by this comment when asked about one of the themes:

> *I was actually thinking about that this morning.*

Although reflection is an important element of the AR process, the use of communities of practice provides an

environment in which people can reflect productively and safely.

*Action research, another dimension of our community of practice*

A community of practice occurs within a social context, such as an IT project, in which groups of people learn collectively (Garrety, Roberston, & Badham, 2004). They establish a shared understanding of goals and ways of achieving the goals, and together enhance their capacity to perform within that context. Communities of practice may live on after completion of the contextual project. However, these communities do not necessarily develop spontaneously or predictably. In the research context, participant and partner relationships are deliberately developed to achieve research goals (Reason, 1998). The AR process takes advantage of communities of practice to enrich both business and research outcomes. The successful development of the relationships that result in communities of practice is dependent upon perceived additional value to the job at hand, shared understanding of both business/project goals and processes, and the capacity of the participants to adopt the practice of reflection (Orr & Sankaran, 2006b). We, the researchers, developed our own community of practice. Together we discovered, learned and applied AR principles in our research and as employees. Together we convinced the two project teams with which we were working to adopt the principles as a way of working and of effecting change associated with their projects.

Becoming an AR community of practice in the work environment requires that the time spent on research activities has obvious work-related benefits. This links back to the innovation process in which a good idea is floated and uptake occurs according to perceived added value, improvements and/or increased benefits (Rogers, 1976; Teng, Grover, & Guttler, 2002). The introduction of the AR

process is akin to the introduction of an innovation. Potential participants take on the innovation (research) and become co-researchers (and simultaneously, participants and partners), contributing to and taking from the research as and when resources and demands allow. This is illustrated in the comment in an email from the CIS change manager to the CIS principal researcher.

> *I remember at the beginning of all this research, I spent a lot of energy and time convincing the team that there was value in attending the reflection sessions. They felt that this was all soft, touchy-feely nonsense and told me that there needed to be a specific link to their work for them to want to come along.*

This adoption of the role of co-researcher and participant is an additional component, or layer, of the community of practice to which it is attached. Although it is a natural consequence of research, this role needs to be negotiated and formally included in the related community of practice. An additional layer of mutual learning occurs, where the participants learn not only about the project at hand, but also the skills of reflection and problem solving that come from practicing reflexive thinking. This is illustrated by a comment by a member of the CIS team later in the project's duration.

> *…there is a need for people to put aside time to reflect on their work as a conscious and formal activity. It not only feeds the soul but gives them the energy to do a better job.*

However, complexity in the health system does not predispose people to behave in predictable ways (Plesk & Wilson, 2001). The IP team, in contrast to the CIS team, had members joining and leaving according to the project milestone in progress and the associated skills mix needed for that milestone, e.g. the automation of application deployment requires different skills from the establishment of a global email exchange for three DHBs. As a consequence, they expressed the diffusion of AR differently.

There was a tension between the demands of the job and the desire and capacity to contribute to the IP project's AR community of practice and so group reflection sessions were not established. The reflexive practice for this team as listed in Table 1 did not lend itself to group reflection sessions that characterised the CIS use of AR. The tight-knit group identity of the CIS team was the subject of some reflection in one of the reflection sessions as follows:

> *…we are a close-knit team and we need to be to be able to get on with the work…*
>
> *…those outside of the team who struggle with team work see the cohesiveness as something destructive and that the lack of team work is highlighted by the presence of a strong and close team.*

On the other hand, someone who joined the IP team near the end of the project found it difficult to join the established community of practice of the project at such a late stage, and commented that:

> *…it (the project work) was all too much for me and I felt unsupported…*

The AR process layer of the IP project's community of practice was expressed mostly by means of structured email reports between the change manager (principal researcher) and the project manager, reflective one-on-one discussions between the change manager and various team members, and learning review sessions marking the end of each milestone period. The principal researcher's informal reflection took the form of writing, mostly emails to self or what Orr, Sankaran & James (2005) have previously described as 'I-mails'. Writing was a form of discovery (Richardson, 2003; Williams & Harris, 2001), regardless of the medium (emails to self and others, handover documents, communications tools such as newsletters and the project websites, memos, research journal) and was an important reflection tool for both individual and group learning,

communication and collaborative action. Although not overtly used as an AR tool by the project team members, the AR goals of discovery and learning were evident in many of the documents, emails and informal written communications in both teams. The use of AR in the CIS project was considered key to its success as indicated in the formal handover document in this statement:

> *Action learning was an integral part of the change management plan for the project. The cycle … became a way of working for the project team. Asking the question "knowing what we know now, and if we could do this part again, what would we do differently?" became a way of thinking through every situation. Consequently, the team was able to facilitate change more effectively. Situations were examined and lessons learned were applied more regularly than would otherwise have happened. The conscious use of the action learning cycle enhanced the way in which change was managed and occurred.*

The CIS team had assimilated AR into their way of working to the point of almost neglecting to single it out in the handover document: it had reached a point where the processes and tools of AR were taken for granted and fully integrated into the traditional project management process. A key finding for the CIS project was that AR may enhance the individual and collective sense of control, competency and connectedness which are central psychological processes for coping and thriving in a complex changing environment (Orr & Sankaran, 2005, July, 2005).

It is difficult to discern a margin between research and practice as to which is the primary beneficiary of the reflection. Some participants would go so far as to confirm that they found even the interviews informative for their subsequent practice – they had internalised the practice of reflection so as to take instruction from any reflective episode. This was true even for the uncomfortable insights, which provided balance to their iterative learning experience in action, as advocated by Pillow (2003). The AR cycle was

not limited to the project process - it was considered a cyclic opportunity to review progress and modify plans iteratively to improve project outcomes at any juncture in the project. This approach was used in both projects in differing degrees as a consequence of each team's different group dynamics. At the end of the two projects, both project teams were disbanded and team members found new work in the DHBs, returned to their old roles, or left the organisation. Those who adopted AR principles in their work activities no longer appear to consider it separately from their usual work practice. They have taken the practice into their subsequent jobs, convinced others to use AR principles and find that:

> *It (the AR approach to research) makes you realise the value of working that way. We've done that quite a lot in my new work, in the operational work that I'm doing now. It is not rocket science. We persuade others to use reflective practice, it is not easy but they come round; they can't help it (former CIS project leader).*

And so AR takes on its own life long after the researcher has left and everyone has gone their different ways, into new jobs, new research projects and new adventures.

## In conclusion

A core quality outcome of action research is not just results in the form of data, but a critically reflective process that helps empower and develop both the individual researcher and their associated communities. The innate enhanced sense of control, competency and connectedness, may attract and cement new followers, and lead practitioners to disseminate this core empowerment and meaning to others.

We conclude that in the projects described in this paper there was an element of positive proselytising in which those who saw the appropriateness and value of AR as part of their daily work during the project's lifespan, transferred this belief to other situations, persuading other people to adopt

AR practices as well. AR may be immortalised or live on by the continuing use and spreading of its principles by researcher and participant alike into both research and employment situations with or without any associated research project. Although the longevity of such a legacy of AR was not the focus of our research, more scrutiny and elaboration on this form of positive proselytising is recommended for gaining a better understanding of how we apply AR in practice.

You may say I'm a dreamer,
but I'm not the only one,
I hope some day you'll join us,
And the world will live as one.

*Imagine,* John Lennon

## Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express their appreciation to the research participants of the two projects, Waitemata District Health Board and healthAlliance for the opportunity to conduct this research and report on it.

## References

Baskerville, R. L. (1999). Investigating information systems with action research. *Communications of the AIS, 2*(19).

Bell, S. (1998). Self-reflection and vulnerability in action research: bringing forth new worlds in our learning. *Systemic Practice and Action Research, 11*(2), 179-191.

Brydon-Miller, M., Greenwood, D., & Maguire, P. (2003). Why action research? *Action Research, 1*(1), 9-28.

Checkland, P. (2000). The emergent properties of SSM in use: A symposium by reflective practitioners. *Systemic Practice and Action Research, 3*(6), 799 - 823.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative Research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Dick, B. (2001). Action research: Action and research. In S. Shankar, B. Dick, R. Passfield & P. Swepson (Eds.), *Effective change management using action learning and action research*. Lismore, NSW: Southern Cross Press.

Dick, B. (2002). Action research: Action and research. In S. Shankar, B. Dick, R. Passfield & P. Swepson (Eds.), *Effective change management using action learning and action research*. Lismore, NSW: Southern Cross Press.

Flood, R. L. (2000). A brief review of Peter B. Checkland's contribution to systemic thinking. *Systemic Practice and Action Research, 13*(6), 723 - 731.

Garrety, K., Roberston, P. L., & Badham, R. (2004). Integrating communities of practice in technology development projects. *International Journal of Project Management, 22*(2004), 351 - 358.

Hughes, I. (2006). How to keep a research diary. Action research electronic reader. Retrieved 29 May 2006 from http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arr/arow/rdiary.html

Kock, N. F. J. (2003). The three threats of action research: a discussion of methodological antidotes in the context of an information systems study. *Decision Support Systems, 37*, 265 - 286.

Kock, N. F. J., McQueen, J. L., & Scott, J. L. (1999). *Can action research be made more rigorous in a positivist sense? The contribution of an iterative approach.* Paper presented at the 20th International Conference on Information Systems.

McArdle, K. L., & Reason, P. (2006). Action research and organization development. . In T. Cummings (Ed.), *Handbook of Organization Development*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. Forthcoming from http://www.bath.ac.uk/~mnspwr/.

Orr, M., & Sankaran, S. (2005, 5-7 December ). *Mutual emphathy, ambiguity and the implementation of electronic knowledge management within the complex health system.* Paper presented at the Systems Thinking and Complexity Science: Insights for Action. 11th Annual ANZSYS Conference: Managing the Complex. , Christchurch, New Zealand. .

Orr, M., & Sankaran, S. (2006a). Convergent interviewing as reflective 'therapy'. *In press*.

Orr, M., & Sankaran, S. (2006b). Mutual emphathy, ambiguity and the implementation of electronic knowledge management within the complex health system. *In press*.

Orr, M., & Sankaran, S. (July, 2005). *The implementation of electronic health knowledge management systems in a district health board. 'Respect and protect.'* Paper presented at the Fifth International Conference on Knowledge Culture and Change in Organizations, Rhodes. Accepted for publication in the *International Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Change Management*.

Pillow, W. S. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *Qualitative Studies in Education, 16*(2).

Plesk, P. E., & Wilson, T. (2001). Complexity science: complexity, leadership, and management in healthcare organisations. *British Medical Journal, 323*, 746-749.

Rapoport, R. N. (1970). Three dilemmas in action research. *Human Relations, 23*(6), 499 - 513.

Reason, P. (1998). Political, epistemological, ecological and spiritual dimensions of participation. *Studies in Cultures, Organizations and Societies, 4*, 147 - 167.

Reason, P. (2006). Choice and quality in action research practice. *Journal of Management Inquiry* Retrieved 29 May 2006 from http://www.bath.ac.uk/~mnspwr/

Reason, P., & Bradbury, H. (2001). Inquiry and participation in search of a world worhty of human aspiration. . In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (Eds.), *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice* (pp. 1 - 14). London: Sage.

Richardson, L. (2003). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Collecting and Interpreting Qualitative Materials* (pp. 499 - 541). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Rogers, E. M. (1976). New product adoption and diffusion. *Journal of Consumer Research, 2*(March), 290-301.

Teng, J. T. C., Grover, V., & Guttler, W. (2002). Information technology innovations: general diffusion patterns and its relationships to innovation characteristics. *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management, 49*(1), 13 - 27.

Thomas, D. R. (2003). A general inductive approach for qualitative data analysis (11 screens). Retrieved 13 March 2006 from http://www.health.auckland.ac.nz/hrmas/resources/Inductive2003.pdf.

Waterman, H., Tillen, D., Dickson, R., & de Koning, K. (2001). *Action research: a systematic review and guidance for assessment.* Norwich: Queen's Printer and Controller of HMSO 2001.

Weber, R. (2003). The reflexive researcher. *MIS Quarterly, 27*(4), v - xiv.

Williams, B., & Harris, B. (2001). Learning logs: structured journal that work for busy people. In S. Shankar, B. Dick, R. Passfield & P. Swepson (Eds.), *Effective change*

*management using action learning and action research.* Lismore, NSW: Southern Cross Press.

## About the authors

*Karen Day MA* Managed Care, *BA, Dip Gen Nursing & Midwifery*

Karen Day has a special interest in health informatics, change in health organisations and how we adapt to change when it is linked to health IT projects. Her concern about the application of theory in the workplace as well as our capacity to learn and adapt as we develop professionally resulted in her discovery of action research. Her experience in nursing, health service management, health insurance, managed care, and health IT project management is now being used in her role as health informatics co-ordinator at the University of Auckland. Karen teaches health informatics principles, knowledge management, qualitative research, and principles of public health. She is also involved, with Dr Martin Orr and others, in the establishment of a National Institute for Health Innovation. Karen is completing her PhD on change management linked to health IT projects using action research.

*Dr Martin Orr MB, BAO, BCH, MBA, FRANZCP*

Dr Martin Orr is a Psychiatrist, a Doctoral student at Southern Cross University, a Senior Lecturer at Auckland University School of Population Health and Clinical Director of Information Services for the Waitemata District Health Board (Auckland, New Zealand). Dr Orr is involved on a daily basis in the pragmatics of meeting the "opportunities and challenges" of developing health knowledge systems. His key research interests lie in working with the dedicated professionals that, through the development, implementation and utilisation of Health Knowledge Systems, strive to "make a healthy difference" for their communities.

*Dr Shankar Sankaran BSc, M Sys. Eng., PhD, MIEAust, CP Eng, MPMI*

Dr Shankar Sankaran is a control systems engineer and project manager by background and is currently employed as an Associate Professor at the Graduate College of Management, Southern Cross University, Australia. He is also the Director of the College of Action Research at the University. Shankar teaches Knowledge Management, Management Information Systems and Project Management in MBA programs in the Asia-Pacific Region and supervises doctoral students at both the DBA and PhD levels.

*Dr Tony Norris PhD, MSc, DIC, FRSC, CChem, CSci, FIMA, CMath*

Tony Norris is Professor of Information Systems at Massey University in Auckland, New Zealand. His research interests are in the strategic role of information technology and information management in the health sector and include the cultural and business issues associated with the application of IT, data quality, privacy, and telehealth. Prof Norris is the author of the book, Essentials of Telemedicine and Telecare/ published by Wiley in 2002.

*This article was originally presented at the ALARPM 7th and PAR 11th World Congress Action Research Conference on* Participatory Research, Standards and Ethics, *Groningen, The Netherlands, August 21-24, 2006.*

# Should Australian AR theses be examined using a developmental approach adopted by US universities?

- Shankar Sankaran, Geof Hill and Pam Swepson

*In Australia PhD theses are examined by three external examiners who look at a written thesis submitted by the student after he/she has completed it. Generally universities want the examiners to be external. Therefore when the student thesis is read by the external examiner it is probably the first time the examiner looks at the thesis. Although this is meant to be an objective process it poses problems in practice. The three authors, all action researchers and members of the Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management Association of Australia (ALARPM), were concerned about the issues arising out of examining action research theses. As they considered writing a paper together on the issue they realised that there were issues even with any doctoral theses, not just AR theses. So they collaborated and wrote two papers about issues in examining doctoral theses. One of the authors, Sankaran, visited the US for his sabbatical and interviewed four prominent action researchers and academics about issues they faced with examining action research theses. It became evident that while the model used for examining doctoral theses in the US and Australia is different there are common issues in examining these theses. However the authors feel that the developmental approach used in the US, where the student and the examiner are in communication from the beginning of the thesis, might resolve some of the issues faced by Australian doctoral supervisors. This article presents issues faced by supervisors in Australia with regards to examining action research theses and how a developmental approach may address some of these issues.*

## Introduction

The authors are colleagues within the 'community of practice' (Wenger & Synder, 2000) of the Action Research, Action Learning, and Process Management Association Inc. (ALARPM) and have been doctoral students who used action research, supervisors of action researchers and examiners of action research theses in Australia. Over time they became aware of each other's experiences and concerns with examining action research theses. As they began to talk informally about their concerns they came to recognise that these might apply equally to any research thesis, action research or otherwise.

The general process for theses examination in Australia is that they are examined by two or three examiners, external to the candidate's university. While the principal supervisor through the School's Director of Postgraduate Studies and Research suggests potential examiners to the Higher Degrees Committee (this is the name of the committee at Southern Cross University; it may be called by other names in other universities), it is the Committee that makes the final decision. The names of the examiners chosen are not made known to the candidate. But the candidate would know the identity of their examiners after the examination process if the examiners agree to it. Some Australian universities also require an oral defence. Several studies have been conducted on the process of thesis examination. This literature appears to focus on improving the quality of the thesis rather than illuminating the examination processes and examiner practices.

Nightingale (1984) reviewed examiner reports and university regulations pertaining to the various degrees. She concluded that the examination practices that existed at the time of her research were dis-empowering in that they did not clarify the criteria by which a thesis would be evaluated. Simpkins

(1987) similarly examined the practice of thesis examination by undertaking an analysis of examiner reports to determine whether examiners subscribed to common thinking about theses and research. The study revealed that overall there was a common construct of critical evaluation. Simpkins suggested that examiners expected a research thesis to draw on established methods of investigation, and that there was also a willingness, at least of the examiners in his study, to accept some of the assumptions expressed in the new research traditions.

Hansford and Maxwell (1993) replicated the Nightingale (1984) study and focussed on the examination of Master's theses. Their study identified the range of reasons that examiners provide for a thesis not meeting the standard, and thus inferred the indicators of a quality thesis.

Nightingale (1984), Simpkins (1987), and Hansford and Maxwell (1993) used examiner reports as their primary data. Mullins and Kiley (2002) critiqued the use of examiner reports for investigations into thesis examination, suggesting that by the time the report was written, the examiner had already gone through several processes of reading and examination, and hence these studies failed to capture the immediacy that is the experience of the examiner, novice or otherwise.

While several papers could be found in the literature of examination of doctoral theses in Australia we could not find any paper about issues of examination processes with action research theses. A paper that discusses the academic qualities of practice-based PhDs (Winter, Griffiths and Green, 2000) reflects on some of the issues faced by action researchers and their supervisors. Winter *et al* (2000: 25) state that 'our starting point is that an important practical problem facing students and tutors in higher education is how to

produce and judge practice-based PhDs.' The paper describes three viewpoints on preparing and judging a practice-based thesis but does not say much about the process of examination.

## Is the scientific method relevant for practice –based research?

Generally Australian universities expect their students to adopt a traditional structure for their theses based on the scientific method and an objective way of examining the thesis based on a blind peer review. However with the increasing number of doctorates in the social sciences, education and professional disciplines such as management adopting new methods of conducting their investigation to link theory to practice, students are adopting new ways of preparing and submitting their theses. But the examination processes have essentially remained the same. One of the issues faced by supervisors is the uncertainty associated with the 'objective' examination process. While supervisors may recommend examiners based on the content area of a student's thesis the examiner may examine the thesis not only for the content but also for the methodology as well as style of writing. Sometimes examiners rooted in the positivist tradition may not favour new ways of writing or presenting a thesis.

Winter *et al* (2000) point out several reasons why practice-based research is increasing in numbers. They say that higher education is now linking with a variety of workplaces and is willing to accept more practice oriented research. The public funding of higher education is closely tied to the economy, and academic qualifications are being brought closer to work-based learning. Organizations are also encouraging their workforce to get more academic qualifications. Some organizations have gone a step further and are setting up universities within their own

organizations, for example, General Electric's Leadership Centre at Crotonville to develop their managers (online, 2007). Organizations such as Flight Centre in Australia are collaborating with the International Management Centres Association (IMCA) in the UK to train their managers using an 'action learning' approach and award qualifications similar to those awarded by universities (online, 2007).

With the demand for linkage between theory and practice in academic research methodologies such as action research have come into prominence (e.g. a PhD program using action research has been established by the University of South Australia in Asia since1994 and Southern Cross in Singapore since 1999. Monash University has partnered with industry to engage researchers in doctoral programs using action research in Australia. Several Doctors of Business Administration (DBA) have successfully completed their theses using action research from Southern Cross University and Edith Cowan University where academics who practice action research have been promoting the use of action research as a suitable method to do practitioner research). However, supervising and examining action research theses from a traditional point of view is proving to be difficult. First of all there is no standard definition of action research even though the various schools of action research use some common principles. Since action research is flexible in its approach it is often critiqued for not having scientific rigour. Action researchers also face problems with ethics committees in universities who expect researchers to submit their ethics applications based on using the scientific method of conducting research. Often action researchers do not start off with a specific plan as data might drive the research in different ways.

## The US model of theses supervision and examination

In 2004 one of the authors of this paper interviewed some prominent scholars in action research in the US during a special study leave from his University. A purposeful sample of scholars was chosen from those who were editors, or on the editorial or advisory boards of the journal *Action Research*. To render the sample diverse the scholars were also chosen from different disciplines to see if their expectations of an action research thesis were different. Six of them were contacted and four were available during the period when the author was able to visit the US. It was only possible to meet four scholars within the time and budget that the special study leave allowed.

While interviewing these scholars in the US about issues with supervising and examining action research it became clear that even though the systems of supervision and examination in the US are different from the Australian practices some of the problems faced by the supervisors are the same. However the US examination system allowed face-to-face contact between candidates and their examiners through the dissertation and hence researchers are able to understand what is required of them in submitting their dissertations.

Information about doctoral programs was collected from Boston College, University of Cincinnati, Case Western Reserve University and Cornell University, where the scholars were located, through the University websites and while interviewing them. Although other US universities may have slightly different models we can arrive at some conclusions about some of the common features of doctoral programs in the US.

1. Most doctoral programs have course work requirements prior to becoming eligible for candidacy.

Some have residential requirements. Some expect students to teach as well. The number of courses you have to complete to reach candidacy depends on your previous education.

2. In most cases students along with responsible authorities get to select their dissertation advisors and also the committee that will examine them. Regular reviews are held with the student, their advisors and the committee responsible for examination.
3. Some of the universities expect students to conduct research that contributes to knowledge through qualifying courses or projects.
4. The thesis is always defended orally and people from other parts of the university are welcome to attend the defence and ask questions within the permitted time. The committee responsible for examining the theses makes the final decision collectively.

In the Australian system most PhDs do not require course work but the student has to have honours equivalence to demonstrate that he/she is capable of doing research. In social sciences where mature-aged people with work experience undertake a PhD program, they may have a Bachelor's degree without honours. They will be asked to undertake a qualifier program to learn research skills after which they can be admitted into the doctoral program. Some practitioner doctorates require course work. Students usually work with a single supervisor although associate supervisors can be appointed for multidisciplinary research. The supervisor recommends the examiner to a school research director who has responsibility to look after research activities within a school and then a committee will approve the examiners. The examiners are sent the thesis on completion for examination and they are not permitted to discuss the thesis with the students. The examiners can also opt not to reveal their identity after examination. In some

universities such as Southern Cross University the examiners know each other's identity and can discuss the thesis. Some universities in Australia have an oral exam for PhDs.

In terms of peer review universities try to do this through doctoral symposia or progress workshops during their research. Students are also encouraged to present papers at conferences (universities assist them financially to do so), or publish papers in journals and the peer reviews help them to improve their research.

## Problems with examining action research theses

In the preface to the *Handbook of Action Research,* Reason and Bradbury (2001: xxii) state that action research could be thought of

> *…as forms of inquiry which are participative, experiential and action oriented. We see this as a "family" of action research approaches – a family which sometimes argues and falls out, may sometime ignore some of its members, has certain members who wish to dominate, yet a family which sees itself as different from other forms of research, and is certainly willing to put together in the face of criticism or hostility from supposedly "objective" ways of doing research.*

This creates several problems for supervisors of action research theses when selecting examiners in the Australian context:

α) Would an examiner they recommended as a specialist in the 'content' area of their student view action research as not an objective 'methodology'? Where does he/she find a clear definition of action research if they are not familiar with it?

β) If they did choose examiners who are familiar with action research how would they find out which flavour of action research they favour?

To understand how the examination processes in the US differ from the Australian processes we will first look at how the four scholars we interviewed define action research:

> *There is no "short answer" to the question "What is action research?" But… a working definition… [is] that action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of pressing concerns to people, and more generally flourishing of individual persons and their communities* (Reason and Bradbury 2001:1).

> *AR refers to the conjunction of three elements: research, action and participation. Unless all three elements are present, the process cannot be called AR. Put another way AR is a form of research that generates knowledge claims for the express purpose of taking action to promote social change and social analysis* (Greenwood and Levin 1998: 6-7).

Greenwood and Levin also add that the social change is linked to empowerment.

> *Participatory action research …is an explicitly political, socially engaged approach to knowledge generation. By combining popular education, community organizing, and issue-based research, this practice demands that the researcher play simultaneous roles as scholar and activist. PAR operates within communities that have traditionally been oppressed or marginalized and through a process of democratic dialogue and action provides members of those communities with the opportunity to identify issues of concern to them, gather relevant information and explore and implement possible solutions* (Brydon-Miller 2002: SPSSI convention speech).

Torbert (online, n.d.) prefers to use the term 'action inquiry' and says that he is always concerned about 'how to practice social science in everyday life, that is, about how I (or you) can engage, in the midst of daily practice'. He further explains action inquiry in terms of three forms of research (online, para: 7):

> ***in first-person research*** *(e.g. observing what I am doing and the effects I and my environment are having on one another, what I am thinking and feeling, and what I really want)*
>
> ***in second-person research (****e.g. encouraging mutual testing of attributions and assessments in real-time conversations and meetings, along with transformations toward increasingly mutual control of our collective vision, strategies, performance, and assessment) and*
>
> ***in third-person research*** *(e.g. publicly testing propositions with persons not present through measures and publications, as well as through creating learning organizations that interweave first-, second-, and third-person research).*

We can see similarities in what the scholars think that action research should look like while at the same time we see some differences in approach. While Greenwood and Brydon-Miller feel strongly about liberating communities from their current situations to take more control of themselves, Torbert leans more towards personal development as the starting point before embarking into testing the findings in conversations with others and publicly testing the propositions. Reason and Bradbury's views encompass both the pursuit of pressing concerns as well as individual and group development.

Another issue with defining action research is that some researchers combine other forms of participative processes into their research. For example management researchers tend to mix action research with action learning and seem to be bothered less about emancipation and focus more on learning and organizational improvement. Raelin (1999: 115-125) compares several methods used by organizational researchers in a special issue in *Management Learning* devoted to action-oriented methods. These are action research, participatory research, action learning, action science, developmental action inquiry and cooperative inquiry. He states that action research involves 'iterative

cycles of problem definition, data collection or implementing a solution, followed by further testing' (p.119).

Action researchers also tend to write their theses in different ways. The authors of this paper have observed that often action research theses are written in the first person, do not have a lengthy literature review to identify gaps in the literature, combine data collection and analysis chapters in the form of descriptive action research cycles and usually include a personal learning chapter. This does not fit in with the standard forms of writing a thesis favoured by universities. An action research thesis received recently by one of the authors for examination used multimedia effects like colourful pictures, was printed out like a coffee table book and another had a DVD as a major part of the thesis showing the facilitation work done by the researcher. This raises concerns about how much variety would an examiner, used to conventional theses, tolerate?

## Themes from the interviews of the four US scholars

During the interviews with the four scholars in the US it became quite clear that they do not face many of the issues that Australian supervisors face with the examination system. All their universities use committees and the student usually has a voice in selecting their examiners (committee) along with his/her thesis advisors. While there were some general rules about examinations the criteria for the final defence is developed as the thesis develops with the advisor and at the regular reviews with the examining committee and so there are no major surprises at the end. One of the scholars pointed out that the student is encouraged to communicate individually with all the members of the committee before the defence. Another scholar mentioned that the student would be told in advance about the emphasis on certain areas during the examination to prepare adequately. But there were also concerns that while the

committee system might be better than a blind examination there was also a risk that an incompetent committee may approve a poor dissertation. While two of the scholars interviewed had been external examiners for other universities all of them did not feel comfortable about being a 'blind' examiner of a thesis.

But some issues such as getting human research ethics (or getting Institutional Review Board approvals in the US) were fraught with difficulties when granting approvals for action research theses. Herr and Anderson (2005) who wrote a book about action research dissertations devote one chapter to ethical issues relating to action research and the difficulties faced by researchers to secure ethics approvals. They state that a 'primary concern of would-be action researchers is that their proposals are reviewed using guidelines and questions designed with traditional scientific experiments in mind rather than action research' (2005: 124). Australian action researchers and their supervisors face similar issues. In fact one of the authors of this paper had to delay collecting data for his own doctoral research using action research for nearly six months awaiting human research ethics approval.

The four scholars were asked about what they would expect of an action research thesis and their expectations are in general agreement with their own definitions of action research that was quoted earlier in this paper.

Bradbury said that she wants to see some clarity about the research question – how it is going to contribute to the world of practice and the world of theory

> *... I want to see that the student has done something successful in the practice site, which implies that they have developed good relationships. The third criterion is developing infrastructure by which I mean that the work can go on even after the student leaves the site. I am interested in making more use of multimedia not just*

*the words that you find in the dissertation. I am also interested in the values dimension - in what way are you contributing to a better world? This matches closely with the five criteria for quality that we articulated in the* Handbook of Action Research.

Greenwood stated that:

*In an action research thesis I expect more narrative as an AR thesis may change as the research develops and I want to know about the struggles faced by the student. If the student lacks a disciplinary paradigm for the dissertation the narrative of the thesis had to work by itself. I think the process discussions about the (action research) projects and dilemmas in the projects and failures which are never reported are some things I want to know about…. dissertations should not be all about your triumphs, it should also be honest about your struggles not in a heroic way but in a more realistic way.*

He also said during the interview that he thinks the value of knowledge is probably found in breaking rules to move into new directions.

Brydon-Miller wanted to see a practical outcome and evidence of collaboration:

*I expect to see an explicit discussion of who has contributed what – I do not necessarily expect that there will be any ethical dilemmas – even though ideally in an action research project it is not all your own work…and there has to be some indication of how it was negotiated… I would see the collaborative effort contributing to the research. I also expect my students to talk about ethics ....they have to write about ethical issues they confronted or had to deal with in the context of doing their research... how it was negotiated and what happened as a result of it.*

Both Brydon-Miller and Greenwood also raised concerns about the ownership of the 'intellectual property' from an action research thesis due to a collaborative effort.

Torbert said that:

*the particular questions I would like to push forward with an action research thesis would be*

- *to what degree you have studied yourself during the process of the thesis?*
- *to what degree do you understand the effect of your own actions have had on the [research] site and on people's responses?…*
- *to what extent have you gone through a feedback process already and obtained feedback from the participants of your research?*
- *your data may show that you have helped the participants to achieve a particular practical outcome but to what degree is your thinking influencing them as well? In other words to what degree the theory is influencing the practitioners?*
- *how do the first person, second person and third person research interweave with one another?*

Torbert also raised concerns about how ethics approvals are handled with action research. He felt that the emphasis on informed consent in the scientific way with action research is counterproductive as action research has an ethically defensible relationship due to its own collaborative nature. The authors of the paper also feel that the way human research ethics approval is dealt with in Australia does not suit the nature of action research.

Torbert felt that he would expect some of the things that he said about expectations from an action research thesis to be true for other types of theses. Greenwood also had a similar opinion about expectations from any thesis but he would like to see something more with action research theses.

From what was stated in the interviews almost all the scholars were interested in the details of what went on during the action research, what issues came up and how the

researcher struggled to overcome problems that occurred, the negotiations that had to be done to move forward and the nature of collaboration during the research. It was also clear that ethics approval for action research was a major concern.

## Discussion

The first issue that arises out of the experiences of the authors which is also confirmed by the literature is that different people define action research differently. Although the definitions have some common threads how does an examiner who may not be familiar with the various schools of action research judge it? The lack of contact between the examiners, the supervisor and the student makes this even more difficult.

The second issue is that the guidelines provided by universities in Australia to doctoral examiners is the same irrespective of the methodology used. These guidelines are based on a typical thesis that is written using the scientific model using a structured approach. Action research theses may not fit this model as sometimes they are written in different ways. For example, some may not have a detailed literature review to find a gap in the literature, some may be written using the first person, and in some the data collection and data analysis may be written up as action research cycles.

The third issue often arises due to the practitioner nature of action research. Action research may be used to solve a particular problem that may be relevant only to the context where the problem originated. Examiners familiar with traditional thesis may look for some generalisation in the thesis to be considered as a contribution to knowledge.

From what has been presented in the paper so far it seems that the examination model for Australian action research theses needs some improvement. The first question is when would examiners be invited to engage with the student so that their expectations are clearly known to the student and the supervisor? Second what developmental role would examiners play in ensuring that the student learns from the process of supervision as well as examination? And third how will the university distinguish between the roles of the supervisor and the examiner?

The authors of this paper used action research methodology for their own doctoral theses before becoming supervisors and examiners. In an earlier paper (Sankaran, Swepson and Hill 2005: 830-831) they highlighted the following issues about thesis examinations in Australia.

- We think that candidates do not understand or are prepared for the examination process
- We think that candidates and examiners are not informed about the criteria/process for choosing examiners by all Universities while the supervisors recommend examiners based on certain criteria (for example content or methodology), the examiners are not told by the Higher Degrees Committee why they have been selected as examiners.
- We think that candidates, universities and other examiners do not know the criteria examiners use. Universities give broad guidelines, which are open to interpretation.
- We think that problems can be avoided by engaging the examiner prior to the examination process in conversations with other examiners or with supervisors/candidates.

The above issues are also relevant to the concerns raised in this paper.

At a recent conference dealing with postgraduate research in Australia, Professor Margaret Kiley from the Australian National University, who has written several papers about doctoral theses examinations in Australian universities, pointed out some issues with the current examination practices for PhDs in Australia. She suggested that an oral examination with one external examiner and public seminars within the department or school could be introduced to overcome the issue related to the time taken for the examination process using three external examiners located across the globe. It looks as though in the near future the Australian examination systems will adopt some practices of the US system.

While the examination processes in social sciences, education and management seem to follow the scientific method, doctoral examination of creative arts theses follow a developmental approach where the artist demonstrates his/her research through various shows that he/she puts on for the public and the examiners to show his/her progress step by step. Although there is also a written component it is only a minor portion of the examination. It seems as though action research theses may benefit by taking on some aspect of the US model as well as those used in Australia for doctorates in creative arts.

## Conclusions

The current system of examining action research theses (dissertations) in Australia is fraught with problems and uncertainty due to the hegemony of the scientific method. The use of action research in Australia is increasing in doctoral programs such as the Doctor of Business Administration program where managers are finding the approach useful to link their research to their practice as well as economically collect data from their own organizations while implementing organizational change. Some Australian

Universities such as the University of South Australia and Southern Cross University are asking their PhD students doing business research to use action research. If action researchers were to be judged in accordance with scientific ways of conducting and writing up research the value of using a participative and flexible research methodology that links theory to practice is lost. The developmental model used in the US for examining doctoral theses (dissertations) would be fairer for examining action research theses in Australia. While the Australian system is planning to introduce changes to the current examination system for PhD research these changes will not go far enough to help action researchers and their supervisors.

In an earlier paper (Sankaran, Swepson and Hill 2005: 832-834) about research theses examinations the authors recommended a set of assessment criteria for practitioner-based theses that could be applicable to action research theses. These are summarised in the following paragraphs. For more details about these recommendations refer to Sankaran, Swepson and Hill (2005).

1. There is a clearly framed practice that is being investigated.
2. There is a well-argued approach to investigating the practice.
3. There is convergence between what the thesis says you will do and what you actually did.
4. There is a statement of conclusions drawn and evidenced to show that there has been an attempt to communicate the findings with other practitioners.
5. There is evidence of rigor throughout the report.
6. The theses make a contribution to knowledge (including the contribution to the practice and the field of practitioner investigation).

## References


Boston College (2006) *PhD Program: Organization Studies*, Carroll School of Management. Retrieved, May 3 2006, from

http://www.bc.edu/schools/csom/phdos/

Brydon-Miller, M. (2002) What is Participatory Action Research and what's a nice person like me doing in a field like this? Remarks presented at the *2002 SPSSI Convention*, June 28-30, Toronto, Canada.

Case Western Reserve University (2004) School of Graduate Studies. Retrieved May 3, 2006, from http://www.case.edu/provost/gradstudies/

Cornell University (2007) Graduate School. Retrieved May 3, 2006 from

http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/

Flight Centre Ltd, (2007) Retrieved May 15 2007, from http://www.careers.flightcentrelimited.com/content.asp?stp=FW&newsID=98174

General Electric Company (2007) John F. Welch Leadership Development Centre. Retrieved May 15 2007, from http://www.ge.com/en/company/companyinfo/welchcenter/welch.htm

Greenwood, D.J. & Levin, M. (1998) *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change.*

Hansford, B. C., & Maxwell, T. W. (1993) A Masters degree program structural components and examiner's comments. *Higher Educational Research and Development Journal,* 12(2), 171-187.

Herr, K. & Anderson, G.L. (2005) *The Action Research Dissertation: A Guide for Students and Faculty*, Thousand Oaks: Sage.

Hill, G., Sankaran, S. & Swepson, P. (2006) Examiner stories. Knowledge creation for the testers, Presented at the *7th Quality in Postgraduate Research Conference*, Adelaide, Australia, April 20-21.

Mullins, G. & Kiley, M. (2002) It's a PhD not a Nobel prize: How experienced examiners assess research theses. *Studies in Higher Education, 27*(4), 369-386.

Nightingale, P. (1984) Examination of research theses. *Higher Education Research and Development Journal, 3*(2), 137-150.

Raelin, J. (1999) 'Preface', *Management Learning,* 30(2), 115-125.

Reason, P. & Bradbury, H. (2001) (Eds.) *Handbook of Action Research,* London: Sage.

Sankaran, S., Hill, G. & Swepson, P. (2005) Do research thesis examiners need training? Practitioner stories, *Qualitative Report*, 10(4), 817-835. Retrieved May 15 2007, from

http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR10-4/sankaran.pdf

Simpkins, W.S. (1987) The way examiners assess critical thinking in educational administration theses. *Journal of Educational Administration, 25*(2), 248-268.

Torbert, W. R. (2006) What is action inquiry?, Retrieved May 3, 2006, from

http://www2.bc.edu/~torbert/

University of Cincinnati (2005) *Graduate Handbook.* Retrieved May 3, 2006, from http://www.grad.uc.edu/file_pdf/handbook.pdf

Wenger, E. & Snyder, W. (2000) Communities of practice: The organisational frontier. *Harvard Business Review*, Jan-Feb, 139-145.

Winter, R., Griffiths, M. & Green, K. (2000) The 'Academic' qualities of practice; what are the criteria for a practice-based PhD? *Studies in Higher Education*, 25(1), 25-37.

## About the authors

Dr Shankar Sankaran, Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building, University of Technology Sydney, Australia.

Dr Geof Hill, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia.

Dr Pam Swepson, William James School of Business, Flight Centre, Brisbane, Australia.

*This article was originally presented at the ALARPM 7th and PAR 11th World Congress Action Research Conference on* Participatory Research, Standards and Ethics, *Groningen, The Netherlands, August 21-24, 2006.*

# A window into the process of doing a community based action research project

- Dennis Lim

*This article addresses the processes and outcomes of a Community Based Action Research project conducted with Southside Community Care Inc. (SCC) over a three-month (academic) period and provides a window into the way in which the data was collected and analysed which could be of use for others engaged in working on policy solutions with the community.*

## Introduction

Southside Community Care Inc. (SCC) is a small community-based housing organization providing short-term (average four months) supported accommodation to homeless families in the southern suburbs of Brisbane. It has 18 accommodation houses (four of which it owns) with a paid staff of three and several volunteers to provide supported transitional accommodation to tenants needing access to more affordable and long-term housing.

Most of the individuals and families in SCC are on income security payments or on very low incomes. Home ownership for the majority of tenants is not an affordable option and accessing public housing or the Community Rent Schemes are restricted due to the long waiting lists for the limited vacancies available. Although private rental appears a more immediate alternative, many still face access barriers with this option.

This Community Based Action Research therefore aims a) to understand what tenants identify their access barriers to be; and b) to understand their experiences with these access barriers.

## Literature review

The Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) national submission *More Affordable Housing* to the Productivity Commission (May, 2003) pointed out that over 200,000 people were still waiting for a place in public and community housing; that home ownership for young families (25-39yr olds) has slumped 10% in the ten years to 1999; and that 330,000 people on low incomes are spending more than 30% of their income on rent with a shortage of up to 150,000 houses and flats for low-cost private rental (ACOSS, October 2003).

Reinforcing concerns at the state level is the Queensland Council of Social Service's (QCOSS) report *Fair Housing: A Report Card on Queensland's Housing and Supported Accommodation Services* (QCOSS, 2003). The Report states that 'the Queensland government spends the second lowest of all States and Territories, per capita, on public housing recurrent expenditure and the least when including capital expenditure' (QCOSS 2003:15). A net loss of 285 public housing dwellings occurred in 2000-01. Queensland also has the highest number (34.6%) of households that are renting privately compared with other states. Furthermore, the wait list for community housing in Queensland is the second largest in Australia (QCOSS 2003:19).

Myers (2003) from the Queensland Community Housing Coalition submitted a report entitled *Community – The Place for Affordable Housing* to the Queensland Minister for Housing, warning that community housing services were

not able to meet the significant increases in demand for crisis, transitional and long term housing with more than 167,000 Queensland households considered to be in housing stress and 30,000 households on the Queensland public housing waiting list.

At the local level, Southside Community Care's *Annual Performance Report (APR), Service Plan, 1 July 2004 – 30 June 2005* provides useful data which indicates the average length of stay of tenants in its transition accommodation has increased from 6.48 months to 7.3 months to 7.8 months over the last three years 'due to a lack of exit options besides private rental'. Furthermore, its annual report highlighted that of the total 15 tenants that moved on to independent living, 15 (78%) went into private rental, one into the community rent scheme, zero into Department of Housing accommodation, three unknown.

Inadequate supply of affordable housing in the private, community and public sectors to meet the demands of over 200,000 in Queensland alone, has placed many community-based housing services in difficult and stressful situations of deciding on whom to supply their limited services to. The *Finding Beds for Homeless People* (2004) project report highlighted the continued risk of exclusion amongst Brisbane's homeless; and the public discourse on the moral dichotomy of 'deserving versus undeserving' homeless people. The Finding Beds report noted that 'structural factors determine why pervasive homelessness exists now, and individual factors explain who is least able to compete for scarce housing' (Rosenthal 2000:112 in *Finding Beds Report*, 2004:29).

An understanding of the social exclusion issue amongst the homeless families is best summarized by Randolph and Judd (1999) whose perspective on social exclusion also has policy

implications. In their view social exclusion is clearly a multi-dimensional issue involving social, economic, cultural and political processes. It refers to joined-up problems involving a range of interpenetrating processes that, when acting together, reinforce social disadvantage and marginalization. Furthermore, Randolph and Judd see social exclusion, as referring to individuals and areas whereby exclusion is both a social and a spatial problem. For the authors, social exclusion is not just about poverty or income; it is also about access to life chances and non-material attributes and values.

What is clear from the above literature review is that the personal troubles experienced by SCC tenants and their risk of exclusion are related to the wider structural and policy issues of accessing secure, affordable, and appropriate housing that is well documented, researched and argued by peak community housing and social service organizations.

## Philosophical rationale for the research approach

Hart and Bond (1995) best summarise the key methodological issues related to action research (AR) with their four typologies. Although these approaches are presented as distinct types, in practice there are overlaps and a mixing of strategies.

In the *experimental* AR approach or typology, a rational social management and consensus model of society means that change intervention is usually focused on the research aims to solve problems. The AR here is mainly task focused, time limited, and with a top-down approach to identifying problems. What counts as success and improvement usually arises from management interests with controlled outcomes and consensual definitions of improvement. The focus is on identifying the causal factors in group dynamics. Respondents are usually selected by the researcher who is

seen as the outside expert with an experimenter relationship to the respondent.

According to Hart and Bond (1995), the *organizational* AR approach holds a similar rational social management and consensus model of society to that of the experimental approach. Here, effort is placed on enhancing managerial control and organizational change that is towards a consensual definition of success. Problems are defined by the most powerful group and have to satisfy management aims. Like the experimental approach, it is a top-down approach to direct change and outcomes have to be tangible with a consensual definition of improvement. The research relationship is one of researcher/consultant to respondent/participant and the degree of collaboration is to maintain differentiated roles.

The third typology identified by Hart and Bond (1995) is the *professionalizing* AR approach. The educative base is one of reflective practice and practitioner focussed. It emphasises the empowerment of professional groups and advocacy on behalf of clients. Improvements in practice and definitions of problems - which are contested - are defined by the professional group on behalf of clients/users. Change intervention is usually professionally led, predefined and process driven. The research component tends to dominate and the action component is usually held in tension.

Finally, the *empowering* AR approach or typology holds to a conflict model of society and that of structural change. Here the research relationship is one of shared roles where we have co-researchers or co-change agents involved in a bottom-up process driven approach to change intervention. Problems emerge from members' practice or experience and are to be explored as part of the change process. Outcomes are negotiated with pluralist definitions of improvement.

The educative base is one of consciousness-raising, shifting the balance of power and pluralist structural changes and the empowering of oppressed groups.

The above descriptive summary of the AR typologies from Hart and Bond (1995) highlights the range of methodologies available in undertaking AR. It provides a useful framework in which to interpret and enact AR. Issues will emerge if an AR approach is selected without a clear understanding of the *context* to which it is applied.

## The location of action research and its comparison with other methodologies

Action research is located within the naturalistic inquiry of interpretive research that involves qualitative methodologies. Interpretive research according to Stringer and Dwyer (2005:27) identifies different definitions of the problem; reveals the perspectives of various interested parties; suggests alternative points of view from which the problem can be interpreted and assessed; identifies strategic points of intervention; and exposes the limits of statistical information by furnishing materials enabling understanding of individual experiences.

One qualitative approach is 'interpretive interactionism' where 'interpretive' is defined as 'explaining the meaning of' and 'interaction' is defined as 'action between individuals' (Denzin 2001:32). Denzin (2001) goes on to distinguish between two types of researchers: those engaged in interpretation in which interpretations are constructed from and grounded in social interaction; and those engaged in interpretive evaluation research that is conducted from the point of view of the person experiencing the problem. He points out that when researchers fully immerse themselves in the phenomena they wish to interpret and understand

then meaningful interpretations will follow. A greater appreciation of research immersion may be obtained from Spradley and McCurdy's (1972) description of how an ethnographic approach that draws on cultural anthropology is able to provide insights into immersing oneself in phenomenological research. For the authors, the question here is not 'What do I see these people doing' but 'What do these people see themselves doing'.

An interpretive approach to a subject's lived experiences is that of *epiphany* which is an illuminating crisis moment or a transforming experience (Denzin, 2001; Stringer, 2005). The challenge for interactionists interpreting the subject's epiphany is making the connection between private troubles of an individual and the larger public issues of social institutions and social structures (Mills, 1959).

Both Denzin (2001) and Kenny (1999) refer to feminist research that challenges positivism's objective knowledge in social research as it is research by women for women. It studies the world from the standpoint of women's experience with its emphasis on the critical, naturalistic and biographical through women's voices, intuition, subjectivity, feeling and complexity. In feminist research methodology, those being interviewed are encouraged to participate in setting the terms of reference, in recording and analysing of the data and where group discussions and storytelling are encouraged. Kenny (1999) concludes that men cannot be feminist researchers but can be feminist in their approach to research.

Stringer (1999:17) explains that:

> *Community-based action research is a collaborative approach to inquiry or investigation that provides people with the means to take systematic action to resolve specific problems. This approach to research favours consensual and participatory procedures that enable people (a) to investigate systematically their problems and issues, (b) to formulate powerful and sophisticated accounts of*

*their situations, and (c) to devise plans to deal with the problems at hand.*

## The research process

The primary stakeholders for this study were the tenants in the 18 accommodation units and the three employed staff of SCC. Secondary stakeholders comprised of a representative from the management committee, the regular volunteers, an ex-tenant and two members of a benefactor group.

The sampling frame for this project is the Southside Community Care agency. A non-random purposive sampling approach (Shapiro 2005, Vaus 1995) incorporating the technique of 'snowballing' (Stringer and Dwyer 2005) was used to extend the range of selected key representatives from each of the identified stakeholder groups. The management committee and staff present at its 13/09/05 meeting identified two representatives from the tenants' stakeholder group and a representative from each of the remaining stakeholder groups.

A possible criticism to the sampling process may be that it is seen as a top-down approach to purposive sampling. However, it should be noted that both staff and management committee members were supportive of wanting to see more tenants participating and represented in the action research. The gatekeeping role by staff was present to ensure tenants' privacy and duty of care considerations.

The initial research question; *What does it take for tenants in SCC to increase their exit options?* was formulated following informal discussions with members of the management committee and staff. The research question was reframed to *How do SCC tenants understand their experiences with access barriers that they have identified?* after members from the tenants stakeholder group gathered the data for themselves

as co-researchers. This is elaborated in the outcomes of the project, discussed later in this article.

The first phase of the data gathering exercise was by the research facilitator who conducted a one-hour face-to-face interview with each of the representatives from the staff, management, ex-tenants and volunteer stakeholder groups. Two representatives from the tenants' stakeholder group were each interviewed separately; and two representatives from the benefactor stakeholder group were interviewed together. Verbatim recording and 'member checking' methodologies to information gathering were implemented.

The second phase of the data gathering exercise involved the hand written recording of information shared during the Reference Group's meeting held 10/10/05. A third phase of the data gathering effort was by members within the tenants' stakeholder group held on 20/10/05. Hand written recording of the information was carried out. Finally, data gathering was also obtained from SCC's Annual Performance Reports, and Coordinator's monthly reports to the Board of Management and other housing reports summarised in the Literature Review section of this article.

## Research ethics

Permission to implement the community-based action research was sought and obtained from the SCC's Board of Management. Privacy was maintained by the assurance of confidentiality and secured storage of information collected by the research facilitator and adherence to the privacy policy of SCC. Finally, information about the nature and purpose of the research was outlined and informed consent to participate was obtained from each research participant interviewed.

## Data analysis

The purpose of data analysis

> *is not to identify the 'facts' or 'what is really happening', but to distil or crystallize the data in ways enabling research participants to interpret, understand, and make meaning of the collected material* (Stringer & Dwyer 2005:103).

Stringer and Dwyer (2005) present two alternative approaches to assist research participants with their data analysis. One approach is in *categorising* and *coding* of data ('unitizing the data') so as to identify themes that will guide the ongoing activities of action researchers. This approach was used for most of the data analysis in the action research process. See Table below.

The second approach is the *epiphanic* ('illuminative moments that mark people's lives') *analysis* (see also Denzin, 2001: 26-55), which would identify common and divergent features and elements of the experiences of individuals or each stakeholder group.

Participants in the Reference Group were encouraged to consider a *collaborative approach* to analysing the data where participants' shared accounts obtained from individual interviews were categorised and coded into a joint account to assist with further group analysis. The tenants stakeholder group that met 20/10/05 enabled tenants to gather together to share information, identify areas that they shared in common and highlight concerns for further collaborative action.

*Rigor* in community-based action research was achieved from efforts in establishing *trustworthiness* (Stringer and Dwyer, 2005). This was verified through procedures establishing credibility like undertaking *member checking* of the interview notes with the interviewee and the *triangulation of information* from my notes, notes from the staff recorder

and from follow-up phone conversations following the interviews and/or group facilitation efforts. Further efforts to establish trustworthiness involved a *detailed description* of this research process; having data available at the Reference Group meeting for participants to *review*; ensuring that *stakeholder participation* in the research process was well represented; and that there was a *practical utility* to the outcomes of research.

## Window into data analysis in action research

*Preliminary analysis of interview data*

A categorising and coding approach to data analysis is used below. The interview data has been organized into a categorized system that involves the following concepts (Stringer and Dwyer 2005):

- Data Set (acknowledging the distinctions/perspectives between stakeholders);
- Unitizing the data (data divided into Units of Meaning);
- Categorising (labels chosen to characterize the clustered units of meaning).
- Cover Terms (a theme designated by a code for the categories)

*Table 1. Data set: Two tenants' perspectives*

| **Cover Terms Themes/Codes** | **Units of Meaning under Categories** | **Units of Meaning under Categories** | **Units of Meaning under Categories** | **Units of Meaning under Categories** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Relationships** | **Supportive** [Before] SCC, I had post-natal…I had no supports; I used to work in CES…then in | **Non Judgemental** Don't make you feel like crap; can't stand people telling [me] what to do; | **Feelings** Past bad relationships; Felt bad, a failure; feel a lot happier now; [SCC] makes | **Choice** I now know I can do it on my own; I know where I want to be; get to decide the area, |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | prison running programs; SCC assists you to take on responsibilities & to face them; SCC support is always there; Support people who don't really have support; pay things; wont go into a situation & get into massive debt; support & deal with issues that stress people out | didn't judge me; never judge you or horrible to you | you feel good; sad having to move [from present accommodation ]; excited [having to move] | schools; doing volunteer stuff with SCC to keep in touch |
| **Accommodation** | **Security**<br>Feel safe here; first time see my kids relaxed; Didn't know what supported accommodation was; got all my things out of storage; somewhere safe to stay especially for my kids; renewed twice to stay with | **Purchase**<br>Purchased our 1st home | **Barriers**<br>Housing Commission has an eight year wait in the Mt Gravatt area; Aboriginal barriers [racial discrimination] do happen; Aboriginal & mother with six kids; always knew house we're in is not permanent | **Current**<br>[In] 4 br house; house a bit old…bathroom is being done up; no carpets on floor; first house with no cockroaches; fully furnished; new bed mattresses, washing machine, hot water system |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SCC | | | |
| **Debts** | **Loan Access**<br>[Disclosed to SCC worker] my bills and debts; borrowed money from SCC; feel really good to pay it back; loans for car rego, storage, housing commission rental arrears | **Tools to Assist**<br>Auto deductions to pay off power, gas, rent & debt | **Budgeting**<br>Pull myself into line; shown how to budget differently; enough to pay for food and petrol | **Alternatives**<br>Used to go to Cash Converters whenever I ran out of money |
| **Hopes** | **Self**<br>Time for me to study; to have another home to have secure accommodation ; get settled; gives you something to look forward to; help you get to your own goals; ideal is to get a house through MATCH or Housing Commission | **Family**<br>My kids to be happy | | |
| **Challenges** | **Personal**<br>Never see an end in the past, never getting | **Public**<br>More funding for support workers | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | there; being on your own; need to carry through what I've learnt; a lot for K & D to do; make sure rent's paid; look after the house | | | |

## Academic context

To fulfil the academic requirements, a minimum of one interview was required. However, the data above represents *two* tenants who were interviewed. The data analysis was undertaken by just one person – the student-researcher. As such it lacks the *analytical triangulation*. What this means is that by having only one person doing the coding and categorising, the method of analysis is open to criticisms of being subjective, bias and not trustworthy. The ability to compare and discuss the coding and categorising of data is compromised, limited and therefore lacks the analytical triangulation (Patton 1991).

## Community context

Under the community based action research project plan, the integrity in analysis is obtained by using multiple sources (triangulation) to clarify the situation/issue(s), that is, a participatory and inductive process which would allow for data sets to be organized across all stakeholder groups, codes and categories to emerge, and from which common issues are identified into *themes* (e.g. 'internal relationships' or 'managing debts'). Other triangulation sources could include *artefact reviews* like annual performance reports, other research project reports, minutes of the management committee, and literature reviews. *Trustworthiness* or *credibility* of the research is therefore achieved with the use of

triangulation and when the data is captured and grounded in the participant's own words/concepts and interpreted through a participatory process.

## Confidentiality

A challenge in the participatory process of data analysis and interpretations within the Reference Group[1] is that data confidentiality may be compromised if there is only one representative's data collected per stakeholder group. Those participating in the Reference Group (all of whom were interviewed) may be able to identify the source of the unitized data. Perhaps one way of overcoming this is to avoid naming the stakeholder groups in the different cover sets; and just present all collected unitized data under one 'umbrella' cover set, for example, 'Reference Group'.

## Reflections on the selected interview process

As the research facilitator, I had not established any prior relationship with the tenants; therefore I had to rely on the SCC staff to encourage tenant participation. SCC staff provided a 'gate-keeping' function in accessing tenants. The selection of the two tenants were left entirely to SCC staff to identify, approach and transported to a neutral space (the SCC office) for the interview.

I began the interview process with casual conversations in order to establish a connection. Children and family were areas we talked about and had in common. This connection

---

[1] The Reference Group was comprised of one representative (two reps from Tenants) from each of the stakeholder groups. Task of the Reference Group was to undertake a participatory analysis and interpretation of the data summarised by the research facilitator; and to make further decisions on progressing the action research project.

appeared to have allowed both of us to relax and open up. The participant continued to share her past history disclosing personal struggles with domestic violence and challenges in parenting. No notes were taken. After about 20 minutes of conversations, I casually introduced the purpose of the interview session, shared an outline of the action research model and invited the participant to sign the 'Agreement to Participate' form before recommencing on the conversational interview – with note taking. I had organized some interview guidelines to direct my interview process. I began the interview with a 'Grand Tour' question which worked well and from which 'Mini Tour', 'Guided Tour', 'Specific Grand Tour', 'Task Related' questions and 'Promptings' followed. The interview exit phase was made easier by conducting a 'Member's Check' with the participant who expressed her appreciation for being able to capture her comments accurately and respectfully. No changes to the recorded notes were requested. Following this exercise, the participant expressed her appreciation for being able to capture her comments accurately and respectfully. No changes to the recorded notes were requested. Following this exercise, the participant expressed her willingness to commit herself to the Reference Group and continue with the action research process.

## Critically reflecting on the outcomes of the study

I began this study with a determination to maintain the AR principles of *empowerment* and a *participatory, bottom-up* approach that would be *process-led* and that would involve *doing research together* with participants as *co-researchers*. I had hoped it would *give voice* to the participants and reflect the empowerment typology that Hart and Bond (1995) referred to. Furthermore, in formulating the 'initial' research question; *What does it take for tenants in SCC to increase their exit options?* I was hoping this would be acceptable to the management committee. Having obtained the management

committee's permission to proceed, I began to interview representatives of the stakeholder groups with the above formulated research question as a guide. Even my categorising and coding approach to data analysis and the subsequent Reference Group data analysis session were guided by the initial research question.

My epiphany occurred when I realised I was no longer required to facilitate the process with the group of tenants (the third phase of data gathering). There were others like the two tenants and a staff worker (all of whom had been at the Reference Group session) who took on the role and responsibilities to become co-facilitators for the tenant's session. The tenant co-facilitators largely ignored my facilitative guide (which arrived too late) and proceeded to explain the purpose and process of action research in their own words and facilitated conversations around their expressed concerns. It was a great success in the participation process and data gathering.

The effort by this group of tenants had forced me to reflect on my initial research question and reflect on how I had been facilitating the research process. What I have come to realise is that I had pre-empted the study's directions and possible outcomes by my initial framing of the research question that reflected the management committee's agenda – concerns with the exit options. My need to convince the management committee that their agenda would be met with this research was reflective of the *organizational/experimental* AR typologies described by Hart and Bond (1995) I was unconsciously framing; for example being time limited, task focused and a top-down approach to directed change. It reflected my work background in bureaucracy and the voluntary management committee involvement over the years with SCC.

The 'breakthrough' towards a more empowering AR approach occurred when the two tenants and a staff worker from the primary tenant stakeholder group conducted their own data gathering session as co-researchers. It brought into question my role in influencing the initial research question and the subsequent reframed research question that reflected the primary tenant group's concerns. Furthermore, feedback received indicated that if I had facilitated the session, I would most likely have contributed to a less open discussion amongst the tenants - mainly because I was still considered an 'outsider' who had not developed a relationship with them and for one tenant, considered 'too formal' and 'knowledgeable'. I lacked the immersing ethnographic approach in phenomenological research that Spradley and McCurdy (1972) described. Another important reflection on the empowering process was that as a male research facilitator, I was not conscious of my gender impact on an all-female tenant's session. I would most likely have carried the task-focused, top-down mindset that would have enabled my agenda and not theirs to emerge. I am reminded that although I cannot be a feminist researcher, I can be more feminist in my methodological approach to research (Kenny 1999, Denzin 2001).

## Conclusion

Information obtained from this community based action research has highlighted a more personal response to how SCC tenants understand and experience their access barriers. Emphasis was on tenant's personal *hopes*, *dreams* and *relationships* with SCC staff, the community and other support services. It reflects the practical needs and concerns of tenants grounded in their reality of being in transitional supported accommodation. The reframed research question being asked is therefore 'on track' to providing us with a better understanding of how tenants see their situation.

*The Tenant Group process has changed my perspective completely! My initial view was that providing secure housing was the answer. I now realise it is only one of a whole complexity to homelessness…and that it is about reconnecting tenants to community and in relationship building (SCC staff member).*

In contrast, the emphasis by the Reference Group was on *accommodation* and *debt* concerns that reflected the initial research question on exit options. Therefore, the question for SCC is whether it is concerned that it is *unable* to provide long-term housing? This unanswered question was raised during the Reference Group discussions and is especially relevant for staff and the Management Committee stakeholder groups because it questions the basic purpose and philosophy of the service program that SCC is providing. The experiences and views of the tenants indicate they are tired of having to go through the costly and discriminatory experience of relocating several more times in search of affordable housing. Critics may claim that the government funded transitional supported accommodation program in SCC is perpetuating the cycle of unstable housing relocations on their most vulnerable homeless families - except it is done in a supportive way! The challenge for SCC is how it might respond to the question in light of the four houses it owns and controls that are not subjected to the government funded service agreements like the other 14 units it manages.

Having completed this phase of the AR cycle, the next phase is to encourage the primary stakeholders of SCC tenants and staff to implement the action and evaluation phase. This would involve planning and implementing action(s) based on a common understanding of the analysed data; monitoring and evaluating and then modifying the action based on the evaluation.

The challenge for me as the process enters the third 'action' cycle is having an understanding of the connection between private troubles and public issues (Mills 1958) so as to respond to whatever action plans the primary stakeholder group may come up with. I am reminded that successful outcomes in action research would be when those most affected are able to experience significant changes and/or improvements.

## References


Australian Council of Social Services (2003) *More Affordable Housing – Submission to the Productivity Commission*, ACOSS, Redfern, NSW.

Denzin, N. (2001) *Interpretive Interactionism*, 2nd Edition, Sage Publications, California.

Hart, E. & Bond, M. (1995) *Action Research for Health and Social Care*, Open University Press, Buckingham.

McCallum, A. (2003) *Media Release: Housing dream turns to nightmare for low-income Australians*, 30 October 2003, Australian Councils of Social Service. Retrieved 10 February 2004, from

http://coss.net.au/news/acoss/1067467603_18397_acoss.jsp

Mills, C. W (1959) *The Sociological Imagination*, Oxford University Press, New York.

Myers, M (2003) *Community – The Place for Affordable Housing, Summary Report*, Queensland Community Housing Coalition, Brisbane, QLD.

Patten, M. (1991) *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods,* 2nd Edition, Sage, London.

Queensland Council of Social Services (2003) *Fair Housing: A Report Card on Queensland's Housing and Supported Accommodation Services*, QCOSS, Kelvin Grove, QLD.

Randolph, B. and Judd, B. (1999) Social Exclusion, Neighborhood Renewal and Large Public Housing Estates, Paper presented to the *Social Policy Research Centre Conference*, 'Social Policy for the 21st Century: Justice and Responsibility', held at the University of New South Wales, 21-23 July.

Reeves, K (Ed.) (2004) *Finding Beds for Homeless People in Brisbane*, New Farm Neighbourhood Centre for Brisbane City Council, June.

Shapiro, M (2005) Sampling, Unpublished Lecture Notes, University of Queensland, St Lucia, QLD.

Southside Community Care (2004) *Annual Performance Report July 2002-30 June 2004*, Internal Service Document, July 2004.

Spradley, J. & McCurdy, D. (1972) *The Cultural Experience: Ethnography in Complex Society*, Waveland Press Inc., Illinois.

Stringer, E & Dwyer, R. (2005) *Action Research in Human Services,* Pearson, New Jersey.

Stringer, E (1999) *Action Research* 2nd Edition, Sage Pub, California.

Vaus, de D.A. (1995) *Surveys in Social Research* 4th Edition, Allen & Unwin, Australia.

Walsh, P, Milford, C. & Cain, L. (2003) *More than Just a Roof: A Study of Family Homelessness in Queensland*, QUT Centre for Philanthropy and Non-Profit Studies, Brisbane.

## About the author

Dennis Lim completed this community based action research project in 2005 as part of the coursework for his Master of Social Work program at the University of Queensland. He is currently a senior social worker with Centrelink in Brisbane and has a keen interest in community development work in the area of community finance.

# Book review
- Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt

## The Toolbox for Change: A Practical Approach

*Bill Synnot and Rosie Fitzgerald* (In press)

I was fortunate to be invited to read and comment on a draft of this book that conveys Bill Synnot's rich experience, knowledge, expertise and facilitation skills, which he presents in his workshops on *Successful Organisational Transition.* Co-author Rosie Fitzgerald has enhanced his work through her educational and editorial expertise in preparing this immensely useful 'toolbox' of ideas. The book is in press and available from http://www.billsynnotandassociates.com.au, and the authors can be contacted on < rp000073@a1.com.au> or <rosiefitzgerald@bigpond.com>.

As the title suggests, this book takes a practical approach to change management, training and development. It is informed by the literature in the field and based solidly on a non-positivist paradigm/philosophy. It encourages us (the readers) to take time out for reflection and understanding of the ways we see the world, ways that are not right or wrong, but different from each other, and depend on our cultural and socio-historical backgrounds, experiences, values and world views. This comfortable marriage of conceptual/philosophical and practical information distinguishes the 'toolbox' from other practical handbooks and is a real strength of this book.

The book is written in clear, concise, jargon-free English. It is logically structured in seven sections around 60 user-friendly

tools, making it suitable for a do-it-yourself approach and with widespread application by individuals, groups/teams, organizations and communities. Other effective tools that require an accredited facilitator are intentionally excluded from this book; its purpose is explicitly DIY.

As the authors pointed out in their introduction, the 60 tools are designed to help people:

- identify the real problems and their causes, rather than the symptoms;
- become fully aware of the issues, own the problems and solutions, and recognise the need for change; and
- increase dialogue and group discussion by including all parties affected by the change process, so that they are willing to implement the required change and to handle resistance.

A list of tools in order of difficulty from easiest (one cog) to most complicated (four cogs) at the beginning of the book helps the reader to try out the simple tools first and proceed gradually to the more complex and time-consuming tools.

All tools are described clearly and their main characteristics are presented succinctly in a box at the beginning of each section. Examples, pictures, diagrams and stories illustrate the theoretical concepts and practical tools for better understanding. Exercises for the readers to answer stimulate them to think, interact with the authors in a dialogue, and come to their own decisions about solutions, application and action plans. In addition, the contrasting positive and negative approaches and strategies in table form and the authors' subsequent advice help to enable better and deeper understanding of the concepts, tools, methods and

techniques for change management and professional and organisational development.

My only criticism of 'the toolbox' refers to the authors' incomplete acknowledgements, since it is often not clear whether a text, table or figure is taken *verbatim* from an original source or summarised/paraphrased by the authors. Another related weakness is the lack of page numbers in references to other authors' work.

**Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt**
PhD (UQ), PhD (Deakin), DLitt (IMCA, UK), Adjunct Professor, Griffith University, Brisbane QLD.

# News and events
# - ALARPM Conference 2007

The Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management Association presents

*Annual Conference for 2007*

## Moving forward together
## Enhancing the wellbeing of people and communities
## Through Action Research and Action Learning

to be held at

**Tauondi College, Adelaide SA**

**9 and 10 August 2007**

**Pre-conference workshops 8 August 2007**

Topic areas include education, environment, health and Aboriginal ways of knowing and doing.

- A multi-disciplinary conference focussing on collaborative ways of knowing and experiencing action research and action learning.
- For community groups and services, workers, volunteers, researchers, professionals, educators, policymakers and managers.
- An interactive conference with a range of themes, disciplines and learning, teaching and information sharing styles including:
    - Special interest yarning and discussion groups

- Peer reviewed papers
- Poster sessions
- Meeting Place stalls

For more information please see website:
**www.alarpm.org.au**

or contact

| ALARPM office: | Merridy Malin: |
|---|---|
| admin@alarpm.org.au | merridy.malin@ahcsa.org.au |
| Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management Assoc Inc | Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia Inc |
| Brisbane QLD | 78 Fullarton Road |
| Tel: (07) 3342 1668 | Norwood SA 5067 |
| | Tel: (08) 8132 6700 |

**Call for Presentations – information**

The 2007 action learning/action research conference aims to provide a space where community groups and services, workers, volunteers, researchers, professionals, educators, policymakers and managers can come together to share knowledge and experiences in safe and respectful ways.

There are three broad strands or themes of education, environmental and health, with a strong emphasis throughout the conference on recognising Aboriginal ways of knowing and doing. Other areas of interest may include action research in developing countries, issues for business, law, economics, empowerment, capacity building and or livelihoods.

There is a range of presentation and interaction styles being encouraged. These include:

- **Pre conference workshops**

Workshops will be held on Wednesday 8 August at Tauondi or at alternate sites.

- **Presentations**

Presentations can be by single or joint authors. Presentation time will be 30 or 45 minutes (depending on time frames) with 10 minutes for discussion.

First time presenters very welcome. Please indicate on *Call for Presentations* form below.

- **Peer reviewed paper**

A more formal academic paper, that will be peer reviewed. Presenters will be encouraged to submit a paper prior to the conference to be posted on the website for conference delegates to read and consider. The ALARPM journal will also be calling for papers following the conference.

- **Interactive sessions**

There is a range of interactive session styles that can be used. These include (but are not limited by) round table discussions around a pre determined topic, brainstorming around an issue of concern to a group of people (this may be generated before or during the conference), information café where participants share their thoughts about a topic by writing on butchers paper covering a table, and then half of them moving onto another group in the room, thus sharing information in small groups.

- **Meeting place/market place stalls**

People are invited to share information, pamphlets, art and crafts, have a book stall, discuss a project, and promote courses, university opportunities, resources etc during meal breaks. (No cost for conference participants, catering costs for non-conference participants).

- **Meeting place/market place stalls**

Posters will be displayed throughout the conference, and participants invited to discuss them during the lengthy meal breaks. Posters may be formal laminated posters or other creative forms.

**Key Dates**

| | |
|---|---|
| Submissions and abstracts due | 18 May 2007 |
| Authors notified by email | 1 June 2007 |
| Authors to provide a copy of their presentation | 15 June 2007 |
| Presentations posted onto website | 29 June 2007 |
| Pre conference workshops | 8 August 2007 |
| Conference | 9 & 10 August 2007 |

*Please send your submissions to:*

**Donna Alleman** - Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management

**Email:** admin@alarpm.org.au

**Postal address:**

83 Plimsoll St, Greenslopes

Queensland 4066 Australia

Tel: (07) 3342 1668

Fax: (07) 3342 1669

## Call for Presentations

Name: _____

Address:_____

_____

Phone: ( )_____

Mobile:_____

Email:

Position:_____

Organisation/group:_____

**Presentation type** (please tick)

Pre conference workshop (Wed 8 August) □

Presentation (first time presenters welcome) □

Peer reviewed paper (academic) □

Meeting place/market place stalls/exhibitions □

Poster □

**Theme area** (please tick – if more than one area, number in preference)

Education □

Environment □

Health □

Other □_____

(For example: law, economics, empowerment, capacity building, livelihoods, etc)

**Abstract**

Please attach in 250 words or less, a brief description of your presentation.

Please indicate if you are a first time presenter: First time □

All papers will be refereed (read and approved) by conference organisers.

## Conference Registration Form

Name:
_____

Address:_____

_____

Phone: ( )_____

Mobile:_____

Email:

Position:_____

Organisation/group:_____

**Payment (see next page for information)**

Early Bird fees paid by Monday 25 June 2007

Credit card details - **preferred option** *****

☐ Visa ☐ Bankcard ☐ Mastercard

☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ ☐☐☐☐ Exp ___/___

Name on card: _____

Signature: _____

Cheques – payable to ALARPM Association Inc.

**Send this completed registration form to the ALARPM office:**

| | |
|---|---|
| 83 Plimsoll St<br>Greenslopes Qld 4120 Australia | Tel: (07) 3342 1668<br>Fax: (07) 3342 1669 |

**Registration Types**

| Registration type | **Early bird pre June 25** | After June 25 |
|---|---|---|
| Full registration | $340 | $375 |
| ALARPM Member registration | $300 | $330 |
| Low income registration (full time student, community member, unemployed) | $170 | $190 |
| Low income ALARPM member | $125 | $140 |
| Overseas registration | $350 | $385 |
| Overseas ALARPM member | $315 | $345 |

**Upon receipt of payment, a tax invoice will be issued by email.**

**Accommodation options**

There is little accommodation in the close vicinity of Tauondi College but there is a very good tourist park with a range of accommodation options at West Beach, near the airport and beach. We will be providing a bus to and from there at the beginning and end of each day of the conference (approx 20 minutes).

Information about Adelaide Shores is available at:

www.adelaideshores.com.au

Tel: +61 8 8355 7320

Address: 1 Military Road, West Beach, SA 5024

We will also be posting a wider range of accommodation options on the ALARPM website www.alarpm.org.au. These accommodation options will not have transport provided by us.

*Please pay accommodation direct, not through ALARPM.*

# ALARPM 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 trailing 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 allows your organisation to 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 electronic 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: admin@alarpm.org.au
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

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

***Please send mail to:*** ❑ *Home* ❑ *Work*

## Current Employment

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Position / Job Title* | *Organisation* | |
| *Address* | | |
| | | *Postcode* |
| *Town / City* | *State* | *Nation* |
| *Work contact numbers* *Phone* | | *Fax* |
| *Email* | | *Mobile* |

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

- ❑ Action Learning
- ❑ Action Research
- ❑ Community Action/Dev
- ❑ Education/Schools
- ❑ Environment/Sustainability
- ❑ Evaluation
- ❑ Facilitation of AR, AL, etc.
- ❑ Gender Issues
- ❑ Government
- ❑ Higher Education
- ❑ Human Services (Health)
- ❑ Learning Organisations
- ❑ Other

_____
*Please specify*

- ❑ Manager & Leadership Dev
- ❑ Methodology/Methods
- ❑ Org Change & Dev
- ❑ PAR
- ❑ Process Management
- ❑ Quality Management
- ❑ Rural/Agriculture
- ❑ Social Justice/Social Change
- ❑ Systems Approaches
- ❑ Teacher Development
- ❑ Team Learning & Dev
- ❑ Vocational Education/HR

***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 must 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*
*Fax: (61-7) 3342 1669*
*Email: admin@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

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Organisation name* | | | *If incorporated* |
| *Contact address* | | | |
| | | | *Postcode* |
| *Town / City* | | *State* | *Nation* |
| *A/H contact numbers* | *Phone* | | *Fax* |
| *Email* | | | *Mobile* |

***Contact person / Please send mail attention to:*** _____

## Nature of Organisation

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

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

- ❑ Action Learning
- ❑ Action Research
- ❑ Community Action/Dev
- ❑ Education/Schools
- ❑ Environment/Sustainability
- ❑ Evaluation
- ❑ Facilitation of AR, AL, etc.
- ❑ Gender Issues
- ❑ Government
- ❑ Higher Education
- ❑ Human Services (Health)
- ❑ Learning Organisations
- ❑ Other

_____
*Please specify*

- ❑ Manager & Leadership Dev
- ❑ Methodology/Methods
- ❑ Org Change & Dev
- ❑ PAR
- ❑ Process Management
- ❑ Quality Management
- ❑ Rural/Agriculture
- ❑ Social Justice/Social Change
- ❑ Systems Approaches
- ❑ Teacher Development
- ❑ Team Learning & Dev
- ❑ Vocational Education/HR

***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)***

**Mailing address within Australia**

❑ $93.50 AUD Full membership for organisations with mailing address ***within*** Australia

**Mailing Address outside Australia**

❑ $104.50 AUD Full membership for organisations with mailing address ***outside*** Australia

***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 must be 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*
*Fax: (61-7) 3342 1669*
*Email: admin@alarpm.org.au*

# ALAR JOURNAL SUBSCRIPTION FORM

## Address Details

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

## Payment Details

***ALAR Journal subscription (2 issues per year) does not include ALARPM membership entitlements (all rates include GST).***

**ALAR Journal Subscription rate for private individuals**

- ❑ $ 71.50 AUD for individuals with a mailing address ***within*** Aus
- ❑ $ 82.50 AUD for individuals with a mailing address ***outside*** Aus

**ALAR Journal Subscription rate for libraries and tertiary institutions**

- ❑ $ 93.50 AUD for institutions with a mailing address ***within*** Aus
- ❑ $104.50 AUD for institutions with a mailing address ***outside*** Aus

***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 must be made payable to ALARPM Association Inc. in Australian dollars. Please return completed application with payment details to:***

*ALARPM ASSOCIATION INC.*
*PO Box 1748, Toowong Qld 4066, Australia*
*Fax: (61-7) 3342 1669*
*Email: alar@alarpm.org.au*