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HANDBOOKS



THE PALGRAVE INTERNATIONAL HANDBOOK OF ACTION RESEARCH

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Joseph M. Shosh, & Margaret M. Riel



The Palgrave International Handbook of Action
Research

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This handbook is dedicated to the ancestors—biological, spiritual, and intellectual—who have guided the lives and work of all those involved in the production of this volume. In particular, we wish to acknowledge our gratitude and abiding affection and respect for the following individuals, whom we miss but continue to draw inspiration from: Orlando Fals Borda, Paulo Freire, Eduardo Flores-Kastanis, Myles Horton, Kurt Lewin, and Susan Noffke. We also dedicate the handbook to the memory of Dr. Martha Farrell of the Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) network, based in India, who was killed in a terrorist attack in Kabul in May 2015 while participating in meetings to support the education and empowerment of women in Afghanistan. May we take comfort in knowing that her spirit, along with the spirits of all those we recognize in this dedication, lives on.

This book is also dedicated to new and future action researchers who continue to press for social justice around the globe in the wide range of contexts and challenges that we face in our lives and work. Becoming more aware of the knowledge one creates and pledging to be more active in finding new ways to share and build this knowledge together is a transformational process that will lead us forward.

FOREWORD

Picture the lone (and perhaps lonely) natural scientist, guided by an elegant theory and tightly worded hypothesis, working feverishly in a laboratory to discover the proper place of a small piece of the grand puzzle of our universe. As students, many of us recall our first glimpse through a microscope at the marvels of nature, heretofore unseen by our naked eyes—the building blocks of cells, the explosion of color tucked away inside a simple violet, or the disgusting little inhabitants of the pond water that cooled us on hot summer days. As a child overflowing with curiosity and inspired by the little I knew about microscopes, I yearned for a chemistry set and supplies, a toolkit I could use to hammer out an early career as a mad scientist. In the meantime, perhaps to my parents' dismay, I would begin this scientific journey in our home and then on our farm, eventually expanding my laboratory into the community. Maybe this is why I never got that chemistry set.

Luckily, I later found work in another “laboratory,” the wild and wacky world of human kind, beginning with a short stint with the Cooperative Extension Service in Kentucky and then in the mid 1960s as an academic in adult education and later in educational psychology. It seems that my life has been one long exploration of the mysteries of humans and our interactions. Looking back at the early years of teaching and research, I now see that I had not strayed far from the farm, where as a child I explored the ruralness around me, poking at flora and fauna to see how they would react. In my early university career, I researched like my excellent faculty mentors, as they had emulated their professors before them, and so on. Like my colleagues and their mentors, and their mentors before them, we were emulating another world of inquiry, the natural sciences, at least in terms of our methodology. I think we might have done this to impress our colleagues in the so-called hard sciences, as our pursuits were perceived as being “soft.” The song of the hard sciences had lured me in.

After a decade of teaching by transmission, and researching and publishing in ways that my institution found quite acceptable, I grew increasingly uneasy

with this way of doing my work. After all, I was trained in adult education and adult learning, and had read much that my mentors had said in the 1960s. Knowles' classic works about adult learning come to mind. Ever so slowly, I began to spend more and more time stepping around my lectern and standing closer to the students. The invitation I extended to *them* morphed into discussion groups, student-directed projects, think-pair-share techniques, and the like. I call this mode of teaching and learning "teaching by transmission, learning by sharing." It isn't new now, and it wasn't new then. I had just discovered that I could do it by walking, literally, in a path I had to make for myself.

I now see how the changes in my way of teaching roughly paralleled how I chose to do research at the time. These changes happened around the time that the possibilities of qualitative research began to capture the attention of a minority of academic researchers, and the postmodernist paradigm change was well underway, at least in the so-called soft sciences. All this made sense to me as well, so I began to do more and more qualitative research, most of the time through the research of my graduate students and by smuggling in a bit here and there in a couple of funded research projects. But there were upheavals along the way. Those of us doing and advocating qualitative research, alongside more widely practiced forms of quantitative research, found ourselves working up a very steep hill. Our colleagues were not readily accepting of what was perceived as research lacking the rigor of the scientific approach, one that we all had accepted as the glory route to *the* truth. The language we used (numbers, graphs, statistical tools, formal theorizing) was shaped by, and in turn helped shape, our very form of life, a life naturally defended by the vast majority of academics. In the meantime, maverick voices of change began to be heard, and some of them were extolling the virtues of action research. Much is said in this handbook about these times, and there are detailed accounts of the work and influence of the likes of Kemmis, McTaggart, Freire, Horton, Fals Borda, and numerous other thinkers and doers too numerous to mention here. Many of them worked and some still work in academic institutions; however, the vast majority of action researchers, some appearing in this book as authors or in the chapter accounts and cases, were laboring outside of our academic bastions. The spaces that mainly non-academics make in their practices for inquiry and change are beautifully illustrated by the accounts of experienced action researchers, especially in the case examples.

There was one more phase of change in my career that lasts to this day. I first met Myles Horton at Highlander in 1981, when Brenda Bell and I were asked to write a chapter on Horton and Highlander for Peter Jarvis' seminal book *Twentieth-Century Thinkers in Adult Education*. This proved to be a life- and career-changing assignment. We finished the chapter, but my work and friendship with Myles had only begun. Early interviews with Myles revealed much to me about the history of Highlander and his approach to adult education over his long career, including his work in participatory action research. Several authors of this handbook refer to Horton's work and his contributions to action research, so there is no need to elaborate here. Later in the 1980s,

my students, academic colleagues, and I were gifted the opportunity to spend time with Paulo Friere, who was at Highlander for a week to “talk a book” with Myles (*We Make the Road by Walking*). This occasion was the result of a collaborative effort between my university and Highlander. Myles, unlike Paulo, had always stood a respectful distance from experts at universities, as he chose to work outside the system for a half century. He received his first-ever official invitation to speak at our university that week.

This final phase of my career was marked by a more collaborative, participative approach to teaching and learning and to doing action research. I owe much to Myles for his counsel and for setting an authentic example of what is possible when we choose to walk even farther from the podium, sitting down alongside students so that we may learn together. The first two phases of teaching and learning were *about* my own and other scholars’ experiences, and my research was mostly *on* others. However, the last and current stage is all mostly about collaborative teaching and learning, and my students and I have engaged in mainly participative action research. The difference in the phases and my practice lies in what John Shotter calls *aboutness* knowing versus *withness* knowing. These ways of knowing have their counterpart in what Peter Reason and colleagues refer to as research *on* people, versus doing research *with* people. It is in this latter sense that additional themes of the *Handbook* stand out, themes like networking, globalization, and knowledge democracy.

I am now thinking about how much in common these themes resonate with constructionist ideas, for example. As Ken Gergen points out, knowledge is socially constructed. What we have taken for granted for so long is that learning, and democracy, is all about the individual. But Gergen argues that learning, and the expression of democracy, is all about relationships. One has only to reflect on the myriad ways of knowing that abound in our world to see how each, in its own right, is about two or more people working together to construct knowledge and ways of going on together. Martin Buber was on target when he claimed “First, the relationship.” Even in what John Heron and Peter Reason call first-person action research, of which Judi Marshall’s self-reflective research is but one example, the biographer/researcher is never alone in the world, nor can his or her way of knowing be realized without the presence, however indirectly, of others. The same is true in second-person action research, where, for example, a classroom teacher chooses to study his or her students’ responses to changes in teaching techniques, or in third-person research, where a consultant helps an organization or community study its way of doing its work. The importance of relationship is not lost on those who do participatory action research.

This acknowledgment of the role of others in our research helps bring to light the importance of networking with others, locally as well as globally. But, this is heavy stuff. I commend the chapter authors who took on the task of defining knowledge democracy and identifying our historical possibilities of globalizing our interactions. But I will add this to the authors’ rich descriptions and accounts: In networking, collaborating, and participating with others in

the doing of action research, we all must assume what MacNamee and Gergen call a “relational responsibility” for what goes on when two or more of us seek to jointly construct new knowledge. Given the import of this book’s emphasis on participation at all levels and domains of action research, it seems fitting to close my part of the effort with a quote borrowed from McNamee and Gergen’s (1999) work:

We hold relationally responsible actions to be those that sustain and enhance forms of interchange out of which meaningful action itself is made possible. If human meaning is generated through relationship, then to be responsible to relational processes is to favor the possibility of intelligibility itself—of possessing selves, values, and the sense of worth. Isolation represents the negation of humanity. (pp. 18–19)

Action research is not a chemistry set. And science is not an individual endeavor. Both are collaborative enterprises, as is action research. Truths, or multiple truths, are constructed between people jointly engaged in these and other ways of knowing. Evidence of these claims can be found in some of the chapters that follow and elsewhere. But this book does a lot more. By bringing together in one place some of the best thinking about action research in an imperfect world, the book promises to leave its readers motivated to responsibly engage with others, even though they may have their own different ways of knowing, in a joint pursuit of a more perfect world.

John M. Peters

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PREFACE

The purpose of *The Palgrave International Handbook of Action Research* is to present a fairly comprehensive overview and illustrative examples of the work being done internationally by people affiliated with what we call the global action research community. This community consists of teachers, youth workers, counselors, nurses, community developers, artists, ecologists, farmers, settlement-dwellers, students, professors, and intellectual-activists on every continent and at every edge of the globe. The movement that this community sustains and inspires was born of the efforts of intellectual-activists in the mid-twentieth century. Readers will find reference to key figures of this group throughout the chapters in the *Handbook* and we wish to acknowledge them here: Orlando Fals Borda, Paulo Freire, Myles Horton, and Kurt Lewin. To these, however, we would add others, less publically identified with action research in some cases and less widely known in others, but whose work has added immensely to the development of theory and practice in action research: John Collier, John Dewey, Stephen M. Corey, and Marja-Liisa Swantz. The work of these eight people, and many more spread out over the past 100 years, represents the ground upon which all those who have come afterward have stood in building the living practice of action research.

Presently, the entry of “action research” into a Google search yields 165 million results in .45 seconds. The electronic database Academic Search Premier yields more than 16,000 references to action research. There are over 40 print journals that feature action research and many more options for publishing online. In short, there is a great deal to read about action research if one is interested. Yet, we are mindful that “we live in a world where there is more and more information and less and less meaning” (Baudrillard, 1994) and we have challenged ourselves as editors and authors to consider the meaning of this proliferation of information about action research in all its varied forms. And while this is not the first handbook of action research, we see it as different from other handbooks in the shape of its multi-vocality and in its somewhat relentless push to the very edges of action research as a form of humanity itself.

It is our hope that the multiple meanings embodied within the hundreds of action research projects reported in the chapters of this present handbook, converge together to create a catalyst for even more strategic global actions.

We also bring a collaborator's and organizer's bias to this volume. The editors met through involvement in organizing the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA). In the process, we recognized that we shared a history in being active organizers of action research initiatives in conjunction with our academic roles in universities. We also shared a determination to link the university with the larger world of practices both in and beyond our local communities and organizations. Our collaboration began with the common goal of creating a new network that would link action researchers throughout the Americas. This collaborative work nurtured an even larger networking, one that incited us to begin reaching out to other organizations and people around the world whose work we had read and whom we had connected with at international conferences. We began to see the potential for new "convergences," such as those that had become important to the work of Orlando Fals Borda in Colombia by the early 1990s. We grew excited about the prospects for networking among networks.

For Fals Borda, the momentum toward convergence led to the convening of the 1997 *World Congress of Participatory Convergence in Knowledge, Space and Time* (also convened as the *8th World Congress* organized by the Action Research, Action Learning and Process Management [ALARPM] group) in Cartagena Colombia (Fals Borda, 1998, p. xi). The 1997 gathering marked the 20th anniversary of the first *World Symposium of Action Research* organized in Cartagena by Fals Borda and other intellectual activists "to study regional problems and reflect on their scientific and practical implications" (Fals Borda, 1996, p. 77). As we now begin to work with colleagues from around the world to convene a 40th anniversary gathering in Cartagena (Rowell & Santos, 2015), we are mindful of the importance of such a gathering in contributing to the momentum associated with an alternative globalization, and are thankful for the heritage and inspiration of the two prior gatherings. Thus, the organizing spirit within our group works to draw on the many lessons evident in the chapters of this volume to help shape *future* discussions of action research.

However, we do not offer a handbook for organizing action research. Rather, we have approached the word "handbook" in the context of giving useful information about a process that leads to action. What is clear to us is that the true usefulness of the contents of this book will be expressed in action. We believe action research has a crucial role to play in the work of creating, an "alternative globalization" (De Sousa Santos, 2014) that counters the standard view being propagated by those whose interests lie in maintaining the status quo of colonial domination largely by the global North at the expense of the peoples, cultures, resources, and epistemologies of the global South. For us, as editors, the *Handbook* has become a kind of extended meditation on the potentials and the problematics of action research in relation to the current fragile state of the world. The chapters included represent efforts to push

against various forms of colonization of hearts and minds and warmly invite readers to the challenging work of building knowledge democracies based on mutual respect and understanding across cultural, economic, geographic, political, and epistemological divides. As Dani Rodrik (2011) concludes, “We can and should tell a different story about globalization ... This vision will not construct a path toward a ‘flat’ world—a borderless world economy. Nothing will. What it will do is enable a healthy, sustainable world economy that leaves room for democracies to determine their own futures” (p. 280). In this sense there is much work to be done, and we intend this volume to be a catalyst for that work. In politically cynical, market-driven, and ecologically fragile times such as ours, it can seem like a fool’s errand to take up such a challenge. But perhaps we shall learn to live at peace with being seen as “naïve” for our belief that we all can “do better” in approaching the world’s immense problems. And—rather than refuting this accusation—we choose to embrace naiveté as ultimately a more hopeful, responsible, and productive stance in the world.

In reaching out to invite proposals for inclusion in the handbook, we aimed to find action researchers around the globe who were pressing for social justice in a wide range of contexts. We know we did not come near to reaching everyone who could have contributed strongly to this volume, and the contributors faced extremely tight timelines for such meditative, yet action-oriented writing. Ultimately, we assembled a powerful set of action researchers to share the work that they have been doing to address some of the most enduring problems we face as a global community. Some are well traveled in global action research circles, have distinguished publication records, and are well-known leaders in the global action research community. Others are first-time authors, new to the feverish world of draft and revise manuscripts and critical feedback from editors. What distinguishes these chapters as a collection is that they contain knowledge produced through action research. None are writing “about” action research from a “removed” position. We celebrate the efforts of these authors to capture a certain spirit we believe is best expressed in a term used by Orlando Fals Borda. The term is *sentipensantes* (thinking-feeling persons), and it expresses the unity of thought, action, and affect that we believe is needed to address current global challenges.

OVERVIEW OF THE HANDBOOK

The *Handbook* is designed to provide a projection of the history, current state, and possible futures of action research to incite dialogue, critique, and knowledge building. We share our overview of the work with an invitation to join the dialogue. The volume is organized into six parts, with each part highlighting one or more of the major themes we address. Part I provides background and contexts for the volume. We kept this section short and focused. The five chapters address issues of definition (Chap. 6), theory and practice (Chaps. 2, 3, and 4), and the potential of action research as a knowledge democratizing practice (Chap. 5).

Part II includes 16 chapters and is the longest section of the *Handbook*. This panorama of action research from around the world is organized as a kind of globe-spinning tour. We start in North America, which is where we are located, and move South, then East to Europe, farther East to Asia, and then South again to Australia and New Zealand. The stops along the way provide a diversity of action research initiatives and projects, but also an interesting convergence of democratic values, professional challenges, and complexity of approaches. Here, we again see the great potential of action research to contribute to a robust global culture of knowledge democracy and to the development of an alternative globalization.

Part III addresses networking in action research and features the first collection of histories of major global networks that bring together action researchers. In this section, frameworks for communication, mobilization, and ongoing professional development across diverse settings and contexts are discussed. These chapters contain a wealth of history and point to promising directions for the coming decades. Two chapters examine networking “in the trenches,” with one examining grassroots efforts to link university-based action research with larger communities of practice and the other illustrating the use of theory as a binding element in growing a network of colleagues across diverse social and cultural domains of practice.

In Part IV, the authors of ten chapters examine a variety of challenges, tensions, and issues associated with expanding conceptions of action research. These move through ethical, epistemic, and political issues; uses of technology, questions of roles, and positionality; and the potential of action research as a central element in the redesign of teacher education, specifically, and education itself, more generally. Part IV highlights tensions, raises questions, and provides what we hope will be inspiration for action.

The five case studies in Part V are each unique, and reflect a range of types and contexts of action in action research. We also provide introductory comments that outline the distinct and converging features of the five cases of action research and offer some critical questions action researchers can pose when considering the potential for cross-case analyses. In our view, what is needed, in moving forward, is experimentation with cross-case comparisons that bring out central and compelling themes of action research around the world in relationship to important global issues while preserving the uniqueness of the contexts in which each case of action research is undertaken. We also intend this section to encourage the further development of forms of cross-case analysis that support the twin elements of the alternative globalization initiative (Santos, 2014), namely (a) respect of epistemological diversity, and (b) commitment to social emancipation.

Part VI concludes the *Handbook*. Here, we have chosen to look ahead. The first chapter in this section provides an example of social emancipation-grounded university-community engagement. As such, we believe it points a way forward for institutions in the global North seeking partnerships and collaborations with institutions in the global South. The second and third chap-

ters address points in what we believe are the next “convergences” (Fals Borda, 1996, p. 76) to be encountered by the global action research community—that is, the reconciliation of collective memories from the impact of struggles for change, the collective history of action research’s continued commitment to supporting social justice and social change, the new knowledge created through this work, and the new knowledge construction needed to guide us toward the future. The concluding chapter in this section presents the thinking of leaders involved with the networks described in Part III. This final chapter was written in the form of a circular essay and involved six authors, each active in one of the networks, writing in response to an initial prompt from our lead editor.

WHO THIS HANDBOOK IS FOR

This handbook has a wide audience that includes practitioners of action research, students, intellectual activists interested in alternative globalization, those concerned with issues of marginalization and social justice, and teachers of action research. We hope that the handbook provides a “home base” for learning about action research in a wide range of contexts, and serves as a *guide* towards taking action.

In a review of action research literature from the early years of the twenty-first century, Bob Dick (2004) asserted that the publication of the first *Handbook of Action Research* (Reason & Bradbury, 2001) marked a “turning point in the development of AR” (Dick, p. 426). This first handbook “made quality an issue both as a topic and through the quality of its chapters” (p. 426). Since that time, of course, two more editions of the *Handbook of Action Research* have been published (Reason & Bradbury, 2006, 2008), the *Handbook of Educational Action Research* was published (Noffke & Somekh, 2009), and an *Encyclopedia of Action Research* (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014), all have been added to the mix of resources available.

Readers of the present *International Handbook* will find many of the same themes evident from the earlier publications. However, in the present handbook, there is a particular and distinct emphasis placed on three critical dimensions of the current state and imagined future state of the global action research community: (1) the emergence and proliferation of networks and how this is transforming *both* theory and practice in action research, while retaining the philosophical roots of action research in social justice; (2) acknowledgment of the link between the diverse global contexts within which action research theory and practice has been, and is being, developed and the importance of knowledge democracy in creating an alternative globalization; and (3) the necessity for a reflective cross-cultural and cross-case comparative perspective within the global action research community to show respect for the diversity of epistemologies within which action research emerges.

In regard to the broad *family of action research* perspective (e.g., Kemmis & McTaggart, 2007), readers will note that we have taken a particular stance in relation to the difficult element of the “family squabbles” that divide families

and communities, and that push people toward taking “guarded positions” within various philosophical, theoretical, and ideological fortresses. We avoid declaring all things “relative,” which seems both unsustainable and irresponsible, and instead make the case that an “ecology of knowledges” (Santos, 2014, p. 190) that addresses the relation between action research and social change on the one hand and action research and knowledge production on the other is not only healthy but necessary. Our blend of “family” members in this volume includes educational action researchers, participatory action researchers, and a variety of “cousins” and “nieces.” All are valued and appreciated.

Lastly, we mention a number of times in the *Handbook* that this is not a volume for the “faint of heart.” The contents of this volume address tough issues in tough times. In bringing together these contents into one volume we celebrate the creativity and determination shown by action research practitioners around the world. However, when a reader plunges into the particulars of how projects have been established, barriers have been faced in initiating projects, and delays and setbacks have been endured in implementing cycles of action research, she or he will develop a sense of how challenging it can be to engage in action research in the trenches of various social domains.

We also have not shied away from the reality that although action research is currently enjoying a major resurgence in interest and involvement, there are difficult questions to address on the horizon. The *Handbook* is an invitation to get involved with these questions in ways that encourage the application of action research to seeking answers. Regarding participatory action research, we are mindful that “projects that mobilize the oppressed or otherwise redistribute power are never riskless enterprises” (Brown, 1982, p. 208), and regarding educational action research we note the vigilance and determination required to maintain “authentic collaboration and critical dialogue” (Pine, 2009, p. 78).

A SPECIAL NOTE TO THOSE NEW TO ACTION RESEARCH

Thank you for opening this *Handbook* in whatever context has brought you here. If by assignment, we hope to spark some interest. If by interest, we hope the chapters provide some direction for your exploration of the shape of your practice of action research, the conditions in your neighborhood, school, or community that cry out for taking action to create a better place and to make constructive change toward a more socially just world.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALARA	Action Learning and Action Research Association
ARNA	Action Research Network of the Americas
CARN	Collaborative Action Research Network
GACER	Global Alliance on Community Engaged Research
GUNI	Global University Network for Innovation
PEP	Pedagogy, Education, Praxis Network
SAERA	South African Education Research Association

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Introduction

*Lonnie L. Rowell, Catherine D. Bruce,
Joseph M. Shosh, and Margaret M. Riel*

Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury (2006) began the introduction to the Concise Paperback Edition of their groundbreaking *Handbook of Action Research* with a broad overview of the volume's contents and a framing of action research as "inquiry and participation in search of a world worthy of human aspiration" (p. 1). The framing suggests that they were observing an emerging participatory worldview (p. 7) that validated the worthiness of action research as an inquiry process for making change in our world. Today, human aspirations are challenged in ways that go beyond even the contexts of nine years ago. This *International Handbook of Action Research* critically examines the challenges of the present moment as well as the potential of action research to bolster a move away from the hegemonic globalization project now being enacted in the name of a free-market capitalism that, left unfettered, threatens democracy itself (Chang, 2008; Rodrik, 2011).

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1.1 BACK TO THE FUTURE

In exploring the present situation, we take into consideration action research's past as well as its possible future. The volume brings together some original histories spanning the globe. Kurt Clausen (Chap. 7) presents a detailed overview of action research in Canada. We believe it is the most comprehensive and current review of Canadian action research that has been written. Allan Feldman (Chap. 8), with an initial acknowledgment that he is not a historian, then proceeds with a fascinating "Emergent History" of action research in the English-speaking world that will likely generate much dialogue regarding both the historical pathways and the present state of action research in varied parts of the world. Joanne Rappaport (Chap. 9), a Georgetown University anthropologist with a joint appointment in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and the Department of Anthropology, shares an inspiring examination of the early work of Orlando Fals Borda in Colombia. Other than Rappaport's chapter in this Handbook, the specifics of Fals Borda's method, including his collaboration with the National Association of Peasant Users in the 1970s, are available only in Spanish. Michel Thiollent, a prominent figure in action research in Brazil, and his colleague Madalena Colette (Chap. 10) provide an insightful overview of the past, present, and possible future of participatory action research in Brazil. Godwin Kodituwakku (Chap. 18), a central figure in the development of action research in Sri Lanka, details the history of educational action research's emergence through "institutional strands" in Sri Lanka, including the Ministry of Education, the National Institute of Education, and the faculties and departments of education in the nation's universities. Mina Kim and So Jung Kim (Chap. 21) share the history of action research in Korea, with particular emphasis on the evolution of translations of the term into the Korean language and how this evolution has reflected changing views of the relationship between research and practice in Korean education.

Regarding the future, we are mindful that many parts of the world are currently in the throes of what Rogers (2011) describes as an age of fracture (p. 3). Others have written of global disruption (Fukuyama, 1999) and "the clash of civilizations" (Huntington, 1996, p. 182). Yet, many of these accounts miss the mark of the simmering resentments beneath the surface of the so-called modernization forces at work globally. On the other hand, the broad agenda of neoliberal globalization has been made even more clear in the past decade. Its impact on economics, politics, popular culture, and education, indeed all social domains, now "underpins the processes that constitute globalization" (Jordan, 2009, p. 19). The "Conservative Restoration" (Shor, 1992, p. 11) that began in the 1980s has segued into an advanced stage of "predatory capitalism" (Giroux, 2014, p. 15) organized into a comprehensive project consisting of "an ideology, mode of governance, policy, and form of public pedagogy" (p. 15). The moment we face now is one in which a "violence of organized forgetting" perpetrated by a vast "disimagination machine" (p. 25) fosters a widespread disdain for democratic practice as a source of creative solutions and drains hope for the possibility of a better future. We live, in short, in a "time of reckoning at a planetary level" (Santos, 2014, p. 10).

Yet, we are also cognizant that this Handbook is being published in a time of increasing social activism in opposition to the dominant global development paradigm. In the face of epistemicide around the globe, we concur with Santos (2014) that it is time to change the conversation. Like him, we are eager to move on in solidarity with those now seeking social justice and global peace through an amazing array of initiatives, networks, collectives, projects, and affinity groups. We understand that “we are not all headed to the same address, but we believe we can walk together for a very long time” (p. 2). Although the Handbook is not a Manifesto or a Minifesto, such as those passionately and creatively penned by Santos, as editors and authors we have chosen an orientation that we believe fits well with the call for “justice against epistemicide” and the development of a new transnational political culture informed by authentic ways of knowing. We hope this orientation comes through clearly in the concluding section of the Handbook, and in the chapter on knowledge democracy (Chap. 5).

The four chapters in the Handbook’s Part VI address our view of the future as reflected in the larger themes of this volume. In Chap. 46, the authors discuss a global North–South collaboration that shows the potential for alternative community-engaged research. Here, strengthening pedagogical practices in schools located in coffee farm communities in Nicaragua is approached through a multilayered collaboration involving the private and public sectors in Nicaragua and the University of Pennsylvania’s Graduate School of Education in the USA. In this project, careful attention is paid to the dynamics of the diverse knowledges that come into play through the interactions of the Nicaraguan teachers and the US academics. A conscious effort is made to work in horizontal, rather than hierarchical, spaces. In Chap. 47, César Osorio Sánchez, a Colombian scholar-activist, explores the ethical and epistemic work associated with helping local communities in Colombia recover “Historic Memory” of wartime experiences, and he shares his experience of coordinating the Human Rights Archive of the Colombian National Center for Historic Memory. Given the extent of the violence unleashed historically and in the world today, processes of recovering historic memory, truth telling, and reconciliation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015) are a vital part of sustaining the value of human rights and helping us all to better understand what not-to-do in creating future political cultures.

José Ramos, a scholar-practitioner in Futures Studies, provides in Chap. 48 a broad overview of the complementarities of action research and Futures Studies and some timely suggestions for specific ways each can inform the other, including the development of a Futures Action Research. This intriguing notion has implications for respecting epistemological diversity and for strengthening the capacity of action research networks around the world to collaborate and think strategically about the imagined future. Our concluding chapter (Chap. 49), was written in the form of a circular letter, a *Rundbriefe*, in which representatives from leading action research networks reflected on

the present state and the future of global action research and shared thoughts related to possibilities for establishing a broad-based strategic agenda for global collaboration among the networks.

1.2 COMPLEXITY, DIVERSITY, AND COMMONALITY

These times cry out for alternatives for moving “beyond the disimagination machine” (Giroux, p. 185) and toward a reinvented sense of options for a better world through “new actions acted out by new players with new discourses and conceptions” (Santos, 2014, p. 9). According to Naranjo (2009), healing civilization of its current malaise is a “complex *problematique*” (p. 1) that requires a vast transformation in our understandings of human growth and development prior to the needed sociopolitical changes in infrastructure and institutions. For Jacoby, “the effort to envision other possibilities of life and society remains urgent and constitutes the essential precondition for doing something” (1999, p. 181). While for Huntington (1996), the emergence of a “multipolar, multicivilizational world” (p. 238) is a given, and the challenge to all peoples is to find ways of adjusting to this world.

Huntington (1996) posits four “requirements” as essential for maintaining peace in this new world, including that “peoples in all civilizations should search for and attempt to expand the values, institutions, and practices they have in common with peoples of other civilizations” (p. 320). He calls this the “commonalities rule” (p. 320). This approach to the future would focus on finding a sense of human commonalities. On the other hand, Santos (2014) calls for the development of a diverse “ecology of knowledges” (p. 191). His approach involves establishing a “radical copresence” of diverse epistemologies, and assigning commonalities a lesser role than practicing cognitive justice. The respect for diversity in perspectives is reflected in the common protest chant, “no justice; no peace.” In Santos’ words, “there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice. That is to say, there has to be equity between, and inclusion of, different ways of knowing and different kinds of knowledge” (p. 237) as we move forward.

This tension between commonality and diversity for constructing a way forward is not new. Residential schools in Canada from 1883 to as late as the 1980s (with the final residential schools closing in the 1990s) aimed to assimilate Aboriginal peoples to the Canadian-European “mainstream” colonial life and beliefs by taking children away from their homes and families and actively erasing their native languages, culture, and identity (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The goals of assimilation and homogenization are also evident in the current debate over whose lives “matter” in the USA. The promotion of “All Lives Matter,” as an alternative to the assertion that “Black Lives Matter,” shifts the focus of attention from the particularities of the experience of oppression lived by African Americans in the USA to an amorphous “all” that, even if inadvertent, casts aside—negates even—the

validity of articulating the experience of “otherness” and marginalization in the context of American race relations (Yancy & Butler, 2015). This move to commonality narrowing is taken up in political and legal actions including the disproportionality of police responses to expressed difference in many pockets of the world.

We suggest to readers that articulating better understandings of the diversity of global cultures and civilizations, while also paying close attention to emerging human commonalities related to the development of an alternative globalization, could be action research’s most significant contribution to the twenty-first century. This may seem initially odd to some readers, as action research is known much more for its contributions to localized knowledge than to generalizable knowledge. Yet, we hope that readers will find in the chapters in this Handbook convincing and inspiring evidence of the potential of action research to help open spaces within which both difference and commonality can be explored.

In this context, the 16 chapters in Part II, *World of Action Research*, are appetizers for a much larger feast in the coming years. From the global North to the global South, these Handbook chapters reflect some of the diversity of work being done in action research. Examples from Ireland (Chap. 11), the UK (Chaps. 12 and 13), Southern Africa (Chap. 14), India (Chap. 15), Bhutan (Chap. 17), China (Chap. 19), Mongolia (Chap. 20), and Australia (Chap. 22), all bring to life applications of theory and practice in action research and participatory research to addressing issues in a variety of social domains. Looking across these cases, as well as the cases included in Parts IV and V, we hope readers glimpse the ground of epistemological diversity as well as the variety of contexts in which social emancipatory projects can be launched. And while action research, like other forms of research, benefits greatly from resources and funding, David Moxley, Valerie Thomson, and Zermarie Deacon engage us in thoughtful discussion of how to protect participatory values in collaborative action research as one works with funders (Chap. 34).

1.3 ON THE STANCE OF ACTION RESEARCH IN GLOBALIZATION

The variety of geographic, cultural, professional, intellectual, community-based, and sociopolitical contexts in which action research, in all its many forms, is conducted is now vast, and we take an inclusive view of what counts as action research. Although we respect the work being done on definitions and distinctions that by necessity categorize approaches and note competing approaches in the ways that people chose to engage with action research, we prefer to keep the diverse and fruitful range of action research methods and frameworks together under one “big tent” rather than to reinforce arguments of legitimacy or worthiness (see, for example, Chap. 6). Thus, this Handbook embraces a

full range of participatory action research, critical participatory action research, living theories, action learning, emancipatory action research, informal action research, and collaborative action research, among others.

While examples of action research are woven through most chapters, those in Section V were included to illustrate a range of different methodological and theoretical approaches. Jutta Gutberlet, Bruno Jayme de Oliveira, and Crystal Tremblay share their work with marginalized workers in Brazil demonstrating how participatory video and art can be a powerful vehicle for individuals and communities to both engage in critical self-analysis and political action (Chap. 41). Another case details The Bi-National (the USA and Mexico) Action Research Collaborative exploration of educational pedagogy, practice, and theory in the context of a guidance program for adolescents (Chap. 42). In Chap. 43, Alicia Wenzel, a university professor, and Cheryl Peterson, a second-grade teacher, find a common voice for sharing the results of their collaborative action research on the effects of e-readers with grade-2 students. In a similar partnership between university and school action researchers, Terry Locke and Shaun Hawthorne (Chap. 32) describe action research on writing in a high school setting. And two cases explore how models of collaborative action research were introduced into educational settings—one in the USA by Joseph Senese (Chap. 44), and the other in South Africa by Lesley Wood and Bruce Damons (Chap. 45).

In these, and the many other cases of action research that anchor discussions throughout the Handbook, we have adopted a broad view of the notion of *practice*. Kemmis, Heikkinen, Fransson, Aspfors, and Edwards-Groves (2014) define practice this way:

We define a practice as a form of socially established cooperative human activity that involves characteristic forms of understanding (sayings), modes of action (doings), and ways in which people relate to one another and the world (relatings), that ‘hang together’ in a distinctive project. The project of a practice is what people say when they sincerely answer the question ‘What are you doing?’ while they are engaged in the practice. The project of a practice encompasses (a) the intention (aim) that motivates the practice, (b) the actions (sayings, doings, and relatings) undertaken in the conduct of the practice, and (c) the ends the actor aims to achieve through the practice (although it might turn out that these ends are not attained). (p. 155)

The significance of such an inclusive definition is that it invites comparisons while also encouraging a search for boundaries. Questions of the kind “is what I am doing a practice?” and, if so, then “what is my intention in engaging in this practice?” and “what am I hoping to gain through this practice?” come to mind. Robert Urquhart and Michael Wearing illustrate the use of critical case examples as a way of raising thought provoking questions about practice and boundaries (Chap. 33). Such questions are worth asking, and we believe they are essential to the next phases of action research.

We celebrate that action research has become, in a wide variety of intellectual and social practice domains, an important alternative to traditional and positivistic ways of linking knowledge, ways of knowing, and knowledge production with social progress. This is taken up thoughtfully by the authors of Chap. 6 with an exploration of defining action research. Whether in health care, agriculture, education, social service, environmental protection, cultural reclaiming, or any number of other social domains, action research has enabled the development of links from the interests and concerns of varied groups to action for improving conditions and making changes. For example, overcoming cultural tensions and using both appreciative inquiry and action research, Anita Nelson and Natalie Moxham explore strategies to increase participatory decision-making among community forestry officials and workers in Papua New Guinea (Chap. 35).

Brazilian scholar Michel Thiollent (2011) describes how action research and participatory research have served “the ideals and practices of popular culture” (p. 162). Yet, with Thiollent, we share a concern that many times an activist stance in support of reform and “people-driven projects” (p. 162) has rigidified action research and participatory research methodologies into political programs that are more oriented toward pre-set political agendas than toward an ethical practice grounded in social sciences. What often has occurred, in other words, is a split between the populist orientation found in most action research circles (focused on improvement-oriented goals) and the strict social scientist orientation found among many academics who have embraced and practiced action research and participatory research (often focused on social justice). In our view, this split breeds a divisiveness and “othering” that weakens the potential of action research to consolidate the gains made by both orientations over the past six decades. This divisiveness also diverts attention from further developing a broad-based articulation of the importance of diverse epistemological frameworks in addressing pressing social, economic, educational, ecological, and environmental problems around the globe. Yet, we share Santos’ (2014) concern that “because science and hence the social sciences as we know them are part and parcel of the project of Western modernity, they are much more part of the problem that we are facing than part of the solution we are seeking” (p. 72).

Thus, our stance of a more inclusive orientation toward action research reflects a strategic “move” grounded in practices of transformation associated with most forms of action research. We believe that good science, populist activism, and respect for diverse epistemologies are all needed to get us through the enormous and pressing challenges we face globally. Although we tend to agree with Reason and Bradbury (2006) that, in the long run, an emerging “participatory worldview” (p. 7) can transform the way we view knowledge, our experience of being and acting in the world, and our most deeply felt notions of spirit, beauty, purpose, and meaning, such transformations take place over very long periods of time. Our concern is with the practical dimensions of working toward that transformation; we seek strategies for supporting and strength-

ening diverse actions and action research practices in varied contexts. This includes a rethinking of ethical guidelines for collaborative community-based action research as Samara Foster and Ronald Glass undertake in Chap. 31.

With Clive Beck (Chap. 3) we celebrate the importance of “everyday classroom inquiry” and recognize the responsibility that the global action research community has to better connect informal forms of knowledge sharing and practice wisdom with knowledge mobilization and knowledge democracy initiatives on larger levels (as discussed in Chap. 5). We also position action research as a way of transforming the focus from teaching expertise to learning expertise throughout an educator’s career (Chap. 40). With Robin McTaggart, Rhonda Nixon, and Stephen Kemmis (Chap. 2) and with Margaret Ledwith (Chap. 4) we celebrate the importance of the deep reflection associated with articulating one’s stance in action research. With Jean McNiff (Chap. 16) we note that our encounters with difference, however militarized such differences may be, shape our identities as people, not just as action researchers, and challenge us to identify our ethical core. We note in Nathalis Wamba’s (Chap. 37) discussion of “positionality” that increased globalization brings both increased opportunities to experience cross-cultural work and increased challenges to examine how the stance we take as action researchers impacts how others see us and how we see ourselves.

1.4 BEYOND PARADIGM WARS

Lather (1991) situated the issue of worldview on a shifting ground between the disinterested knowledge associated with positivism and parallel knowledges that are continuously constructed and contested. From a strategic standpoint, finding the precise coordinates for situating a newly emergent worldview is less of a priority than holding open a dialogical space within which action researchers in all social sectors can share understandings and develop common initiatives. Flores-Kastanis, Montoya-Vargas, and Suarez (2009) addressed this issue in relationship to participatory action research in Latin America. In their view, the phenomenon of warring factions among action researchers needed to end; the need in Latin America was for “knowledge produced by EPAR [education participatory action research] to be shared and used in academic and practical fields” (p. 461).

Gaventa and Cornwall (2006) assert that, “through access to knowledge, and participation in its production, use and dissemination, actors can affect the boundaries and indeed the conceptualization of the possible” (p. 176). As Santos (2014) describes it, “the call is not just for a new epistemology and a new politics but for a new relationship between epistemology and politics” (p. 72). The essence of Santos’ view of knowledge democracy is that a sense of equity is required when considering, building, and enacting different ways of knowing and diverse knowledges. But an even deeper issue lies in the problem that research on the systematic disempowerment of people and the ways of

knowing held by them, can quickly devolve into treating those actors as *objects* of study. In this context, conceiving the possible becomes more a matter of aligning in solidarity with, and learning from, what is known by those suffering social injustice than a project of data collection, analysis, and intervention associated with a Eurocentric epistemology.

Donmoyer (2014) examines the prospects for avoiding “more grand methodological debates” (p. 8) in educational research and for reconceptualizing the notion of inquiry in education. He revisits the work of Schwab from the 1950s and suggests that Schwab’s focus on the practical in curriculum studies represented a potentially more useful direction for educational research than the effort to link with rigidly scientific conceptualizations of research. If this direction had been adopted (which of course it was not), Donmoyer suggests, the role of educational researchers would “no longer be to tell policymakers and practitioners ‘what works’ and, consequently, what to do. Rather their role would be to provide input into a process of deliberation” (p. 11). We suggest that processes of deliberation are exactly what action research is well suited for in partnership with community members, policymakers, and practitioners in diverse social domains. This issue is examined in depth through the example of Nordic “discussion circles” in Chap. 28. Further, in Chap. 39, the 175 practitioners who conducted action research from 2003 to 2015 in Moravian College’s action research-based graduate education program provide us with a rich example of collaborative knowledge construction when practitioners engage in dialogue with stakeholders outside the classroom, including with more traditional social science researchers. Suzy Thomas describes a rich network of university, school, community, and professional partnerships (Chap. 23), while Rachel Perry and Tim McGarry examine the shifting roles in a partnership focused on the Australian Arts curriculum (Chap. 36). Digital technology is one key strategy for making it possible to plan, organize, and develop these partnerships, and the evolving role of technology in action research is examined in Chap. 38. In this diversity of approaches and perspectives, we see that action research need not compete with the adherents of forms of research that are not a suitable fit for the issues that we choose to engage with. As Wesley Carr (2006) pointed out, a focus on *praxis* makes much more sense for action research than an over-preoccupation with methodology.

1.5 NETWORKS IN ACTION

Part III in the Handbook is, on the one hand, a simple recognition of the growing relevance of action research networks to the practice of action research and to the knowledge mobilization and knowledge democracy efforts associated with that practice. We are pleased to have brought together, in one volume, information on the backgrounds and current priorities of CARN (Chap. 25), ALARA (Chap. 26), PRIA (Chap. 27), P.E.P. (Chap. 29), and ARNA (Chap. 30). To balance the perspectives of these more formal organizational infrastructures of action

research, we have included chapters on local networking (Chap. 23), culturally oriented networks (Chap. 28), and the power of one person's capacity to network globally (Chap. 24), in this case, Jack Whitehead's work with Living Theories. Chapters 5 and 49 address our hopes for what the future may hold for networking in the global action research community.

The importance of the networks described is not just as evidence of the coming together of people who share interests in action research. In our view, an equal, if not greater, importance is found in the potential of the networks for making a difference in the emergence of an alternative globalization. In Vol. 1, No. 1 of *Action Research*, Brown, Bammer, Batliwala, and Kunreuther (2003) contrasted the knowledge generation associated with the notion of a knowledge economy, featuring the commodification of ideas and the capacity to produce them, and knowledge democracy in which knowledge "widely shared, jointly generated and utilized to help marginalized groups to gain voice, re-frame issues and debates and expand their visibility and power" (Brown et al., 2003, p. 85). In the context of knowledge democracy, that is, knowledge is "a resource that affects decisions" (Gaventa & Cornwall, 2006, p. 74), and it is the capacity of our global action research networks to develop this resource, and to share it globally, that makes their work so essential.

One subtitle we considered for this Handbook was "Research and Action in a Newly Networked World," since the themes of speaking out against injustice and collaborating with others through new forms of networking permeate the pages of this volume. As Castells (2010) explains:

The shift from traditional mass media to a system of horizontal communication networks organized around the Internet and wireless communications has introduced a multiplicity of communication patterns at the source of a fundamental cultural transformation, as virtuality becomes an essential dimension of our reality" (p. xviii).

Rainie and Wellman (2012) speak of a triple revolution, whereby the social network, Internet, and mobile devices combine to support what they term, networked individualism. They explain, "The lines between information, communication, and action have blurred: Networked individuals use the internet, mobile phones, and social networks to get information at their fingertips and act on it, empowering their claims to expertise (whether valid or not)" (p. 14). Clearly, action researchers have much to consider in a newly networked world that has the potential to challenge both "large hierarchical bureaucracies and small, densely knit groups such as households, communities, and workgroups" (pp. 6–7). The tensions between "networked individualism" and the collaboration and solidarity required to achieve social justice will mark the path of action research's continued development in the twenty-first century.

1.6 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In concluding the 2009 *Sage Handbook of Educational Action Research*, Bridget Somekh and Susan Noffke acknowledged the unique “opportunity to travel together” (2009, p. 525) afforded by the assembling of an international Handbook. We share that sense of travel opportunities created in the present Handbook. For our embarkation, we imagine ourselves at the historic week-long dialogue between Paulo Freire and Myles Horton, which took place at Highlander Research and Education Center in Tennessee in December 1987. Freire suggested that he and Horton, in reference to a poem by Spanish poet Antonio Machado, “make the road by walking” (Bell, Gaventa, & Peters, 1990, p. 6) to explore the similarities and differences in their thinking and to structure their dialogue. Myles responded, “I’ve never figured out any other way to start” (p. 6). After a few more exchanges, Myles suggested:

I see this thing as just unfolding as we go along. I don’t see any problem with that ... Everything comes out of the past and goes beyond. The conversation should be rooted and just keep moving along. I think we’ll run out of time before we run out of ideas (p. 7).

Our approach to this Handbook has a similar feel. We believe that the global action research community is making a road by walking. We are pleased to be walking this road with each other, with the authors included in the Handbook, with the participants in the many projects described, with the action researchers around the world we were not able to include in the Handbook, and with you, the readers. We will run out of pages, but not ideas. We are hopeful that the brisk and purposeful walk we take with you makes a road that we can travel along and shape together for many years to come. The direction we are headed is toward a fuller appreciation of the contributions of action research, a practice rooted in the relations between knowing the world, knowledge production, knowledge dissemination, and the social uses to which knowledge is put (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991). We hope you enjoy the walk.

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Background and Contexts

Introduction to Background and Contexts

Joseph M. Shosh

In the final chapter to their *Handbook of Action Research*, Reason and Bradbury (2008) conclude, in part, “Action research is about creating forms of inquiry that people can use in the everyday conduct of their lives; and action research is part of revisioning our worldview, a paradigm shift, changing what we take as knowledge” (p. 698). We begin this Handbook with authors who ask us to think about how we use action research in our daily lives and to consider revising our respective worldviews of what action research can be and can do in both complementary and contradictory ways, whether we call what we are doing critical participatory action research, informal action research, emancipatory action research, or knowledge democracy. The exploration of backgrounds, contexts, and definitions in this section of the Handbook provides a dialogic starting point for constructing shared meanings and for articulating more clearly our own approaches to inquiry.

In advocating for critical participatory action research, McTaggart, Nixon, & Kemmis (Chap. 2) remind us of the importance of learning together with others who share our concerns as we take communicative action within a critical public sphere, which must be created to disrupt the extant cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political practice architectures. They explain, “This everyday variation and evolution of practices is the opening through which co-participants in critical participatory action research enter a setting with the aim of ‘studying reality in order to transform it’ as our friend Orlando Fals Borda (1979) put it. In our view, however, that is only half the story: we also think that critical participatory action researchers ‘transform reality in order to study it’” (p. 27).

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They support engagement in participatory action research not to develop social science generalizations or testable hypotheses but rather “to help people to understand in order to transform ‘the way we do things around here’—what happens here, in this single case—not what goes on anywhere or everywhere” (p. 25). As Kemmis, McTaggart, and Nixon (2013) state in *The Action Research Planner*, which provides further explication and examples of the ideas developed in this chapter, “At its best then, critical participatory action research is a social process of collaborative learning for the sake of individual and collective self-formation, realised by groups of people who join together in changing the practices through which they interact in a shared social world” (p. 20).

In dialogic contrast, Clive Beck (Chap. 3) is concerned with the informal action research that occurs in classrooms everywhere, generally by individual teachers as they work to improve professional practice in ways that are often quite critical of the sanctioned methods of instruction. Beck notes that this type of action research is distinctive because of its ubiquity and informality, noting that it generally does not involve advance planning, systematic data collection, collaborative action, or wide-scale dissemination of findings.

However, Beck argues, it is precisely within this type of informal action research that a great deal of knowledge production can and does occur, adding, “If the stance is taken that teacher research must be specialized and use formal protocols that go beyond ordinary teaching, most teachers will not do it, will not see themselves as researchers, and will experience a loss of self-respect as a result. More attention needs to be given to articulating and disseminating a narrative of teacher action research as something that is feasible and already being done as part of everyday competent practice” (Chap. 3, p. 43).

Beck supports the development of a new educational knowledge and practices framework that brings together the contributions of teachers and traditional researchers, producing a knowledge base on teaching and learning from which all stakeholders, including policymakers, may draw. Like John Elliott, Beck sees action research as a key means of improving classroom practice and creating new professional knowledge about teaching, but Elliott (2015) calls for the additional “systematic presentation of findings across different action contexts, in the form of practical hypotheses to test, and the use of learning theory to inform the quest for virtuous action through action research” (p. 14).

For Paulo Freire (1998),

There is no such thing as teaching without research and research without teaching. One inhabits the body of the other. As I teach, I continue to search and research. I teach because I search, because I question, and because I submit myself to questioning. I research because I notice things, take cognizance of them. And in so doing, I intervene. And intervening, I educate and educate myself. I do research so as to know what I do not yet know and to communicate and proclaim what I discover. (p. 35)

Margaret Ledwith (Chap. 4), whose thinking is profoundly influenced by Freire, Giroux, and Gramsci, among others, shares her view of emancipatory action research as a critical living praxis, beginning with her own early days in a program where preservice teachers were trained—not educated—to think of teaching as an apolitical, content-delivery activity that offered no explanation of or protocol for dealing with the social inequalities that permeated the classroom and the wider world. Not until she made her own political decision to change roles from classroom teacher to community developer and explored critical theory for the first time, did she begin to develop her own counter-narratives “that replace hopelessness with hope and possibility by challenging the contradictions of everyday life to create the conditions for social change” (Chap. 4, p. 54).

For Ledwith, emancipatory action research foregrounds inequalities and injustices that may inadvertently be lost when the focus is on participatory rather than emancipatory approaches. Hence, what we call our inquiries is itself a political act, quite consciously or unconsciously framing our approach and privileging some forms of knowledge, while excluding others. “Emancipatory action research provides us with the conceptual tools needed to question inequalities and injustices. Placing social justice at its heart, it commits to eliminating racism, sexism and poverty, and all other forms of discrimination” (p. 60).

Rowell and Hong (Chap. 5) see the intersection of knowledge democracy and action research providing a crucial pathway for twenty-first-century inquiry. For John Dewey (1916/1944),

a democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men [sic] from perceiving the full import of their activity. (p. 87)

Rowell and Hong discuss the incompatibility of positivist notions of social science and democracy, seeing democracy reflected clearly in the origins of participatory research in South America. They argue that neoliberal globalization eliminates epistemological diversity in advancement of a *monoculture of scientific knowledge*. Action research, therefore, may offer a pathway to alternative globalization when it pursues the practice of knowledge democracy.

For Rowell and Hong, the global movement for accountability in education that in the USA is encapsulated by the “No Child Left Behind” legislation is a key battleground. They encourage practitioners to engage in action research that challenges the dominant technically rational paradigm, but to do so, they “assert that when teachers collect evidence based on their practice, that evidence should be shared with a wider audience. ... the action research

community should actively explore ways to ally with practitioner-researchers and help them produce and disseminate knowledge associated with everyday classroom inquiry” (p. 77). Returning professional decision-making to teachers through classroom research offers one path to begin to construct an alternative globalization. “For this we need new educational, cultural, political, social and economic movements in which greater account is taken of grassroots groups, the excluded, the voiceless, and the victims of dominant systems” (Fals Borda, 2006, p. 58).

Rowell, Riel, and Polush (Chap. 6) tackle the challenge of defining action research, building upon the contrasting definitions provided in the first four chapters of the Handbook, noting the diverse contexts and settings in which action research occurs around the world. They compare and contrast an inductive process of defining action research in action with a traditional deductive process of defining action research through received definitions. Altrichter, Kemmis, McTaggart, and Zuber-Skerritt (2002), note that definitions of action research “must be both clarified for communication and open for ongoing consideration since confinement in narrow, restrictive definitions could serve to inhibit useful conceptual development” (p. 125). Rowell, Riel, and Polush concur, adding, “Our call to action researchers is to create dialogical spaces for constructing shared meanings, generating knowledge flows, and growing and nurturing our global community” (Chap. 6, p. 99).

Noffke and Somekh (2009) conclude in the *Sage Handbook of Educational Action Research*, “Action research is crucially about reflexivity: about theory-in-practice aimed at changing social practices and relations, provoking reflection on how well the change effort is working, followed by rethinking/re-practicing” (p. 518). As you read on throughout Part I and the rest of the Handbook, you will see the social, reflexive practice of action research in action as authors call for change, espousing their theories in practice, and asking us to journey with them on the rethinking and re-practicing as together we take new action to bring about a better world.

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Critical Participatory Action Research

Robin McTaggart, Rhonda Nixon, and Stephen Kemmis

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Action research is associated with many approaches to change and inquiry into social practices. Recently (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014) and in the past (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, 2005), we referred to critical participatory action research as a spiral of individual and collective self-reflective cycles of:

- planning a change,
- acting and observing the process and consequences of the change,
- reflecting on these processes and consequences, and then,
- re-planning,
- acting and observing,
- reflecting, and so on.

Critical participatory action research is rarely as neat as this spiral of self-contained cycles suggests. Many aspects of practices are involved. Kemmis (2012) argued that a significant aspect of this spiral with respect to critical participatory action research is that outside researchers and practitioners are working side by side in highly participatory ways rather than the outside researcher facilitating or managing the change process. Also, participants getting together

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to address a legitimate concern of mutual importance as the impetus of the change process is a central feature.

What the spiral does not capture is that critical participatory action research is more than a “method” of change; instead, participants are committed to engaging in a broad social analysis of their situation (exploring the conditions that prefigure their practices) and a collective self-study of their practices to determine what to do to improve their situation. Therefore, they work through iterative cycles of planning-acting-observing-reflecting:

To transform, individually and collectively, the conduct and consequences of their practice to meet the needs of changing times and circumstances by confronting and overcoming three kinds of untoward consequences of their practice, namely, when their practices are:

- a. *irrational* because the way participants understand the conduct and consequences of their practices are unreasonable, incomprehensible, incoherent, or contradictory, or more generally because the practice unreasonably limits the individual and collective self-expression of the people involved and affected by the practice,
- b. *unsustainable* because the way the participants conduct their practices are ineffective, unproductive, or non-renewable either immediately or in the long term, or more generally because the practice unreasonably limits the individual and collective self-development of those involved and affected, or
- c. *unjust* because the way participants relate to one another in the practice, and to others affected by their practice, serves the interests of some at the expense of others, or causes unreasonable conflict or suffering among them, or more generally because the practice unreasonably limits the individual and collective self-determination of those involved and affected. (Kemmis, Heikkinen, Fransson, Aspfors, and Edwards-Groves, 2014, p. 5)

2.2 CRITICAL PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH AS COMMUNICATIVE ACTION IN A PUBLIC SPHERE

2.2.1 *Communicative Action*

Participants in critical participatory action research communities agree to work together to address concerns arising in their practices, to understand the ways in which their situations constrain or enable their efforts, and to change their individual and collective practices. To achieve these goals, participants collaborate to create *communicative action* (Habermas, 1984, 1987; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005), which occurs when people consciously and deliberately aim:

1. To reach *intersubjective agreement* as a basis for
2. *Mutual understanding* in order to
3. Reach an *unforced consensus about what to do* in their particular practical situations.

By interrupting what they are doing to ask four particular kinds of questions (the four validity claims):

- whether their understandings of what they are doing *make sense*,
- whether their understandings are *true* (in the sense of accurate),
- whether they are *sincerely held* (not deceptive) *and stated*, and
- whether they are *morally right and appropriate* in the circumstances.

Participants' commitment to communicative action opens up *communicative space*, an opportunity for conversations that lead participants to respond to felt concerns. Creating conditions for communicative action happens when people who share concerns agree to use the principles of *public spheres* to reflect on changing their practices, their understandings, and their situations—generating *communicative power* and *solidarity* as they learn together. Thus, communicative action, constituted in public spheres, defines the social practice of critical participatory action research.

2.2.2 *Public Spheres*

Kemmis, McTaggart, et al. (2014) argued that when participants in a critical participatory action research project talk about whether things are going the way they hoped or whether they could be otherwise if they acted differently, they are forming a public sphere and opening up communicative space. Here, we outline ten key features of public spheres:

1. *Public spheres are constituted as actual networks of communication among actual participants.* People tend to be involved in many public spheres. Community members, educators, and other professionals are typically involved with many different kinds of support groups, for example, among close colleagues within their schools, and a great variety of formal and informal associations.
2. *Public spheres are self-constituted, voluntary, and autonomous.* People create such public spheres voluntarily and these public spheres are usually relatively autonomous: they are outside (or marginal or peripheral to) formal systems (like the formal administrative systems of the state or organization) and outside formal systems of influence (like political parties, the press, or lobby groups). When people get together to explore and act on a particular problem or issue, they form a public sphere—public spheres form around a theme or felt concern.
3. *Public spheres come into existence in response to legitimation deficits.* Public spheres are frequently created because potential participants experience doubts, concerns, problems, or unresolved issues about the legitimacy of their ideas or perspectives, or about the legitimacy of plans, proposals, policies, or laws, or about the legitimacy of people's practices, or about the legitimacy of the conditions under which people work. These are examples of *legitimation deficits*—where people feel that things are “not quite right.”

4. *Public spheres come into existence in response to legitimation deficits.* Communication in public spheres is usually through face-to-face communication, but it can also include communications between participants who are unknown to one another or anonymous from the perspective of any one individual—digitally or via email, for example.
5. *Public spheres are inclusive and permeable.* To the extent that communication between participants is exclusive, doubt arises about whether a communicative space is in fact a “public” sphere. Public spheres are attempts to create communicative spaces that include not only the parties most obviously interested in and affected by decisions but also other people who are involved or affected, those sometimes excluded from discussion and decisions taken.
6. *In public spheres, people usually communicate in ordinary language.* As part of their inclusive character, communication in public spheres often takes place in ordinary language. Public spheres frequently seek to break down the barriers and hierarchies formed by the use of specialist discourses and the modes of address characteristic of bureaucracies that presume a ranking of the importance of speakers and what they say in terms of their positional authority (or lack of it). Public spheres also tend to make only a weak distinction between “insiders” and “outsiders” (they have relatively permeable boundaries) and between people who are relatively disinterested and those whose (self-)interests are significantly affected by the topics under discussion.
7. *Public spheres presuppose communicative freedom.* In public spheres, participants are free to occupy (or not occupy) the particular communicative roles of speaker, listener, and observer, and they are free to withdraw from the communicative space of the discussion.
8. *Public spheres generate communicative power.* The communicative networks of public spheres constituted for public discourse generate communicative power—that is, the positions and viewpoints arrived at through open discussion and unforced consensus will command the respect of participants. Agreements reached through public discourse in public spheres command respect not by virtue of obligation but by intersubjective agreement, mutual understanding, and unforced consensus about what to do—by the force of argument alone, without coercion of any kind. Communication in public spheres thus creates legitimacy in the strongest sense—the shared belief among participants that they can and do freely and authentically consent to the decisions, positions, or viewpoints arrived at through their own participation in public discourse.
9. *Public spheres generally have an indirect, not direct, impact on social systems.* Public spheres do not usually affect social systems (like government, administration, or the economy) directly; their impact on systems is more indirect and mediated through systems of influence (like voluntary groups and associations in civil society). In public spheres, participants aim to change the climate of debate, the ways things are thought about, and how

situations are understood. They aim to generate a sense that alternative ways of doing things are possible and feasible—and show how to resolve problems, overcome dissatisfactions, or address issues.

10. *Public spheres are often associated with social movements.* Public spheres frequently arise in practice through (or in relation to) the communication networks associated with social movements—that is, where voluntary groupings of participants emerge in response to a legitimation deficit or a shared sense that a problem has arisen and needs to be addressed—for example, an environmental or community health problem. Important social movements like the civil rights movement, the women’s movement, and the green movement have all galvanized powerful and transformative action in educational practices and institutions.

2.3 CRITICAL PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH AS A SOCIAL PRACTICE

2.3.1 *Participating in a Public Sphere*

“Participation” in critical participatory action research means being a participant in the work or life going on in a local situation and also being a participant in the research process. The key form of participation in this research is participation in a public sphere—participation with others in communicative action, conversations where people strive for intersubjective agreement about the ideas and the language they use, mutual understanding of one another’s perspectives, and unforced consensus about what to do.

Commitment to communicative action means suspension of the strategic actions we are ordinarily caught up in and an openness to re-thinking what we are and could be doing so that our lives can be more rational and reasonable, productive and sustainable, and just and inclusive. It also involves a suspension of some of the constraints on discussion that ordinarily occur in hierarchical organizations, where superiors get greater chances to put their views, say what will count to the organization, and impose their will on others.

Once a public sphere has formed around a shared felt concern, participants are in a position to engage in critical participatory action research. Establishing a public sphere is a necessary precondition of this research process. It is necessary because the research process is dependent on participants having established a set of relationships in which people can think openly, respectfully, and critically as a basis for deciding whether “the way we do things around here” (social practices) is in fact rational and reasonable, productive and sustainable, and just and inclusive. And it is to establish the conversational or communicative space to explore whether there might be better ways to do things. Because “the ways we do things around here” are practices held in place by familiar forms of talking, thinking, doing, and relating, participants need to change the ways their current practices are constituted to avoid reproducing the world as they know it.

2.3.2 *Disrupting Practices and Practice Architectures*

In critical participatory action research, social practices are considered to be held in place by “practice architectures”—cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements found in or brought to the sites where practices happen. Practice architectures shape or prefigure social practices, so changing a social practice typically requires participants to disrupt or change the practice architectures supporting it.

Kemmis, Heikkinen, et al. (2014) provide this definition of practice:

We define a practice as a form of socially established cooperative human activity that involves characteristic forms of understanding (sayings), modes of action (doings), and ways in which people relate to one another and the world (relatings), that ‘hang together’ in a distinctive project. The project of a practice is what people say when they sincerely answer the question ‘What are you doing?’ while they are engaged in the practice. The project of a practice encompasses (a) the intention (aim) that motivates the practice, (b) the actions (sayings, doings, and relatings) undertaken in the conduct of the practice, and (c) the ends the actor aims to achieve through the practice (although it might turn out that these ends are not attained). (p. 155)

Such a definition of practices is broad enough to embrace practices like medicine or education, more specific practices like teaching or leadership, and even more specific practices like playing the guitar or dancing the tango. The definition also embraces critical participatory action research as a practice.

The sayings, doings, and relatings of a practice, hanging together in the project of a practice, are made possible by arrangements that are found in or brought to the particular site where the practice occurs: cultural-discursive arrangements that support the sayings of a practice, material-economic arrangements that support the doings of a practice, and social-political arrangements that support the relatings of the practice. These arrangements (cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political) hold practices in place and provide the resources (the language, the material resources, and the social resources) that make the practice possible. Thus, for example, teachers discussing (sayings) their inquiry teaching practice use a specialized vocabulary for talking about it—that is, they use the resources of the specialized cultural-discursive arrangements of “inquiry learning and teaching.” They also do (doings) particular kinds of things in class—like having students explore actively to find answers to questions that are genuinely perplexing for them—doings made possible by the particular material-economic arrangements (material resources) of the classroom or school—arrangements of things and places in space and time. And the people involved in the practice relate to one another (relatings) in particular ways made possible by the social-political arrangements found in or brought to the site—relationships between people trying to understand one another, for example, or role-relationships characteristic of the site (e.g., teacher-student or teacher-principal).

Practice architectures enable and constrain, or “prefigure” (Schatzki, 2002) practices without determining them. We think that it is important to think and talk about practice architectures that shape practices because changing practices requires more than changing participants’ knowledge about practices; it also requires changing the conditions that support their practices—that is, the practice architectures that enable and constrain their practices. To have new practices, with new sayings, doings, and relating, we must also have new practice architectures to support them: new cultural-discursive arrangements, new material-economic arrangements, and new social-political arrangements. Only when new practice architectures are in place can new practices survive.

In Schatzki’s (2002) view, in the case of routinized or specialized or professional practice, sayings, doings, and relating “hang together” (p. 7) in comprehensible ways, in characteristic teleoaffective structures as projects with characteristic purposes, invoking characteristic emotions. And they often unfold in accordance with general rules about how things should be done. Schatzki believes that practices are “densely interwoven mats” (Schatzki, 2002, p. 87) of sayings and doings (and relating) in which people encounter one another in generally comprehensible ways. For this reason—because practices are enacted in dense interactions between people in sayings, doings, and relating—Schatzki describes practice as “the site of the social.” While already prefigured in these ways, however, each new episode of a practice makes possible new understandings that may re-shape the discourses in which it is oriented and conducted; each new episode makes possible new activities that may re-shape the material and economic conditions that enable and constrain the practice; and each new episode makes possible new ways of relating that may re-shape the previously established patterns of relationship between the different people and kinds of people involved. In such ways, the sayings, doings, and relating that compose practices are restlessly made and re-made in and through practice in each particular time and place (site), by these particular participants, so practices and practitioners and the conditions of practice are transformed as well as reproduced from occasion to occasion. This everyday variation and evolution of practices is the opening through which co-participants in critical participatory action research enter a setting with the aim of “studying reality in order to transform it” as our friend Fals Borda (1979) put it. In our view, however, that is only half the story: we also think that critical participatory action researchers “transform reality in order to study it.”

2.4 CRITICAL PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH AS A PRACTICE CHANGING PRACTICE

Critical participatory action research aims at changing three things: practitioners’ practices, their understandings of their practices, and the conditions in which they practice. These three things—practices, how we understand them, and the conditions that shape them—are inevitably and incessantly bound together with each other. The bonds between them are not permanent; on the

contrary, they are unstable and volatile. Neither practices, nor understandings, nor the conditions of practice are the foundation in this ménage. Instead, they shape each other in an endless dance in which each asserts itself, attempting to take the lead, and each reacts to the others.

Critical participatory action research can be a kind of music for this dance—a more or less systematic, more or less disciplined process that animates and urges change in practices, understandings, and the conditions of practice. It is a critical and self-critical process aimed at animating these transformations through individual and collective self-transformation: transformation of our practices, transformation of the way we understand our practices, and transformation of the conditions that enable and constrain our practice. Transforming our practices means transforming what we do; transforming our understandings means transforming what we think and say; and transforming the conditions of practice means transforming the ways we relate to others and to things and circumstances around us—transforming our sayings, doings, and relating.

To know how our understandings of our practices and the conditions under which we practice are becoming more rational and reasonable, more productive and sustainable, and more just and inclusive, we must have *evidence* about our practices—before we change, as we change, and after we change our practices. Gathering, analyzing, and interpreting this evidence is the “research” part of critical participatory action research.

2.4.1 *Critical Participatory Action Research as Research within Practice Traditions*

We regard the “research” part of “critical participatory action research” as important, but we want to say immediately that the “research” we anticipate does not simply borrow the notion of research from other forms of social and educational inquiry. We do not regard the “research” part of critical participatory action research as employing or applying some “correct” set of research “techniques” borrowed from other fields like agriculture (where experimental statistics were originally developed). In our view, critical participatory action research is not a technique or a set of techniques for generating the kinds of “generalizations” that positivist social research aims to produce. Rather, critical participatory action research aims to help people to understand in order to transform “the way we do things around here”—what happens here, in this single case—not what goes on anywhere or everywhere.

As critical participatory action researchers, therefore, we initially approach our own situation in the way a historian might approach it. Like the historian, we want, first, to understand how things work here, how things have come to be, and what kinds of consequences our practices (and the practice architectures that support them) have produced and do produce. Then, second, we adopt a critical stance toward what happens: in conversation with others involved in and affected by our practice (as a public sphere), we ask, “Are the consequences of our practices in some way irrational, unsustainable, or

unjust?” If we conclude that the consequences of our practices are in some way untoward, then we know we must make changes in our practices (and to our understandings of our practices, and to the conditions under which we practice) in order to prevent, avoid, or ameliorate those untoward consequences. Now, third, our conversation becomes more practical and focused. We engage in communicative action with others to reach (a) intersubjective agreement about the ways we understand the situation (the language we use), (b) mutual understanding of one another’s situations and points of view, and (c) unforced consensus about what to do. Once having established, preferably by consensus, what we should reasonably do to prevent, avoid, or ameliorate the untoward consequences of our existing practices, then, fourth, we act to transform our practices, our understandings, and the conditions under which we practice. Simultaneously, fifth, we document and monitor what happens to see if we are now preventing, avoiding, or ameliorating the untoward consequences of our previous ways of working, and to check that our new ways of working are not producing new unforeseen untoward consequences.

These steps (not always in perfect order) are what characterize critical participatory action research. This kind of action research is critical because it takes the first three of these steps: (1) closely examining our practices, our understandings, and the conditions under which we practice, (2) asking critical questions about our practices and their consequences, and (3) engaging in communicative action with others to reach unforced consensus about what to do. And this kind of action research is participatory because it involves a range of people involved in and affected by our practices in those three steps, as well as in (4) taking action to transform our practices, our understandings of our practices, and the conditions under which we practice, and (5) documenting and monitoring what happens. In critical participatory action research, we aim to make changes in our own situations to enact more satisfying, sensible, and sustainable ways of doing things.

2.4.2 Critical Participatory Action Research as a Kind of Research

Critical participatory action research is fundamentally a “practice changing practice.” Its research perspective is different from other kinds of research for that reason. We can say that all conventional kinds of social and educational research can be described using two dimensions:

1. Individual-social dimension: Does the research focus on individuals or social structures, social patterns, or arrangements across groups of people?
2. Objective-subjective dimension: Does the research focus on and describe the behavior of the participants(s) or emphasize the participants’ own interpretations, emotions, and intentions?

Taken together, these two dimensions yield four kinds of research: individual-objective, individual-subjective, social-objective, and social-subjective, as depicted in Table 2.1. We can also think about a perspective that considers

together all of these four standpoints, as we ordinarily do in social life. We often think about the behavior or actions of individuals or of groups, and we often think about things from the perspective of an external observer in a way we might sometimes call “objective,” and we also think about things from the perspective of the one in some situation, from an insider, “subjective” perspective. The five perspectives generated can be depicted as in Table 2.2. As it turns out, different researchers exploring practice have looked at practice from one or more of these five perspectives—following different research traditions. We can immediately see that thinking about educational *practice* might involve any or all of these things. A practice is made and re-made daily based upon many observations.

We now extend the frameworks outlined in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 to describe the relationships between research traditions and observer perspectives:

1. The individual performances, events, and effects which constitute practice as it is viewed from the “objective,” external perspective of an outsider (how the practitioner’s individual behavior appears to an outside observer—*individual-objective*);
2. The wider social and material conditions and interactions which constitute a social practice as it is viewed from the “objective,” external perspective of an outsider (how the patterns of social interaction among those involved in the practice appear to an outside observer—*social-objective*);
3. The intentions, meanings, and values which constitute practice as it is viewed from the “subjective,” internal perspective of individual practitioners themselves (the way individual practitioners’ intentional actions appear to them as individual cognitive subjects—*individual-subjective*);
4. The language, discourses, and traditions which constitute practice as it is viewed from the “subjective,” internal social perspective of members of the participants’ own discourse community who must represent (describe, interpret, evaluate) practices in order to talk about and develop them, as happens, for example, in the discourse communities of professions (how the language of practice appears to communities of practitioners as they represent their practices to themselves and other—*social-subjective*); and
5. The change and evolution of practice, taking into account *all four of the aspects of practice* just mentioned, which comes into view when it is understood by participants as reflexively re-structured and transformed over time, in its historical dimension.

Table 2.1 Four perspectives on research (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014, p. 71)

Focus: Perspective:	The individual	The social
Objective	1	2
Subjective	3	4

Table 2.2 Five traditions of research on practice (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014, p. 71)

Focus:	The individual	The social	Both
Perspective:			
Objective	1	2	
Subjective	3	4	
Both			5

The first four of these perspectives on practice lead to familiar research approaches and techniques (see Table 2.3). Our interest is the fifth perspective, which creates challenges by being more than a research approach; it does not stand back from practice but joins in the action, helping to re-constitute practice through informed, collective human agency. The goal is the immediate and continuing betterment of practice rather than merely being informed about practice. Because changing practice is the focus, we must put ourselves

Table 2.3 Views of practice and the research approaches they imply (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014, p. 74)

Focus:	The individual	The social	Both: Reflexive-dialectical view of individual-social relations and connections
Perspective:			
Objective	(1) <i>Practice as individual behavior:</i> Quantitative, correlational-experimental methods. Psychometric and observational techniques, tests, interaction schedules	(2) <i>Practice as social and systems behavior:</i> Quantitative, correlational-experimental methods. Observational techniques, sociometrics, systems analysis, social ecology	
Subjective	(3) <i>Practice as intentional action:</i> Qualitative, interpretive methods. Clinical analysis, interview, questionnaire, diaries, journals, self-report, introspection	(4) <i>Practice as socially structured, shaped by discourses and tradition:</i> Qualitative, interpretive, historical methods. Discourse analysis, document analysis	
Both: Reflexive-dialectical view of subjective-objective relations and connections			(5) <i>Practice as socially and historically constituted and as reconstituted by human agency and social action by participants:</i> Critical methods. Critical participatory action research that reflexively combines multiple methods

into the workplace and consider what kinds of information we (and others) might need. We need to take into account not just what people might think about the current situation but also how they might respond if we begin to initiate changes. This requires an understanding of individual views and shared social understandings. The individual, social, objective, and subjective perspectives in the situation must be taken into account, if we are to do something. In one sense, the perspective 5 takes an “aerial view” of the four other approaches, and instead of fragmenting into each of the four respective specializations of “method,” it considers them together. As we have suggested, the fifth perspective is much closer to life than the others. When we engage in a social practice like education, the practice bubbles along apace as observations from all perspectives are made about what is going on in the classroom. Perspective 5 engages the kinds of questions each perspective addresses, but in a somewhat different way. It does not anticipate as its primary goal the distillation of a study of the situation but instead concentrates on changing participants’ understandings, their practices, and the situation in which these are constituted. Each of these, understanding, practice, and the situation have been formed in particular historical, material, and political settings, and it is theoretical insight from critical social science which helps to guide reflection and action.

We can begin to tie these five standpoints in research together with the view of practices already presented. These begin to suggest ways we can look at people’s sayings in and about their practices and the cultural-discursive arrangements that make their practices possible; how we might look at the doings of people’s practices, and the material-economic arrangements that resource and support what they do; and how we might look at the relatings of their practices, and the social-political arrangements that make possible those ways of relating to one another and the world. Table 2.4 suggests that it is possible to collect evidence about all of these things from each of these five standpoints. For example, in cell (1) of Table 2.4, in which practice is viewed as individual behavior (from the individual-objective standpoint), we might collect evidence about the sayings and the cultural-discursive arrangements that make those sayings possible by counting the number of times a person uses a particular word or by collecting information about people’s attitudes using a multiple-choice questionnaire in which respondents tick boxes corresponding to the view (e.g., about statements to do with climate change) closest to their own view. An example of collecting evidence about people’s doings and the material-economic arrangements that make those doings possible would be if we counted the number of times students put recyclable and general waste into the right bins. An example of collecting evidence about the relatings and the social-political arrangements that make those relatings possible would be counting the number of times in a lesson that each student in a class interacts with each other student.

We might collect evidence in cell (2) of Table 2.4, in which practices are understood as social or systems behavior (the social-objective standpoint), in similar ways, but in this case, we might focus more on the behavior (sayings,

Table 2.4 Collecting evidence about practices and practice architectures from different standpoints (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014, p. 75)

Focus: Perspective:	The individual	The social	Both: Reflexive-dialectical view of individual-social relations and connections
Objective	<i>(1) Practice as individual behavior:</i> Sayings and cultural-discursive arrangements Doings and material-economic arrangements Relatings and socio-political arrangements	<i>(2) Practice as social and systems behavior:</i> Sayings and cultural-discursive arrangements Doings and material-economic arrangements Relatings and socio-political arrangements	
Subjective	<i>(3) Practice as intentional action:</i> Sayings and cultural-discursive arrangements Doings and material-economic arrangements Relatings and socio-political arrangements	<i>(4) Practice as socially structured, shaped by discourses and tradition:</i> Sayings and cultural-discursive arrangements Doings and material-economic arrangements Relatings and socio-political arrangements	
Both: Reflexive-dialectical view of subjective-objective relations and connections			<i>(5) Practice as socially and historically constituted and as reconstituted by human agency and social action by participants:</i> Sayings and cultural-discursive arrangements Doings and material-economic arrangements Relatings and socio-political arrangements

doings, relatings) of groups rather than individuals—for example, collecting evidence about doings by mapping the spaces in a high school playground occupied by young men versus young women at different year levels.

We might collect evidence in cell (3), in which practices are understood as the intentional actions of participants (the individual-subjective standpoint), by such means as unstructured interviews with students to discover the ways they interpret things (sayings)—their views about climate change, for example.

We might collect evidence about cell (4), in which practices are understood as socially structured, shaped by discourses and traditions (the social-subjective standpoint), by such means as analyzing policy documents, particularly the discourses used in policy documents—for example, to throw light whether a school is implementing a state education department’s policies about schools and energy use or waste management.

When we come to collect evidence about cell (5), however, we begin to be collecting evidence about changes over time, documenting what we say and do, and how we relate to others and the world, and monitoring whether we are preventing, avoiding, or ameliorating the untoward consequences of our practices. In this case, we need a range of different kinds of evidence, and to be *triangulating across different kinds and sources of evidence*: different kinds, from different standpoints; and different sources, from different people or groups, for example. In cell (5), we are not focusing people’s individual or collective views or activities or relationships as static, but rather as dynamic—as changing over time. In critical participatory action research, we change our practices in pursuit of better ways of doing things in the sense that they are less irrational, less unsustainable, and less unjust. We are not studying the same practices and practice architectures over time, but different, changing practices and practice architectures.

In critical participatory action research, we aim to locate ourselves principally in the fifth standpoint in Table 2.4. We might nevertheless want to collect some observations and evidence from the first four standpoints, to see ourselves as others see us. This evidence helps us to enter the living dialectic of exploring the relationships between (a) our individual actions, understandings, and relationships with others, and (b) how our actions and understandings and relationships are part of—and help to mutually constitute—the cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements that enable and constrain our collective practices in (e.g.) a community, a school, a classroom, or a staff room. Connecting, comparing, and contrasting views in the individual-social (or individual-collective) dimension create a dialogue between things we experience individually and things we experience collectively—in intersubjective space—semantic space, physical space-time, and social space. Similarly, connecting, comparing, and contrasting evidence in the objective-subjective dimension from the first four standpoints also helps us to enter the living dialectic between so-called objective observations about what we say and do and how we relate to others and the world, on the one hand, and, on the other, people’s so-called subjective understandings, interpretations, and perspectives of their practices: creating a dialogue between how others see us and how we see ourselves—a dialogue between self and other.

This comparison between key aspects of critical participatory action research with other research traditions illustrates how, why, and by whom critical participatory research is conducted. It also reveals its distinctive view of the relationship between research and practice.

2.5 FINAL COMMENT

We have argued that critical participatory action research is a social practice, guided by particular views of participation, the nature of social practice, and the relationship between research and practice. It arises when potential participants sense a lack of legitimacy in their work and lives. Participants come together with shared concerns in public spheres with the aim of communicative action—conducting critical participatory research and contesting irrationality, unsustainability, and injustice.

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Informal Action Research: The Nature and Contribution of Everyday Classroom Inquiry

Clive Beck

Action research in the field of education is defined somewhat differently by different scholars. There is general agreement that (i) it is an inquiry conducted by practitioners in the context of practice, with a view to improving practice (Punch, 2014), and (ii) it is cyclical: the process of identifying issues or problems, implementing solutions, and assessing outcomes continues in a “never-ending spiral” (Wells, 1994, p. 26). However, further characteristics of action research are stressed by some theorists and not others: for example, that (iii) it requires a critical, even radical stance on the part of the researcher (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Punch, 2014); (iv) the inquiry must be explicitly planned and include systematic data-gathering (Anderson & Freebody, 2014; McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 2006); (v) it should be done collaboratively (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Corey, 1953); and (vi) the findings must be made public in some way (Elliott, 1997).

In this chapter, I argue there is a type of teacher action research that does not have all the above characteristics but is nevertheless both widespread and of great importance. My concern is with *informal teacher research that occurs in the classroom in the normal course of good teaching*. I call it action research because it meets the two main criteria noted above: it is conducted by practitioners to improve practice, and it is cyclical. I will also argue that such inquiry satisfies the third criterion of action research noted above, though in a modified sense: it is critical and even radical, since it questions the way things are

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currently done and results in considerable resistance to conservative conceptions of teaching.

This type of action research is distinctive in that it is informal: it does not involve explicit planning and systematic data-gathering (though I believe it is systematic in its own way); it is not typically collaborative, being carried out largely by teachers in their own classroom; and the results of the inquiry are usually not made public, beyond informal conversations among teachers. However, I will argue that, despite the value (where feasible) of explicit structure, collaboration, and publication in research, a great deal of important knowledge production can and does occur without them.

There are several reasons for academics and others to pay close attention to informal action research. First, acknowledging such research is important for teacher morale and resilience (Day & Gu, 2014) in an era when teachers are being strongly criticized by policy makers and the general public. Second, awareness of the amount teachers already learn through informal classroom inquiry can result in more appropriate forms of professional development (PD): less top-down, more dialogical (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Zeichner, 1995; Zeichner & Liston, 2014). Third, recognition of such teacher inquiry can lead to a fruitful kind of university-based research, in which academics study the ideas and practices of teachers (Beck & Kosnik, 2014; Carr, 1995). And fourth, attention to informal teacher inquiry can provide a basis for enhancing teacher learning, for example, by helping teachers become even more reflective and creating opportunities for them to share their knowledge (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, & LeMahieu, 2015; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Zeichner & Liston, 2014).

3.1 INFORMAL ACTION RESEARCH: PAUL'S CASE

As noted, I believe informal teacher inquiry satisfies what is probably the most basic criterion of action research: it is conducted by practitioners in the context of practice with a view to improving practice. However, its nature and importance are difficult to explain because of a common lack of familiarity with informal teacher inquiry. People usually think of teachers not as inquirers but as transmitters of academic content; and the examples of teacher inquiry in the academic literature tend to be rather formal since they are presented in the context of advocating structured and explicit action research.

To help address this problem, I will use examples of informal inquiry carried out by an elementary teacher (pseudonym Paul), who is a participant in a longitudinal study of teachers that Clare Kosnik and I have been conducting since 2004 with the support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (Beck & Kosnik, 2014; Kosnik & Beck, 2009). While the examples presented are just a few fragments from one teacher, I believe they illustrate well what good teachers do on a regular basis; many similar examples could have been provided from other teachers in our study.

As Paul mentioned freely in interviews over the years, he is of immigrant and racial-minority background and his family was relatively poor. In his late 20s,

after training and practice in architecture, he decided to become a teacher; he completed a one-year elementary preparation program (in 2003–2004) and taught initially for three years at the grades 4–6 level in a high poverty area. After two years of parental leave, he taught for three years (years 6–8) in a rather affluent school, followed by two more years (years 9 and 10) in a poorer school.

To give an initial sense of the type of informal action research this chapter is concerned with, I begin with some quotes from Paul’s year 8 interview. Among other initiatives that year, Paul decided to place greater emphasis than in the past on student autonomy. He commented:

This year I shifted: I set up my classroom in such a way that a lot of responsibility was on the students. I realized that often they should know what they should be doing and shouldn’t have to wait for me to ask them. And my thinking was that in many places in the world kids of that age are doing all kinds of things, like raising siblings, going to work, finding food for their families. And a lot of the kids were quite shocked because [given their affluence] they were never really expected to do much for themselves.

And it seemed to Paul that the experiment worked well, from several points of view:

It was amazing to see how much more independent they were; not just at school, but their parents reported that at home they were getting along with people better, doing more around the house, and not giving so much attitude... [G]enerally speaking it was really successful. There were a few who struggled, but I figured they would struggle next year in grade 7 and this was a chance for them to try to sort it out.

Illustrated here is the central component of informal action research: a practitioner in the context of practice striving to improve his practice. Paul did not work within an explicit theoretical framework, although the various theories he was exposed to during teacher preparation clearly affected his thinking. Rather, he spoke generally about what happens in different parts of the world, the lives of the relatively affluent students in his class, and the frequent lack of intellectual engagement of his students. On this basis, he decided to try giving them more independence and responsibility. He then assessed the effectiveness of this approach based on evidence such as increased student motivation and comments from parents. He noticed that some students had to be “chased around a bit” and adjusted his method to accommodate this reality.

3.2 THE CYCLICAL NATURE OF INFORMAL ACTION RESEARCH

According to Punch (2014): “An important characteristic of action research, which sets it apart from other designs, is that it is usually *cyclical* in nature... For many people, the spiral of cycles of self-reflection, involving planning,

acting and observing, reflecting, replanning and so on, has become the dominant feature of action research as an approach” (p. 137). In my view, this feature of action research arises from the fact that the situation of teachers is very complex and urgent. Many things have to be researched at once and over time because the whole class has to function well; and when a new type of pedagogy is implemented, the “glitches” have to be addressed immediately because this is happening in real time. Also, the teaching situation keeps changing from year to year and class to class, requiring modification in the approach taken.

Once again, Paul’s case illustrates how *informal* action research shares this cyclical quality. For example, from his first year of teaching, Paul had been developing ideas about how to teach students from differing levels of affluence. In years 1–3 he taught in a poor neighborhood where his grades 4–6 classes included many “behavioral” students and “struggling learners.” One thing he learned over this period was that even so-called learning disabled students can learn if they are interested in what they are studying. Then, when he moved to the affluent school in year 6, he was surprised to find that the students were often more interested in getting good marks than in the content of subjects. These discoveries helped lead him to the teaching approaches he used in later years, including the individual-responsibility approach discussed in the previous section.

In year 9, moving again to a less affluent school (though still at the junior level), Paul found he had to modify the approach he had employed in year 8, returning to the more structured pedagogy of earlier years. But there were some surprising consequences, leading to further learning. It was “a hard year; a very difficult class”; and he placed a strong emphasis on teaching basic skills such as grammar and cursive writing: “I realized that these kids needed more explicit teaching about rules and stuff.” However, later in the interview, he expressed concern about the year as a whole, which led him to plan yet another shift for year 10:

So next year, I want to have structure—because a lot of the kids need it—but in a less emotionally draining way: more in the sense ‘This is the structure we’re using’ and less about ‘You have to do it because I say so.’ And actually I’ve learned to accept more where the kids are at: it was a hard lesson, but it was really good to hit the wall and realize, ‘Okay, that’s it; I’ve got to pull back and adjust my expectations.’

3.3 INFORMAL ACTION RESEARCH AS CONTRIBUTING TO KNOWLEDGE

On the basis of his informal inquiry activities, Paul reached a number of conclusions: for example, that all children can learn if they are interested in what they are studying; a considerable amount of structure is important in teaching;

student choice is a major motivating factor in learning; students can come to enjoy writing if allowed some control over topics and process; and structure in the classroom needs to be balanced by a degree of warmth and friendliness. While the precise interpretation of these principles needs to be adjusted for different contexts, I believe they constitute an important contribution to knowledge.

But what is the status of the knowledge generated by practitioners? Many people (even teachers themselves) assume it has less authority than knowledge arrived at by academic researchers, and they look to the latter as the basis for school improvement. It is often thought that practice-based knowledge has less value because it cannot be generalized beyond the practitioners' specific situation. Moreover, the current press for "research-based" or "evidence-based" schooling suggests a lack of confidence in practice-based knowledge. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) see the emphasis on evidence-based schooling as having "devastating implications" for practitioner inquiry (p. 10). It results in a portrayal of "good" teachers as "wise consumers of products and selectors of research-based strategies to boost students' achievement" (p. 11).

Despite these common doubts, however, many theorists maintain that informal practitioner knowledge has basically the same qualities as sound academic knowledge and deserves similar status. For Dewey (1916, 1938), for example, both theoretical and practical dimensions are essential to *all* genuine knowledge. Dewey's position is largely supported by Schön (1983), who rejects the "technical-rationalist" notion that teacher expertise comes primarily through "the application of scientific theory and technique" (p. 21). Rather, when teachers see a student having difficulty learning, they "must do a piece of experimental research, then and there, in the classroom" (p. 66). On Schön's view, practitioners not only learn on the job, they generate "theory" (p. 181), which in turn provides "springboards for making sense of new situations" (p. 317).

In similar vein, Allen (1989) maintains that, contrary to Aristotle's view that practical knowledge (*phronesis*) is inferior to theoretical knowledge (*theoria*), practical knowledge is actually more basic since it integrates theory and practice. Allen sees the generation of "universal statements" associated with academic discourse as a kind of "distancing move" that has heuristic value but is a tool rather than the goal of inquiry. Like Dewey, he argues that reality is too complex and context-specific to be captured by universal statements; generalizations are only useful if they have implicit within them reference to the diverse concrete situations that give them their actual meaning.

Others take a similar position. For example, Zeichner (1995) is critical of the view that teacher research is just a form of PD and does not result in legitimate knowledge. This leads to the unfortunate situation where university researchers ignore teachers' knowledge and teachers "ignore the researchers right back" (p. 154). But because of the status differential, teachers have to endure top-down PD that "ignores what teachers already know and can do

and relies primarily on the distribution of prepackaged and allegedly ‘research-based’ solutions to school problems” (p. 161). Again, Carr (1995) states that teachers have “extensive theoretical powers” and constantly use theory in “conceptualizing their own activities” (pp. 34–35). He says that academics must acknowledge teachers as theorists and work in tandem with them if they are to have significant influence on the field.

Along the same lines, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) point to the absurdity of a situation where teachers, throughout their career, “are expected to learn about their own profession not by studying their own experiences but by studying the findings of those who are not themselves school-based teachers” (p. 1). In a later work, these authors remark:

[P]ractitioners are deliberative intellectuals who constantly theorize practice as part of practice itself... [T]he goal of teacher learning initiatives is the joint construction of local knowledge, the questioning of common assumptions, and thoughtful critique of the usefulness of the research generated by others both inside and outside contexts of practice. (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009, p. 2)

They go on to reject “the widely held assumption that there are two kinds of knowledge, formal and practical” (2009, p. 129).

3.4 INFORMAL TEACHER INQUIRY AS RESEARCH

Informal action research as I have described it may be useful and contribute to knowledge in some sense, but is it really *research*? Many people would not apply this term to it. Part of the reason is that traditional research has usually been quite specialized, whereas the informal inquiry teachers undertake to improve their practice is of necessity broad, as noted earlier. They have to investigate simultaneously: program planning, teaching strategies, student assessment, classroom management, community building, teaching for inclusion, and the like. Exploring any of these in isolation would not help them much.

In my view, however, the broad learning teachers achieve through informal inquiry can legitimately be called research since it comes about through their sustained attempts to understand and improve practice. The fact that it is informal and broad should not preclude its being seen as research; the important thing is that it includes “experimentation” and considered response to “surprise” (Schön, 1983). It involves arriving at conclusions based on extensive experience in relevant contexts, with close and systematic attention to impact: teachers watch carefully the reactions of every child in their class. The same topics are investigated as in academic research (e.g., for common topics, see Berliner & Casanova, 1993); and knowledge and theory on these topics is produced that other teachers and theorists can use and build on.

Teachers have many advantages as researchers. They have daily in-depth experience of the phenomena in question and teach a great many students over the years—their “sample size” in fact is typically quite large. Academic

researchers have to go to considerable lengths to achieve such a level of familiarity with what they are investigating. Zeichner and Liston (2014) observe:

[B]ecause of teachers' direct involvement in the classroom, they bring a perspective to understanding the complexities of teaching that cannot be matched by external researchers, no matter what methods of study they employ. (p. 5)

Moreover, teachers have strong motivation to get it right, given that they have to “live with” their students throughout the year and deal with fallout from ineffective methods. Of course, academic researchers also have advantages: for example, greater knowledge of relevant theoretical literature and specialized skill in certain research methods. But these do not justify seeing academics as *in general* superior to teachers in the conduct of educational inquiry (Groundwater-Smith, Mitchell, Mockler, Ponte, & Ronnerman, 2013; Schön, 1983; Zeichner, 1995).

However, while in my view informal action research *is* research, caution is needed in talking with teachers in these terms. It is essential to stress that they can and do conduct research *in the normal course of teaching*, without necessarily adopting special methods. Of the 42 teachers in our longitudinal study (Beck & Kosnik, 2014), *not one* has yet conducted an individual “action research” or “inquiry” project of the kind advocated and typically required during their preservice programs (including our own). If the stance is taken that teacher research *must* be specialized and use formal protocols that go beyond ordinary teaching, most teachers will not do it, will not see themselves as researchers, and will experience a loss of self-respect as a result. More attention needs to be given to articulating and disseminating a narrative of teacher action research as something that is feasible and already being done as part of everyday competent practice, in line with the views of Dewey (1916), Schön (1983), Bryk (2008), Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009), Loughran (2010), and Zeichner and Liston (2014).

3.5 INFORMAL ACTION RESEARCH AS INCREMENTAL, CRITICAL, AND RADICAL

The modifications of practice integral to teacher action research must take place gradually; attempting to change everything at once in a classroom is neither possible nor desirable. This is why action research must be cyclical: it involves constantly building on the positive features of current practice. Today's extreme criticism of teachers and teaching—and the call for sudden and drastic change—arises from a highly conservative, transmission view of schooling among politicians and the general public. Teachers must maintain their commitment to progressive, child-centered pedagogy, while steadily enhancing it.

Social and political philosopher Joseph Heath makes a general case for incremental reform in his recent book *Enlightenment 2.0* (2014). He offers a new take on the original Enlightenment approach to social reform, which in his

view exaggerated the capacity of scholars to figure out how things should be done. He argues for what he calls “cumulative improvement” as follows:

If everyone insists on reinventing everything, we’ll never get anywhere, simply because no one is smart enough to understand all the variables and grasp all of the reasons that things are done exactly the way they are. (p. 88)

Similarly, Sykes, Bird, and Kennedy (2010) recommend an incremental approach to reform in teaching and teacher education. What is needed, in their view, is a combination of “(a) more realistic aspirations, (b) a process of continuous improvement, and (c) a generous regard for [current] practice” (p. 473). Elsewhere, Kennedy (2010) rejects “bold” approaches to reform that are “unrealistic, out of range, over the top [and] fail because they don’t take real circumstances into account” (p. 17). Instead, she says we should engage in “studying our practices closely and deliberately, deepening our understanding of the circumstances in which we work, and finding small and sustainable ways to improve” (p. 19).

In my view, however, an incremental approach to change is compatible with *also* viewing action research as critical and radical, as advocated by Carr and Kemmis (1986), Denzin and Lincoln (2000), and others. As Heath observes, a cumulative approach does not imply “uncritical acceptance of tradition” but rather provides the basis for “a more successful form of progressive politics” (2014, p. 83). In arguing this point, some clarification of the terms *critical* and *radical* is needed. The word *critical* is often used in a strong sense that implies a negative view of existing knowledge and the need to adopt extreme alternatives. But such usage is neither necessary nor desirable. As Heath and Kennedy maintain, we can be positive and critical at the same time and critical in selective ways. In the case study, Paul saw the need for certain aspects of traditional practice (e.g., structure, grammar and spelling lessons, and extensive writing opportunities) but combined these in innovative ways with student choice, autonomy, and engagement.

Similarly, we need to qualify what it means to be *radical*. The term suggests something very new or different; but I would argue that building on the past in careful and imaginative ways is truly radical, by contrast with a modernist ideology of “transforming” past practices. Again, Paul shows a very fresh way of viewing things in a number of respects. He sees students of both poor and privileged backgrounds in a new light; and his insight into the importance of student choice and autonomy is also new in many ways. As with the critical, so we need a revised concept of the radical, enabling us to say that Paul and other teachers like him are radical in that they are doing something very original.

3.6 CONNECTING INFORMAL AND FORMAL RESEARCH

If teachers are to avoid having inappropriate research programs imposed on them—such as the massive standardized testing currently in vogue in many countries—ways must be found to recognize teachers’ informal action research

and link it to formal university- and school-based research. As Wiseman (2012) says (speaking of teacher education), the public debates cannot be avoided: a focus on research “must be encouraged if we are to continue to be viable in today’s policy environment” (p. 88). The research highlighted, however, must balance the formal and the informal, and university- and school-based research must be celebrated equally.

One means of achieving this end would be for academics to give higher priority than at present to interviewing and observing teachers and reporting on the findings of teachers’ informal inquiries (as Clare Kosnik and I are doing in our longitudinal study). Conducting educational research in this way gives academics ready access to authentic classroom experiences and practices; lifts teachers’ morale by affirming their expertise; extends teachers’ knowledge by informing them about the insights of their fellow teachers; and contributes to the general sharing of educational knowledge among academics and practitioners.

A second and much more ambitious approach is to establish an education-wide repository of research that presents both theory and practice of teaching and is readily available to all educators and policy developers. Over the past decade, the outlines of such an initiative have begun to emerge. Bryk (2008), for example, advocates a “new vision of research ... organized around core problems of practice” and involving both teachers and university researchers who together develop “something that has the potential of working on a broad scale across large numbers of different contexts and in the hands of different sorts of people” (p. 3). It would be an open, knowledge-sharing “system,” somewhat like Wikipedia (Bryk, 2008; Bryk et al., 2015). Similarly, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) propose “[p]utting practice at the center and drawing on the collective intellectual capacity of practitioners collaborating with others, such as university-based researchers,” resulting in a “grounded theory of educational transformation” (p. 161). And Lowrie (2014) argues for establishing an “educational practices framework” that permits “sharing ideas, presenting options and stimulating rich practices and [includes] resources, learning tools and curricula” (p. 43). This is a daunting enterprise, but Bryk (2008) maintains that the present approach of each group going their own way is simply not working; moreover, with advances in information technology, it may be feasible to develop such a knowledge-sharing system.

3.7 ENHANCING AND COMPLEMENTING INFORMAL ACTION RESEARCH

While the knowledge generated through informal action research is extensive and valuable, there is always room for improvement. Even theorists who attach great importance to such knowledge say it needs to be enhanced and supplemented. For example, Feiman-Nemser (2012) states that although “informal influences are far more salient in learning to teach” than formal ones, they often have “miseducative effects” (p. 28). This does not mean that university-

based educational inquiry is superior, however, since it too has defects and limitations.

Part of the groundwork for enhanced informal learning can be laid at the preservice stage. Bransford, Darling-Hammond, and LePage (2005) state that preservice preparation should “provide teachers with the core ideas and broad understanding of teaching and learning that give them traction on their later development” (p. 3). And Feiman-Nemser (2001) says we should think of preservice education not as giving full expertise but rather as “laying a foundation ... and preparing novices to learn in and from their practice” (p. 1016). After preservice, there are further ways to increase informal teacher research. Schön(1983) maintains that reflection-*in*-action should be supplemented by reflection-*on*-action, a more conscious and explicit form of practitioner inquiry. According to Loughran (2010), teachers can enrich their practice-based learning by explicit reflection activities such as keeping a journal. In this vein, Paul in his ninth year used a final writing assignment to gain more information from his students.

I had them all write a letter to me called Letters From the Heart; and I told them I wouldn't read it until after the school year was over because I wanted them to be really honest about the year... [And] a comment from one student that really hit me hard was: ‘Mr. XXX, it would be good if you could show more that you really care about each student, instead of just talking about helping us by being strict.’ This was from a student who never gets into trouble, and I thought, oh, that’s his way of saying, ‘You need to be more positive and you need to be nicer to us so we know you actually like us, instead of being strict, strict, strict.’

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) and Zeichner and Liston (2014) maintain that practice-based teacher inquiry can be enhanced by being more collaborative. Perhaps, the greatest potential for feasible collaborative activity lies at the school level. At minimal expense, professional learning communities can be created within a school, enabling teachers to connect beyond their own classroom, observe each other teach, ask each other questions, and share what they are learning (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2012; Hadfield & Jopling, 2012; Lieberman & Friedrich, 2010). In facilitating this kind of collaboration, the role of the principal is crucial (Berry, 1995; Crowther, 2009; Falk, 2009). The principal can help deepen the culture of teacher learning within the school; make time and resources available, even in small ways (Day & Gu, 2014); work to develop a shared vision within the school (Reeves, 2011); and help establish working conditions such that teachers maintain their “resilience” and commitment to continued inquiry and improvement (Day & Gu, 2014).

To conclude, in stressing the importance of informal action research, I do not wish to suggest that it is sufficient on its own or that teachers cannot improve their inquiry skills. However, acknowledging the extent and value of such inquiry is an essential step in arriving at a more adequate approach to educational research in general. So long as we see teachers as merely consum-

ers of educational knowledge rather than major co-contributors, our approach to educational inquiry will be flawed. We need to recognize the importance of informal teacher research and then, as proposed by Bryk (2008) and others, go on to establish an educational knowledge and practices framework to which both academics and practitioners contribute and on which everyone (including policy makers) can draw.

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Emancipatory Action Research as a Critical Living Praxis: From Dominant Narratives to Counternarratives

Margaret Ledwith

Stories interest me. The relationship between epistemology, the way we make sense of the world, and ontology, the way we act in the world, is embedded in the stories we tell about everyday life. This suggests that seeing the world differently by changing the stories we tell changes the way we act in the world. In this sense, stories are at the heart of transformative change. Keep this in mind as you read through this chapter; it is the foundation of the ideas I introduce. Also bear in mind that a society which “neither questions itself nor can imagine any alternative to itself” encourages more of the same: when those claiming to act for change are uncritical, practice engages with the symptoms rather than the causes of social injustice, and activists are in danger of becoming “complicit with the forms of power they condemn” (as cited in Giroux, 2009, p. 177). Dominant narratives tell convincing stories based on the interests of the powerful, persuading us to act for the benefit of privilege. But, when we start to question these stories, asking in whose interests they are told, we see different possibilities for changing the story and therefore changing the world.

4.1 PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH AS TRANSFORMATIVE

My first encounter with participatory action research changed my understanding of the relationship between knowledge creation and power interests.

Many years ago, when I started work as a classroom teacher, I found myself perturbed by unequal relations acted out between children, regardless of

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potential, and the ways that this was often reinforced by teacher attitudes. Conversations in the staffroom judged life chances, and those expectations influenced the self-belief of the young lives that passed through the school. “These are the ones that’ll make it, and those don’t stand a chance!” It left me perturbed, but I had no idea about structural power and the way that discrimination is systematically woven through society according to “race,” class, gender, and all other social differences. Throughout three years of teacher training, we had been systematically told that there is nothing political about the classroom. This, of course, was a lie. And, it feeds into the bigger “collective lie” that Cammarota and Fine (2008, p. 216) identify, based on the thinking of the Jesuit priest and activist thinker Ignacio Martin-Baro. Fine challenges us to uncover the collective lie that persuades us to accept a way of life based on the interests of the privileged. Before I was able to see critically enough to discern this collective lie, my own particular quest for understanding took me on a search through adult literacy and adult education, until an encounter with Vietnamese refugees taught me more about power and powerlessness than anything before. It was however at Edinburgh University, when I made a political decision to change from classroom education to community development, that David Alexander, the respected adult educator, introduced me to the ideas of Paulo Freire, Antonio Gramsci, feminism, and anti-racism. A light went on in my head illuminating the nature of discrimination. For instance, Gramsci’s (1971) definition of *hegemony* in the few moments it took to hear David Alexander’s explanation, made such immediate sense that I could “see” power in action in everyday lives, mutually reinforced through processes of *coercion* and *consent* to maintain the interests of the privileged. The point here is that without theories of power, I had found it impossible to “see” power in action, so my practice lacked the critical approach necessary to contribute to social change. Anzaldúa (1990) talks about knowledges that are kept from us, and just how important it is to occupy theorising space, and in occupying it we are in a position to transform the future of thought.

Community development is a political activity committed to social justice and environmental sustainability. It is informed by a vision of a more fair and just world, a world in greater balance. Every aspect of its practice is built on values of equality, respect, dignity, trust, mutuality, and reciprocity in a process of critical consciousness developed through popular education. This is the basis of collective action for change. Community development’s eclectic theory base analyses the forces of power that discriminate against some social groups and privilege others. My community development practice became founded on Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy, a theory of power, critical consciousness, and liberation. To be effective, it is imperative that this form of liberating education evolves in relation to its changing context, which is why I emphasise that it is impossible to practice social justice without contextualising people’s lives politically, socially, and economically.

As a community worker, I decided that a part-time PhD would give me the discipline to focus my practice critically. At Manchester University, I felt

pressure to propose “legitimate” tools of analysis. As I searched for ways of analysing my social justice practice, jarring alarm bells warned me of a disconnect between my practice values and my research methodology: as a practitioner, I worked *with* people; as a researcher, I felt obliged to work *on* people. Then, one remarkable day, my friend and colleague Paul Jones put *Human Inquiry* into my hands. It was yet another critical moment in my politicisation.

This book is about human inquiry ... about people exploring and making sense of human action and experience ... ways of going about research which [offer] *alternatives* to orthodox approaches, alternatives which [...] do justice to the humanness of all those involved in the research endeavour. (Reason & Rowan, 1981, p. xi)

My eyes lit up with excitement! This was a point of praxis: it gave me legitimacy for structuring an academic thesis around the lived reality of local people in a faithful Freirean approach. Opening with the story of a day in the life of one young mother, I built iterative cycles of action and reflection that wove this story deeper and wider, connecting her story with the stories of others to become a collective counternarrative, one that exposed the taken-for-granted contradictions constructed by dominant narratives to open a space for change.

Critical educators argue that *praxis* (informed actions) must be guided by *phronesis* (the disposition to act truly and rightly). This means, in critical terms, that actions and knowledge must be directed at eliminating pain, oppression, and inequality, and at promoting justice and freedom. (McLaren, 2009, p. 74)

Freire’s (1972) concepts of *denunciation/annunciation* are central to this. We need to be able to understand power in order to denounce it, and by denouncing it we create an interruption, a critical space in which to build *counternarratives* of human flourishing, *annunciation*, which, in turn, releases the collective determination to act for change. In this sense, critiquing the *status quo* opens the space to transform the present into a better future. But, for this to have a sustainable impact on social change, it needs to extend beyond individuals and groups “to build systemic pictures of what is going on, and systemic intervention strategies, developing multiple inquiries that engage whole systems in ongoing cycles of inquiry” (Burns, 2007, p. 18). These new insights into the power of knowledge and who controls that knowledge enabled me not only to develop a practice that is Freirean but also to embed this in an emancipatory praxis that bridges the gap between research and practice.

In these ways, Reason and Rowan (1981) played a significant part in the action research movement by gathering pioneering action researchers together to present this sourcebook of new ideas and methods. It certainly helped me to understand what constituted an action research approach, challenging controlling methods as acting in the interests of power. More than this, I could see *participatory action research* as a liberating praxis in its own right, held together by values consonant with the value base of community development. Here

was an approach to research that built knowledge in action, and acted on that knowledge in iterative cycles that forge deeper into knowing and reach broader into action for change. Participatory action research, influenced by Paulo Freire, based its methodology on working *with* people in reciprocal, mutual relationships. Its methods are rich and diverse, with distinct characteristics:

- rejecting the alienating methods of scientific research;
- emphasising connection/wholeness, healing injustices;
- countering fragmentation of thought and action;
- committing to critical consciousness and action for change;
- developing language and methods that aim to discover new knowledge based on multiple truths; and
- equalising power in the research process and in its outcome.

More than this, its purpose is transformative. Intending to change the world for the better, it overtly builds action into its process linking collectively to movements for change. Analysing power and discrimination is at the heart of understanding injustice as the basis for a more just fair and equal world. For this reason, research and practice for social justice can only be effective when contextualised in their political times.

4.1.1 *Dominant Narratives: Contextualising Research*

Kemmis (2010) talks about a *unitary praxis* as an approach to life in which we aim to “live well by speaking and thinking well, and relating well to others in the world ... If we accept this view, then we might say that action research should aim not just at achieving knowledge of the world, but achieving a better world” (p. 419). This, it seems to me, is an aspiration for achieving a better world by being better in the world. Rather than an abstract conceptualisation of piecemeal reform, Kemmis seems to be proposing an organic process that contextualises us in reciprocal relation to each other and the planet we inhabit, so bearing mutual responsibility for a universal good. This ecosystems approach, one that replaces a preoccupation with profit with human and planetary flourishing, calls for a *critical living praxis* that integrates our thinking and our doing. The beginning of this process involves exposing the “collective lie,” referred to above, by contextualising everyday lives in the grand narratives of their times. For this reason, let us explore the power of the “collective lie” under neoliberalism.

The welfare state, in response to both the World Depression of the 1930s and World War II’s impact on people in poverty, took on the task of redistributing wealth, improving health, extending life chances through education, protecting the most vulnerable, and generally taking up issue of social justice. In the 1970s, a recession together with a rising welfare budget created the conditions for change. This provided a historic moment, in which neoliberalism, previously a little-known or understood ideology, was able to emerge through the politics of Thatcher, Reagan, Pinochet, the International Monetary Fund, and

the World Bank, and a global, profit-driven, free-market took hold. Margaret Thatcher seized the opportunity to dismantle the common good, announcing that “There is no such thing as society, only the individual and his (sic) family” (as cited in Williams, 2012, p. x). The sudden rise of individualism became palpable and working-class solidarity became a thing of the past.

The sudden rise of neoliberalism in Europe and North America, according to Foucault, was a reaction to Nazism and the dismantling of former communist states, a fear position that placed “the big state” as the enemy of freedom (Foucault, 2008, p. 116). Instead, the “small state” idea was introduced as a benign, innocuous form of government, a cover for what we now see as the market invading every crevice of civil society to justify dismantling all potential forms of resistance. The phenomenon of the “global super rich” was born. Wealth has been systematically siphoned into the pockets of the privileged, and simultaneously the poor have become poorer. This ideology could not have been sold to the masses without the help of the powerful dominant narrative of the “welfare scrounger,” which has taken hold in public consciousness and continues to feed a hatred of the poor.

Failing to question what is going on and in whose interests it is acting renders us complicit with this collective lie, one that justifies continued targeting of the poor and marginalised. In 2008, Killeen boldly accused successive UK governments of a violation of human rights for failing to challenge the images of the feckless welfare scrounger embedded in public consciousness since Thatcherism. He suggested that, as a consequence, we have created *povertyism* as a new form of discrimination that exists alongside racism and sexism as major structural inequalities-based derision of the poor. “As governments have come to govern for the market they have also come to govern *against* the people” (Tyler, 2013, p. 6).

The consequences have been escalating social inequalities, low social mobility, dismantling of the public sector, and erosion of workers’ rights and civil liberties. Rather than neoliberalism as market rule in a classless society, Tyler (2013) argues that neoliberalism is a *class project* in its own right. The political left and right both now occupy a neoliberal consensus where there is no voice remaining to act in opposition to defend democratic freedom, fractured communities, the eroded fabric of social life, and the economic inequalities that destroy social justice. In order to understand the role that dominant ideology plays in achieving popular consent, Tyler (2013) uses social abjection theory to analyse the way that neoliberal “democracies” generate prejudice by engendering fear to harden public opinion, dehumanising people in poverty as revolting, undeserving, undesirable, and disposable. Demonising the poor has not only dismantled the class struggle but also provided a smokescreen for the continued centrality of class, “race,” and gender as major discriminations in the global shift from industrial to neoliberal capitalism (Tyler, 2013, p. 57). Tyler takes neoliberalism beyond its overt image of free-market rule, to present it as a considered form of social and cultural control. State power produces dialectical relations of subject-object in relation of power and disgust. To maintain power,

it is essential to have the abject object of derision portrayed as an unworthy form of human detritus, hardening public opinion by playing on media images, such as that of the “chav,” to justify policies that lead to unacceptable and rising inequalities. Pathologising the poor blames the victims of social injustice for the structural disadvantage that creates their reality.

Teasing out the way that dominant narratives influence attitudes and justify policies, it becomes apparent that the story of the welfare scrounger has been accompanied by a simultaneous transference of wealth from *poor* to *rich*. The story of poverty as a human failing rather than structural discrimination continues to be sold so convincingly as common sense, that its inhuman consequences are not questioned. The contradictions that we now live by in the UK, one of the richest countries of the world, are that 1:8 of our poorest children get no daily hot meal, 1:7 go to school without breakfast, 75,000 children are homeless, yet 62% of poor children have working parent/s. Children most at risk come from lone parent, unemployed, low-paid, ethnic minority families, as well as families affected by disability. This trend of escalating child poverty in rich countries suggests a pattern of wealth as a structural advantage for the privileged, rather than a benefit for the common good. Yet, the paradox of poverty is that in unequal societies everyone suffers, rich and poor alike. Growing up in poverty destroys aspirations, creates hopelessness, damages cognitive development in our pre-school children, creates ill health and premature death, and reduces the potential for all society. Giroux suggests that neoliberal societies have launched a war on youth, an assault against our children, and that this is indicative of a deep moral and political crisis. Young people, he says, are no longer where society invests its dreams but where it hides its nightmares as we allow ourselves to be persuaded to see young people as the source of societies’ problems (Giroux, 2009).

Giroux has helped us to understand the ways in which neoliberalism’s emphasis on the centrality of producers and consumers in an ideology of the market give rise to what he terms a *politics of disposability* (Giroux, 2006a, 2006b); a world in which the poor, the Black, the female, the young, the old, the sick, and disabled are disposable players in the game of profit. We cannot afford to be uncritical, otherwise we overlook the inhuman contradictions we live by, which brings us back to the urgent need for a *critical living praxis*. Practice, when it is not understood in relation to its political context, becomes at best placatory, dealing with the *symptoms* of injustice rather than the *causes*. Dominant narratives feed into perceptions of human worth and become assumed as a given truth when they go unchallenged, “they silently seep into the public mind” (McNiff, 2012).

4.1.2 *Counternarratives*

Counternarratives are stories that replace hopelessness with hope and possibility by challenging the contradictions of everyday life to create the conditions for social change. Countering grand narratives, they challenge the hegemonic

conditions of everyday life that influence people to accept life's unjust contradictions unquestioningly (Giroux, Lankshear, McLaren, & Peters, 1996). For instance, unacknowledged White privilege, a system of opportunities and benefits assumed simply by the fact of being White (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997) is often invisible and unrecognised (McIntosh, 2004, but is, nevertheless, racist because it advantages White people. Dominant narratives often express White privilege as normal and natural, and so are racist. But, there again, the story will not only be constructed from a racist perspective, but also along sexist, classist, heterosexist, ageist, and other subordinating lines to reinforce the interests of privilege.

The media play a key role in reinforcing dominant narratives. Gilroy (as cited in Tyler, 2013) called for new media images that offer alternatives to the stories of stigmatisation in the aftermath of the English Riots of 2011: "one of the worst forms of poverty that's shaped our situation is poverty of the imagination" (p. 149). Tyler links this idea of *poverty of the imagination* to the role of news agencies and entertainment programmes in reinforcing perceptions of poor people that play to the power of the neoliberal state. Using imaginative possibilities, counternarratives challenge stories that diminish, dehumanise, and disadvantage marginalised groups. This can be done by giving voice to unheard stories of people's experience and backing these up with analytic evidence that they are not random, individual experiences but social trends that embed structural disadvantage. Counternarratives of hope and possibility tell different stories based on mutual respect and human dignity, empowering those disempowered to challenge and change the course of history. These can take the form of personal accounts of people's life experiences. They can remain personal stories or be developed into collective narratives based on composite characters blended from real life. Either way, they are always contextualised within a bigger picture of political/social/economic conditions.

In these ways, counternarratives build solidarity on the margins by instilling pride in identity and culture, building a counterculture of resistance against injustice. They offer the analytic tools that expose and challenge unjust contradictions in the existing system. They create a collective purpose amongst and between marginalised groups. And, they release the energy of injustice to act collectively for change based on newly imagined possibilities. They plant the seeds of change on the margins, creating spaces for radical transformation. In this sense, storytelling offers a source of analysis, consciousness, and action, locating the margins as "more than a site of deprivation ... it is also the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance" (Hooks, 2015, p. 149) that points the way forward to a transformed future.

4.2 EMANCIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

In order to practice social justice, any occupation that claims a social justice imperative must bridge the divide between theory and practice. Developing a *critical living praxis* capable of weaving our theory and practice together is

my purpose here, one that shares community development's value base, that co-creates knowledge in action in partnership with marginalised people, and is relevant to the changing political context is what we are after.

Emancipatory action research (EAR) is about participation: all people involved come together as co-participants in a process of education for critical consciousness that informs action for social change. Co-participants are equals, and this fits well with Freire's notion of co-learners and co-teachers, a spirit of mutuality in which everyone is prepared to teach, listen, and learn. Creating critical spaces for dialogue is important, involving all co-participants in co-creating knowledge for our times. These are counter-hegemonic critical spaces where power relationships are investigated and deconstructed in order to act to reconstruct democratic relations with new possibilities for a world that is fair and just. This concept of a democratic public space is a vital context for social justice as a site for critical dialogue and participation in the process of participatory democracy (Habermas, 1989). A public space is place where people who identify with a group can participate and interact, and also where there is a connection between groups that provides the glue to create community and deepen democracy. This involves the freedom for dissenting voices to be heard. Critique and dissent are central to the deepening of democracy; critiquing the *status quo* opens the space to transform the present into a better future. In these ways, EAR contextualises personal lives within the political, social, and economic structures of our times (Kemmis, 2006). And, to have a sustainable impact on social change, it needs to extend beyond individuals and groups "to build systemic pictures of what is going on, and systemic intervention strategies, developing multiple inquiries that engage whole systems in on-going cycles of inquiry" (Burns, 2007).

EAR is an approach to research committed to change for social and environmental justice by:

- equalising power in its process by working *with* not *on* people;
- using methods that liberate not control so the traditional "objects" of research become "subjects" co-creating new knowledge from lived experience as a valuable truth;
- co-creating new knowledge that is beyond the written word through story, dialogue, photographs, music, poetry, drama, and drawings;
- contextualising personal lives within the political, social, and economic structures that discriminate;
- demonstrating an ideology of equality in action using demonstrable skills of mutual respect, dignity, trust, and reciprocity;
- dislocating the researcher as external expert to become a co-participant;
- becoming co-researchers with co-participants in mutual inquiry;
- creating the research process as a participatory experience for all involved;
- creating a research process that becomes empowering in its own right; and
- creating a social/environmental justice outcome through collective action for change based on new understandings of the world.

The cycle model (adapted from Rowan, 1981) captures the key stages of EAR in circular movement, in inner and outer stages of development, and in iterative cycles that grow deeper and wider attempting learning how to relate better to others and to the world, and to avoid injustice, exclusion, and causing suffering (Kemmis, 2010, p. 424).

4.2.1 *Stage 1: Being*

Being is a point in everyday practice where you notice an issue or a situation that needs attention. It might be a new insight into a regular event in your practice, such as noticing the children playing in dangerous conditions, or it may be that something new has erupted, such as changes in policy have reduced benefits for the poorest in the community.

4.2.2 *Stage 2: Problematising*

Capture the situation in photograph or any other medium that is relevant to local people. If it is relevant to local people, it will generate interest and evoke feelings, a *generative theme*. This is a *codification*. For the process of *decoding*, invite a group of people to join you. Project the photograph onto the wall, and encourage dialogue by asking people what they notice about it: Who is this? Where is it? What's going on? Why's it happening? Attention eventually turns away from the photograph and into the group, as questions open up new awareness. Further information is needed. This could be, for instance, information on social trends and poverty statistics into questions about why is child poverty getting worse in our community? It could be that going to the local authority to get a breakdown of current ward statistics might be useful, or checking the Child Poverty Action Group or the Joseph Rowntree Foundation websites for latest poverty trends. Different people may volunteer to find out information, from talking to local schools or surveys of local people, and bring the information back to the next meeting of the group.

4.2.3 *Stage 3: Conscientisation*

As the process develops, the local issue will be seen in its political context, and questions will concentrate on, "What shall we do about it?" An outer stage, where critical awareness of structural implications exposes the contradictions inherent in local lives, calls for a plan of action, moving to an outer stage of engagement, taking the contradiction of the existing situation towards a new stage of action.

4.2.4 *Stage 4: Action*

This is the stage of engaging in action with the wider community. It could be that a group of local residents want to form a local Child Poverty Action

Group to help more other people make connections with the injustices of child poverty. Wider action could take the shape of making links with the End Child Poverty Campaign to be part of an alliance of local groups in movement for change.

4.2.5 *Stage 5: Making Sense*

This is the stage at which “experience turns into meaning and knowledge” (Rowan, 1981, p. 100). Find ways to support those involved to deepen understanding of the experience in order to identify another cycle of development.

4.2.6 *Evidence Questions*

- How is practice working towards social and environmental justice?
- What evidence is there that values of , dignity, mutuality, and respect are operating at every level of practice?
- How is the process empowering to all those involved?
- What evidence is there that the outcome is contributing to change?
- What evidence is there of greater equality in the process or outcome?
- What evidence is there that people are working together for a common good?

The above questions form the basis for checking the validity of the process. In other words, what evidence is there that we are doing what we claim to be doing in the process of EAR? The evidence questions need to be formulated by all those involved in the research process to maintain a high degree of collaboration. For instance, the following might stimulate food for thought.

4.2.7 *Quality and Validity Questions*

- (i) *Methodology and methods*: What is the approach to this research? How is information gathered? How does it fit with the value base of community development?
- (ii) *Process questions*: Who has initiated the research? Who has defined the problem? Who is involved? How is the power and decision-making shared?
- (iii) *Power questions*: Is the social/political/economic context being taken into account? How is this research representative of the diversity of the community?
- (iv) *Dialectical questions*: Is just one answer being sought? Is the situation being explored from more than one angle?
- (v) *Legitimacy questions*: Is there pressure to avoid certain problems? Who is funding the research? Are there preconceived outcomes?
- (vi) *Relevance questions*: How will this research benefit people? Will it benefit some people more than others? Is it relevant to the people who took part? How does it contribute to social and environmental justice? How does it

address “race,” class, gender, age, disability, faith, culture, religion, sexual preference issues? (Influenced by Rowan, 1981; Reason & Bradbury, 2001)

If we are to change the course of history, says Kemmis (2010), we need to develop sustainability criteria against which to judge the contribution of EAR initiatives. He offers a structure from which to develop evidence of practice that leads to social change. Build this level of critique into your practice to transform the present into a better future. Problematised the unsustainable by taking photographs of the consequences of poverty in your community and relate them to Kemmis’s five sustainability factors:

1. *Discursively unsustainable*: Based on false, misleading, or contradictory ideas;
2. *Morally/socially unsustainable*: Aspects of the process or outcome are excluding, unjust, oppressive, or dominating;
3. *Ecologically/materially unsustainable*: Aspects of the process or outcome involve excess of either natural resources or degradation of the environment;
4. *Economically unsustainable*: Aspects of the process or outcome fail to address costs and benefits to people or expose power relations between privilege and poverty; and
5. *Personally unsustainable*: That any physical, intellectual, or emotional harm or suffering is a consequence of the process or outcome;

4.2.8 Stage 6: Communication

The final stage of the current cycle is that of communicating the new knowledge that has been co-created by the participants so that others can learn from the experience. Hold a public meeting run by participants, put up a photo display on a community noticeboard, invite local or national media, write an article for a journal, take participants to present the research to a conference, do a regional roadshow, and present the research in community centres, council offices, and invite everyone! (Ideas adapted from Ledwith, 2011).

In these simple ways, EAR contributes to a movement for change for a better world based on:

- creating critical spaces to question lived experience;
- exposing the taken-for-granted contradictions we live by;
- developing critical consciousness—seeing the world differently; and
- telling a new story of hope and possibility that leads to social change.

Here you have a structure from which to develop evidence of practice that leads to social change. Building this level of critique into your practice opens the space to transform the present into a better future.

4.3 FROM DOMINANT NARRATIVES TO COUNTERNARRATIVES

Theory must be an integral part of critical practice. We need to be able to explain why we are doing what we are doing at any stage of the process.

Recently, I have been reading the late Stuart Hall (2012), one of the most significant Gramscian thinkers of our times, alerting us to another conjuncture, a point at which social, political, economic, and ideological contradictions are condensed into a historical moment, presenting a crisis, but also an opportunity for change. The story of poverty as a “human failing” rather than a structural injustice is a powerful story to tell. It carries a message of human detritus, human waste, and disposability, discarding people to the wastelands of society. As Hall emphasises, effective interventions need to *see* forces of power critically. And if we *see* more critically, we *act* more critically.

The simple act of questioning, seeing everyday life from a new perspective is the beginning of becoming critical, and through a process of dialogue the taken-for-grantedness of everyday life is replaced with an awareness of the contradictions we live by—a critical consciousness.

At this point, I want to introduce the idea of the Quaker understanding of “speaking truth to power,” Kemmis (2006) notion of “telling unwelcome truths,” and Gramsci’s comment that “to tell the truth, to arrive together at the truth, is a ... revolutionary act” (Gramsci & Togliatti, 1919, p. 68). The courage to name the discomfiting reality of inequalities as unacceptable injustices plants the seeds of dissent. Interrupting the collective silence that surrounds paradoxical realities of excess privilege and unacceptable poverty exposes the taken-for-granted contradictions that we live by; dissenting voices ring out through the unquestioning apathy to cleave a crack where the light of change can shine in. Critique and dissent are the processes that Freire had in mind when he talked about *denunciation* and *annunciation*: critiquing the *status quo* opens the space to transform those unacceptable contradictions that constitute “a crime against humanity” (Freire & Macedo, 1995). Quality of life is no longer dependent on further economic growth: it is about community and that way that we relate to each other. Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) argue that inequality is toxic, destroying trust, making people anxious and ill, and encouraging greed. They demonstrate how physical health, mental health, drug abuse, education, imprisonment, obesity, social mobility, trust and quality of community life, violence, teenage pregnancies, and child well-being are much worse in unequal rich countries.

EAR provides us with the conceptual tools needed to question inequalities and injustices. Placing social justice at its heart, it commits to eliminating racism, sexism, and poverty, and all other forms of discrimination. Acknowledging that lived experience is critical to understanding processes of power, subordinated groups, through a process of consciousness analyse structural discrimination, challenge dominant ideology, and act together to change the course of history. This paves the way towards a “collective vision of what it might be like to live in the best of all societies and how such a vision might be made practical” (as cited in Macrine, 2009, p. 120).

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Knowledge Democracy and Action Research: Pathways for the Twenty-First Century

Lonnie L. Rowell and Eunsook Hong

In December 1987, Paulo Freire and Myles Horton met at Highlander Research and Education Center in Tennessee for a week of dialogue (Bell, Gaventa, & Peters, 1990). Both men had been familiar with each other's work for more than 20 years, and their paths had crossed on a few occasions at conferences and gatherings. However, they had not had an opportunity for an extended in-person dialogue until the Highlander event. The dialogue was centered on the relationship of education and social change. During the dialogue, Paulo stated:

respecting the knowledge of the people for me is a political attitude consistent with the political choice of the educator if he or she thinks about a different kind of society. In other words, I cannot fight for a freer society if at the same time I don't respect the knowledge of the people. (As cited in Bell et al., 1990, p. 101)

This chapter examines knowledge democracy, a concept rooted in the relations between knowing the world, knowledge production, knowledge dissemination, and taking action in the world (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991). It is fundamentally concerned with how action researchers engage with the knowledge of the people and the impact of this engagement on action researchers and participants in action research.

We examine issues faced by action researchers working within the context of democratizing knowledge. Not all action research supports democratized

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knowledge and not all advocates of knowledge democracy are comfortable with the stances and practices of all action researchers (Kapoor & Jordan, 2009). This chapter takes up the challenge of considering these issues in relation to the broad themes of the *Handbook*, that is, the implications of globalized action research; the place of networks in knowledge construction and dissemination; and the impact of critical intellectual, moral, historical, and sociopolitical issues on the practice of action research. For brevity, we use the term “action research” to represent various kinds of action research such as participatory action research (PAR), cooperative inquiry, collaborative action research, participatory inquiry, and so on, unless distinctions need to be made.

5.1 VANTAGE POINTS FOR A VIEW OF KNOWLEDGE DEMOCRACY

We have delineated four vantage points for this chapter to brief the origin of knowledge democracy, the progress toward knowledge democracy, and current and future prognosis and recommendations. They are (a) knowledge monopoly in the field: on the origins of participatory research; (b) knowledge monopoly in the fortress: globalization and the scientific worldview; (c) action research and alternative globalization: the practice of knowledge democracy; and (d) convergences in knowledge democracy: reflections on a battlefield in the global North.

5.1.1 *Knowledge Monopoly in the Field: On the Origins of Participatory Research*

The first vantage point is the situation confronted by those drawn to PAR in the mid- to late 1960s. This was a time of uprising, exhilaration, and hope for a better world, and there was a sense that “something useful was bound to come of so many uprisings” (Berman, 1996, p. 14).

The knowledge monopoly that created the need for the countervailing perspective represented by PAR was rooted in a revolutionary time some 500 years before the uprisings described by Berman. The Scientific Revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries led to the birth of the “modern world system, a capitalist world economy” (Wallerstein, 1998, p. 45). Among many noteworthy developments, this system also sponsored the colonization of the global South by the global North. This colonization reflected an epistemic divide (Santos, 2014), which Santos characterizes as Northern hemispheric epistemology threatening to extinguish ways of knowing found in the global South. He refers to this as “epistemicide,” and its destructive power serves as the backdrop of the emergence of PAR.

Fals Borda deeply understood this phenomenon (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991). He asserted that PAR in Latin America and other parts of the global South offered a way to correct the “unequal relations of knowledge” through “stimulating popular knowledges” (p. 31). Whether coming from South America (Fals Borda, 1979), Africa (Hall, 1992; Swantz, 1996), or India (Tandon, 1982), the calls for breaking the knowledge monopoly were strongly

connected with recognition of the value of participatory forms of action research in the global South.

Among PAR pioneers, knowledge democracy was an effort to break the hold of “intellectual colonialism” (Fals Borda & Mora-Osejo, 2003, p. 35) rooted in the monopolizing effects of the dominant research paradigm of positivism (Tandon, 1982). According to Hall (1992), mobilizing disenfranchised and oppressed peoples required demystifying the social science approach to knowledge production: “We have created an illusion and we have come to believe in it—namely, that only those with sophisticated techniques can create knowledge” (p. 25). Similarly, Fals Borda and Rahman (1991) described support for “knowledge existing as local or indigenous science and wisdom to be advanced by the people’s self-inquiry” (p. 31) as a basis for achieving equality and democracy.

Most Western-educated PAR pioneers realized that the theories and methods they learned during their formal university educations did not fit the situations they found themselves in as socially conscious individuals. Fals Borda (1979), a sociologist educated at the University of Florida, concluded that the categories utilized within the sociological paradigms imported from the global North were “inapplicable to the existing reality ... and too specialized to be of use in attempting to understand the totality of the phenomena confronted daily” (p. 35). Swantz (1996), after many years living and working in Africa, found her European university experience troubling and “felt it was cultural arrogance for anyone to study the people of another culture as a kind of specimen without ever asking them what they themselves wanted to find out” (p. 124).

Many scholars and activists in the Northern hemisphere saw parallels between what critics such as Fals Borda (1979) and Tandon (1982) were describing in the global South and their own struggles for social justice. Gaventa (1991) outlined three strategies for North American PAR: (1) the reappropriation of knowledge; (2) developing the people’s knowledge; and (3) popular participation in the social production of knowledge (p. 122). He discussed these strategies in the context of grassroots groups gaining control over “knowledge and skills normally considered to be the monopoly of the experts” (p. 124). The similarity between “Third World” and “First World” participatory research initiatives was rooted in the recognition that groups in both worlds shared “characteristics of domination by the knowledge system” (Gaventa, p. 122).

Fals Borda addressed the importance of these South–North “convergences” (1991, p. 158) in PAR in his writing up until the time of his death in 2008. In the first *Handbook of Action Research*, Fals Borda (2006) discussed 1970 as a crucial year in which alternative institutions and research approaches grounded in “research and action focused on local and regional problems involving emancipatory educational, cultural and political processes” (pp. 27–28) sprang up independently in various parts of the world, yet shared essential commonalities. Even with convergences between South and North, Fals Borda and Rahman (1991) held strongly to the view that Northern intellectuals were not giving “due recognition” (p. 161) to the leadership of Third World PAR philosophy and techniques in remaking science and knowledge (p. 161). Nevertheless, the

open door for convergence was clearly marked. That is, the task of creating new knowledge, of pushing back against knowledge monopoly, was directly connected to people's struggles for justice, peace, and progress, no matter whether one was located in the North, South, East, or West.

Smith (2012) equated breaking the knowledge monopoly with a process of "decolonizing methodologies" (p. 1). With a specific focus on the experience of indigenous peoples, she identified the word "research" as "probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary" (p. 1). Here, we encounter disgust with the patronizing views of colonialism in any form and the remaking of indigenous peoples into "objects" of study by "experts" from the developed world. The social science view in which only the "scientists" could make sense of the world had created a need for approaches that would decolonize the act of understanding indigenous peoples and free up the creative capacities of indigenous people to seek solutions to their problems.

As Fanon (1963) discussed the psychology of colonization, the role of colonizing knowledge is to confirm to the colonized that the given order of things is as it should be. The psychological trick is to convince the oppressed that radical change should not be supported because it is "not needed," with things being just fine as they are. Here again, the notion of knowledge democracy has the potential to disrupt this status quo and open prospects not only for seeing the world differently but for taking action individually and collectively to align new ways of seeing with new ways of being in the world.

Today, the issue of knowledge monopoly looks somewhat different than it did during the earlier decolonization. First of all, a more democratized perspective on knowledge has gained greater exposure through scholarly journals, books, and the Internet, as well as through popular struggles for social justice and against racism, poverty, sexism, and other injustices. The knowledge monopoly of Western epistemology gave birth to a quest for recognition of diverse forms of knowledge and for the creation of practices to work with these knowledges in service of creating a more socially just world. In the process of confronting the knowledge monopoly, the available tools of social science were found to be inadequate. The resulting situation is that although the social sciences remain a "large-scale enterprise" (Tandon, 1982, p. 79), it is not an enterprise that finds it possible to operate with impunity in the world today.

5.1.2 *Knowledge Monopoly in the Fortress: Globalization, Universities, and the Scientific Worldview*

Our second vantage point brings into view the interplay among knowledge production, universities, and globalization, as well as the position of action research within this interplay. We use an example of a major initiative in support of the democratization of knowledge as the backdrop to our considerations. The multi-year international research project conducted by Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos and his colleagues condemns the injus-

tice associated with epistemicide and makes the case for the “emancipatory recognition of both cultural differences and the epistemological diversity of the world” (Santos, Nunes, & Meneses, 2007, p. ix). Santos challenges the hegemonic position of neoliberal globalization and supports an alternative globalization comprising “local/global linkages, networks, and alliances” (pp. vii–viii), rallying people to social justice and social emancipation.

In Santos’ view, the “monoculture of scientific knowledge” (Santos et al., 2007, p. xx) plays a key role in neoliberal globalization’s suppression of social emancipation in the global South. Here, Santos is updating the very scenario confronted 50 years ago by those initiating PAR. Philosophical debates associated with knowledge, its production, and its uses go back much farther than the current concern with globalization. At its core, the term “knowledge democracy” reflects a struggle over the “politics of knowledge” (Kincheloe, 2009, p. 108) that has been a part of the fabric of human civilization since the beginning. In this context, our focus is on knowledge democracy built on the “epistemological diversity” of the world as a fundamental source of ideas, practices, and values for furthering global social emancipation.

As the primary fortress of the monoculture of scientific knowledge (Santos et al., 2007), universities play a particularly troubling role in the scenario we are considering. In our view, the capacity of action researchers to critically examine our positionality (e.g., Shepperd, 2002) within the dominant globalization agenda is a crucial issue in assessing the potential of action research to contribute to knowledge democracy and alternative globalization. For most of those involved with action research, the home base of their work is the very fortress from which the oppression they struggle against has been rationalized.

One example is evident in the current popularity of community-engaged research (McKenna & Main, 2013). There have been earnest efforts by university-based action researchers to engage communities in democratizing knowledge (e.g., Gutberlet, Oliveira Jayme, & Tremblay, Chap. 41, this volume; Kapoor & Jordan, 2009; Nelson & Moxham, Chap. 35, this volume). Too often, however, the community-engaged research perspective (Bourke, 2013; Gelmon, Jordan, & Seifer, 2013) also reflects an effort by universities and other formal institutions to “follow the money” in research funding (e.g., the US National Institutes of Health and Department of Health and Human Services). For example, community-engaged research gained considerable momentum in health-related fields with the 2006 decision of the US National Institutes of Health to place a new emphasis on translational research—research that focuses on the translation of scientific discoveries into practical applications that improve human health—in its funding decisions. With research funding at stake, many top universities in the USA rediscovered the community surrounding them and the importance of linking with it.

Yet, translation and empowerment are not at all the same thing and “going into the community” can be accomplished without learning a thing from the community or supporting the community in its long-range interests in

social emancipation. Many community-based or community-engaged research initiatives unwittingly continue to marginalize community participants, setting research agendas without making sufficient efforts to understand the local context and conducting research without adequate communications with community participants (Bourke, 2013; Jordan, 2009).

The two key components of knowledge democracy (Santos, 2007, 2014)—knowledge diversity and empowerment of the oppressed—operate in a kind of symbiotic relationship. As Rahman and Fals Borda (1991) discuss, people’s knowledge should be respected in efforts to make a different kind of society where local knowledges are engaged in improving society through research and action. Where the knowledges of the oppressed are respected and engaged, empowerment becomes a natural extension of knowledge democracy. On the other hand, epistemicide destroys the social practices associated with diverse knowledges and disqualifies “the social agents that operate according to such knowledges” (Santos, 2014, p. 153). Without this kind of deeper engagement with epistemological issues, the same tendency found in earlier development projects threatens the democratic validity of community-engaged research, namely the tendency to view the locals as “a kind of problem that the experts [have] to solve” (Hall, 1982, p. 14).

This issue also illustrates the tendency of higher education to appropriate for itself all discursive space associated with knowledge and its production. Rather than opening space for critical reflection with communities, universities usurp terms originally put forward for emancipatory purposes, reshaping them to fit the epistemological contexts within which universities are operationally and ideologically comfortable. If an authentic collaborative relationship does not exist between the community and a university’s community-engaged research team, the potential for knowledge democracy and for nurturing an action-orientation that challenges wider issues of social justice is muted.

Some supporters of community-engaged research attempt to walk a fine line between community-engaged research’s potential to contribute to knowledge democracy and its vulnerability to cooptation (see, e.g., Hall, 2009). However, the tendency of “paradigm maintenance” (Wade, 1996, p. 31) lurks in the shadows of community-engaged research, just as it has in the World Bank’s adoption of “alternative knowledges” as a way to show acceptance of epistemological pluralism (Enns, 2015). In the case of the World Bank, although respect for alternative knowledges became an official stance in the 1990s, intended to end the Bank’s one-way prescriptive approach to development, this stance was not reflected in actual operational practices within World Bank departments. In examining this, Robert Wade, a former World Bank economist, introduced the construct of paradigm maintenance as “the mechanisms used to influence knowledge in favour of the dominant economic paradigm” (Enns, 2015, p. 64).

We see similar mechanisms at work in university involvement with forms of participatory research. That is, the approach to knowledge, whether in the community, in a partnering country, or in a campus laboratory, seems to be

shaped to conform to the dominant knowledge paradigm of the academy to maintain the monoculture of knowledge. For academicians, the rejoinder to this critique might be the simple folk dictum “don’t bite the hand that feeds you.” Universities are not looking to change the fundamental frames of reference they operate within, and this includes the dominance of an epistemic monoculture (e.g., Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Washburn, 2005).

However, criticisms from within abound (e.g., Daniels & Porfilio, 2013; Guinier, 2015; Schrecker, 2010) and perhaps in the long run the gravity of such criticisms will lead to the academy’s reclaiming of its mission, devotion to the common good, and veering off from the adoption of “corporate practices” (Schrecker, 2010, p. 3) in service of the knowledge economy that is now the handmaiden of the corporate globalization model. Yet, for the foreseeable future, the pressures directed at higher education and its faculty in the context of globalization and the hype associated with the knowledge economy will continue. As Jacoby (1987) detailed more than 25 years ago, the academy will continue to be a place in which faculty withdraw into their specializations to protect themselves from public criticism and institutional rebuke. Universities will continue to be environments in which “younger intellectuals no longer need or want a larger public ... colleagues [are] their audience; monographs and specialized journals their media” (p. 6); the same sentiment expressed more recently in a *New York Times* op-ed, “Professors, We Need You!” (Kristof, 2014).

Nevertheless, as long as the academy also provides space, however small, in which “academic freedom” includes being able to think critically, there continues to be room to work “outside the box” of the current system of higher education. There is room to test the intellectual and practical boundaries of theory and action and to challenge the hegemony of a monocultural view of scientific knowledge. It is still possible to make contributions to strengthening practices associated with issues of social justice.

5.1.3 *Action Research and Alternative Globalization: The Practice of Knowledge Democracy*

Action research, in our view, has the capacity to produce knowledge in partnership with the powerless in the interest of change. Action research can be a way to acknowledge, respect, and work in alliance with social practices grounded in alternative knowledges. What we see in the works of Fals Borda, Freire, Horton, Swantz, Gaventa, and many other pioneering action researchers were first steps toward knowledge democracy. The more grounded action research has been in working respectfully with diverse knowledges, the more it has “slipped the bonds” of epistemological privilege. In general, action research, PAR in particular from its beginnings, has struggled with issues of power and knowledge. According to Park (1993), PAR provides “space for the oppressed to use their intellectual power to be critical and innovative in order to fashion a world free of domination and exploitation” (p. 15).

The examination of knowledge interactions was a critical element in the Fals Borda and Mora-Osejo (2003) contribution to Volume 1, Number 1 of *Action Research*. Although they were aware of the technical superiority of the North regarding knowledge production and accumulation, they were certain that twenty-first century-knowledge production needed to be based on a more “horizontal and symmetric” (p. 36) process. Their “invitation” (p. 35) for a South–North convergence in the 2003 article was an extension of what they had experienced in their work in the field over the previous 30 years and had been the focus of the 1997 World Congress they had helped organize in Cartagena, Colombia.

We believe that new convergences, including advancing action research on a more visible global scale and an increased intentionality in applying action research to an alternative globalization initiative, should serve as a focal point for dialogue and action within the global action research community. Although some examination of the relationship between action research and globalization has taken place (e.g., Lykes & Mallona, 2009; Morell, 2009), much more is needed. In particular, the global action research community needs to get its bearings on how to contribute productively to alternative globalization. While a call for this project is beyond the scope of the present chapter, some preliminary steps can be identified. We address three points in the convergence of alternative globalization and action research.

Action research and epistemological diversity. A first step would be to strengthen practice in aligning action research with diverse epistemologies. Much of the action research produced to date has been based on “the methodological discourse of the social sciences” (Carr, 2006, p. 422). What might action research based on diverse epistemologies look like in practice and in forms of written dissemination? One clear example is the work of Fals Borda and his colleagues in Colombia (Rappaport, Chap. 9, this volume). Rappaport describes Fals Borda’s integration of traditional data with “the work of the imagination” (p. 148). In his engagement with indigenous peoples, Fals Borda worked with stories, pictures, drawings, maps, and other items of interest out of the recognition that social justice could be served only in the context of a profound respect for the indigenous culture.

A second example is found in the work of Swantz (1996). Her “personal quest for living knowledge” (p. 120) did not just take her to another continent (from Europe to Africa) but led to transformation in her thinking about science, rationality, research, and development in the non-Western world. She concluded that participatory researchers should be assessed with the same criteria as a fellow human with “the same anticipation of honesty and transparency, the same scrutiny and self-critique of his or her motives and ways of acting and relating to other people, and the same weighing of the purpose of life” (p. 125). Another example comes from a talk given by Freire (1982) at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania in 1972. Freire addressed organizing a large-scale PAR project involving, potentially, thousands of people. Freire spoke of combining a commitment to social change with issues of epistemol-

ogy. As he explained, how the project would approach data collection and use would have to be grounded in how the Tanzanian people see the world. The method would incorporate the concrete reality of the people, which consists “not only of concrete facts and (physical) things, but also includes the ways in which the people involved with these facts perceive them” (p. 29).

What these examples tell us is that action research has much to learn from PAR regarding the particulars of working with diverse epistemologies. Perhaps one of the most relevant convergences for the first half of the twenty-first century would be a two-fold initiative in which (a) intellectual-activists from the global North enter into a period of extended listening to the voices of the global South and (b) non-Eurocentric PAR practitioners and action researchers lead dialogues with practitioners from the global North. Such an initiative might begin with a prompt for reflection. One of the most useful we have found is the question posed by Joe Kincheloe (2009): “Why would Western researchers know how to produce knowledge that would be useful to those whose history has been marked by Western colonial exploitation of their resources and/or labor?” (p. 119).

Engaging with intercultural translation. Santos (2014) sees intercultural translation as an alternative ground to the “nonrelationships” of Western modernity and non-Western cultures and the “destruction and assimilation” (p. 212) of epistemicide. To be clear, this is not linguistic translation, although linguistic translation and intercultural translation work in tandem. Intercultural translation recognizes “mutual intelligibility among culturally diverse social experiences of the world” (p. 217). Similarly to Pratt (1992), Santos sees “translational contact zones” (p. 218) as spaces within which “rival normative ideas, knowledges, power forms, symbolic universes, and agencies meet in usually unequal conditions and resist, reject, assimilate, imitate, translate, and subvert each other” (p. 218). An example is a research team’s participation in Talking Circles in the Cree Nation as a part of their effort to gain access to study leadership practices with this indigenous group (Buchanan, Makokis, & Donmoyer, 2012). The Cree community required the team to participate in numerous Talking Circles prior to any decision being made on access for research purposes.

Intercultural translation is similar in concept to Fals Borda’s (1991) notion of convergences. Fals Borda’s (2006) intention was to “discover a way to bring about a convergence between popular thought and academic science ... [to] gain both a more complete and a more applicable knowledge—especially by and for the underprivileged classes which were in need of scientific support” (p. 29). We suggest using translational contact zones as a way to deepen convergences in action research. An example would be creating explicit space for translational contacts within action research conferences and gatherings. Here, attendees would experience more of the dizzying swirl and “reciprocal incompleteness” associated with “having one foot in one culture and the other in another” (Santos, 2014, p. 219). The intention of the time created for such

zones would be to explore the intersections of theory, practice, and values, and to build solidarity for epistemological diversity.

Unlearning and reinvention. What we have written to this point perhaps suggests a return to a thesis introduced by Carr (2006) who questioned “Why is it felt necessary to import the methodological discourse of the social sciences into debates about the nature and conduct of action research?” (p. 422). Drawing on Gadamer’s (1980) rehabilitation of Aristotle’s philosophy, Carr concludes that the pre-modern tradition of practical philosophy, in particular the adoption of *praxis*, offers a better ground on which to construct understanding of action research and helps fill an intellectual and practical void now shaped by “cultural tendencies that ... undermine and degrade *praxis*” (p. 434). Might “unlearning” the current epistemic structure of action research be necessary? Such unlearning would involve taking up the question of what is “lost in translation” when projects involving indigenous knowledges in the global South are reported to the global North through the lens of “Eurocentric scientific paradigms” (Fals Borda & Mora-Osejo, 2003, p. 32). An alternative globalization orientation within the global action research community would place struggle with intercultural translations and back-translations at the center of its work, as a part of a practice of cognitive justice.

All research involves questions, but in the context of knowledge democracy and alternative globalization the questions we ask take on a new meaning. In calling for respect for epistemological diversity and for turning away from Eurocentric epistemological domination, Santos (2014) has concluded that the entirety of Western political imagination is “haunted” (p. 24) by its inability to come up with good answers to the tough questions of our time. In this context, unlearning involves an encounter with indigenous knowledges that do not share the premise of “infinite growth and unstoppable development of productive forces” (Santos, p. 23). Such encounters open psychological space for reconsiderations and reinventions, and the global action research community should nurture and create such opportunities.

Summarizing these three elements, we believe that further embracing epistemological diversity, initiating intercultural translation experiences, and unlearning and reinvention are good places to start for enhancing knowledge democratization. Working on the epistemological interactions among action researchers, within and across the global South and North, and holding to *praxis* will not be easy work. We believe it is essential to remember that action researchers not only produce knowledge by providing research evidence within the context of their practices but also change the realities of their practice. That is, the purpose of action research has an intrinsic connection to generating change and improving society. We can proceed with some confidence based on this recognition. Yet, with the very epistemic structure of action research called into question, and for good reason, there is much room for humility and growth. It will require courage and a determination to pursue the tough questions of what kind of world we wish our children and grandchildren to inhabit.

5.1.4 *Knowledge Democracy in the Twenty-First Century: Reflections on a Battlefield in the Global North*

What we have chosen to reflect on for the final vantage point is close to home to us as authors and as professionals. We have chosen to discuss knowledge production in education both because we are knowledge producers in this field and we want to address the workings of neoliberalism's vast globalization project within the education sector as a case of epistemicide within a social domain in the global North, particularly the USA. Here, the issue is not so much local knowledge rooted in culturally oriented epistemology and practice but local knowledge rooted in the practices of educators and "held" within them as unarticulated practice wisdom. In this case, the epistemicide is the systematic suppression of this knowledge by the denial of its validity in public discussion and debate of educational policy making at local, state, and national levels. This denial is carried out by the monolithic neoliberal education enterprise, where corporate business models have attempted to shape the academy and pre-K-12 education at all levels and all functional aspects (Donoghue, 2008; Giroux, 2014).

In keeping with the previous vantage points, we address the impact of knowledge monopoly, the obstacles and opportunities for intercultural translation, and emancipatory initiatives associated with the totality of educational research and the methods and means of producing this knowledge. In a 1998 document, the National Alliance of Business describes teachers as "knowledge suppliers" and schools as "the knowledge supply chain" (discussed in Emery & Ohanian, 2004, p. 15). This logic perfectly reflects the current state of American public education, in which, as Giroux (2013) expresses it, "neoliberalism's ideology of competition now dominates policies that define public spheres such as schools, allowing them to be stripped of a civic and democratic project and handed over to the logic of the market" (p. 11). Within this ideology, pedagogy is geared toward conformity, an unquestioning acceptance of authority, and the squeezing out of any thoughts concerning "education and a critical notion of citizenship" (Giroux, p. 118). In such an environment, teachers and the other educators working in schools, including principals, counselors, and librarians, are reduced to the role of "de-skilled technicians" (Giroux, p. 164), and it is no wonder that their morale has plummeted (Ravitch, 2013).

Given the assault on education by the corporate elite leading the neoliberal enterprise, it is also no wonder that educators working in the trenches have been marginalized in the creation of knowledge about educational practice. In the struggle over whose knowledge counts, those who teach in the classrooms of pre-K-12 educational institutions have been pushed aside in favor of the views of corporate reformers and conservative think tanks (Ravitch, 2013). In our view, the clash between the current manifestation of hierarchical perspectives about knowledge construction in the form of the corporatization of education and the recognition of other kinds of knowledge generated through practice within schools and other public institutions is a battle for social justice and against the epistemic monoculture of the knowledge economy.

Gaventa and Cornwall (2008) spoke of a “knowledge strategy” for political organizing in poor and marginalized communities, and we suggest that a knowledge strategy for educational reform be developed in which knowledge democracy is promoted at all levels of educational policy formation, education assessment, and professional development for educators. We believe such a strategy can be built upon the knowledge produced through action research conducted in various locations within the pre-K-12 educational system, such as whole school-district initiatives (Caro-Bruce, Klehr, Zeichner, & Flessner, 2007), school-site action research experiments (Senese, Chap. 44, this volume), border pedagogy work (Barajas-Leyva & Rowell, Chap. 42, this volume), pre-service preparation of educators (Katsarou & Tsafos, 2013; Rowell, 2005, 2006), and the construction of in-service knowledge democracies of teacher action research (Pine, 2009; Shosh, Chap. 39, this volume).

We acknowledge that, at present, education is not an area in which any clearly visible form of systematic knowledge democracy is being practiced. Although many higher education institutions involved with teacher education have faculty who are actively involved with action research, in particular in preparing pre-service educators to use it, these involvements are rarely institutionalized with full support, usually are maintained through the interest of one or two faculty members, and can be swept away in an instant through the changing of an administrator, a sudden shift in interest by a faculty member, or the twists and turns of faculty politics.

Furthermore, in the education sector, the same issues of knowledge monopoly appear before us. The same top-down monoculture of scientific knowledge (Santos et al., 2007) looms over all efforts to produce knowledge in this field. The same tendency to view the “locals,” in this case the teachers and students in schools, as “a kind of problem that the experts [have] to solve” (Hall, 1992, p. 14) is found. Yet, we have hope that things can change, and we have some thoughts about how that might occur. From this vantage point, and again returning to the importance of focusing our considerations on supporting knowledge democracy in relation to the practice of action research, we sort through distinctions between the current fetishistic promotion of evidence-based practice and what we introduce as practice-based research evidence (PBRE). Although some might see this as a small skirmish on a very large battlefield, we believe that this skirmish will help align forces needed in the larger battle.

PBRE and knowledge democracy. We think that developing PBRE in a partnership among practitioners in the field, the educational research as well as general social science research communities, and the public is a good way to build knowledge democracy in education. Encouraging practitioners to engage in collecting PBRE contributes to knowledge democracy as practitioners in schools independently or in collaboration with scholars in research institutions can produce evidence of what-works on specified problems of practice. We see PBRE as an important source for various deliberations regarding educational practice and policy making within institutional settings such as schools, com-

munities, and state education agencies. Such a shared mission is one way the research community can learn from the vast number of practitioners, many of whom exhibit practice wisdom developed across years, which can be shared among other practitioners and scholars in the field. While it has rarely been seen in the USA, there have been efforts to improve education based on non-hierarchical knowledge collaborations among local constituents in Sweden (Rönnerman & Salo, Chap. 28, this volume), although PBRE was not their focal point.

Although practitioners are in an outstanding position to create knowledge by producing PBRE, there are major obstacles that prevent non-academy practitioners from engaging in research within their practices (e.g., Pine, 2009). Even for those individuals who learned and conducted action research in their pre-service education, with many of them seeing the benefits of action research, conducting action research during in-service practice is something that requires a different kind of commitment and that has stacked against it an array of disincentives. In general, practitioner-led research, either by collaborating with someone inside or outside the practice or by themselves, has been rare. Over the past several years, we have informally interacted with many educators in the field in an effort to understand this phenomenon. Three themes have emerged from our observations and interactions that partly explain the lack of practitioner-research.

- (a) Practitioner–scientist gap. The vast majority of pre-K-12 educators do not see themselves as researchers. Although perhaps interested in tackling what they see as problems in their practices and somewhat intrigued by the possibility of becoming authors and presenting their work to the larger public, becoming a practitioner-researcher and author is a new and somewhat frightening concept. Some teachers, however, are motivated by the possibility that the knowledge they produce could be useful and shared with other practitioners in the field. One practitioner shared with us that he does not like “teaching strategies and policies thrown at [him]” and saw action research as a way that his voice could be heard. Some have mentioned that they are sick of researchers who come to their workplaces telling them what to do in professional development, when they do not understand the particular situation of the workplace.

Empowering practitioners as knowledge producers who feel comfortable generating and disseminating knowledge based on PBRE could be accompanied by opening up spaces for new forms of intercultural translation in which public school educators and university-based action researchers could meet to explore the politics of the practitioner–scientist gap, to build trust, and to explore possibilities for using teacher knowledge to improve education. Here again, practitioner suspicion and resistance regarding knowledge production is understandable given the current colonization of primary and secondary schools by the knowledge producers from the university (Kincheloe, 2009). Strong efforts would need to be

made to separate such an initiative from the “war against public school teachers” (Giroux, 2013, p. 160) in which the neoliberal agenda rides roughshod over respecting teachers for their contributions to the public good. As Giroux (2013) explains, “neoliberalism ... is also a mode of pedagogy and a set of social arrangements that uses education to win consent, produce consumer-based notions of agency, ... while simultaneously instrumentalizing all forms of knowledge” (p. 161). The promotion of practitioner/teacher research will need to be built from the ground up as a contribution to ending the bashing of public institutions, including schools, and restoring the teachers’ role as “engaged citizens and public intellectuals” (p. 160). If careful attention is not given to this tension, teachers will most likely continue to see practitioner-research as another form of imposed pedagogical practice.

- (b) Motivation. No extrinsic rewards exist in the current educational culture for practitioners who are willing to engage in research in their practice. Teachers, for example, are assessed and rewarded mostly by their students’ test scores, not by efforts to improve their practice through classroom-based research to enhance student learning. Although teachers might have developed practice wisdom, say, in classroom management, there are, in most workplaces, no incentives to collect data and share what-works with colleagues and a wider audience. Further, there is no time available for the “extra” work of evidence gathering. We suggest that new forms of recognition be established by school districts and unions and awards be given for initiative and innovation by educators participating in various forms of action research.
- (c) Research application process for practitioner-led research. Research Review Board and application processes constitute major hindrances to practitioner-research. When a principal we interviewed planned to conduct school-wide action research with teachers in her school, she found that her district had no research application for practitioner-research. The district only had forms for university researchers who wished to conduct research utilizing the districts’ schools. District administrators were “baffled” by her request and the principal was left with no alternative other than putting her idea on hold. Modifying the procedure, she was told, would take many months. Another scenario involved two middle-school teachers who wanted to conduct research with their students. In this case, the district’s Research Review Board directed them to obtain human-subject protection training, which was not readily available through their district, before they could apply to conduct action research. We suggest that alternatives to the current highly restrictive practices associated with research led by practitioners are available and that advocates for practitioner-research expand their advocacy to include addressing the current barriers.

Strategy for implementing PBRE. In our view, the focus of a knowledge democracy strategy in education should be three-fold. First, identifying key

participants for the development of local and regional strategy and convening planning meetings needs to take place. This element of the strategy should concentrate on establishing a strong partnership between educators, local communities, education unions, and, when possible, university schools of education. The use of “Futures Action Research” (Ramos, Chap. 48, this volume) may be a helpful part of this initial element. Second, an initiative to develop a democratized knowledgebase as an alternative to the vast array of top-down knowledge could be launched. Such an initiative might be approached through something like “network action research” (Foth, 2006, p. 205) in conjunction with web-based knowledge democracy resources (discussed below). Third, once established, the knowledgebase could be used systematically to challenge the dominance of the epistemic monoculture of education research, to launch egalitarian countermeasures to the corporate agenda for school reform, and to engage in productive intercultural translation work with educators, academicians, union leaders, policy makers, and the larger community. Knowledge democracy in this arena again would need to fit the dual challenge of respecting diverse knowledges and being at the service of emancipatory initiatives.

We see a number of considerations to be thought through by those potentially interested in the knowledge democracy strategic initiative we have suggested.

- (a) Supporting practitioner-researchers producing knowledge by gathering PBRE. Clive Beck (Chap. 3, this volume) discusses the “informal action research” of everyday classroom inquiry, noting that such research is important for teacher morale and resilience. Beck indicates that informal action research is distinctive in that it is not usually made public, beyond informal conversations among teachers. Although teachers’ informal conversations are quite beneficial as they allow them to learn from each other, we assert that when teachers collect evidence based on their practice, that evidence should be shared with a wider audience. We believe the action research community should actively explore ways to ally with practitioner-researchers and help them produce and disseminate knowledge associated with everyday classroom inquiry.

There are already Internet sites that provide space for practitioners to share their action research evidence, including a network for the living theory approach to research and life by Jack Whitehead (<http://www.actionresearch.net/>), Catherine Bruce’s Internet space where mathematics teachers’ action research digital papers are presented (<http://www.tmerc.ca/digitalpapers/>), a repository of pre-service teachers’ action research studies facilitated by Joseph Shosh (<http://home.moravian.edu/public/educ/eddept/mEd/thesis.htm>), a website for pre-service school counselors’ action research studies facilitated by Lonnie Rowell (<http://www.schoolcounselor-advocate.com>), and the Center for Collaborative Action Research by Margaret Riel, providing space for practitioner-researchers’

written reports (<http://cadres.pepperdine.edu/ccar/define.html>) and an action research tutorial (<http://ccar.wikispaces.com/AR+Tutorial>).

A recent website whose mission is to help practitioner-researchers initiate action research in various fields has been launched by the Social Publishers Foundation (<https://socialpublishersfoundation.org/>). This site provides practitioners with opportunities for small grants and for crowdfunding for research and product development, and for publishing their practitioner-research. The published research process and findings will be displayed in various fields and subfields including Child and Youth Services, Community-based Participatory Initiatives, Education, and Healthcare. The Foundation utilizes social media to help disseminate the published materials, thus the site name, “Social Publishers” Foundation. Mentoring services are provided currently through the application review process for research funding and publication on the website; mentoring during practitioner-research is being conceptualized.

Practitioner-as-researcher is not a new concept (e.g., Carr & Kemmis, 1986), and Feldman (Chap. 8, this volume) traces efforts in educational action research as far back as 1948. However, given the current climate of education, motivating practitioners to engage in action research, and sharing their approaches and findings requires renewed determination and innovation by local practitioners and action researchers with the support of the global action research community.

- (b) Challenging the reign of evidence-based practice. In a very informative article, *Why “What Works” won’t work: Evidence-based practice and the democratic deficit in educational research*, Biesta (2007) concludes that evidence-based practice restricts “the scope of decision making to questions about effectivity effectiveness” as well as “the opportunities for participation in educational decision making” (p. 1). He points out various mistaken ideas about evidence-based practice in education, including what experimental research (randomized-controlled experimental research) can offer in determining what-works. What-works in “hard” natural science may not work as well in the “soft” social sciences, where the former involves the application of a straightforward method that assures a solution while the latter allows some rule of thumb or heuristic that narrows down possible solutions but without assurance of a solution (Simonton, 2004, 2014). Biesta stresses that educational practice requires educational and practical judgments about particular situations, not what has worked in a particular experimental condition. Although the latter can inform educational practice, it cannot replace professional judgment.

This trend in both the UK and USA has led some advocates of evidence-based practice as well as followers (some blindly) to assert that “any practice not based upon scientific knowledge is inferior and should ultimately be banned” (Biesta, 2007, p. 3). In the current “reign of error” (Ravitch, 2013, p. 1) in education, such an insult to the intellectual capabilities of teachers

goes almost unnoticed. One wonders who decides which evidence is scientific when there are a plethora of published works with questionable quality and relevance, especially when the research context cannot be matched with a practice context. Recent funding decisions in the USA, requiring the positivist randomized research design in applications for funding, seem to be not only top-down but flawed in generating what-works in education for a multitude of different classrooms and school contexts that require professional judgments by the educational practitioners. Research utilizing large-scale databases and meta-analysis incurs similar problems. It is not that randomized, large database, or meta-analytic research is not useful, but when such research is tied to requirements in policy making and funding, it violates the democratization of knowledge and marginalizes the professional judgment of teachers.

In summary, the difficulties we have discussed in the current research culture are symptoms of disrespect for the non-dominant knowledge production reflected in PBRE and practice wisdom. Not utilizing practitioners who “live” in the workplace and have vast contextual and practice-based knowledge regarding what-works and what-does-not-work is offensive to knowledge democratization and perpetuates a kind of colonization of knowledge about education. We agree with Kincheloe (2009) that a “transformative politics of knowledge” (p. 119) is essential to the overall process of decolonization, and we have attempted to show how elements of such a politics might be put into play in decolonizing the education system from the current dominance of a monocultural epistemology of knowledge production and dissemination. The task of educational action researchers is to help mobilize in the face of “neoliberalism’s war against teachers” (Giroux, 2013, p. 159). As we have discussed, this can be accomplished in part by bringing together the emerging democratically produced knowledges from the trenches of practice in public educational systems and drawing on this cocreated knowledgebase to reassert the “role teachers play in preparing learners to be active and critical citizens” (Giroux, p. 165).

5.2 SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The work of aligning the global action research and PAR community with an alternative globalization project is a tall order. It ranges from taking up important considerations of philosophy and epistemology, to practical programs of intercultural translation, to the forging of new alliances in support of knowledge democracy, and other issues in between. Today, the neoliberal globalization project presses hard against the intention of action research to respect epistemological diversity and exerts its pernicious influence on all knowledge produced and used in the large institutional infrastructures of modernity. In this situation, action research faces severe challenges associated with its role in knowledge production and its potential to contribute to knowledge democracy. In our view, the global action research community is well positioned to contribute to the development of an alternative globalization. Grounded in the

links between thought and action, research and practice, and social injustice and the struggle against it, the action research community has a natural affinity for knowledge democracy and can contribute substantially to the development of this dimension of democracy.

Although we have appealed for knowledge democracy in this chapter, we expect that the battle over the monopolization of knowledge production will intensify in the decades to come. We hope that more university-affiliated action researchers working in solidarity will engage with practitioners in examining questions of practice and disseminating their work. Through the use of technology for knowledge democracy, the effort to democratize knowledge and to respect diverse knowledge ecologies can be made more visible. Finally, perhaps, action researchers and others can gather to again examine the convergences between the global South and North and to map out the road to be walked toward a more just and sustainable future.

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Defining Action Research: On Dialogic Spaces for Constructing Shared Meanings

Lonnie L. Rowell, Margaret M. Riel, and Elena Yu. Polush

The variety of geographic, cultural, professional, community-based, social, and political contexts in which action research, in all its many forms, is conceived and conducted is now vast and continues growing. This chapter explores the challenge of defining action research given the diverse contexts and settings in which it is practiced. The act of generating knowledge and taking actions based on this knowledge is becoming increasingly relational, with knowledge producers walking across methodological boundaries and participating with others in creating knowledge flows (Hagel, Brown, & Davison, 2010). In the present chapter we are interested in the juncture of action research definitions and knowledge production in regard to the relational aspects of the work being done within what we characterize as the global action research community (ARC).

The chapter is grounded in a broad and inclusive view of defining action research. We begin by examining this grounding. We then examine our stance against the backdrop of previous research we have conducted on defining action research within a knowledge community (Rowell, Polush, Riel, & Bruewer, 2015) and through the lens of some of this Handbook's chapters as representative work of the global ARC. Finally, we reflect on the relational aspects of

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definition and meaning that can be seen across the chapters in the Handbook and in other literatures.

6.1 APPROACHES TO DEFINING ACTION RESEARCH

Epistemological and methodological plurality is an essential framework of action research as a “self-consciously” collaborative, participative, and democratic process and a “multidimensional strategy for social change” (Greenwood & Levin, 2007, p. 1). In Volume 1, No. 1 of *Action Research*, Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, and Maguire (2003) introduce the new journal with an examination of common themes and commitments among action researchers, including “areas of disagreement and important avenues for future exploration” (p. 9). They maintain that the “complex history” of action research is due to the broad range of academic fields and social contexts from which action research has emerged, including philosophy (e.g., John Dewey), labor organizing traditions, liberation theology, social psychology (Kurt Lewin), anthropology (Sol Tax), sociology (Orlando Fals Borda), group dynamics (Tavistock Institute), civil rights and social justice struggles (Highlander Center), and organizational change and development, to name the key fields and contexts (p. 11). Regarding the blending of theory and practice, Brydon-Miller et al. assert that “many action researchers would have to admit that they came to theory largely as a way of justifying what they knew was correct to begin with; to legitimize a politically informed and effective form of knowledge generated through experience” (p. 15). Given the great variety of life experiences informing the construction of such knowledge, it is no wonder that efforts to find a simple common definition have been difficult, if not impossible.

This difficulty has resulted in a kind of standing invitation for all manner of considerations regarding what constitutes the actual practice of action research. Some have approached this invitation philosophically (Carr, 2006; see also Kemmis, 2010) and others from the standpoints of the varied domains in which action research has flowered (e.g., education [Lomax, 1986; Pine, 2009]; participatory action research [Jordan, 2009], systemic action research [Burns, 2007] and nursing [Holter & Schwartz-Barcott, 1993]). Johansson and Lindhult (2008) conceptualize two basic orientations that characterize action research: (1) the pragmatic orientation and (2) the critical orientation (p. 100). In their thinking about action research, the pragmatic orientation has “a focus on *praxis* and practical knowledge development, cooperation between all concerned parties, and the need for finding and constructing a common ground between them as a platform for action” (p. 100). Its purpose is improvement in the workability of human *praxis*. The critical orientation, on the other hand, is more in line with the thinking of Paulo Freire and Foucault; its purpose is emancipatory and calls for the recognition of tensions and conflicting interests. It has a feel of disruption more than one of harmonious collaboration. “To acknowledge such tensions and conflicts through reflective and self-reflective efforts is crucial, as well as giving a voice to unrecognized groups and interests” (p. 105).

According to Johansson and Lindhult (2008), the transformations associated with the critical orientation take the form of struggle and resistance. They align these orientations, respectively, with the global North (the pragmatic orientation) and the global South (the critical orientation). Santos (2014) would take some issue with this positioning by seeing the critical orientation as being primarily grounded in a Eurocentric epistemological framework (the global North) but would agree that much of the vitality of an emancipatory orientation is found in the global South. Ultimately, Johansson and Lindhult conclude that although there is room for dialogue and negotiation regarding the suitability of one or the other orientation for a particular action research project, the two orientations “can never fully agree with each other” and “in praxis, one of the two tends to take the upper hand” (p. 110).

Writing four years later, this same issue of the debate between pragmatist and critical tendencies in action research is taken up by Hadfield (2012). Hadfield’s motivation in addressing the issue was sparked by the tensions between Carr and Kemmis’s (1986) position on critical theory and Elliott’s (2005) critique of that stance. In Hadfield, it is as if the hypothetical conversation in Johansson and Lindhult (2008) between “p” (pragmatic) and “c” (critical) (pp. 103–110) is continued with the addition of a third participant, “t,” or therapist. Drawing on his 20+ years of experience with action research, Hadfield sought a “rapprochement” (p. 575) between the critical orientation and the pragmatic through a close analysis of the ebbs and flows of his own practice, and a comparison of these lived experiences with the assertions of Carr and Kemmis, on the one hand, and Elliott, on the other hand. Hadfield “began to consider technical, practical, and emancipatory not as separate forms of action research but as ‘moments’ that could occur within any given programme” (p. 576) of action research. Such moments are to be reflected on and learned from but should not be hardened into rigid categories that then stand in some kind of “opposition” to one another.

Feldman (Chap. 8, this volume) puts forth a historical framing of the shifts in focus within action research in the English-speaking world. He organizes the nearly 90-year history of action research into three “Eras” (p. 125) with varying conceptualizations of action research emerging within each era. Although the Eras overlap, there are enough distinct differences to support both the framework he offers and his conclusion that “what counts as action research is a product of its time” (p. 140). He concludes that in the current Era of conservative ideology, action research has largely abandoned its earlier links with social justice. However, as explored by Rowell and Hong (Chap. 6, this volume) there have been determined calls coming from the global South and global North for at least the past 65 years for re-establishing and maintaining these links. While it remains too early to tell just when a fourth Era of action research might begin, it is likely that a new Era will bring further shifts in definitions.

In this context, in 2010, Kemmis took up the question of “what is to be done” (p. 417) regarding the place of action research in the troubled world of the twenty-first century. Writing from a unified framework of *praxis*, Kemmis

carefully examines what it means to *do* action research and *to be* an action researcher:

It follows that the most important goal of action research is to help us do what is right for each person (individual praxis) and what is right for humankind (collective praxis). Our concern, in action research, should not just be with us—the ones who intend to do the right thing—but also, and perhaps more particularly, with what happens (what is done)... Thus, the point of doing action research, it seems to me, is for each of us and all of us to find more sustainable—or, more precisely, less unsustainable—ways of living in the world. (p. 423)

The specific relevance of the question “what is to be done?” has to do with Kemmis’s conviction that action research “needs to move on from the impasse of justifying itself as ‘research’ on the model of the empirical-analytic sciences that aim to produce new (‘external’) knowledge” (p. 425). Kemmis is pointing toward what can be inferred from Feldman (Chap. 8, this volume), that is, the emergence of a new Era of action research. Perhaps this new Era will be one in which action research of all kinds:

aims to explore ways of doing things, new ways of thinking, and new ways of relating to one another and to the world in the interest of finding those new ways that are more likely to be for the good of each person and the good of humankind, and more likely to help us live sustainably. (Kemmis 2010, p. 425)

It is up to the global ARC to answer Kemmis’s call.

The traditional approach to searching for definitions in action research orients scholars, intellectual-activists and practitioners in the direction of the propositional form of science that Kemmis (2010) has suggested we move on from. In our case, we argue for creating dialogic spaces within which those *doing* action research can share their understandings and in the process create new meanings. The effort to find meaning among action researchers and communities of action research situates the three authors of this chapter in the more practical philosophy space written about by Kemmis and earlier by Carr (2006). It also opens up opportunities for different kinds of dialogue about the meanings that adhere to the work with which action researchers are engaged. We believe this nurtures the critical orientation described by Johansson and Lindhult (2008).

6.2 CREATING SHARED UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE DEFINITIONAL BOUNDARIES OF ACTION RESEARCH

In 2012, we conducted a study within an ARC to gain an understanding of “community members’ perspectives about characteristics of action research that distinguish it from other social science modes of inquiry” (Rowell et al., 2015, p. 254). The particular community with which we worked was the

Action Research Special Interest Group (AR SIG) of the American Educational Research Association (AERA). At the time of the study, the AR SIG leaders wished to explore the *common ground* of its members' knowledge and practices, while also being respectful of the diversity of views and meanings of action research held by this community. The research sought both an understanding of the shared meanings drawn on to define action research and a delineation of the boundaries. Through the use of a "comparing and contrasting approach" (Rowell et al., p. 254), we identified the distinguishing characteristics of action research within this community and framed the space within which the AR SIG members co-create knowledge while being part of the larger educational researchers' community, that is, AERA. In generating this understanding, we also problematized connections among participants' shared perspectives (*what was shared, how it was shared*), and emphasized both convergence and divergence of perspectives.

From an initial one-method Delphi process, the study evolved as an emergent mixed-methods design by introducing learning circles methodology (Rowell et al., 2015). The use of two methods facilitated a broader representation of AERA AR SIG community members and their voices. We looked for "the complementary and explanatory qualities of integration" (Rowell et al., p. 254) across members' views, and were able to generate a depiction of 30 distinguishing characteristics of action research within this community. As a part of sharing our findings, we offered an overarching narrative statement within which the identified characteristics were woven together. We considered the generated overarching narrative statement as a *living document*.

6.2.1 *The Afterword—Community Discussions on Defining Action Research*

To initiate further conversation based on the idea of the narrative statement as a living document on naming action research, in the spring of 2015 we conducted two interactive workshops with members of the AERA AR SIG and the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) communities. Below we share a brief summary of both discussions. Further, the *living document* is posted on the AERA AR SIG Wiki-website where members can modify it continually (sites.google.com/site/aeaarsig/Home/what-is-action-research).

Two questions guided our interactive sessions with the two communities of action researchers, "How do we [members of the AERA AR SIG; members of the ARNA community], think about action research?" "Could we craft a narrative that would capture the essential meanings of action research across the diversity of fields, contexts, and settings?" The first workshop was held in conjunction with the AR SIG Business Meeting at the AERA 2015 annual conference. The second workshop was included in the 2015 ARNA conference program. In both sessions, we distributed copies of the living document and invited participants to read and reflect on and to make changes to its content.

Subsequent discussions in both sessions surfaced tensions in the definitional process. A central point of the AERA AR SIG discussion was the nature of the change associated with action research. Should the focus be change at a personal level, organizational level, societal level, or a mixture of all three? One participant in the AERA AR SIG session asserted that action research was primarily about deep transformative change of the practitioner. Another participant claimed that if action research is to be considered a *serious social science* it must be centered on findings and their reliability and validity to generate knowledge about practices in particular settings.

Here, we see an example of how defining action research is tied to the politics of knowledge production (see Kincheloe, 2009). For example, Fals Borda (see Rappaport, Chap. 9, this volume) left his university position in Colombia because he wanted to be free to approach participatory action research from a more open epistemological stance, that is, a stance not limited by the dimensions of traditional social science as practiced at the university. Fals Borda certainly did not see his approach as any less *serious* than that of any other social scientist; he simply did not want to spend time in arguments about whose work was serious or not. Such conflicts can become quite heated, and the discussion at our AERA AR SIG session was no exception. However, the AERA AR SIG members in the session seemed to reach a shared perspective that change is always a *part* of action research; moreover, it is not just change for the sake of change, but change for the better in the relevant social context that is at stake.

In the second instance, we offered a workshop at the ARNA 2015 annual meeting. In this session, the issues of concern were more global and cultural in nature. In addition, views of action research related to process versus outcomes also stood out. One participant shared a perspective that of late there has been too much emphasis on action and not much on learning, and this point was discussed. Also, what was perceived as an intent to *regulate* defining action research was questioned by some participants, with the point made that definitions of action research are culture specific and informed by the unique contexts and settings of its (action research) practice within a particular country and/or ethnic community. A question was raised, “How could the study’s living document be relevant to action research practitioners in other countries?” One participant asserted that in several African countries, people do not see action research and participatory research as distinguishable; they are viewed as one methodology. Further, similarities between action research and other modes of inquiry were acknowledged (e.g., critical anthropology) and the importance of blurring genres was debated. While for some participants, the living document appeared as an overly *Westernized* view of action research, there seemed to have been a shared perspective that having this narrative was useful in encouraging dialogue and refining our understandings.

During the discussions in both sessions, reflecting on the presented living document raised additional questions with the central theme, “What is the essence of action research?” Although the majority of the community mem-

bers participating in both discussions tended to agree that action research is not traditional social science, it appeared to be much more difficult for members to articulate a shared sense of the essence of action research, that is, the special quality without which action research would no longer exist. However, we do not wish to overdraw this point. The intent of initiating and conducting these two sessions was to share with the communities the living document and to engage the members in the process of creating dialogical spaces.

Perhaps, for some in attendance, the experience of action research is simply too personal to share in dialogic spaces organized within conferences, which can be large and impersonal gatherings, constrained by time designated for a “session.” We would contrast the cultural context of this type of sharing, for example, with the experience of something like the Cree Nation’s use of the Talking Circle (Buchanan, Makokis, & Donmoyer, 2012) in which the dialogue is much more open, less *on the clock*, and built around a deeper appreciation of the nature of connection-through-sharing and the essential role of dialogue in genuine community.

Despite the limitations, we view opening up these dialogical spaces as small steps that potentially can contribute to a new Era of action research. Perhaps through repeated dialogic encounters, members of various ARCs will begin to develop a sense of not only shared meanings in conducting action research but also common value in sharing openly their understandings of the essence of what they practice when they engage in action research. We hope that our previous research-generated narrative as well as the summaries of the two more recent group interactions on defining action research will continue to evolve within virtual spaces, face-to-face interactive environments, and other settings.

The printed chapters in the Handbook represent one of those forms of dialogic space. The contents of each chapter now exist in a public space accessible by English-speakers in any part of the world. In this context, the Handbook as a whole provides an opportunity to investigate and question the extent to which the works included here contribute to consideration of issues associated with defining action research. We briefly discuss five issues related to Handbook chapters and related literature, specifically (1) boundaries, (2) ownership of the process of action research, (3) knowledge production and dissemination, (4) epistemological diversity, and (5) dynamics of networked interaction. We end the chapter with a brief conclusion.

6.3 EXTENDING THE DIALOGUE

6.3.1 *On Boundaries*

Williams and Imam (2007) argue, “defining boundaries is an essential part of systems work/inquiry/thinking” (p. 6). Boundaries delineate a space

where one meets the other and, most importantly, where differences meet. Boundaries generate turbulence. Boundaries are encountered through exploration, and the process of exploration is messy (Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1996). Yet, it is within this messiness and the associated tensions of shared and differing perspectives, and often at the points of intersections of diverse ideas, new possibilities emerge and new solutions and/or approaches are generated, which, in turn, inspire and lead to transformation. To gain these benefits, one has to be open to *enter* a dialogical space and to engage with its processes. The initially bounded space can facilitate dialogue and provoke critical reflection. Further, the key attribute is to keep the boundaries of a created space flexible by examining its relationships with other spaces (e.g., organizations, institutions, networks, communities, and virtual spaces), looking “inside, outside, beside, and between” the created space boundaries, and “critiquing and if necessary changing that initial choice of boundaries” (Williams & Imam, 2007, p. 6).

Pushing (critiquing, challenging) definitional boundaries and opening dialogical spaces are processes built on social connectedness. Stretching dialogical spaces enables self-reflexivity and allows us to “grapple with the complexities” (Dimitriadis, 2012, p. 11) of our growth as action researchers. These points are powerfully evident in relation to McTaggart, Nixon, and Kemmis’s (Chap. 2) discussion of *critical participatory action research*. In their view, involvement with critical participatory action research constitutes an agreement by participants to share in a process of seeking “mutual understanding” leading to an “unforced consensus” (this volume, p. 29) and ultimately to “communicative power and solidarity” (p. 23). The work within the communicative spaces at the core of their conceptualization is a practice-changing practice with permeable boundaries and voluntary participation. As Peters asserts in the Handbook’s Foreword, we must always account for the social nature of the knowledge constructions we offer up to the world. The authors of Chap. 2 capture the intricate “dance” of such accountability.

6.3.2 *Ownership of the Process of Action Research*

For some, the meaning of action research invokes a process of empowering practitioners to solve the problems that they own, building their knowledge, developing *living theories* and sharing reflective insights with peers (Whitehead, Chap. 24). For others, as previously discussed, the work of action research means taking a critical stance involving addressing issues of social injustice (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Rai, Chap. 15; Rowell & Hong, Chap. 5; Shosh, Chap. 39; Tandon, Chap. 27). This latter perspective is well illustrated in the work of the Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) organization described by Rajesh Tandon (Chap. 27). PRIA’s initiative, “*making democracy work for all*” focuses on engaging the poor, the marginalized (especially women and youth)

in programs and participatory research that are of value and meaning to those groups and aim to address the most pressing social issues including violence against women; access to housing rights, water and sanitation services; and engaging in the political process. In this context, the sociopolitical outcomes of projects outweigh considerations of what a facilitating action researcher may, or may not have, gotten out of the work.

In other cases, the voices of action research practitioners may be muted by the positioning of action research within infrastructures and associated political discourses where topics are decided in advance by ministries of education or university researchers. For example, Kodituwakku (Chap. 18) and Kim and Kim (Chap. 21) tell somewhat similar histories unfolding in very different countries. Action research as originally introduced in Korea and Sri Lanka was synonymous with teacher research or classroom research, yet in both countries, teachers were assistants in projects directed by researchers from either a university or a ministry of education. The overall approach was to conduct traditional social science research, with virtually no ownership of the process by classroom-based practitioners. Kim and Kim share that research presented in the first handbook of action research as well as other publications influenced Korean educators and encouraged the eventual development of grassroots' networking associations among teachers to take more ownership of knowledge construction based on classroom practice.

The history of the Action Research Laboratory in a midsize suburban secondary school north of Chicago tells a different story of teachers owning the process of action research and reporting dramatic shifts in their identities as professionals (Senese, Chap. 44, this volume). A high degree of involvement by teachers in the action research process, including the sharing of their knowledge with others, added fulfillment to their professional careers. Similarly, as Beck (Chap. 3, this volume) describes it, the process of classroom practice as a form of informal action research provides much satisfaction for practitioners, is widespread, and is of great importance to education. Beck also claims that this informal action research provides a point of resistance to conservative assertions about education, and in this sense it has a critical edge to it. However, because it is often not shared beyond the very localized, and therefore narrow, context of teacher's lounges and informal conversations among educators, this form of knowledge production struggles for legitimacy in the larger circles of shared knowledge. Even among teachers themselves, Beck finds, the knowledge generated by practitioners is assumed to have less authority than that produced by *the experts* in universities.

6.3.3 *Knowledge Production and Dissemination*

The literature of action research is filled with discussions of knowledge, its production, and its dissemination. Closely linked to considerations of who

owns the process of action research are questions related to ownership of the knowledge created, including the issue of whether, without formal peer review and formal academic dissemination, any knowledge is actually produced by action research (see Feldman, Chap. 8). McTaggart, Nixon and Kemmis (Chap. 2) suggest that dialogue around practices in public spaces is the way in which knowledge generated in action research should be shared. Here, we find the emphasis on the relational dimension of knowledge. Rowell and Hong (Chap. 5) assert that the dialogue concerning knowledge production has to move past informal space (Beck, Chap. 3) and even the public spaces discussed by McTaggart, Nixon, and Kemmis, and be shared with a wider audience. Rowell and Hong emphasize the role of the larger ARC in supporting practitioner researchers to share their knowledge. In effect, the authors are encouraging the growing global ARC to attend to what McTaggart, Nixon, and Kemmis describe as creating new *practice architectures* to support action research.

Ledwith (Chap. 4) details her own journey working in both schools and communities. Her story embodies a construct discussed by Fals Borda (2001) (see also Rappaport, Chap. 9), namely, *sentipensantes* (thinking-feeling persons). Introduced to him by the fishermen on the coast of northern Colombia, the term was used to describe a language based in telling the truth. In Ledwith's case, her truth emerges through combining a deep feeling of empathy for, first, the children she taught, and later, the members of communities within which she worked in community development projects and by embracing an evolving orientation as an intellectual-activist. Ledwith reads, thinks, feels, finds her voice for speaking truth to power, and takes action as her work evolves. In the process, she experiences a personal and political transformation. Here we encounter the phenomenon of combining types of knowledge produced through working *with* people in the context of popular struggles and the resulting transformation of *both* local community participants and the researcher. In this regard, the knowledge produced is both relational in a very local sense, that is the new knowledge is produced and shared at the grass roots level, and personally transformative (as well as reflective of the feminist tenet that the personal is political). The knowledge produced is disseminated locally and finds its validity in the context of how useful the knowledge is in advancing the community's interests. At the personal level, the knowledge produced is transformative but may have limited dissemination other than through the evolving work of the practitioner in relation to other people. Yet, Ledwith's story of her personal journey is also an example of the next level of dissemination of such knowledge. Through her Handbook chapter she now tells the story as a *sentipensante* (thinking-feeling person) to a wider audience.

As previously mentioned, Beck (Chap. 3) defines a cyclic inquiry process of "*informal action research*," which he believes is something that good teachers frequently employ. Beck makes a strong case for the value of personally enacted

knowledge created through this informal experimentation over time, and he raises a critical question, “Does the role of researcher entail a commitment to externalize and share knowledge in a way that opens it up for public scrutiny and community dialogue?” Reflective practices are a powerful form of personal and professional learning, but “Does action research carry with it an obligation to build collective knowledge?” This important question is somewhat reminiscent of the Zen Koan about *one hand clapping*. Is there any sound? Thus, although teachers (and other practitioners providing public service to people, such as in the community development work described by Ledwith (Chap. 4)), may have a wealth of accumulated knowledge in the form of practice wisdom, the question remains, “Who benefits from this knowledge when it is not shared?”

6.3.4 *Epistemological Diversity*

Another issue encountered in defining action research is the recognition of epistemological diversity (Santos, 2014). Living in a world of many forms of diversity with unprecedented changes taking place globally calls for “the development of a critical consciousness” (Cannella & Lincoln, 2013, p. 170) and critical reflexivity to challenge our positions and the ways we conceive and engage with inquiry in all forms. Here we echo the sentiment of Fals Borda (2001):

If we could discover a way to bring about the convergences between popular thought and academic science, we could gain both a more complete and a more applicable knowledge—especially by and for the underprivileged classes which are in need of scientific support. (p. 29)

The point here is that the convergences Fals Borda addresses assume epistemological diversity and that ultimately a truly “applicable” knowledge will be one that serves the oppressed. This definitional element can be seen in several chapters in the Handbook (see Ledwith, Chap. 4; McTaggart, Nixon, & Kemmis, Chap. 2; Rappaport, Chap. 9; Rai, Chap. 15; Shosh, Chap. 39).

Reflecting on methodological experiences and articulating the emergence of new methods associated with our practices as action researchers surface undergirding assumptions, extend our thinking, enable reflexivity, foster transparency, and contribute to strengthening the quality of practice. Lather (2007) and Maguire (2006) have examined this aspect of epistemological diversity in relation to feminist perspectives on action research. Rappaport (Chap. 9) and Smith (2012) describe the psychological and epistemic depth associated with such explorations in the context of indigenous cultural practices.

The problems and challenges we face in constructing shared meanings of action research that are also respectful of epistemic diversity are complex.

Santos's (2007) volume examining knowledge construction "beyond northern epistemologies" is a valuable contribution to understanding this complexity. The 15 chapters are written by scholars and intellectual-activists from around the global South and address difficult issues related to land ownership, the rights of indigenous people, biodiversity, and intellectual property rights, among others. In one chapter, Visvanathan (2007) discusses the work of India's C.V. Seshadri (1930–1995) as a scientist with a deep commitment to creating a new kind of science and scientific knowledge rooted in the history and culture of India. Seshadri, according to Visvanathan, saw the traditional science laboratory as "an outpost of the western scientific establishment" (p. 216) and he wished to enliven, challenge, and disrupt this notion by creating laboratories that were highly innovative, yet deeply, even playfully rooted in the genealogies of all the great thinkers in India, which had come before. His vision was of a laboratory that provided "refuge and hospitality to defeated and marginal ideas" and appealed to an ascetic style of life based on "a science lean and sinuous in muscle" (p. 216). It also was to have a kitchen-like sense of openness to the broader "household" of farm and society. Here, the epistemology of science was to be re-imagined in a rich blend of ancient cultural constructs, the needs of a developing country, serving the people, and preserving traditional knowledges.

In the same volume, Alonso (2007) discusses traditional knowledge as:

a complex whole based on tradition, observation, and the use of biological processes and resources. It has to do with a holistic conception of the relationship between society and nature, and is expressed and systematized in myths, rituals, oral narratives, and practices linked to the management of the environment, to health, to institutions, and to the rules established for the access to, use, apprehension, and transmission of such knowledge. (p. 255)

The point here is not in any way to romanticize or exoticize indigenous cultures and the knowledges embodied within them. Rather, what we wish to note is that action research has to acknowledge this diversity and be open to working with a variety of epistemological frameworks. An advantage held by the global ARC in meeting this challenge is the accumulated practice wisdom seen in projects such as those described by Ronnerman and Salo (Chap. 28) and Nelson and Moxham (Chap. 35).

In other words, it is not just the use of a variety of action research *methods* that is at issue; it is the willingness and ability to embrace empathic understanding when entering the life space of others and exploring the world as they experience it. There is ample evidence of the capacity of action researchers to call up this understanding. Action research is a learning process "through which communities and organizations can adapt and respond purposefully to their constantly changing environments" (Burns, 2010, p. 1). It is a collaborative process aimed at making improvements and generating actions (Koshy, 2010).

Many action researchers appreciate the beauty in learning from each other, which, in turn (1) contributes to both methodological plurality and respect for epistemological diversity, (2) fosters greater analytical thoughtfulness, and (3) creates dialogical spaces.

6.3.5 *Dynamics of Networked Interaction*

As digital technologies remake how we live and re-define the value and meaningfulness of our interactions in personal and professional domains, a network of action researchers creates a space that enables greater connectedness, including connection through dialogues that facilitate changes. In today's world, networks re-shape and transform our views on knowledge production and claims of its legitimacy. Hagel et al. (2010) make the claim that the success of our institutions depends "on their ability to amplify the effort of individuals so that small moves, smartly made can become catalysts for broad impact" (p. 8). They argue that we face two enormous challenges today: (1) making sense of the world around us and (2) mapping progress in a rapidly changing world. The *power of pull* is the ability to mobilize people and resources, including ourselves, to address new opportunities and challenges. This power is best realized by creating networks and moving away from the notion of storing knowledge and refocusing on creating "knowledge flows" (p. 11).

Networks offer a new platform for social interactions, collaboration, and engagement. Practitioner Research Forum provides an ongoing dialogue around living theory approaches to action research (see Whitehead, Chap. 24). The operational groups and ARCs of ARNA extend organizational leadership to a wide network of people (Shosh, Rowell, Riel, & Bruce, Chap. 30). The CARN Study Days (Balogh, McAteer & Handley, Chap. 25) organized throughout Europe and increasingly extended to other parts of the world invite action researchers and practitioners to meet informally, share their experiences, and engage in dialogues regarding issues of theory and practice in action research.

Networks are evolving and organic by nature; they are "always becoming" (Hagel, Brown, & Davison, p. *x*). Virtual networks especially transcend all boundaries and have become increasingly global. The essence of a network is social connection, and the network's energy is in a shared passion by its members. This passion is what stretches and opens the dialogical spaces needed for growth and change.

CONCLUSION

In the opening article in Vol. 1, No. 1 of *Action Research*, Brydon-Miller et al. (2003) asked "why action research?" (p. 9). Included in their exploration of this question are some suggested areas of improvement that the authors hoped

would be a part of the journal's future and thus a part of advancing "both the theory and practice of action research" (p. 16) in the field. They point out that there is much work needed in "adequately articulating strong theoretical foundations for our work" and "in articulating inclusive theoretical foundations that build more extensively on indigenous knowledge systems" (p. 16) such as feminist and postcolonial perspectives. Ultimately, in their view, the new prominence of action research that had become evident in the final decade of the twentieth century and the beginning years of the twenty-first required significant inquiry to better understand why this phenomenon had occurred as well as to examine "what can be done to sustain and expand it with integrity" (p. 25).

The global community of action researchers has come a long way in the 12 years since that invocation. We see the issues we have raised in this chapter as a contribution to the process of continuous learning, improvement, and growth within this community. Our intent is to advocate for a broad and inclusive way of thinking about action research by opening dialogical spaces within which the established and/or perceived definitional boundaries are explored, challenged, and pushed, while also respecting the central elements without which there would be no action research. To apply the results of such an exercise of reflection and "thinking through" tough questions requires, in parallel with a process of abstraction, practical reasoning to decide what to do with the tools which action research puts in people's hands and the knowledge that emerges from the use of those tools. Posing new questions represents, of course, turning new pages on our journey as the global community of action researchers, a journey that is shared and inspired by our passion for humanity. The work of opening dialogical spaces will require the participation of all of us "to discover new ways of being together" (Wheatley, 1999, p. xi) and to explore new potentials.

Defining or framing or naming is a complex and contextualized process. Understanding various contexts within which action research is theorized and practiced is essential to be able to see beneath the surface (Scharfstein, 1989). As a result of our examination of the notion of defining action research by reflecting on our previous study and some of the authors' works presented in the Handbook, we can discern distinctions between (1) the *formal* definitions of action research; (2) definitions or ways to define action research based on *experiential learning* or *learning by doing*; (3) definitions informed by a specific *culture's* particularities, traditions, ways of living, and being in the world; and (4) the *meanings* assigned (or unearthed) by action researchers by reflecting critically on conducting action research and thinking about what happens (what is done) (Kemmis, 2010).

Most likely, there could be other distinctions that readers might draw. Our take from this exploration of definitional issues is that it is important to "be aware of the textural differences between our lives, the different ways in which we are woven into the world and into one another" (Scharfstein, 1989, p. 4).

There is a strong relationship between one's making meaning of action research and *knowing* its (action research) various contexts and situations, the diverse perspectives and the complex dynamics of relationships woven together in an action research project.

"The river of action research now flowing around the world" (Rowell et al., 2015, p. 244) has its tributaries, and the history of this river reveals numerous eddies, or points below obstructions where a counter-current of water temporarily breaks the swift flow. At the source, we find that the question of the meaning of action research is inseparable from the question of our ways of living in this world. To this end, our call to action researchers is to create dialogical spaces for constructing shared meanings, generating knowledge flows, and growing and nurturing our global community. The created dialogical spaces are connecting by and through sharing. They serve as the juncture to explore new ways and possibilities informed by our emergent practices. In these spaces we come to new appreciations of the diversity of global epistemologies, new choices for how we want to live in the world, and a deeper recognition that it will take the entire global village to transform the world.

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A World of Action Research

Introduction to A World of Action Research

Catherine D. Bruce and Lonnie L. Rowell

Part two of the Handbook addresses historic activity of action research around the globe and leads us to understanding the present circumstances as part of that history. This section includes 16 chapters representing 6 continents. The chapters flow in a pathway beginning in North America, where the editors are located, and move to South America, then over to Europe, and farther East to Asia, and then South to Australia and New Zealand. Nations and regions represented in the Handbook include Australia, Bhutan, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Finland, India, Ireland, Korea, Malawi, Mexico, the Middle East, Mongolia, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Southern Africa, Sweden, the UK, and the USA. Those countries not represented directly in Part II are found in other parts of the Handbook. In all of these regions of the globe, and more, action research is alive and well.

The range of contexts, cultures, and sociopolitical dilemmas identified in these chapters are by no means inclusive, however, there is an interesting convergence across the chapters in terms of predominantly democratic values, professional challenges, and a complexity of approaches focused on changing patterns of thinking, doing, and being. The country-by-country chapters capture almost 100 years of history from all corners of the world and in a sense, Part II of this Handbook acts as a meta-layer of extended action research stories, each with its own perspectives, family of methods, cultures, ways of knowing, and knowledge creation structures. This meta-layer hovers over the more detailed examples and stories of action research found in other parts of the Handbook and provides overall context for understanding the many forms of

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marginalization, injustice, and strife that action researchers are continually acting against.

One of the primary goals of this Handbook is to pay attention to typically silenced voices, and to offer a sense of the multi-vocality of action research internationally—as a textual form of knowledge democratization. This has involved gathering national histories in English, even though for many of the authors and stories presented, English is not a first language. Nonetheless, through translations the authors and editors have tried to preserve the meaning (and spelling) of key terms and ideas in their native language or at least in direct translation form. Terms such as *sentipensantes*, meaning *being thinking and feeling persons* (Rappaport, Chap. 9, this volume), are explored and illustrated to expand our understanding of being human and enacting that humanity through action research.

It is not only interesting but essential, to learn about the histories of action research from these various nations for several reasons: First, each chapter presented in this section of the Handbook allows us to develop our understanding of the critical groundwork that has been completed in each region of the globe. The typical narrative of the origins of action research points to Kurt Lewin as the founder of action research, and the term was indeed coined by Lewin in 1944, although Feldman (Chap. 8, this volume) shows the complexity of even this assertion. Action research did not emerge as a linear trajectory or storyline. It has been developing over time, and across a broad range of disciplines and interest groups around the world. In some cases, this groundwork has been met with charges of heresy, rebellion, and breaches of conformity, but in all cases, the groundwork was built from a place of dissatisfaction and need for change or new ways of understanding problems of real life. Today, we stand on the shoulders of the action research giants that have come before us.

Second, in reading the national histories of action research, we gain insight into not only the action research activity over time in these nations but the culture, political contexts, and social developments (both positive and negative) that impact and are impacted by the action research activities. In learning about the historical development of action research to the present, sometimes described as eras for those regions where there has been extended history of action research (see Feldman, Chap. 8, this volume), or in shorter movements or bursts for those countries where action research is relatively new (see Lin, Chap. 19, this volume, and Kaye et al., Chap. 20, this volume), we can more easily situate the culturally bound and current work of action researchers today. Tracing the ebb and flow of action research momentum, over time and in pockets of significant activity globally, helps us to reflect on the social, political, geographic, and cultural diversity of the circumstances we all face as a global community.

Third, in learning about how others develop, refine, and improvise with forms of action research, we may increase our own repertoire of action research practices, particularly in regard to tensions, restrictions, and challenges faced by action researchers globally. As Rappaport (Chap. 9, this volume) explains,

we can learn from the necessarily imaginative practices of others around the globe:

While all research, participatory or otherwise, is a work of the imagination, collaborative endeavors require researchers, both academic and non-academic, to generate new forms of engaging the imaginaries of diverse participants if they are to include everyone in the construction of an epistemology that is simultaneously grounded in local thought-ways and in academic ways of thinking. (p. 148)

Through the imagination, and actions on those imaginings, we begin to see the great potential of action research to contribute to a robust knowledge democracy and to the development of an alternative globalization.

Fourth, in seeing the scope of action research internationally, we develop a deeper understanding of the range of community members engaging in research. According to Greenwood and Levin (2006), action research is a series of expressly collaborative and democratic strategies that support the generation of knowledge and action, where local stakeholders work with research experts and specialists. This community consists of practitioner-researchers in education, social work, nursing, counseling, community development, ecology, farming, academia, and across many forms of intellectual activity on every continent and at every edge of the globe. The growing engagement (see Clausen, Chap. 7, this volume) of an international population of action researchers helps to cement action research as a clearly relevant, legitimate, and ethically responsible form of both action and research. In this regard, the 16 chapters presented in Part II point to a promising way forward and to the resounding potential for vigorous activity of action research in the coming years.

A second important goal of this section of the Handbook is to embrace the multi-vocal and sometimes conflicting sets of beliefs and methods of action research. Rather than positioning the Handbook in exclusionary terms (where one particular set of methods or positions is privileged over others), the goal here is to include and celebrate the vast range of forms of action research and the beliefs and actions associated with those various forms. McNiff (2013) cautions us to resist the temptation of pitting the various beliefs and methods against one another. She explains:

Over the years, various models and different interpretations of action research have developed. Some people prioritize technical aspects, believing it is important to get the method right. Other people are also interested in the values that inform action research, such as a belief that people should be in control of their work and the way they conduct that work, and how the research can lead to a living out of those values...These different perspectives generate lively debates. There is no one 'correct' way. (McNiff, 2013, <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/ar-booklet.asp>)

It is our own reflection on the work of others, and in the lively debates about our work, that we develop a deeper understanding of not only what others are doing internationally, but also what is occurring in our own back-

yards, and indeed in our own practices. The set of chapters presented in Part II offers readers the opportunity to circumnavigate the globe, virtually, to engage with this range of beliefs and practices with the ultimate aim of increasing our respect for the work of others and increasing the level of critical reflection on our own work.

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Action Research in the Canadian Context

Kurt W. Clausen

The history of Canada has been largely dictated by its vast geography: ten separate provinces and three territories, all following their own paths. Yet, in more recent years, these once isolated regions have begun sharing general alliances over many issues. Few aspects of this condition are more telling than that of action research in Canada. This chapter examines its development and present state of acceptance in this country and the many variations that exist in its realization. While it focuses primarily on the area of education, it also touches on the fields of health care and social work (long-standing promoters of this methodology), as well as more recent developments in environmental and aboriginal studies. Specifically, the chapter first observes the evolution of a “grass-roots” researcher-practitioner movement in the pre- and postwar period and a widespread (yet fragmented) acceptance of action research by the mid-late 1960s. Building on this contextualization, it then reviews Canadian scholarship that has been produced on the subject and the major researchers who are presently at the vanguard of this movement. Subsequently, a sample of federal and provincial governmental initiatives, as well as federations and associations, surveys the work they have done in promoting action research among their constituents. Finally, this chapter identifies a number of formal and informal networks that function at the bedrock level, aiding practitioners and scholars in their work.

7.1 THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

As the world’s second largest country geographically (almost 10 million square kilometers), with a great deal of territory consisting of inhospitable terrain for habitation, Canada has traditionally been a land of sparse settlement and poor

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communication. At the time of Confederation in 1867, the populace was close to 3.5 million, and has since increased tenfold. Even so, its population density is still three persons per square kilometer, a stark contrast with other countries around the world. Bangladesh, for example, sits with a population density of 1,034, and most northern European countries contain about 400 persons per square kilometer. Until the latter half of the twentieth century, this thinly spread Canadian population largely avoided the urbanizing trend of industrialization and focused on a main source of income derived from food and raw goods production.

While the above description seems almost a caricature, it does point to the fact that these features and activities traditionally led Canadians to a rather solitary existence, split into distinctive, and for the most part, self-sufficient communities. Government intervention was fairly basic and streamlined in appearance by modern standards. This, no doubt, played a large role in the development of local control and proto-action research initiatives throughout the country. In examining the education system that emanated from Ontario in the last half of the nineteenth century (which had a great effect in the rest of English Canada), for example, one sees an interesting mix of local and central control.

On the one hand, potential teachers were compelled to attend a “normal school” before becoming certified, thereby inducting them into the profession. Here, they were admonished to efficiently transmit the Departmental curriculum to students in a uniform fashion, regardless of location across the province. Government inspectors were periodically sent to visit each teacher to ensure that this was the case. In this fashion, teachers were envisaged as a kind of Praetorian Guard, watching unquestioningly over a body of knowledge generated from a central authority.

On the other hand, these teachers were, by necessity, left unsupervised in isolated, one-room classrooms for long periods of time. Left to their own devices, they would surely have taken on the role of action researcher of sorts, pinpointing and endeavoring to solve the multitude of issues that came their way. From the numerous reports that do exist from this time period, it would seem that, while the Departmental inspectors did primarily act as judges over educators, many also played a role of “critical friend,” helping them solve problems with students, finding new pedagogical techniques to aid learning, and seeking out innovative resources to better the classroom. The same inspector would then cycle back every year to see how improvements were progressing. This “Action Research” aspect of the teaching experience was largely hidden from view in most official accounts, however, in favor of maintaining a perception of a uniform school system.

A great rift existed between the rote teaching that was conducted in most schools of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the rhetoric that took place in educational circles throughout the country. While experiments had been undertaken and written about by Pestalozzi, Froebel, and Herbart, the naturalist approach lay largely dormant in North America. By the

1890s, however, it managed to gain wider acceptance as more and more educational associations were persuaded of its benefits. The provinces' Teachers' Federations, education associations, and the wider-based Canadian Education Association (CEA) all petitioned for more child-centered education and, after 1900, began promoting tenets put forward by John Dewey and the Progressive Education Association. The concept of turning the classroom into a laboratory for social and scientific inquiry was especially appealing to reformers who wished to see teachers as active leaders engaged in self-study for pedagogical improvement.

This innovative mind-set was first given credence by government authorities in the 1920s in British Columbia (BC) with the publication of the Putman-Weir Report (1925). One of the first provincial documents to officially accept the principles of Progressivism, the report identified the traditional teacher and "archaic teaching practices" (Wilson & Stortz, 2003, p. 239) as the problem in rural schools. By remaining isolated, and not keeping up their own education, rural teachers fell "into the rut of old fageyism, routine and drudgery" (Putman & Weir, 1925, p. 26). The report recommended a more de-centralized approach to curriculum including more active discussions with pupils, less reliance on transient teachers who did not know or study their surroundings, and better-trained teachers who could consider and solve problems in situ. In stark contrast to the staidness of the East, the Putman-Weir Report highlighted the practitioner-researcher initiatives that were being discussed in BC, Alberta, and Saskatchewan at the time (Lemisko & Clausen, 2012).

By the 1930s, with provinces on either end of the country engaged in progressive forms of education, Ontario finally capitulated and put forward a curriculum (colloquially called "the Little Grey Book" based on its cover) that encouraged teachers to continue their own professional development and to make curriculum decisions based on their observations. In the document, there was also an expectation that teachers would take responsibility for holding discussion groups among peers to discuss common problems and linkages in the profession. At the same time that Kurt Lewin was introducing the world of postwar industrial relations to the methodology of Action Research, the Ontario government also initiated a program to create community-level curriculum committees, acknowledging the importance of locality and the expertise that lay in each teacher to research their own classroom for best learning. Unfortunately, in order to meet a tidal wave of young students entering school during the baby boom of the early 1950s, a shift in training and hiring of teachers then took place. Educators were, once again, encouraged to merely get information transmitted as efficiently as possible to the increased student numbers in their classes. At the same time, many Departmental officials and even important academics such as Hilda Neatby (who published *So Little for the Mind* in 1953), attacked all facets of progressive education, including anything that promoted local initiative and student inquiry methods.

It was only by the late 1960s that the actual term "Action Research" was introduced into the vocabulary of written documents and promoted as a fea-

sible methodology for teachers. The influential Hall-Dennis Report of 1968, for example, stated that every teacher had the responsibility to follow informal routes in obtaining new knowledge and improving their competence. To this end, it recommended that “studies of limited scope, largely of the type called action research, should be carried on continually throughout the province by individual teachers and groups of teachers” (p. 200). These projects, it advocated, should be allocated funds and personnel “as a regular part of the budget design” (p. 200). For the next generation of teachers, Action Research and self-study became a focus of study by academicians, Ministries of Education, and school boards. Rising and falling in intensity, over time, it was considered a creed by some and a fad by others.

David Townsend, at the University of Lethbridge, argues that the Alberta government created sparsely worded curricula in the 1970s as a “provincial reaction to the teacher-as-curriculum-developer and teacher-as-researcher experiments happening around the same time in the U.K.” (2000, p. i). Adding to this, Canadian researchers throughout the 1970s began to throw a spotlight on the revolutionary work of Marja Liisa Swantz in Tanzania, Orlando Fals-Borda in Columbia, and Rajesh Tandon in India. This new offshoot movement entitled Participatory Action Research (PAR), focused more closely on the systematic and collaborative interaction between academic and marginalized or oppressed members of society with an eye to social reform. Even so, Townsend concludes that such efforts caused only a small ripple, largely unnoticed by the great majority of teachers.

By the early mid-1990s, a peak of interest and funding were expended on action research projects and grass-roots collaborations. The Ontario Educational Research Council dedicated its 1996 conference to this theme and invited Jack Whitehead, its foremost British advocate to speak. From this, Whitehead kept up a continued alliance with graduate students, acting as a mentor to many in Ontario. Unfortunately, for the Canadian movement, a backlash soon occurred once again leading up to the millennium that reined in a great deal of further progress in Canadian public education. With a mandate for fiscal restraint, most newly elected provincial governments promoted a program to increase centralization, cut spending, streamline departments and local authority, and re-focus education on fixed bodies of knowledge through standardized curricula. For the past generation, therefore, the terrain has, at times, proved somewhat inhospitable for Action Research to grow, but in the last five years, there has once again been a resurgence of interest in this methodology. One notable large-scale action research project involved a three-year funded collaboration between the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario, seven Ontario Universities, and teachers collaborating in small teams across the province. The overall impact of this project was reported by Bruce and Flynn in 2013. Projects of this sort have come about largely from burgeoning communication networks facilitated greatly by the use of Internet technologies. This has been a boon to not only the traditional supporters of action research such as educators but has now extended into neighborhood health, food distribu-

tion, and Aboriginal communities where expansive geography had previously resulted in limited communication and collaborations.

7.2 INDIVIDUAL SCHOLARSHIP

Unlike the practitioner level, Canadian scholarship has maintained a fairly steady output of material in the past generation, endeavoring to connect the theory and practice behind this research methodology. This has taken the shape of individual scholarship, dissemination of ideas through coursework, and through partnerships within the university and with outside collaborators. While a number of action researchers have begun to combine their efforts regardless of location, this section focuses on Faculties of Education in Canada, who have, since the 1970s, established themselves at the frontline of this movement. However, scholarship has also emerged from more interdisciplinary sources, from Community Development and Social Work, and from Health Care.

7.2.1 *Alberta*

One of the earliest and most influential faculties to recognize and cultivate a discussion around action research has been the University of Alberta. In fact, an opening salvo was fired in the first issue of the *Canadian Journal of Education* in 1976 by E.A. (Ted) Holdaway, one of its distinguished professors, who bluntly criticized the organization of educational research in Canada as “haphazard” (Holdaway, 1976, p. 5). Based on an examination of European techniques, he concluded at the time that most findings from Canadian research were concerned with strengthening an information base in order to improve rationality of decision-making. As such, he recommended that research, rather than being an elite activity, should be funded at the school district level and used by teachers to conduct action research projects.

From this time onward, a host of researching scholars from the University of Alberta have undertaken the pursuit of drawing practice and theory closer together. Perhaps, the two best known internationally are Max van Manen and Jean Clandinin. The former, known for his work in phenomenology, has led an ongoing campaign to turn North America away from its behaviorally driven pedagogical approaches in favor of ones that address the personal, relational, motivational, emotional, and values-based preconditions of good teaching (van Manen, 2008). Just as prolific, Clandinin has produced countless works in the area of practitioner research, especially focusing on *Narrative Inquiry* (2000). A former teacher, counselor, and psychologist, she presently holds the role of Director of the Center for Research for Teacher Education and Development.

The Department of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta has also produced a great deal of scholarship specific to action research. Terry Carson has, since the mid-1980s, continued to teach postgraduate courses focusing on this methodology. With Dennis Sumara from the University of Calgary, he co-edited *Action Research as a Living Practice* (1997). More recently, Jim Parsons,

a 40-year veteran of the University of Alberta, and Director of the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) has published well over 200 articles and 90 books, concerned mostly with teacher engagement including *Engaging in Action Research: A Practical Guide to Teacher-Conducted Research* (2013) co-edited with Kurtis Hewson, Lorna Adrian, and Nicole Day.

7.2.2 *British Columbia*

Rather than a focus of study and discussion, researchers in BC have chosen to simply use action research as a standard methodology to examine more subject-centered issues. At the University of BC, for example, numerous studies have been conducted focusing on specific disciplines: the Arts-based group entitled *A/r/tography*, for example, has continued to promote the use of action research as a means for advancement. This has been led by Rita Irwin (see Irwin, Mastri, & Robertson, 2000) who examines the intertwining of feminist theory and art, Peter Gouzouasis (2006), who examines Music education, and the poet Carl Leggo (see 2008). This work has led to many books, dissertations, and other print series (see <http://artography.edcp.educ.ubc.ca/>). Other examples include Joy Butler (1996), who focuses on the use of action research in the area of Physical Education, Samson Nashon on Science (see Anderson, Nashon, & Thomas, 2009), and Cynthia Nicol on Mathematics and Home Economics in schools (see Nicol, Moore, Zappa, Yusyp, & Sasges, 2004).

Recently, a number of university-based, cross-disciplinary projects have attracted a good deal of attention. In examining the experiences of women in prison, the Faculties of Education and Family Medicine have collaborated under the leadership of Dr. Ruth Martin. The group, which includes Lynn Fels and Carl Leggo, concluded that “by working together, we are learning to understand what matters in terms of the needs, perspectives, and agency of women regarding their health and wellbeing both within and outside the prison gates.” (Martin, Korchinski, Fels, & Leggo, 2014). Another initiative, the “Knowledge to Action (KTA) Project,” led by Dr. Margot Parkes at the School of Health Sciences at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) aims at strengthening “capacity for inter-sectoral action by focusing on integrated water governance as a means to improve the social and environmental determinants of health in northern British Columbia” (see <http://www.unbc.ca/parkes>).

One undertaking by universities in BC to aid action research has been the addition of action research-style projects to graduate programs. This has become popular at the UNBC under the leadership of Willow Brown (2009) and at Royal Roads University. Simon Fraser University (SFU) has, in fact, encouraged a rather revolutionary approach to student-led research. One example is the Simon Fraser Public Interest Research Group (PIRG), a student-led group which maintains an “Action Research Exchange (ARX)” that connects SFU students with non-profit community organizations needing research but with limited resources. Students can do an ARX project for credit or indepen-

dently (see <http://www.sfpirg.ca/category/action-research-exchange/>). This model has been followed by other “PIRG” groups, such as the University of Regina. Another example of student-focused research is found at the SFU’s Department of Gender, Sexuality, and Women’s Studies, which recently announced a partnership with the Justice Education Society of BC in an action research project to study young people’s engagement in civic and political life (see <http://www.sfu.ca/gsws.html>).

7.2.3 *Central Canada*

A number of isolated hubs and connections have grown, fallen, and been maintained in Ontario and Quebec in the last 20 years; some focus on the study of action research itself; others use the methodology as common practice. For a number of years, peaking in the early 2000s, Queen’s University proved to be the pivotal site of educational action research, largely through the leadership of Tom Russell. A pioneer in the field of self-study for the last 20 years, he has explored how teachers learn from their own practices (Russell & Munby, 1992). His legacy has manifested itself not only in Canada-wide associations to focus on self-study but also in a special interest group attached to the American Educational Research Association. In 2005, the group launched a journal, *Studying Teacher Education*, which Dr. Russell co-edits.

Another base for action research may be found at Ontario largest institute for the study of education, that is, the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE). In the 1990s, while at the Kitchener branch of OISE, Lynne Hannay was responsible for the creation of several professional development programs to facilitate teachers’ involvement in action research (Hannay, 1995). More recently, the Head of OISE’s Center for Science, Mathematics, and Technology Education, Larry Bencze has taken a leadership role in promoting action research through websites, workshops, seminars, and publications (Bencze & Hodson, 1998; Lemelin & Bencze, 2004). With funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (see below), the Center has created a curriculum and instruction framework that encourages and enables students (and others) to conduct research-based actions to address personal, social, and/or environmental issues relating to fields of science and technology. Finally, Shelley Stagg Peterson at the Department of Curriculum, Teaching, and Learning has been recognized for her work in the area of literacy and teacher collaboration (Bruce, Flynn, & Peterson, 2011; Peterson, 2012).

One distinguished group affiliated with OISE is “Literacy Teaching and Teacher Education” initiative (<http://literacyteaching.net>). It brings together a team of professors who have adamantly promoted action research for decades, including Clive Beck, Clare Kosnik, and Monica McGlynn-Stewart. One of the sustained impacts of this work is the Action Research focus in the Teacher Education program at OISE (Kosnik & Beck, 2000).

While a smaller institute, Nipissing University in North Bay has acted as a northern home for action researchers. Most influential, Ron Wideman has

distinguished himself as a facilitator of a number of action research ventures including journals, networks, collaborative works, and forums for the last two decades (DeLong, Black, & Wideman, 2005). Thomas Ryan has also become a prolific writer on the subject, with topics ranging from doctoral progression, online learning communities, and reflection (Ryan, 2013). Finally, as a 14-year veteran at this North Bay institute, I have collaborated with this circle (Clausen, Aquino, & Wideman, 2009; Ryan, Aquino, Berry, Clausen, & Wideman, 2008) and acted as the editor of the *Canadian Journal of Action Research* (CJAR) since 2001 (described below).

Numerous other central Canadian scholars also have used action research: Heather Lotherington (2002) of York University, for example, uses the methodology to better understand the teaching of foreign languages, while Cathy Bruce of Trent University focuses on the teaching of mathematics (see Bruce & Flynn, 2013; Ross & Bruce, 2012). At the University of Windsor, Drs. Rosemary Cassano and Judith Dunlop of the School of Social Work have centered their study on the experience of immigrant women (see Cassano & Dunlop, 2005). Finally, a number of researchers have distinguished themselves through their work with the First Nations communities, which has proven to be a natural fit with PAR. Individually, this has included Seth Agbo (2010) from Lakehead University, Julian Kitchen (see Kitchen, Ciuffetelli-Parker, & Pushor, 2011) at Brock University, and Steve Jordan (see Kapoor & Jordan, 2009) of McGill University. The McGill Department of Family Medicine has also distinguished itself through the creation of the Center for Participatory Research (<http://pram.mcgill.ca/>) presently under the directorship of Dr. Neil Andersson.

7.2.4 *The Atlantic*

Until she left Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax to become an educational consultant, Judith Newman devoted considerable effort to helping teachers become reflective learners in their own classrooms (Newman, 1998). Through online tools, publication, and seminar work, she especially focused on literacy and education as inquiry. Presently, the hub of activity seems to have shifted to Memorial University of Newfoundland. In the Faculty of Education, Bruce Sheppard has focused on leadership (Sheppard & Brown, 2014) while Morgan Gardner investigates student and teacher activism. Finally, a recent professional development initiative has been launched by Karen Goodnough (see <http://www.mun.ca/tia/pdStrand1.html>). Funded by a donation from Hibernia Management and Development Company Ltd., it will ultimately involve over 100 teachers from school districts across the province, working collaboratively as part of a teacher inquiry group. Entitled “Teachers in Action” it will support teacher professional development (K-6 Education) in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics in Newfoundland and Labrador.

7.3 THE GOVERNMENT LEVEL

Canada's government may well be described as de-centralized, in that many aspects traditionally assigned to the state (such as education, and health care) are not assigned to federal control. Rather, many of the areas that pertain to action research are under the jurisdiction of each province, and there is a wide variation in government action throughout the country. However, some aspects of action research may be seen as being influenced by central authorities. Perhaps, the most direct initiative is in the area of Public Service, with a series of action research roundtables led by this group (Mouafo, Morales, & Heynen, 2004). More indirectly, the Federal Government has funded a great deal of action research through a series of grants and programs. Through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), for example, monies have been offered to research institutes in the form of Insight (for research), Connection (for creating networks), and Partnership Grants in the area traditionally using the action research methodology. Table 7.1 shows the funding of grant recipients who stated they were using an action research methodology as a prime means of exploration.

When seen in historical context over the last 15 years, the growth of funding of action research must be noted. From a low of \$100 K of grant money in 2000 to a tenfold increase a dozen years later, it cannot be denied that action research has become a more mainstream, accepted methodology. This must be coupled with the increasing number of research institutes that are applying for and receiving these grants. And while the number of individual projects reached a peak in 2007 and has been slowly declining ever since, the amount of funds given has continued to rise. This would seem to indicate that the govern-

Table 7.1 SSHRC funding of action research proposals

Year	#	#Partners	Ab.	Health	Ed.	Com	Envir	Misc	Total \$
1999	4	3	1	3	0	0	0	0	\$258,900.00
2000	4	3	0	2	2	0	0	0	\$96,569.56
2001	4	4	0	0	4	0	0	0	\$149,452.00
2002	9	7	1	1	4	3	0	0	\$365,514.00
2003	18	9	3	3	3	7	2	0	\$476,855.00
2004	12	7	5	2	2	3	0	0	\$436,217.00
2005	8	6	3	0	2	2	1	0	\$562,189.00
2006	13	10	1	2	3	5	2	0	\$320,076.00
2007	29	21	9	3	8	8	1	0	\$814,145.00
2008	22	14	4	1	2	10	4	1	\$774,300.00
2009	24	16	4	3	6	6	1	4	\$925,261.00
2010	22	15	1	1	5	5	8	2	\$765,908.00
2011	19	12	4	0	6	5	2	2	\$611,793.00
2012	22	13	6	2	0	4	4	6	\$1,299,084.00
2013	19	12	5	0	4	6	2	2	\$838,590.00
Total	229		47	23	51	64	27	17	\$8,694,853.56

Source: <http://www.outil.ost.uqam.ca>

ment has recently favored action research projects of grander scope and larger scale. Finally, there has been a gradual expansion of disciplines who have won grants of this nature. For the last decade, Education and Community Service have tended to dominate, collecting over half of the grants. While Health has long associated itself with a participatory method, it continues to garner only sporadic funding (perhaps, due to the many other federal grants that exist for this field). The two areas that have become increasingly supported have been that of research into Aboriginal and Environmental issues (now accounting for more than 32% of the total grants).

To a larger extent, various provincial government agencies have played a more direct role in the promotion of action research. However, this varies from province to province:

7.3.1 *British Columbia*

A broad-based initiative by the BC Ministry of Education was the creation in 2000 of the *Networks of Inquiry and Innovation*, a voluntary, inquiry-based network of schools designed to improve the quality and equity of education in BC. Led by Linda Kaser and Judy Halbert, this was to be accomplished “through inquiry, teamwork across roles, schools and districts, as well as a focus on assessment to assist learners in taking greater ownership of their learning” (see www.noii.ca). Since this time, other organizations have partnered with this group (such as the Aboriginal Enhancement Schools Network and the Healthy Schools Network).

7.3.2 *Alberta*

Perhaps, the most prominent action research initiative taken by the Alberta government (or in fact, any provincial government so far), has been the creation of the Ministry or Education-sponsored AISI. Partnered with a number of stakeholder groups including the Alberta Teachers’ Association (ATA), it was developed in 1999 “to support three-year cycles of school-based data-gathering, analysis, and reporting focused on the effect of innovations on student learning” (Brown, 2012, p. 69). Under the directorship of Jim Parsons, this initiative has published more than 1500 research reports and provided more than 400 million dollars over six years to support school projects that “address local needs and circumstances to improve student learning” (Parsons, 2005). As stated recently by Parsons:

Fifteen years ago, only a relatively small number of teachers in Alberta knew much about action research.... However, by 2006, a large majority of the nearly 1000 funded AISI projects were identified as *action research*. (<http://education.alberta.ca/admin/aisi.aspx>).

This has drawn a good deal of active researchers to leadership positions within the school system. Most notable have been Kurtis Hewson, David Townsend, and Pamela Adams from the University of Lethbridge. Related publications, links, and contacts can be found on the Action Research Network in Alberta site on:

(<http://www.uleth.ca/education/research/arnia>).

7.3.3 *Saskatchewan*

One of the more fruitful endeavors to come from the Saskatchewan government has been its revival of the Saskatchewan Education Research Network in the new persona of the Aboriginal Education Research Network. Partnered with a host of educational and First Nations groups, this undertaking has re-focused itself as a forum “to foster a collaborative research culture in Saskatchewan and make efficient use of limited resources, taking advantage of member agencies overlapping research interests and funding opportunities” (<http://www.education.gov.sk.ca/AERN>).

7.3.4 *Manitoba*

In 2005–2006, the Department of Education led a province-wide, large-scale action research project to implement the document *Literacy with ICT Across the Curriculum*. Teams from every Manitoba school division were composed of at least one “early years” teacher, one “middle years” teacher, and one school leader, with the option for consultants, additional teachers, teacher-librarians, and school leaders. Each team engaged in action research to build capacity as members of their own school division’s implementation team and to explore inquiry questions. From this, feedback was then developed, samples collected, face-to-face and online professional development strategies were created, and networks of action research teams were connected throughout the province (<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/tech/licit/index.html>).

7.3.5 *Ontario*

In the last half-decade, the Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat has produced a *Capacity Building Series* for the development of “Collaborative Teacher Inquiry” (special Issue #16, September 2010) and “Research into Practice” (Research Monograph #49, February 2014). As well, the Ministry of Education has created a Teacher Leadership and Learning Program to fund proposals from classroom teachers who seek a peer leadership role in curriculum, instructional practice, or supporting other teachers. The three goals of the program are to create and support opportunities for teacher professional learning, foster teacher leadership, and facilitate the sharing of exemplary practices with others for the broader benefit of Ontario’s students.

7.3.6 *Quebec*

Like its western neighbor, Quebec has also funded a Program to Support Research and Development (earmarked for Special Education) for grass-roots study. As part of its mandate to bring about more effective intervention on behalf of students with handicaps or disabilities, it places support directly at the school level in order to foster collaboration among educators and the development of a research community (see <http://www.gnb.ca/0000/publications/mackay/appendixh.pdf>).

7.3.7 *Nova Scotia*

Emerging from the 2009 *Report and Recommendations of the Education Professional Development Committee* (see http://www.ednet.ns.ca/files/reports/EPDC-Report-Response_Fall_2009.pdf) was a desire by the Department of Education and School Boards to address significant concerns held by principals and other key partners about Nova Scotia's approach to teacher professional learning. These concerns related to the amount of time teachers were out of their schools for professional development and the efficacy of this professional development in terms of its direct impact on the quality of instruction and student achievement. Ultimately, one of the main recommendations was a focus on Action Research. This push for more participatory activity has been mirrored in other aspects of government control, including the area of community services (see http://nslegislature.ca/index.php/committees/reports/community_services) and of food distribution (Nova Scotia, 2007).

7.3.8 *New Brunswick*

As part of the *New Brunswick Public Health Nutrition Framework for Action, 2012–16*, participatory leadership was demanded as standard routine when finding sources of information and endeavoring to create a Health Network across the province. The New Brunswick Schools Early Literacy Project, another provincial government initiative, is based on a collaborative action research project in partnership among the Canadian Research Institute for Social Policy, the New Brunswick Department of Education, five school districts, twenty provincial schools, and six federal First Nations schools. The study is designed to augment the New Brunswick Department of Education's Quality Learning Agenda (QLA, 2003) and has as its overarching goal the reduction of reading failure in New Brunswick students.

7.3.9 *Newfoundland*

A good deal of action research initiatives has begun with the release of government documents. A prime example of this may be found in the 2001 document, *Teaching and Learning with Young Adolescents* (<http://www.ed.gov>).

nl.ca/edu/k12/curriculum/documents/adolescents/) which is still held up today for advice.

7.4 CANADIAN COMMUNICATION NETWORKS FOR ACTION RESEARCH

Until recently, no pan-Canadian venues have been made specifically available for action researchers to share the results of projects or carry on discussions concerning this methodology. Instead, authors and presenters have made use of more general, national research conferences, forums, federations, and journals to discuss the subject. While this has allowed open exposure, it has also kept the action research community rather scattered.

Alongside the general conferences hosted by the more academically driven Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE) and the Canadian Education Association (CEA), this trend can be seen among the country's various teacher federations. Annual gatherings, for example, are held by the Alberta Teachers Association (ATA), the Manitoba Teachers' Society, the Nova Scotia Teachers Union, the Yukon Teachers Federation, and the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association. At many of these assemblies, prestigious awards are bestowed upon participants who engage in action research projects: the ATA's Educational Research Award; the Nunavut Professional Improvement Grant; the Stirling McDowell grant given at the Saskatchewan Teachers' annual "Learning from Practice" Conference (see <http://www.mcdowellfoundation.ca>); and the Whitworth, the Pat Clifford, and the Ken Spencer Awards, given at the CEA's conference to university and school workers who use participatory methods (<http://www.cea-ace.ca/awards/>).

Alone or together, Federation and Government initiatives have spawned a great deal of material in the aid of professional development in this area. In last years, the ATA has acted as a powerhouse at this level, publishing monographs (see *Action Research Guide for Alberta Teachers*, 2000) and countless articles on the subject in its *ATA Magazine*. Similarly, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario has reached a wide-ranging audience with its journal, the *ETFO Voice*, frequently discussing issues of action research and related projects. Most recently, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) has provided two of its most important province-wide contributions with the publication of *Teachers Learning Together: Lessons from Collaborative Action Research in Practice* (2013) led and edited by Ruth Dawson and Jane Bennett and of *Collaborative Action Research: Teachers Learning Together* (Bruce, Ross, Flynn, & Mackenzie, 2013).

Mainstream education journals have also been an outlet for action researchers, including: the *Canadian Journal of Education*; *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*; *McGill Journal of Education*; and *the International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Learning*. Other journals, related to the field of Social Welfare and Health, perform the same function: *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*; *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*; *Canadian Review of Social Policy*; and *Canadian Journal of Dietetic Practice and Research*.

Beyond these traditional means of communication, a number of online networks have recently sprung into being. For example, a website group, “*Action Research Canada*” (<http://www.spanglefish.com/actionresearchcanada/>), has been organized by the advocate Jackie Delong in a continuing attempt to rally support for the methodology and broadcast action research projects undertaken at the school level.

Another such network grew out of a movement in adult education. Based on a workshop led by Professor Allan Quigley of St Francis Xavier University (March 2006), the *Nova Scotia Action Research Movement* was launched. Nine separate action research projects designed by teachers, tutors, and administrators were immediately launched, focusing on student dropout issues, recruitment, and participation (see www.ns.literacy.ca/nsarmove/resrchmv.htm). Connected with Literacy Nova Scotia, it has offered action research training opportunities in professional development series. Professor Quigley’s name may also be attached to research-in-practice in Saskatchewan. In 2003, he was invited by the University of Saskatchewan to facilitate a province-wide presentation on adult literacy, followed by a two-day Research-in-Practice (RiP) workshop held at Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, Wascana campus. In 2005, a two-day workshop was conducted by Dr. Mary Norton to enlighten participants on approaches to RiP. Over the years, with the aid of the Saskatchewan Adult Basic Education Association and the Saskatchewan Literacy Network, this has developed into the Saskatchewan Action Research Network. Under the direction of Quigley, it presently offers the services of teams “who provide action research training and mentoring, and also provide a repository and clearing house for practice-based research and resources” (see <http://sarn.ca/>).

A collaborative effort between Manitoba’s faculties of education with provincial funding, the Manitoba Education Research Network (MERN) professes the goals of facilitating a province-wide education research community, promoting professional learning through collaborative inquiry; creating opportunities for research connections across the field and supporting education priorities and research interests relevant to Manitoba. To this end, MERN organizes events and forums to communicate research findings. The network also distributes the *MERN Journal* and the *MERN monograph series* (see <http://www.mern.ca>).

Dealing with a wider focus of research, *Community-Based Research Canada* emerged from the Community University Expo Conference held in Victoria, BC, in May 2008. Its intent is to act as a network of people and organizations engaged in locally based research to meet the needs of people and communities. Originally run by individual members, it has since been joined by a number of universities and organizations. It was built as an inclusive and open communication system, engaging existing networks and supporting community-university partnerships. It is interested in global economic, rights, and environmental priorities, and it is tied to the Global Alliance on Community-Engaged Research, which “is influencing international discussions on the future role of higher

education in meeting global needs for sustainable development” (<http://communityresearchcanada.ca>).

While not solely dedicated to action research, the Ontario Education Research Exchange also attempts to make research more accessible and collaborative with the community. Funded by the Knowledge Network for Applied Education Research and based at OISE/UT, the site is run by educators and graduate students. After vetting, research is shared through a database (see <http://oere.oise.utoronto.ca/>).

Finally, based on actions taken almost two decades ago, a movement has been afoot in Canadian education to promote action research in a pan-national way. The Ontario Educational Research Council (OERC)’s forum of Action Research in 1996 planted seeds of inspiration, and bore fruit with the creation of a small journal dedicated to the subject in Ontario, entitled the *Ontario Action Researcher* (<http://oar.nipissingu.ca>) in 1998. Based on funding by the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario and housed on Nipissing University’s website, it was founded and co-edited by Ron Wideman and Jackie Delong until 2001, when editorship was passed to me. Unfortunately, by the mid-2000s, the OERC had become defunct, and the ETFO had gone into a period of retrenched funding. However, rather than contracting, the journal’s mandate began to expand, accepting work from across the country and including a review panel of Canada’s most imminent scholars in the field. After a decade, the name of the journal was changed to the *Canadian Journal of Action Research* (<http://cjar.nipissingu.ca>) to reflect its new national status.

The summer of 2014 marked a new stage in pan-Canadian networking as the CJAR collaborated with the Canadian Association for Teacher Education to host a preconference on the theme of Action Research at the CSSE Annual Conference in St. Catharines’ Brock University. After keynote addresses from Jack Whitehead (Cumbria University), Steve Jordan (McGill), Ruth Dawson (ETFO), and Zoe Donoahue (Institute of Child Studies), the group of 60 came to the decision that a new association had to be created to promote the use of action research across the country. To this end, the *Canadian Association of Action Research in Education* was created and hosted its first annual conference in Ottawa in 2015. It is hoped that this will be the start of a foundational network for Canada-wide discussion and partnership, with promising links to the *Action Research Network of the Americas*.

7.5 CONCLUSION

As seen in this quite brief survey of action research in Canada, the country offers a paradox for those working with this methodology. Traditionally, its wide spaces and diverse communities have led to a sense of isolation with little holding the center together. However, in recent years, a number of networks and countrywide associations have been created to allow researchers and practitioners the ability to communicate with one another, even over the great geographical divides. While this has been due in large part to the role that the

Internet has now played in the everyday lives of practitioners and academics alike, it cannot be denied that peoples' sensibilities are also changing in how they view "grass-roots research." No longer the sole purview of an academic elite, it has now been claimed by those interested in solving problems with the discipline to carry out action research projects, and the time to do so. This has led not only to richer discussions but also to a sense of community beyond physical proximity.

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An Emergent History of Educational Action Research in the English-Speaking World

Allan Feldman

8.1 INTRODUCTION

I begin this chapter on the history of action research by acknowledging some of my limitations. First, I am not a historian. That said, I have engaged in action research, taught classes in it, and facilitated others' action research. I have also in some ways lived a significant portion of its history. Second, while I would very much like for this chapter to be international in its perspective, my inability to read academic work in languages other than English has made it difficult for me to go beyond the English-speaking world. Finally, there are practitioners of action research in many fields including formal and informal education, nursing, social work, criminology, and so on. This history will focus only on educational action research and in particular, action research done by those in formal preK-12 educational systems and those who educate them or collaborate with them.

I organize this chapter by what I call different “eras” (see Fig. 8.1) of action research. Era 1 began with the antecedents of action research in the early twentieth century and stretched into the 1960s and 1970s. Era 2 begins with the development of curriculum or collaborative action research in the UK and continues into the present. I include in this era, critical action research, self-study of teacher education practices, and what I call “writing-as-research.” The third era is associated primarily with pre- and in-service teacher education, and tends to use a technical problem solving approach to improve student learning, often as measured by high-stakes examinations.

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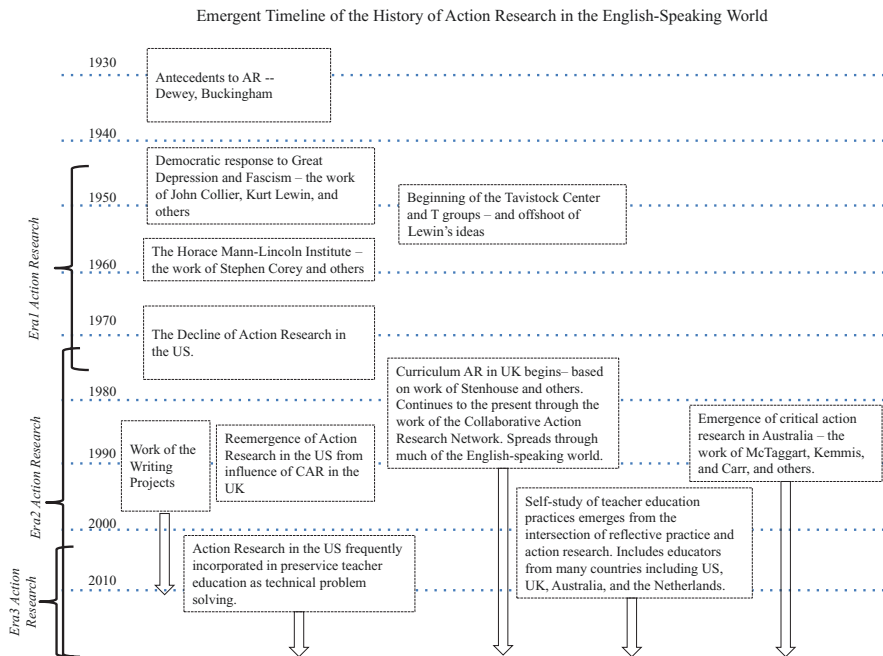


Fig. 8.1 Emergent timeline of the history of action research in the English-speaking world

8.2 THE ORIGINS OF ACTION RESEARCH: ERA I

I begin this history of action research with its origin as an applied social science to improve the human condition. I then turn to its use in education with the work of the Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute at Teachers College, Columbia University.

8.2.1 Kurt Lewin—The Standard Story

Kurt Lewin is often cited as the originator of action research (e.g., Adelman, 1993; Foster, 1972; Glassman, Erdem, & Bartholomew, 2013; Kemmis, 1980; King & Lonnquist, 1992; Masters, 1995). Lewin was a social psychologist who received his PhD at the University of Berlin in 1916 and collaborated with members of the Frankfurt School (Jay, 1973). When Hitler came to power in 1933, Lewin fled to the USA. There he founded several organizations that did social research for change. He worked with the Iowa Child Welfare Station (Noffke, 1989) and then with the Commission on Community Interrelations (Marrow, 1964), which led to the establishment of the National Training Laboratory (Marrow, 1967). While working with these organizations, Lewin wrote about his faith in democratic forms of change and a concern for understanding the dynamics of groups (Noffke, 1989), and the relationship between research and action as action research. Noffke described Lewin’s conception of research as:

taking actions, carefully collecting information on their efforts, and then evaluating them, rather than formulating hypotheses to be tested, although the eventual development of theory was important. This represents not only a clear distinction from the dominant educational research forms of the time, but also emphasizes Lewin's concern with resolving issues, not merely collecting information and writing about them. The theory developed as a result of the research was theory about change, not about the problem or topic itself. (Noffke, 1990, pp. 35–36)

Lewin was also very much aware of the problems that come about due to power differentials between researchers and subjects and of the values and beliefs that outsiders bring to their studies. He argued that the social scientist

has to see realistically the problems of power, which are interwoven with many of the questions he is to study, without his becoming a servant to vested interests.... The problem of our values, objectives, and of objectivity are nowhere more interwoven and more important than in action research. (Lewin, 1947, p. 153)

It is not clear when Lewin first began to use the term “action research.” His first publication that used it was “Action Research and Minority Problems” (Lewin, 1946). The first use of the term in academic writing was in an article by Ronald Lippitt and Marian Radke (1946). Lippitt and Radke also describe a cyclical nine-step action research process that is completed with making the outcomes of the research public.

In Lewin's writing, we also find the description of action research as a cyclical process. Action research begins with planning that starts with some general idea about why it is desirable to reach an objective. It is important to note that the objective and plan to Lewin were those needed to address directly social and economic needs (Kemmis, 1980). Once this is identified, then fact-finding is needed about the situation in order to develop a plan to reach the objective. One of the outcomes of this first step could be to modify the original idea. The second step is to execute the plan, followed by fact-finding about the outcome of the enacted plan. Lewin referred to this as *reconnaissance* and saw it as having four functions: to evaluate the effects of the actions; to determine the effectiveness or usefulness of the actions; to provide information for planning the next step; and to serve as the basis for modifying the overall plan. The third step is to go through this cycle again of planning, executing, and fact-finding (Lewin, 1946) (Fig. 8.2).

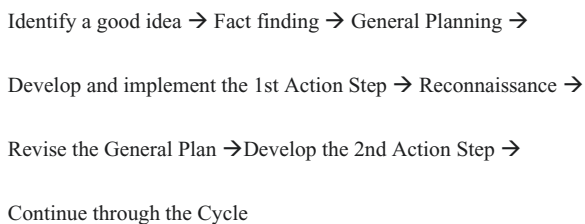


Fig. 8.2 Diagram of Lewin's conception of the action research cycle

In addition to laying out the cyclical approach to research, Lewin also highlighted the importance of community members participating in every part of the research process (Glassman et al., 2013).

8.2.2 *The Origin of Action Research in Context: Collier, Dewey, and Moreno*

Lewin's most productive period coincided with the Great Depression, the rise of fascism, and World War II. Starting in 1933, when Franklin Roosevelt became president, the USA began a series of large-scale experiments based on democratic ideals to alleviate the suffering of so many of its citizens. This is just when Lewin arrived in the USA. It is also the time when John Collier was US Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Collier, according to Susan Noffke (1990) and others, including Boog (2003), Corey (1953), Grundy (1987), and Kemmis (1980), was also an originator of action research.

Collier was appointed as Commissioner by President Roosevelt as part of the economic program known as the New Deal. Although Collier is usually identified with his role as Commissioner, he had been very active in education (Noffke, 1990) and was recognized as a reformer. As Commissioner, he was especially interested in reversing 50 years of US federal legislation that sought to end Indian cultural heritage and promote assimilation. The primary vehicle for this reversal was the Indian Reorganization Act, which among other things allowed for tribal self-government. As a way to both promote the reforms and to evaluate their effectiveness, Collier introduced the use of applied anthropology in his work with indigenous Americans. To Collier, "research should be evoked by needs of action, should be integrative of many disciplines, should involve the administrator and the layman, and should feed itself into action" (Collier, 1945, p. 300). In the same way that Lewin's concern to provide for the social and economic needy was in some ways related to his experience with anti-Semitism and fascism, Collier's parallel development of action research was related to his concern for the betterment of the condition of indigenous Americans.

In looking at the context in which action research originated in the USA, it is important to pay attention to its antecedents. Noffke (1989), in her critical history of action research, noted that Buckingham published a book in 1926 titled *Research for Teachers* (Buckingham, 1926). In it, he called for teachers to produce case studies as a way to make public and accumulate teacher knowledge and to improve their professional stature. Noffke added that Buckingham's approach to research was firmly within what we would now call a quantitative methodology.

John Dewey's work may also have played a role in the development of action research. Dewey's pragmatic philosophy has often been used to support the goals to improve and increase social and democratic participation for a more equitable and just society (Boog, 2003). In fact, when one looks at the steps in Dewey's (1933) conception of educational research, one finds a striking resemblance to the action research cycle (Fig. 8.3).

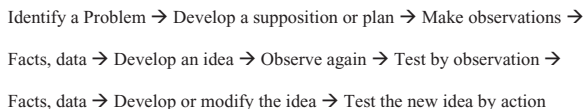


Fig. 8.3 Diagram of Dewey's conception of educational research

In 1929, Dewey wrote in *The Teacher as Research Worker* that “it seems to me that the contribution that might come from classroom teachers are a neglected field; or, to change the metaphor, an unworked mine” (p. 46). There is also evidence that Dewey, Lewin, and Collier interacted with one another. Dewey was on the advisory board of Collier's New York Training School for Community Workers (Noffke, 1989), and Lewin and Dewey met and corresponded with one another (Adelman, 1993).

Another scholar connected to the origins of action research was Jacob L. Moreno (Boog, 2003; Gunz, 1996). Although he moved in the same circles as Dewey, Lewin, and Collier, and advocated the transformation of the social researcher from participant-observer to social investigator, there is little evidence that he had much influence on the further development of educational action research.

8.2.3 *Action Research in Education: The Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute*

The history of educational action research usually turns next to the work of Stephen M. Corey at Teachers College, Columbia University. However, when Corey moved from the University of Chicago to New York in 1948, he was first affiliated with the Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute for School Improvement, which had been promoting action research for five years. In 1946, the Institute staff published several papers that described its workings and the theoretical, political, and ethical bases of its objectives and goals (Goodson, 1946; Mackenzie, 1946). Overall, the program of the Institute had four emphases. The first was to prepare reviews of the literature in the social foundations of education, child development and curriculum, and curriculum design. These reviews were provided to schools and districts with help in identifying problems and areas for research, which would occur as the second emphasis, action research in schools (Goodson, 1946).

The third emphasis was for the Institute staff and students to study relationships in the schools, such as “informal person-to-person contacts, the techniques of working within a group, and intergroup relations” (Mackenzie, 1946, p. 444) and the process of curriculum change, including identifying the barriers and affordances. This early example of what John Elliott later called “second-order action research” (Elliott, 1988) is not unexpected, given the Institute's connections with Lewin and his focus on group dynamics. Finally, the Institute staff also had the primary responsibility for publishing and disseminating the findings.

By the time Corey joined the Institute in 1948, it had developed a large network of participating schools and districts in which teachers and other staff were engaged in action research facilitated by Institute staff to support education that would result in the democratic person

who behaves in ways consistent with human values and understands how these values differ from those reflected in human actions that either manipulate and exploit or threaten and terrorize people. This person understands the resources of mankind for overcoming racial and religious prejudices, economic insecurity, and the threat of war with its devastating results. (Goodson, 1946, p. 42)

This required a dedication to strong democratic ideals, including the need to reduce economic, political, and ideological barriers among people; the need to have a more equitable distribution of opportunity and power; the need to reduce intergroup tensions along ethnic and racial divisions; and the need for community and school groups to engage in the shaping of public policy (Goodson, 1946).

8.2.4 *Stephen Corey*

Corey became the head of the Institute in 1948. It is clear from his writing that he saw the work of the Institute to be the encouragement of teachers and administrators to engage in the action research process (e.g., Corey, 1949, 1953, 1954). In his 1949 article in *Educational Leadership*, Corey, new to the Institute, relied on examples from Mackenzie's work with school administrators. However, Corey provided readers with details about his own take on action research:

The type of research that is conducted in local situations and is designed to help the people working there know whether or not what they are doing is right is called 'action research.' The reason for the name is that the investigations are undertaken to determine the consequences of specific educational practices in actual schools. (Corey, 1949, p. 148)

Corey outlined what he called the "minimum essentials of action research design":

- The statement of a hypothesis that implies a goal and procedure for reaching the goal;
- Uncovering the relationship between the goal and the larger situation;
- A description of the procedure so that others will know what action was taken;
- Methods for collecting data before and after the procedure was implemented; and
- The formulation of generalizations about the relationships between the action and the goal (Corey, 1949, p. 152).

This list is very similar to what is traditionally called “the scientific method,” which he made explicit in later writings (e.g., Corey, 1954). This is related to his belief that most school decisions are based on subjective impressions and that what is needed instead is a scientific basis for decision-making, which action research could provide.

8.2.5 *The Decline of Action Research*

It appears that there were two major changes in the Institute’s approach to action research after Corey took over its leadership. One was the much larger emphasis on the need for action research to be scientific. The other was the decrease in emphasis on democratic goals. It is likely that these changes, while tied to a rapid increase in the doing of action research in schools, also led to its decline in the 1960s and 1970s. The literature on the history of action research generally attributes this to the critique by traditional researchers and changes in the ethos of educational research in the USA. Arthur Foshay, one of the staff members of the Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute, described it in this way:

The chief limitation of cooperative action research, from the point of view of the educational researchers of that time, was that it was not possible to generalize from the examined population to others, because no attempt was made to see whether the examined population was representative of a larger population. What was reported was, essentially, case material. In addition, since much of the research was designed and carried out by classroom teachers, who usually are not trained in research, the data often were flawed. For these reasons, the movement was ridiculed in the publications of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and it did not spread. It disappeared as the members of the [Horace Mann-Lincoln] Institute staff scattered with the passage of time. (Foshay, 1994, p. 320)

One of the chief critiques, and the one that is cited most often, was by Harold Hodgkinson. In his article, Hodgkinson (1957) made a highly critical case against action research by stating the lack of training that teachers and administrators had in research methods, their lack of membership in the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and the lack of familiarity that teachers had with the educational research literature. He also noted the lack of time that teachers had for engaging in research. He argued that the democratic nature of collaborative action research is an impediment to rigor because it could result in the lack of an able group leader. Hodgkinson also questioned whether action research should actually be considered to be research. He cited proponents of action research, including Foshay, stating that its goal is to develop middle-ground principles rather than theory. His conclusion, therefore, was that if the goal of action research is not to produce theory, then it could not be considered scientific research. Hodgkinson ended his critique by using a quote from Dylan Thomas to call teachers’ action research “easy hobby games for little engineers” (p. 148).

In summary, it appears that the move of action research from a form of social action for improving the practice of schooling to a technique that practitioners could use to generate knowledge to reduce the gap between research and practice set it up for damning criticism. Part of this was due to the research ethos of the day. In the post-war period, positivist methodologies dominated US educational research. As proponents of action research like Corey argued for its legitimacy as scientific research, it became seen as more and more like “merely a version of positivistic research suitable only for teachers as ‘amateur’ researchers” (Kemmis, 1980, p. 9) and rapidly declined in the following decades (Carr, 2006).

Before turning to the resurgence of action research beginning in the 1980s, I feel that it is important to also make note of the political situations that acted against action research. Action research in the USA developed during a time of social change that, while wary of socialism and communism, was welcoming to movements that worked for greater democracy and against poverty. The post-war period in the USA was a time of fervent anti-communism and anti-socialism that demonized activities that were connected in any way to those ideologies. It could be argued that this was the case with action research and could account for the lack of the language about democratic principles in Corey’s writings. The history of action research in other regions, such as Latin America and Spain in which right-wing dictators held power well into the 1970s and 1980s, suggests that similar politics greatly impeded the growth of action research (Dinan & Garcia, 1997; Fals-Borda, 1997; Saez Brezmes, 1997).

8.3 THE RESURGENCE OF ACTION RESEARCH: ERA 2

While action research went into a rapid decline in the 1960s, it did not disappear completely. As Noffke noted, “AR did not ‘die,’ it remained a consistent and frequent entry in the Education Index throughout the 1960s” (1989, p. 32). Similarly, a keyword search for “action research” that I did on ERIC for the 1970s found over 300 entries, while one for the 1980s found over 400. A similar search for the 1990s found almost 2000. Clearly, there was a major resurgence beginning sometime in the late twentieth century.

8.3.1 *Collaborative Action Research in the UK*

The story that is often told of the resurgence begins with the work of Lawrence (Stenhouse, 1975, 1981) and the Humanities Curriculum Project (Stenhouse, 1968). It has been described in detail by John Elliott (1991) so I only provide a summary here. Stenhouse began to have teachers take an active part in the shaping of the implementation of the Humanities Curriculum Project, an integrated humanities curriculum that was developed in Britain to meet the needs of students in the new comprehensive high schools as the school leaving age was increased. By involving teachers in this way and by recruiting teach-

ers to play important roles in the structure of the project, Stenhouse sparked the growth among British teachers and educational researchers in the use of action research as a way to improve curriculum. Two subsequent projects—the Ford Teaching Project and the Teacher-Student Interaction and Quality of Learning Project—played important roles in the spread of its use and in the origin of the Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) (Elliott, 1991). It was through these projects, CARN, and the publications that came out of this work, especially from the faculty of the University of East Anglia, that traditional action research spread to Europe, Australia, and back to the USA in what I call Era 2.

8.3.2 *Differences between Era 1 and Era 2 Action Research*

While the preceding paragraph is broadly descriptive of what happened, there are major differences between Era 1 and Era 2 action research. One is the conception of what counts as collaboration. In looking back at Collier and Lewin, we see collaboration as the experts, both in content and research methods, gathering data and information that were shared with community members or practitioners with the purpose of providing them with the knowledge with which to make decisions about the actions to be taken. Similarly, the staff of the Horace Mann-Lincoln Institute saw their role as being facilitators and providing research expertise to the teachers. This is in contrast to the Era 2 model in which collaboration usually refers to teachers or other practitioners working with one another in groups in joint research and/or to help each other with the action research process.

A second difference is the understanding of the relationship between theory and practice. There was much confusion in Era 1 about what role action research had in the construction of theory (Hodgkinson, 1957). The development of the idea of practical theories cleared this confusion in Era 2 (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Sanders & McCutcheon, 1986). To Sanders and McCutcheon, practical theories are

the conceptual structures and visions that provide teachers with reasons for acting as they do, and for choosing the teaching activities and curriculum materials they choose in order to be effective. They are the principles or propositions that undergird and guide teachers' appreciations, decisions, and actions. (1986, pp. 54–55)

By conceptualizing theory in this way, action research could be seen as a way to develop and test through action the practical theories that guide and undergird practice.

A third difference can be understood as the differences between what Shirley Grundy (1987) referred to as the theoretical orientation of action research. Building on the work of Habermas (1971), she used the terms technical, practical, and emancipatory. Era 1 action research had a technical orientation in

which problems are defined and solutions sought, relied upon experimentation, and had its goals the development of theories, propositions, and law-like hypotheses with empirical content. Most Era 2 action research has a practical orientation based on the realization that human activities are highly situated, moral, and ethical, and that decisions to act are made through deliberation about alternatives.

The emancipatory orientation arises from a critical perspective that strives to uncover the structures of society that inhibit freedom (Grundy, 1987) to provide opportunities to take actions that promote justice and freedom. Critical action research, which I turn to below, is emancipatory in nature.

Finally, it is important to note the change that had taken place in the landscape of educational research. From the 1960s through the mid-1980s, the primary paradigm was the use of hypothesis testing quantitative methods. However, following on the pioneering work of George and Louise Spindler (2000) in the use of ethnographic methods in educational research, a movement began that promoted the use of qualitative methods to make meaning of educational situations (Erickson, 1986). By the early 1990s, action research had become recognized as a legitimate form of educational research within this interpretivist paradigm (see e.g., Reason, 1994).

8.3.3 *Varieties of Era 2 Action Research*

As I noted above, Era 2 action research has as its origins curriculum inquiry by teachers in the UK. Since then, several varieties of action research have arisen that I believe are similar enough to the British collaborative action research, or what Zeichner and Noffke (2001) refer to as the “teacher-as-researcher” tradition, to include them as part of the same era. They are critical action research, self-study of teacher education practices, and what I call *writing-as-research*, which was developed as part of the National Writing Project (NWP) in the USA (Feldman, 1993).

8.3.4 *Critical Action Research*

Critical educational action research has its antecedents in the work of Paulo Freire (1989) in community literacy education and in Fals-Borda’s conception of participatory action research (1987). However, what is usually considered critical action research in education (Carr & Kemmis, 1986), which is also referred to as emancipatory action research (Boog, 2003; McKernan, 1988) and critical participatory action research, was developed primarily in Australia at Deakin University during the 1980s by McTaggart, Kemmis, Carr, Grundy, and others (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014). Kemmis et al. (2014) define critical action research as:

a social process of collaborative learning for the sake of individual and collective self-formation, realised by groups of people who join together in changing the

practices through which they interact in a shared social world—a shared social world in which, for better or for worse, we live with the consequences of one another’s actions (p. 20).

It is critical because it rejects the stance that the researcher ought to be objective and replaces that with the notion of critical self-reflection. In critical self-reflection, individuals and collaborative groups interrogate their practice and its consequences, how they understand their practice, and the conditions under which they practice. The objective of this reflection is to discover whether their practices are rational, sustainable, and just and to take actions that result in the emancipation of “people and groups from irrationality, unsustainability, and injustice” (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 14).

Although the connection of critical action research with critical theory, and hence its emancipatory orientation, distinguishes it from the collaborative action research that was developed in the UK, they share several features. These include the recognition that people living and working in particular settings can participate in all aspects of research; that their research has as its purposes to make improvements in their practices and settings; the cyclical nature of action research; and the importance of groups of practitioners collaborating with one another (Kemmis et al., 2014).

8.3.5 *Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices*

Those who tell the story of the origins of self-study of teacher education practices (S-STEP) often refer to a symposium held at the 1992 Annual Meeting of the AERA (e.g., Loughran, 2004; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009; Samaras & Freese, 2006). The symposium, titled “Holding up the Mirror: Teacher Educators Reflect on their own Teaching,” included a set of four papers from new teacher educators (Karen Guilfoyle, Mary Lynn Hamilton, Stefinee Pinnegar, and Peggy Placier) and one from an experienced teacher educator, Tom Russell. In the discussion that ensued during the session, it became clear that there were other teacher educators who recognized the problematic nature of their practice and were interested in studying their own practice. By 1994, S-STEP became an official special interest group (SIG) of AERA. It is today one of the largest SIGs in AERA.

In addition to this birth story, there have been multiple attempts to provide the intellectual history of self-study (e.g., Clarke & Erickson, 2012; Loughran, 2004; Russell, 2004). Among the scholars who are referenced are Dewey (1929, 1933), Schwab (1969), Schön (1983), and Goodlad (1994). There is also a connection made with the development of the ideas of teachers’ practical knowledge and theories, as well as the increase in the use of qualitative or interpretive research methods in education, all of which I noted above.

That said, I found it difficult to find an explicit definition of S-STEP. This is not unexpected given that in the *International Handbook of Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices* (Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey, &

Russell, 2004), there is a clear sense that those who practice self-study are reluctant to define it too closely so that the field remains open to multiple interests and approaches. As a result, we see definitions like this from the conclusion of Loughran's chapter in the Handbook:

Self-study ... is an academic activity that is responsive to these individuals' desire to better understand the nature of teaching and teaching about teaching and in so doing, improve the quality of teacher education. Self-study of teacher education practices can be perceived as offering both an invitation and a challenge for teachers and teacher educators. The invitation involves using self-study to better understand one's own practice and, from the learning through this, to influence the very nature of teaching and teacher education programs. The challenge is for self-study to demonstrate rigorous, valid and meaningful responses to this invitation that enhance our understanding of the complex worlds of teaching and teacher education. (Loughran, 2004, p. 30)

While there is a tendency among self-study researchers to draw a line between it and action research, I see good reasons to include it in this chapter and as part of Era 2 action research. One is that there is at least some indication that teacher educators began to study their own practice because it seemed to be a natural outgrowth of their encouragement of their students to engage in practitioner research (Loughran, 2004). A second is that there seems to be little difference between how one does self-study and the doing of Era 2 action research. The largest difference seems to be between narrative forms of self-study and collaborative action research. However, there are varieties of action research that use writing as their primary method (see, e.g., the next section in which I discuss "writing-as-research"). Finally, many of the originators of self-study were involved with Era 2 action research. As Tom Russell wrote in the Handbook, "One way of viewing the development of self-study in post-secondary preservice teacher education contexts is as action research conducted with special reference to the significance of self" (Russell, 2004, p. 1200).

8.3.6 *Writing-As-Research*

During the same time period that classroom action research was growing in Britain and spreading to other parts of the world, a second, and very different, movement was developing in the USA. It originated in 1974 at the University of California, Berkeley, where James Gray and his colleagues, recognizing the need to improve their students' writing skills, established in collaboration with local school districts a program for K-16 teachers called the Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP). Within two years, the BAWP had evolved into the NWP with 14 sites in six states. Currently, there are nearly 200 sites in the USA, including all states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands (National Writing Project, 2015).

Soon after it was founded, the BAWP recognized that teachers are an important source of knowledge about ways to teach writing and that some of the

best professional development is when teachers teach other teachers. This was incorporated into the invitational summer institutes (ISI). Although each is a product of the local site, they have similar goals and structures. For example, in the Western Pennsylvania Writing Project's ISI, participants engage in writing activities, gain confidence as writers, develop knowledge and skills to help their students improve their writing, and take part in writing response groups (Western Pennsylvania Writing Project, 2015). Participants also identify an inquiry topic related to their practice that they will work on during the summer through research, reflection, and writing. At the end of the summer, the ISI publishes a collection of writing by the participants.

While the activities of the Writing Projects described above may not appear to be action research, there are important similarities. First, there is the recognition of the teacher as expert. Second, teachers generate knowledge about the teaching of writing by taking actions within their classrooms and seeing whether they work. And third, there is the culture of presenting work to others and having it critiqued.

This Writing Project-style of teacher research does differ significantly from that of classroom action research in terms of both the focus of the research and in methodology. First, teachers involved in Writing Project activities seek to improve the teaching and learning of writing, while those engaged in classroom action research might focus their inquiries on their own pedagogy, the curriculum, or the structural elements of schooling that cause dilemmas or dissonances in their work. This difference leads to the Writing Project teachers identifying with that movement, while the latter teachers tend to identify themselves as teachers who do research.

Second, the Writing Project model of teacher research consists of paying close attention to one's own work by keeping a journal and of paying close attention to children's work by collecting samples of their writing. Teachers in collaborative groups then share and critique each other's work by sharing journal writing and student writing samples. They expand upon their ideas by writing self-reflective documents that rely on their journals, the student writing samples, and the comments and questions of their peers. These documents are shared again with the collaborative group in a peer review process. This process may be repeated several times until there is an acceptable finished product.

What this amounts to is a method of doing research through writing. This is quite different from the model of research used by teachers who do classroom action research. These teachers rely much more on traditional research methodologies combined with the action research cycle of recognition of a problem, dilemma, or dissonance in practice that they would like to resolve, followed by taking action within the system and by collecting and analyzing data. The cycle is repeated several times and results in improved practice and knowledge that can be shared with other teachers.

The idea of writing-as-research has gone far beyond the Writing Projects. For example, it is an integral part of most of the types of teacher research identified by Susan Lytle and Marilyn Cochran-Smith (1990). In their working

typology, they divide teacher research into four types: journals, oral inquiries, classroom/school studies, and essays. The keeping of journals and the writing of essays are clearly examples of writing-as-research. While there is no expectation of writing in oral inquiries, the examples given by Lytle and Cochran-Smith (e.g., the work of Pat Carini (1986) at the Prospect School and Center) are highly reminiscent of what happens in writing groups. Classroom studies, as they note, “includes most of what others currently term teacher research” (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1990, p. 97). The methods and ideas of writing-as-research can also be seen in narrative forms of action research. Narrative forms of inquiry in educational research were espoused and explored by Canadian researchers Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly (1992, 1996; Connelly and Clandinin 1990). They describe narrative inquiry as “a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restorying as the research proceeds” (p. 4), which usually results in a research report that is itself a narrative. Narrative forms of inquiry have since become part of the methodological repertoire for both collaborative action research and self-study (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Feldman, 2003, 2007; Heikkinen, Huttunen, & Syrjälä, 2007; Quicke, 2010; Stuart, 2012; Walker, 2007).

In the next section, I turn to Era 3. This might suggest that the doing of action research in the manner of Era 2 no longer happens. This is not the case at all. Teachers, teacher educators, and other practitioners continue to collaborate with one another to uncover what is problematic in their work and how it relates to larger social, cultural, and economic conditions; seek to improve their practice; and to share with others the new understandings that they have constructed. While all this continues, a different conception of action research has developed, which I label Era 3.

8.4 TECHNICAL ACTION RESEARCH IN TEACHER EDUCATION: ERA 3

Era 3 varieties of action research are another current that are found primarily within pre- and in-service teacher education programs (e.g., Churcher, 2007; Cochran-Smith, Barnatt, Friedman, & Pine, 2009; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014; Ersoy & Cengelci, 2008; Gilbert & Smith, 2003; Gray, 2013) and has several objectives. One is to encourage teachers to engage in inquiry in their classrooms that would lead them to have an “inquiry stance” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). A second is to help teachers respond to policy initiatives and external reforms such as the evaluation of teachers based on their students’ performance (Cochran-Smith et al., 2009), differentiated instruction, data-driven decision-making, and response to intervention (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). A third is to reduce the research-practice gap (Churcher, 2007; Ersoy & Cengelci, 2008; Gray, 2013; Vanderlinde & van Braak, 2009).

Whatever the stated objective of Era 3 action research, for the most part, it has the characteristics of technical problem solving. This can be seen in the

formulaic way that the action research process is described, the lack of language that relates to the issues that underlie educational problems including inequity and lack of social justice, and the use of language that describes it as pragmatic problem solving: “action research is pragmatic and goal oriented, it encourages a mix of theory and practice (praxis). Teachers address practical classroom puzzles that must be solved while teaching and researching in their classrooms” (Gilbert & Smith, 2003, p. 81).

The technical problem solving nature of this mode of action research can be seen in the “how to do” texts written for teachers. A best-selling one is *The Reflective Educator’s Guide to Classroom Research* (Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2014). One of the first things to note about the book is that the authors reject the term “action research” and replace it with “teacher inquiry” because they found that the word “research” conjures up in teachers stereotypical images such as the objective scientist removed from the subjects, controlled experiments, and the crunching of numbers. While this may improve the efficiency of teacher professional development, it eliminates the opportunity to discuss the nature of educational research, including the political ideologies that define it.

The technical problem solving nature of the Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) approach can also be seen in their description of teacher inquiry as a paradigm that competes with process-product and qualitative/interpretive (Q/I) paradigms. In their comparison of teacher inquiry with Q/I approaches, they argue that the former is cyclical but not discursive (Q/I); that it is focused on improving what happens in classrooms but not on explaining what is happening (Q/I); and that its research questions focus on teaching methods rather than on how teachers and children experience schooling (Q/I). By separating teacher inquiry in this way from qualitative/interpretive research, they are suggesting that it is primarily a form of problem solving rather than of knowledge construction through coming to understand.

Finally, Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2014) state that the ultimate goal for teacher inquiry is to create an inquiry stance, which is “synonymous with professional growth and provides a nontraditional approach to staff development that can lead to meaningful change for children” (p. 8). One interpretation of this approach to teacher research is a rejection of the need to engage teachers in discussions about what counts as educational research and how their work can contribute to what we know about teaching and the embracing of teacher inquiry as a form of professional development within the existing formal structures of education.

Marilyn Cochran-Smith and her colleagues (2009) found themselves promoting Era 3 type action research when they engaged in what they called an “inquiry-on-inquiry” study of the teacher inquiry projects of preservice teachers at Boston College. The purpose of their study was to uncover what teacher candidates learned when they engaged in inquiry that focused on student learning outcomes. Cochran-Smith et al. chose this focus for the preservice teachers in response to the growing use of student outcomes to evaluate teachers. Although the title of the article refers to practitioner research, it shifts into the

language of practitioner inquiry, which has as its objective to help preservice teachers “become lifelong learners who raise questions and continuously learn how to teach by researching and reflecting on practice across the professional life span” (p. 17). Cochran-Smith et al. claim that, when teachers engage in inquiry on student learning, they are able to produce detailed analyses of teaching and learning that can be insightful if interwoven with an examination of their own intentions, reactions, decisions, and interpretations. They see this as being part of a larger project “about generating deeper understandings of how students learn and enhancing educators’ sense of social responsibility in the service of a democratic society” (p. 19). However, they note that, in teacher education, this link to social justice and equity agendas is sometimes but not always made.

In their analysis of the preservice teachers’ project reports, Cochran-Smith et al. (2009) found that academic learning, such as content knowledge, comprehension and communication skills, and literacy or numeracy, was the focus of most of the papers. They also found that the preservice teachers tended to have a technical problem solving orientation to the inquiry project:

The analyses presented in this article ... led us to realize (albeit reluctantly) that by requiring a major inquiry paper focused on students’ learning during the student teaching period, we were bolstering the notion of inquiry as project rather than inquiry as stance—even though inquiry was supposedly a major theme of the overall program. (p. 28)

In addition, they found that although the program had a social justice orientation, by having the preservice teachers focus on student learning, they “created an artificial division between social justice and learning” (p. 29).

In both, the book by Dana and Yendol-Hoppey and the article by Cochran-Smith et al., we can see the nature of Era 3 action research. In it the practitioners, who are either pre- or in-service teachers, identify a problem of practice often related to student learning but may also be related to the implementation of a mandated instructional program. The teachers then engage in inquiry, often using a traditional mode of data collection and analysis, seeking to solve the problem. With a nod to the traditions of action research, the problem setting and data collection and analysis may be done as part of a cycle. Missing are the practical, deliberative, and critical aspects of Era 2 action research.

8.5 CONCLUSION

As I reflect back on what I have written here, I am struck by how much what counts as action research is a product of its time. The originators of action research in Era 1 were working during a time of economic crisis and the growth of fascism. They saw action research as way to help those impoverished and as a way to fight for human freedom. In the post-war period, action research became more scientific and less focused on social issues as science gained power

as the one way of knowing and as anti-communist hysteria swept the USA. Era 2 action research saw a return to a concern for social justice and a flowering of different approaches to practitioner research drawing on a wide range of qualitative and interpretive methods. Although in the 1980s, the USA and the UK were under the sway of the conservative politics of Reaganism and Thatcherism, it was a time of experiment, idealism, and optimism in education in which multiple ideologies guided the design of schools.

Things are quite different now. Several years ago, I had my students read a chapter on curriculum ideologies by Elliott Eisner (1994). As we were discussing them, I realized that, except for religious schools and schools connected to educational movements like Montessori and Waldorf, there was one dominant ideology in US schools—the use of business-like accountability. I believe that much of what I call Era 3 action research is a product of what Dreier et al. (2004) call a conservative regime. Like business, the focus is on the bottom line, which in education is student performance as measured on high-stakes examinations. Teachers' work in a conservative regime has as its objective to improve these outcomes. Their job then becomes doing what is necessary so that students' scores increase (Shor, 1992). In this atmosphere, action research becomes a problem solving process to best engage students so that they learn what is necessary to achieve as measured on the exams.

The ideology of the conservative regime permeates all aspects of our lives. Cochran-Smith et al. (2009) found that when they responded to it by having their students focus on student learning outcomes—the bottom line—the result was action research as technical problem solving overshadowing issues of social justice and equity. I found the same happening to me when I taught a course in action research to a group of teacher leaders (Feldman, Bennett, & Vernaza-Hernández, 2015). As a result of my colleagues and I tailoring the course to meet the needs of the program and the teacher leaders' role in the school district to help train teachers to increase test scores, the action research projects tended to focus on technical problem solving, even though the teacher leaders often expressed their concerns for social justice.

As President Barack Obama said recently in his eulogy following the attack on an African American church in the USA, history “must be a manual for how to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past—how to break the cycle. A roadway toward a better world” (Obama, 2015). In the history that I have presented here, we saw the democratic ideals of Era 1 action research abandoned and replaced with a focus on scientific research in response to the pressures of that time. As a result, action research nearly disappeared from the US landscape. The development of Era 3 action research in response to the dominant conservative ideologies of our time appears to be a similar abandonment, this time of the ideals of Era 2. If action research is to continue as a way for teachers and other practitioners to make the world a better place, to reduce inequities and support social justice, it is important for all of us to learn from the mistakes of the past so that we can stay on the roadway of action research for a better world.

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Participation and the Work of the Imagination: A Colombian Retrospective

Joanne Rappaport

9.1 INTRODUCTION

In the first edition of the *Handbook of Action Research*, Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda (2001) penned an impassioned appeal for the future of participatory research. Highlighting the importance of empathetic engagement, he identifies participatory action researchers and the communities they work with as *sentipensantes* (thinking-feeling persons). He implores researchers to combine different types of knowledge through the collective exercise of a series of investigative techniques, framed by a research paradigm aimed at lending support to popular struggles. In the process, he argues, the attitudes of external researchers as well as grassroots participants will be transformed.

Much of Fals Borda's writing in English refers to participatory action research (PAR) in the abstract or through brief vignettes; the only exception is a more detailed manual published in India (which appeared simultaneously in Spanish), intended for a grassroots readership (Fals Borda, 1985). Other than this publication, the specificities of his method are only available in Spanish in his many books and articles that recount, among other topics, his collaboration with the National Association of Peasant Users (ANUC) in the 1970s (Fals Borda, 1979, 1981, 1984, 1986; see also Negrete, 2008). In these more comprehensive publications as well as in Fals Borda's personal papers, we can sense the novelty of his approach to social research. My aim in this contribution to the current *International Handbook of Action Research* is to explore what participation meant at the dawn of PAR and to trace how the particular meanings generated by Fals Borda and his associates in the 1970s were appropriated and expanded upon by later researchers; in turn, these subsequent attempts at conceptualizing collaborative research help me to frame an interpretation of

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the documentation left by Fals Borda. In this sense, this chapter is not so much a case study, as an historical appreciation of PAR in its infancy.¹

PAR, as conceptualized by Fals Borda, combined the rigorous collection of archival and oral materials with keen ethnographic observation in combination with a participatory process whereby local community organizations played a crucial role in determining research agendas and were the primary recipients of the results of research, which they would subsequently appropriate as political tools. But Fals Borda did not adhere exclusively to the data that he and his collaborators so meticulously collected. A vital component of the sort of observation he advocated was what I would call the “work of the imagination.” Early PAR was typified by methodologies that engaged both external researchers and internal activists in an active process of imagining: envisaging scenarios for local history, crafting historical narrative out of stored objects, and identifying themselves in the history of their organization, thus effectively constructing alternative epistemologies through dialogic research practice.

Latin American social science has witnessed a flowering of collaborative methodologies since the 1970s, which at once build upon and critique the participatory methods pioneered by Fals Borda. These subsequent exercises in co-researching with local communities and grassroots organizations combine oral historical and ethnographic techniques in an approach I have termed *co-theorizing*, involving the creation of intercultural conceptual vehicles by the collaborative team (Rappaport, 2005); co-theorizing engages communities more fully in the research process than do earlier participatory approaches. More recent collaborative methodologies also include innovative techniques for fostering participation in the re-creation of memory. Many of these methodologies problematize the notion of research by acknowledging that the academic definition of research as a process of collection and analysis of data is only one way of understanding the research process. In contrast, grassroots participants in collaborative or participatory projects embrace research as a process of communal self-reflection. The combination of academic and grassroots notions of research into a single process entails, therefore, the bridging of substantial methodological, conceptual, and epistemological disparities, involving a dialogue between distinct knowledge bases (*diálogo de saberes*) that encompasses not only their contents but also their form. Arriving at this common language involves not so much a process of reconciliation or compromise, as it does taking advantage of the confrontation between not-entirely compatible worldviews, which, in clashing, produce knowledge. This process requires the work of the imagination, just as much as it presupposes diverse definitions of observable fact, dissimilar understandings of what constitutes rigor, and different approaches to and sources of theory.

While all research, participatory or otherwise, is a work of the imagination, collaborative endeavors require researchers, both academic and non-academic, to generate new forms of engaging the imaginaries of diverse participants if they are to include everyone in the construction of an epistemology that is simultaneously grounded in local thought-ways and in academic ways of think-

ing. This is particularly important if they are to create multiple vehicles for effectively disseminating this knowledge. It is not simply a matter of collecting testimony—anyone properly trained can in the long run conduct a passable interview—but of imagining the myriad possibilities that testimony can unlock. I will explore this process by touching on several key moments in Colombian collaborative research, from the dawn of PAR in the 1970s to the present.

9.2 LA ROSCA

Fals Borda's experiments in PAR emerged at an extraordinary activist moment in Latin American social science, which Fals touches on in his *Handbook of Action Research* article (2001, pp. 27–30). Most recognizable to scholars and activists are the efforts by Mexican anthropologists like Guillermo Bonfil Batalla and Rodolfo Stavenhagen to decolonize their discipline (Lomnitz, 2001) and the immense social impact of Paulo Freire's critique of mainstream education and his posing of a politicizing alternative in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Freire, 2000). Not as familiar will be the creation of the *Rosca de Investigación y Acción Social* (Circle of Research and Social Action), an action-research collective that Fals Borda founded with a group of other social scientists and journalists who were prepared to abandon academic life for a deeper commitment to popular struggles. Thirty years later, Fals Borda summarizes La Rosca's aims in the following words:

Besides establishing a rigorous pertinent science, we also wanted to pay attention to ordinary people's knowledge; we were willing to question fashionable meta-narratives; we discarded our learned jargon so as to communicate with everyday language even with plurivocal means; and we tried innovative cognitive procedures like doing research work with collectivities and local groups so as to lay sound foundations for their empowerment. With the advantage of hindsight we can now say that we somehow anticipated postmodernism. (Fals Borda, 2001, p. 28)

The reconstruction of history was a collective process in which La Rosca researchers and community members worked “from the past to the present, and from today toward the past, so that history and action could meet” in political praxis (Fals Borda, 1979, p. 51A).² La Rosca sought to create a new research model premised on intellectual exchange between equals in the service of social change. They attempted to achieve this in various locations in Colombia, in particular, in the Caribbean coastal department of Córdoba in collaboration with ANUC, and in the southwestern highlands of the department of Cauca in concert with the Regional Indigenous Council of Cauca (CRIC). Both regions were hotbeds of alternative politics: in Córdoba a radical wing of ANUC appeared on the political scene, intent on occupying hacienda lands in the face of an ineffective agrarian reform (Rivera Cusicanqui, 1982; Zamosc, 1986); for several years, CRIC was affiliated with ANUC as its Indigenous Secretariat, espousing similar objectives (Archila & González, 2010).

The construction of a revisionist history was central to La Rosca's objectives. Víctor Daniel Bonilla, who spearheaded the work of historical recovery in Cauca, intended his efforts in collaboration with CRIC to effect a break with existing discourses that saw Indigenous people as people without history. Bonilla (1980) wrote:

This rupture with the dominant ideology was possible thanks not only to observations of lived indigenous reality as a result of integrative oppression, but also the vision that the Natives [*indígenas*] themselves have of it; leading them to correct the colonialist vision of our respective histories, which have accumulated over time. And this work of revising our conceptions regarding the formation and history of the Colombian nation in relation to the formation and history of indigenous peoples and communities allowed us to grasp with more precision how, hidden at the core of those societies and relived in their 'myths' and narratives, their own values, their own non-colonized lifeways, survive.³ (p. 64)

Bonilla is not expressing a nostalgic or romantic indigenism in this quotation. What is central to his project is a pair of linked objectives: first, the fostering of a process of self-conscious historical recovery within indigenous communities and second, the contextualization of this process of historical interpretation within the broader history of the Colombian nation. In the process, communities would become capable of using their own historical vision as a tool for interpreting their place in regional and national society, and for recognizing that their historical trajectory was intimately bound up into that of Colombia. Bonilla described this as a "rethinking of the relationship between the two societies" with the indigenous internal vision in the driver's seat. This recognition of the fact that researchers and local indigenous activists were fellow citizens marked, on the one hand, a step toward de-exoticizing indigenous subjects in social science research and on the other, a recognition that the two could be linked in a common struggle (cf. Jimeno, 2008).

La Rosca's 1972 manifesto, *Causa Popular, Ciencia Popular* (Popular Cause, Popular Science), advocated a series of innovative methodologies blending research with activism. First, the research collective promoted an approach they called "critical recovery" that paid "special attention to those elements or institutions that have been useful in the past to confront the enemies of the exploited classes. Once those elements are determined, they are reactivated with the aim of using them in a similar manner in current class struggles" (Bonilla, Castillo, Fals Borda, & Libreros, 1972, pp. 51–52). In Córdoba, for instance, extensive interviewing and workshops with ANUC leaders and the grassroots led to a revival of the *baluarte de autogestión campesina* (bastion of peasant self-sufficiency), a politically autonomous entity governing haciendas occupied by peasant activists. The *baluarte* was an idea recovered from the memory of socialist struggles in the 1920s against the debt-peonage system; research on *baluartes* was encouraged by Juana Julia Guzmán, who led the first *baluarte* in the 1920s and collaborated as an oral narrator and an ANUC firebrand in the 1970s.⁴

These memories were reactivated through a process of “systematic devolution” accomplished through workshops, courses for local leaders, and the production and publication of pamphlets aimed at empowering grassroots organizations to take control of their future by recalling successful political strategies of the past and by situating these strategies in broader regional and national historical struggles that were taking place at the time. La Rosca activists in Cauca produced picture-maps based on their archival and oral historical research into the history of the *resguardo*, the indigenous communal landholding corporation introduced in the eighteenth century that has served over the centuries as a tool for defending Native territorial autonomy. Picture-maps condensed the major moments in indigenous political history, situating them in the topography of the region and resulting in mural-like cartographies that could be read and embellished on by indigenous activists in their native language (Bonilla, 1982).⁵ In Córdoba, La Rosca authored a series of graphic histories (Chalarka, 1985) that contain illustrations peopled by historical actors in whom peasant readers could recognize themselves. As Víctor Negrete, one of the leading activist-researchers who worked with Fals Borda in Córdoba, observes, these pamphlets capture the style and tone of peasant narratives: “the work ... is written to be read aloud; its writing style is *similar to* that of the peasants who were interviewed; its language is simple, characteristic [of the region], and a bit literary.”⁶ Matilde Eljach, a student-collaborator of Fals Borda’s, noted that the peasants “were moved when they saw their history in pictures” and began to sense that “they were the protagonists of ... history.”⁷ The graphic histories thus aroused strong political sentiments, which was one of La Rosca’s aims.⁸

The combination of rigorous historical research with innovative means of making it accessible to the grassroots unfolded thanks to the introduction of a series of techniques that were politically effective because they engaged the imagination of both external researchers and local activists, forcing them to think outside the box of official history and to adapt strategies for accessing local epistemologies. One of these was the collective perusal of *archivos de baúl* or kitchen-archives: the documents and objects saved by individuals in their homes (Fals Borda, 1979, pp. 42B–43B). The contents of these personal treasure troves not only motivated researchers to compose written materials in a language accessible to peasants but also allowed them to situate oral memory within a local historicity, one with its own distinct narrative arc and landmarks of memory.

In *Historia doble de la Costa* (Double History of the Coast), a four-volume work that recounts La Rosca’s experience on the Caribbean coast against the backdrop of the history of land tenure and peasant struggle in the region (Fals Borda, 1979, 1981, 1984, 1986), Fals Borda employs a technique he calls *imputación*, involving the rendering in creative literary form of the products of his research.⁹ For instance, when Fals Borda recounts the visit of a historical figure to a particular locale, he paints a verbal portrait of the place and includes imaginary dialogue, as though he were present at that distant event:

Since the methodology I have adopted requires I bear in mind not only the serious and objective collection of data, but also the efficacy of the transmission and communication of that knowledge and of the information obtained... I had to impute to the people I interviewed acts, data, and concepts I collected later or in other investigative scenarios that fleshed out, clarified, corrected, or completed the thought as it was originally registered. At the same time, *imputación* facilitated the handling and classification of the information I had obtained without the arbitrary division... and bewildering meticulousness of structurally oriented anthropology. (1979, p. 27B)

In other words, Fals Borda uses his historical imagination to depict scenarios and to render peasant narratives in accessible and pleasing prose, sometimes combining several narrators into a single voice, a technique he says he learned from Latin American novelists like Julio Cortázar, Alejo Carpentier, Gabriel García Márquez, and Eduardo Galeano (Fals Borda, 2001, pp. 30, 35).¹⁰

At first, I suspected that *imputación* was a literary strategy that Fals Borda employed to render his historical narrative more accessible to readers. However, I later discovered that he advocated *imputación* as a technique to be employed in the field, in collaboration with local activists (Fals Borda, 1985, p. 61). The import of this technique becomes readily apparent in the panels of the graphic histories produced by La Rosca in Córdoba. *Imputación* was a strategy that situated historical interpretation in its oral, communal context, a way of simulating orality in writing. This was attained through the depiction of familiar faces in the graphic histories, many times represented both as historical actors and as aged narrators. It was also achieved through the portrayal of scenes of political action and of repression by the police and the hacienda owners, complete with minimalist dialogue. These scenes had to be condensed and imagined out of the dense narratives that were shared at community meetings and captured, first in comic-book drawings and only later in comic strips. The process of construction of the graphic histories was entirely collaborative: an interlinked series of interventions by peasant narrators, urban artists and activists, and the ANUC leadership, which supervised the process at every point in its production (Rappaport, n.d.).

9.3 THE GUAMBIANO HISTORY COMMITTEE

La Rosca abandoned Córdoba in the mid-1970s in response to government repression, discord in ANUC over its political strategy, and the opposition the research collective had encountered from the Maoist left that was collaborating with the peasant organization. La Rosca's local affiliate, the *Fundación del Caribe*, continued to practice PAR in rural and urban settings, and is still doing so today (Negrete, 2008). Víctor Daniel Bonilla's legacy in Cauca led to the development of distinct notions of collaborative research that do not adhere to PAR guidelines, nor do their practitioners call their work "action research." In fact, some of Bonilla's associates, particularly anthropologist Luis Guillermo Vasco, have voiced overly strident criticisms of PAR as a paternalistic approach

that frames local knowledge within metropolitan theory (Vasco Uribe, 2002, pp. 454–457, 2011, pp. 20–21). In place of PAR, Vasco advocates an approach that emphasizes co-theorizing, that is, the generation of conceptual vehicles in dialogue with indigenous researchers, in particular, with the members of the History Committee of the Indigenous Council of Guambía, Cauca, a Native community located in Colombia's southwestern highlands. The Guambianos invited Vasco to collaborate with them as they consolidated their strategy of land-claims that began in the 1980s. There are substantial differences between the earlier work of La Rosca and that of Vasco and the Guambiano History Committee, although the latter would never have flourished if not for the path-breaking work of Fals Borda, Bonilla, and their associates.¹¹ While La Rosca's appeal to the imagination centered on the production of historical narratives combining academic and grassroots epistemologies, the latter remained embedded in the graphic histories and picture-maps, and were not objects of reflection between researchers and peasants. In contrast, Vasco and his Guambiano associates mapped out more explicit theoretical positions in their work on the history of Guambía.

Vasco's conceptualization of research differed radically from La Rosca's. Fals Borda and his associates in Córdoba described research as a process of collecting information that was then subjected to interpretation.¹² Local people could be trained as researchers, so long as they were sufficiently schooled and literate, which few of them were.¹³ Vasco operates under a very different conception that sees research as taking place at the grassroots, as he illustrates in the following description of the breakout groups that mull interminably over proposals at Guambiano assemblies:

The work in break-out groups organized by indigenous people in their meetings was, in reality, a research meeting, in which knowledge of a problem was intensified through a discussion in which they confronted the knowledge of every participant with that of the rest in order to finally arrive at group knowledge....It became clear to me that after the break-out groups and the multiple discussions that ensued in them, in the mind of every participant lay certain conclusions: a broader knowledge of the problem than what there had been before the meeting, now that it was no longer personal knowledge, but knowledge held by the entire group. (Vasco Uribe, 2002, p. 461)

In other words, Vasco visualizes indigenous research as a process of *thinking through* ideas, not necessarily of collecting and then systematically analyzing data that will be “returned” to the community. In hindsight, I would say that this was precisely what La Rosca did in Córdoba with their graphic history project, although they never explicitly defined research in this way at the time.

Participating fully as researchers—albeit functioning within distinct parameters of what constitutes research—Vasco's Guambiano associates actively engaged in theory building. For example, in one of their published narratives, time and space are depicted as a spiral that winds and unwinds, touching repeatedly on events taking place in the same topographic locations but at

different points in history; the theoretical construct of the spiral originates, the authors argue, from various usages in Namriik, the Guambiano language. The political history of Guambía is narrated in a spiral format that continuously sights back on the same locations, which also have mythic significance (Rappaport, 2005; Vasco Uribe, Dagua Hurtado, & Aranda, 1993). Fals Borda also created conceptual vehicles for his retelling of the history of the Caribbean coast. An excellent example is the *hombre anfibio* or “amphibious man,” whose riverine lifestyle characterizes the lifeways of the peasantry of Córdoba, who are both agriculturalists and fisherfolk and whose relationship to their marshy environment is conditioned by this dual emphasis on land and water (1979, pp. 23B–26B). The *hombre anfibio* is a motif that Fals Borda assimilated from his conversations with people in the region who served as his informants, as is clear from his field notes.¹⁴ Nonetheless, the motif was not developed as a conceptual vehicle through a dialogical process in which local people participated in its construction as theory, which, in contrast, is what occurred in Guambía.

In both instances, participatory research is conceptualized as the work of the imagination, more specifically, the search for alternative epistemological frameworks that permit people to tell their history from their own point of view. What differs is the extent to which local people were encouraged to think of their participation as vital to the construction of theory. Vasco’s indigenous collaborators had, of course, many more years of experience as activists under their belts than did the peasants and indigenous leaders who worked with La Rosca. Moreover, some of the Guambianos on the History Committee had university educations and could clearly articulate what theory is, while only a small number of the leaders of ANUC were versed in Marxist theory obtained through workshops and, less frequently, through reading, and it is unclear to me that they would have identified their own epistemologies as theoretical founts, despite La Rosca’s efforts.¹⁵ Perhaps, the differences between what La Rosca could achieve and what the Guambianos accomplished owes to the political maturity of the indigenous movement in the 1990s, which was indebted, in great part, to the early efforts of collaborators like Orlando Fals Borda and Víctor Daniel Bonilla.

9.4 YOUTH AND HISTORICAL MEMORY

Collaborative research in Colombia has always been a dangerous enterprise, particularly when its focus is on progressive grassroots organizations, which have come under fire during the last 60 years. The current Colombian conflict began in the late-1940s and has only intensified in the past three decades with the introduction of right-wing paramilitary organizations whose ties to the military and to politicians have granted them a degree of immunity. There have been over a thousand massacres documented since 1982 and there are currently more than five million Colombians displaced by violence. Regions like Cauca and Córdoba, which have always been sites of political struggle, as well as cities like Medellín, have been hard-hit by the conflict. Consequently, it is

not surprising that forms of collaborative human rights research have evolved in these areas.

Particularly inspiring is the work of the Comisión de Memoria Histórica (Historical Memory Commission), an official organ of the Colombian government set up to collect documentary and oral materials substantiating violations of human rights; the group is constituted by interdisciplinary research teams working collaboratively with local communities and disseminating their work widely in report form.¹⁶ To some extent, Memoria Histórica researchers employ PAR methodologies, but their approaches to bearing witness of the conflict also owe to other sources. I cannot do justice here to the scope of Memoria Histórica's important work, and will, instead, touch only briefly on some of the methodological innovations they have developed, many of which are contained in a research manual contained on their website authored by anthropologist Pilar Riaño Alcalá (n.d.). Some of the techniques the manual contains build on PAR and others were first used by Riaño in her work two decades earlier with youth groups in Medellín (Riaño Alcalá, 2010), a city that in the last few decades of the twentieth century witnessed an unprecedented wave of violence by paramilitary groups and the police, in response to a growing guerrilla presence in marginal neighborhoods and the growth of drug trafficking.

Riaño organized numerous memory workshops in community organizations, at which young people shared their recollections of the deaths of friends and neighbors through the production of picture-maps of the violent history of their barrio, thus investing neighborhood geography with the intense memories they brought to light at the workshops. Riaño also helped the youths to engage their aural memory, leading them to associate popular music with the memory of their acquaintances. In this sense, the memory workshops built upon the youths' own ways of remembering, culminating in a powerful set of narratives and passionate community memorials of the fallen; thus, workshops were both therapeutic for the youth and involved them in constructive communal projects. In Riaño's ethnography of memories of violence, we can begin to imagine how participatory methodologies permitted young people to conduct their own forms of research, different from those of academics but tied to them in a synergistic relationship.

The road map for Memoria Histórica workshops derives from Riaño's work in Medellín. While we can only read Memoria Histórica's published reports, which are enormously detailed and balance testimony and figures to describe emblematic cases of human rights abuses, the results of their memory workshops are also felt on the ground. During the research process, community members participate in communal acts of witnessing, with external researchers acting as listeners, scribes, and facilitators of a unique methodology. Like the picture-maps created by Bonilla in the Cauca of the 1970s and those used by Riaño in Medellín in the 1980s and 1990s, Memoria Histórica workshops capture human rights abuses in map form, in cartographies that are worked out by the witnesses themselves, alongside graphic time lines in which they recount their experiences; such exercises are complemented by walking-tours

that stimulate memory and lodge violent episodes in the landscape. This methodology encourages the exercise of voice by those who have always remained silent, especially women, who have been victims of violence in myriad ways not always experienced by men, although women have not always been called on as narrators or recognized as activists. Women's organizations frequently operate below the radar of both national or regional organizations and external observers, only coming to the fore in exercises such as those promoted by *Memoria Histórica* (Machado & Meertens, 2010).

Once again, here is a participatory project that assumes that grassroots research operates according to distinct epistemologies and, consequently, offers non-academic researchers possible techniques for enhancing their own historical imaginations. In a sense, such methodologies are ephemeral, lodged in the oral memory of workshop participants, and stored in transcriptions not available to the public because of security concerns. *Memoria Histórica* reports only partially reflect such methodologies: they are dense pieces of writing that are not accessible to most of the workshop participants, whose relationship to the written word is frequently precarious and they only partially reproduce the intense relationships that unfold in memory workshops. Moreover, the reports do not convey the depths of the sentiments of workshop participants, who combine their experiences and their feelings through the use of picture-maps, time lines, and walking-tours in order to construct detailed communal narratives. Clearly, this is a form of research that engages the imagination of peasants and poor urban dwellers in novel ways, affording them a voice that we can only guess, as it is only fully shared with their neighbors during the workshop experience itself.

9.5 CONCLUSION

Fals Borda's *Handbook* entry advocates an ever-widening participatory scope for the research model he helped to create. He saw subsequent PAR paradigms as "combining praxis and ethics, academic knowledge and popular wisdom, the rational and the existential, the regular and the fractal...[as] break[ing] down the subject/object dichotomy" (Fals Borda, 2001, p. 32). This combination of different types of knowledge and different forms of research in the service of political objectives—what Fals Borda called "praxis"—requires particular forms of the work of the imagination in order to bridge the gaps that yawn between them. The process of creating innovative techniques for enabling collaborative imagining has been unfolding in Colombia since La Rosca's founding in the early 1970s, flowering into a multiplicity of approaches aimed at a broad array of communities and organizations, some of which I have meditated on here.

NOTES

1. Fals Borda deposited his personal papers in the Archivo Histórico de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá (henceforth, AHUNC/B), the university at which he passed the bulk of his academic career. His work in the 1970s

and 1980s on Colombia's Caribbean coast is stored at the Centro de Documentación Regional "Orlando Fals Borda" of the Banco de la República in Montería, Córdoba (henceforth, CDRBR/M). I thank the Graduate School of Georgetown University for providing me with several summers of funding to work in these documentary repositories and the directors of the two archives for the welcome they gave me. In particular, I thank Víctor Negrete, of the Fundación del Sinú and one of Fals Borda's original collaborators, for a series of illuminating conversations in which he shared with me his vast PAR experience. Note that Spanish surnames include a patronymic (Fals) and a matronymic (Borda). An individual can be identified by the combination of the two or by the patronymic; I will employ the double surname for Fals Borda, as this is the name he is known by, but for others, such as Luis Guillermo Vasco Uribe, who is generally known only by his patronymic, I will only use the double surname in the bibliographic citations.

2. All translations are mine, unless otherwise noted.
3. AHUNC/B, Colección Orlando Fals Borda, caja 49, carpeta 3, p. 64, Víctor Daniel Bonilla, Experiencias de investigación-educación en comunidades paeces, V Congreso de Antropología, Medellín, October 1980. See also Bonilla (1980).
4. CDRBR/M 0853, p. 5112. La Rosca operated in Córdoba with the collaboration of a local research collective called the Fundación del Caribe (Caribbean Foundation). In this article, I will refer to the activities of both organizations with the shorthand of "La Rosca."
5. For a series of reproductions of these maps, see Luis Guillermo Vasco, "Lucha indígena en el Cauca y mapas parlantes" <<http://www.luguiva.net/cartillas/subIndice.aspx?id=10>> accessed 11 September 2013.
6. Interview with Víctor Negrete, 22 July 2009, Montería.
7. Interview with Matilde Eljach, 15 July 2009, Popayán.
8. 'Norte del Cauca: Reflexiones sobre conocimiento y poder popular,' AHUNC/B, caja 49, carpeta 3, p.109.
9. The book is called *Double History of the Coast* because it is meant to be read in two channels: the left-hand pages providing a history from below and the right-hand pages including theoretical and methodological observations, as well as the contextualization of local historical narratives within regional and national histories. This layout is intended to reproduce the very conversation between researchers and the grassroots that occurs in PAR. In his *Handbook* article Fals Borda translates "imputación" as "imputation" (2001, p. 30); however, I don't find the English-language rendering to be particularly elucidating and therefore opt for employing the Spanish original.
10. García Márquez was a close associate of Fals Borda. In the 1970s, the two founded *Alternativa*, a leftist magazine that frequently incorporated in its pages the testimony of ANUC activists (Figueroa, 2009; Chap. 4).
11. Several sociologists who were associated with Fals Borda cautioned me that his methodology differs from that of Vasco because he combined participatory research with activism while Vasco focused almost entirely on the research component. I would respond that by the time Vasco arrived in Guambía in the 1990s, the indigenous movement had been functioning for some two decades, and the Guambianos were politically mature enough to limit Vasco's participation

to the research endeavor, in distinction to Fals and Bonilla, who were collaborating with nascent organizations that required more direct collaboration. My interlocutors also cautioned me that the methodologies of Fals Borda and Vasco were not entirely comparable because Fals Borda was a sociologist and Vasco an anthropologist. For my part, I do not think disciplinary differences influenced the divergent approaches of Fals Borda and Vasco, because it is not so much anthropology and sociology that were at stake in their work, but the use of ethnography as a tool for constructing a new approach for research, which they held in common.

12. In his *Handbook* article Fals Borda (2001, p. 30) calls the materials researchers collected “hard core data” (2001, p. 30); in Spanish, *datos-columna* (Fals Borda, 1981, pp. 56B–59B, 1984, pp. 47B–49B), which I understand as the “spinal column” of the research process.
13. CDRBR/M, 0642, p.3376; interview with Orlando Fals Borda, 24 June 2008, Bogotá.
14. CDRBR/M 1108, p. 6375.
15. See, for instance, the autobiography of ANUC leader Moisés Banquett; CDRBR/M 1041–1048, 1051–1058.
16. Memoria Histórica reports are available at www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co.

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Action Research and Participatory Research in Brazil

Michel Thiollent and Maria Madalena Colette

10.1 HISTORY OF ACTION RESEARCH IN BRAZIL: CONTEXT AND REFERENCES

It is widely agreed that the origins of action research lie in the applications of Kurt Lewin's (1890–1947) social psychology in the USA during the 1940s. In subsequent decades, this approach was further developed in Great Britain and the Scandinavian countries. In areas such as education and organizational change, action research was used as a tool for re-construction and adaptation to the post-war context.

Participatory research, on the other hand, began to spread during the 1950s and 1960s, especially in Latin America under the influence of the Brazilian Paulo Freire (1921–1997), in the field of popular education, in awareness-building initiatives and liberation pedagogy, and in social, religious, and educational contexts. During the following decades, João Bosco Pinto¹ developed the foundations and practices of action research in Latin American countries, mainly in rural areas and in the northeast of Brazil. He also contributed to the explanation of the transition from liberation pedagogy to the action research method (Pinto, 1989).

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In Brazil, these methodological approaches have been applied in various sectors such as education (mainly adult education), social work, rural extension, political practices, and social movements. In recent decades, they have spread to an even greater number of areas including collective health, nursing, the environment, organizations, social communication, and engineering and urbanism.

From the 1980s, and especially more recently, the tendency has been for these approaches to share a larger number of features and, in some cases, even combine to form a methodological alternative to conventional methodologies derived from positivism. The interaction between researchers in the Southern and Northern hemispheres has consolidated this movement based on the ideas of the Colombian Orlando Fals Borda (1925–2008), who coined the term *Investigación Acción Participativa*. This methodology currently predominates in many educational and social or environmental planning bodies. From its beginnings as a local matter or semi-artisanal practice, action research and the methodological and conceptual changes it is associated with have become issues that are discussed in the international sphere in forums where experiences are exchanged. Its agenda has also been broadened to include not only poverty-related themes.

However, far from producing a monolithic alternative, this increasing cooperation between different tendencies is taking place in the context of various intellectual environments and institutional arrangements. The aim is not to develop a unified body of knowledge, with closed borders, given that these tendencies constitute a family of proposals that are all inspired by the desire to deepen democratic processes through participation and cooperation between all parties involved, and the need to share a transformational social vision.

Accompanying the period since 1980 that has seen action research and participatory research move closer to each other, Michel Thiollent has taken part in some landmark events in Brazil such as the Brazilian Education Conference in 1981, in Belo Horizonte, with Carlos Rodrigues Brandão, and the participatory research meeting organized by Pedro Demo, at the National Pedagogical Studies Institute in Brasília, in 1984. At this time, when the country was still living under a dictatorship and the desire for the democratization of education and social life in general were particularly strong, participatory proposals helped boost expectations of change.

The contributions of Freire, Brandão, and Thiollent to these proposals are frequently cited. The impact of action research, divulged through Thiollent's (1985) introductory book, which is now in its 18th edition and is still being adopted all over the country in different social and technical areas (Thiollent, 2011), exceeded all expectations. Danilo Streck (Streck, 2011; Streck, Sobottka, & Eggert, 2014), from Rio Grande do Sul, editor of *International Journal of Action Research*, is currently one of the most important coordinators of initiatives related to participatory methodologies at the domestic and international levels. Júlio Emilio Diniz-Pereira (2008), from Minas Gerais, is another fundamental author and mainly involved in teacher training.

The following approaches developed by internationally acclaimed authors have also been influential in Brazil: educational action research, in the tradition of

L. Stenhouse (1998) and J. Elliott (1990, 1993); cooperative action research, in the line developed by Henri Desroche (2006); integral and systemic action research developed by André Morin (1973); action research and participatory research, according to Hilary Bradbury's (2001) conception, with experiences in various social, environmental, and community contexts; collaborative action research in education presented by Kenneth M. Zeichner (2005); and finally, existential action research proposed by René Barbier (2002), which has been especially influential.

In recent years, we have facilitated the exchange of ideas with international authors, particularly those who write in French, by organizing the translation of introductory books and action research manuals. Books by important authors, such as Henri Desroche (2006), from France; André Morin (2004) and Hugues Dionne (2007), from Quebec; and Khalid El Andaloussi (2006), from Morocco, are already available in Portuguese, and Guy Avanzini's book (1996) has already been translated but is still awaiting publication. In addition, Brazilians have access to a "library" of fundamental books in their own language, which, to some extent, enable them to update and diversify their methodological resources.

Over the years, there have been successes and challenges in the application of participatory methods. They lost ground during the neoliberal period of the 1990s, but have since recovered in various regions of the country in the wake of the social projects implemented by recent governments. The participatory methodology is currently relatively well-regarded both in certain academic areas and in areas involving social and environmental actions. It is also stipulated as a requirement to take part in bidding processes for large projects funded by international bodies, a field in which one must have reservations as to the way they are used.

10.2 METHODOLOGICAL ALTERNATIVE, POPULAR RESEARCH, AND A SHARING CULTURE

Action research and participatory research propose a type of research and education that is committed to the ideals and practices of popular culture. In this context, popular culture is mainly viewed as consisting of genuine manifestations in people's everyday lives. They constitute a methodological alternative to conventional research in applied social sciences, characterized by the mere collection of data and imposition of procedures, without the participation of interested parties in data gathering and the interpretation of results (Thiollent, 2011).

There are times when conditions are favorable for popular projects, based on Freire-inspired educational principles of liberation or emancipation, thus making the relation between participatory research and popular interests almost a "natural" one. However, dominant social groups attach little value to participation or use it inappropriately to mask interests and, perhaps more importantly, the information and knowledge they use are shaped in other paradigms.

Given that action research is a research method linked to action, care must be taken not to confuse it with a mere political or social mobilization technique. Some researchers adopt a radical stance, turning it into a cultural or political activity aimed exclusively at attaining popular ends, in accordance with the views of the interested parties. They fail to see that, as long as its objectives are clearly defined by the researcher, action research can help to produce knowledge, while at the same time supporting public causes, defending the rights of the community or denouncing atrocious living conditions.

However, the majority of those who perform action research and participatory research use its methods in professional activities. The results of research in various areas may cater to the demands of the actors who are directly involved, but they also generate academic studies and scientific publications. The rules governing the use of knowledge produced in a participatory fashion should necessarily be submitted to explicit ethical criteria.

Action research fosters a culture of information and knowledge sharing. Increasingly practiced in medium- or large-scale projects, inserted and managed in institutional arrangements involving public authorities, universities, foundations that support research, and other entities, this methodology bears little resemblance to the artisan-based or quasi-militant practice that existed in the past.

However, in these arrangements, one must observe whether all participating actors are, in fact, motivated to share. Entities that are used in the conventional consultancy model, where practical problems are solved without systematization of knowledge, may feel uncomfortable in this situation. In action research, such systematization is required, whereas traditional consulting as practiced by official organizations does not involve knowledge sharing, and the relation between consultants and clients is strictly asymmetric. Consultants always see themselves as holders of knowledge, and they monopolize the proposal of solutions on which their remuneration is, after all, based; sharing their knowledge or expertise would make them dispensable.

In practice, participatory research is more like an advisory service in which information asymmetry is minimal. This cultural difference perhaps explains why action research in Brazil is rarely applied in the business world. Companies prefer to work with management consultants and technicians who have conceptions that are in tune with their immediate interests and linked to management fads and gurus.

10.3 ACTION RESEARCH: ORIENTATION IN HUMAN AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Action research derives its theoretical orientation from various strands of philosophy in order to conduct research and construct meanings anchored in observation and action. The most evident theoretical orientations sought after in action research include: critical historical approach; praxis theory; critical

theory; communicative action theory; humanist Marxism; phenomenology; existentialism; constructivism; and social constructivism.

Taken as a whole, action research cannot be equated with any of these approaches in particular. But, by recognizing the multiplicity of possible theoretical approaches, one accepts the justified complementarity between theoretical and practical points of view, related to a conception of research and intervention aimed at generating processes of change, with the participation of actors related to the problem at issue.

The approach chosen by the researcher should be clearly defined and explained in terms of objectives, taking care not to confuse or merge positions that are far apart. In outlining a project, the researcher performs a fundamental constructive task because, in general, the active methodology was not directly endorsed by the founders of the various tendencies of action research referred to above when they were formulated.

The theoretical and methodological implications of this choice can have serious consequences for the research's possible objectives and results. The tendencies at issue provide distinct frames of reference that cannot be interchanged. However, some perspectives, such as positivism, formalism, or structuralism, are fundamentally incompatible with action research or participation involving observer and observed.

The last few years have witnessed a significant growth in the use of qualitative research methods in the social and human sciences in the USA and Europe, as well as in Brazil. The qualitative research methods most often used include narrative and episodic interview techniques, focus groups, the case-study method, life history, discourse analysis, action research, and the various types of participatory research.

By seeing action research as a method that can be practiced along with the use of qualitative methods and techniques, or some specific techniques such as interviews and focus groups, for example, one abandons the idea of transforming action research into an independent research standard, paradigm, or science. This view of a plurality of methods operating inside a multi-paradigmatic space seems to be currently the most adequate epistemological position and avoids truth-monopolizing attitudes.

It constitutes an open-ended position in which no pre-established procedures are imposed and interlocution between various actors with different kinds of knowledge can take place. The important thing is to provide a framework for the actions of actors involved in problematic situations in which researchers and members of situations can all learn together based on shared experiences. Various points of view are thus compared, leading to data triangulation and possible interpretations of meanings.

An issue that is often raised when discussing the orientation of research is that of the objectivity, or rather lack of objectivity of action research, given the role of the researcher and the interference of actors in the results of the research. Critics of this approach consider that the "truth" obtained in this way is merely a reflection of each actor's individual "truth," thus violating the

basic tenets of scientific research. However, research which is based on a clearly stated methodology and sound ethical principles does not generate results that reflect particular interests. The interlocution process, which is facilitated by the researcher, generates a kind of negotiation of the meaning of problems and possible solutions. The role of the researcher is not that of a spokesperson of one of the interlocutors, but rather of someone who analyzes and knows how to engage with and address the actions and reactions of the actors and their effects in the context at issue.

10.4 THE AREAS OF APPLICATION OF ACTION RESEARCH IN THE COUNTRY

Participatory methodologies and action research, in particular, have been applied in various fields of study at research centers and universities, in their undergraduate and post-graduate programs and especially their extension activities.

Most applications over the past few decades have been made in educational research, both into its practice and in the sphere of collaborative research related to basic and higher education. Research themes include:

- teacher training;
- culture and language studies;
- adult education;
- human rights;
- work;
- cooperativism;
- associativism; and
- interdisciplinary applications.

They also appear, albeit on a smaller scale, in other applied social sciences such as in the management, communication, social work, and domestic economy areas. Action research has also been used in various areas of health, and also in environment-related areas such as:

- collective health;
- public health;
- nursing;
- health promotion;
- family medicine;
- work medicine,
- studies of older people;
- environmental information and education spheres;
- conservation, defense, sustainable management;
- agro-ecology; and
- pollution control in both urban and rural areas.

In the interfaces between health and the environment, participatory methods, with their diverse approaches, are considered to be the most appropriate for dealing with household and community matters, in themes such as sanitation and epidemics, or broader ones, related to the degradation of ecosystems and climate change and their socio-environmental consequences (Giati, 2013).

Action research has also been occupying a space in the interface between education and the environment, in studies related to environmental education in the spheres of sustainable production, consumption and occupation in both urban and rural territories, and in the interface between education and health, for the prevention of disease and accidents and the promotion of health. Action investigation can produce results that also lead to a deeper understanding of collective aspects of the propagation of disease and the willingness to act of people who belong to risk groups (Thiollent, 2013).

This research methodology is also used in technological areas such as ergonomics, production engineering, information systems, architecture, urbanism, and agriculture and husbandry. These actions are sometimes guided by economic and political considerations, but also seek to engage in transformational studies and practices in the social interfaces of various areas, in urban and rural areas. In recent years, projects have appeared aimed at developing technologies together with, and for, popular production sectors, in convergent territorial development and interdisciplinary research projects that also congregate the humanities, science, and technology.

10.5 ACTION RESEARCH AND THE UNIVERSITY IN BRAZIL

In Brazilian universities, participatory methodologies have suffered, and still suffer, some form of discrimination and have not always received due support from research funding bodies. It is an incontestable fact that they have made inroads into various universities during the past decade, mainly not only those in the public sector but also in certain private, religiously affiliated colleges, and universities.

Although it is now practiced on a larger scale and is being used in the development of undergraduate, master's, and doctoral dissertations, action research has expanded the most in the university extension area. In Brazil, the academic area known as "extension" consists of an activity aimed at divulging extramural knowledge which universities should, in principle, develop in association with their "teaching" and "research" functions.

University extension constitutes a space that provides the freedom necessary to develop participatory projects in different areas and at various levels (group, institutional, local, and regional). These activities are often aimed at the popular sectors of society. Most extension projects and programs based on action research are undertaken in rural areas and the peripheries of large cities. The books on this methodology that have been translated and published in recent years are frequently cited in this field of application.

Despite this optimistic trend, doubts still remain regarding the scientific status of action research and its academic feasibility. Those who support the use of conventional methods, especially quantitative ones, frown on action research projects, considering that the participation of actors leads to a loss of scientific objectivity. Although this is a complex matter and should certainly be discussed, the proponents of action research hold that it can indeed be conducted with observational rigor and control of distortions. Moreover, given the current academic re-valuing of qualitative research, many of the epistemological considerations relating to this kind of research also apply to action research. In any case, it is important to make a great effort to renew and consolidate the methodology of action research and its participatory modalities in order to lend legitimacy to its use and enhance its feasibility in universities and scientific research centers.

In view of the growing demand for research and knowledge that can accompany social change, define public projects, programs or policies, and intervene in community, environmental, or organizational situations, action research methodology is acquiring a new relevance. However, it is not sufficiently developed. Many students and researchers are unfamiliar with its proposals and are not trained in its techniques.

From a technical point of view, it is increasingly easy to develop new research and planning tools using information and communication technology, given that verbal and visual data can be processed using computers. However, to make full use of these tools, it is necessary to train technicians and researchers. Thanks to these technical resources, large academic projects can be developed with the participation of groups organized into cooperation networks and using a variety of institutional arrangements.

This brings us to a crucial problem of a different kind. Action research requires the participation of interested parties, and, if this is not forthcoming, it loses its essential nature and becomes a conventional procedure of data collection and analysis. Many traditional research projects are repetitive, with no effective prospect of change, and end up devaluing social research in the eyes of various audiences. Appropriate means are needed to reinforce the credibility of action research in order to ensure project continuity without creating unsustainable expectations. It is also crucial to achieve concrete results, even though they may be incomplete, and to publicize results so that the population, individuals and groups of actors, can use them in their actions.

The specific results of action research are still not sufficiently disseminated in academia, which lacks journals devoted to this type of methodology. In addition, publications from the university extension area are not valued or widely available. Teams should try to produce and publish a greater amount of knowledge based on action research using various channels, including digital and audiovisual media. Teachers and researchers should try to obtain greater academic recognition by publishing in indexed journals in different areas of the social sciences, education and administration, and so on.

The promising future of action research in the university of the twenty-first century was expounded by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2008). He argued that, in the aftermath of the neoliberal shock of the 1990s, with the crisis caused by the loss of identity and the legitimacy of public and private universities in thrall to the dictates of the market, the possibility of a democratic and emancipatory reform needed to be re-conceptualized. This would involve, among other measures, the strengthening of extension projects, the application of action research, and the ecology of different forms of knowledge, with the prospect of expanding the integration of universities with society in a non-hegemonic fashion. This point of view, based on many experiences in courses in Brazil and other countries, constitutes an incentive to re-examine the foundations of action research that were laid during the last century and perfect its methodology.

10.6 AN OVERVIEW OF CONCRETE EXPERIENCES IN UNIVERSITIES

Without wishing to cover all the countless participatory experiences that have taken place in Brazilian universities all over the country during the past two decades, we will simply indicate some we have had contact with in recent years, indicating institutions, areas of application, and the main themes addressed by these experiences, in order to provide an idea of what is happening in Brazil in the action research field.

We initially highlight the forums related to university extension, which have a great influence on public policies, and congregate deans of extension from universities throughout the country. The National Forum of Deans of Extension of Public Universities, the Forum of Deans of Extension of Community Universities, and the Forum of Deans of Extension of Private Universities address communication relations in the sphere of extension projects, generation of links and social mobilization strategies, formation and activities of interdisciplinary teams, and quantitative methodologies in university extension.

The Technical Solidarity Center/SOLTEC, which is a benchmark experience of the Politechnical School of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, promotes the solidarity economy in partnership with various federal, state, and municipal institutions, through participatory projects based on action research in the city of Macaé, in a fishing community (Addor, 2006), and in Rio de Janeiro's favelas (shanty towns). These projects have provided inputs for public policies and, in the academic sphere, have generated various master's dissertations and doctoral theses, as well as dozens of articles and presentations at conferences and scholarly gatherings. They are characterized by an interdisciplinary approach involving various engineering areas, applied social sciences, education, information technology, and environmental studies.

One should also highlight the regional and national networks which sprang from the activities of the SOLTEC Center: the National Meeting of Engineering

and Social Development and the Regional Meetings of Engineering and Social Development. These initiatives gather professionals, students, and other people interested in contributing to social development and foster the academic sharing of practical experiences and theoretical reflections related to engineering projects between different universities, social projects, and extension projects.

The Federal University of São Carlos has rich experience in action research applications in both institutional development and research and extension projects in various areas. In production engineering, for example, it has developed cooperative incubation projects (Targino & Thiollent, 2008). It has also supported important publications devoted to participatory methods and action research (Beningá, 2011).

In the field of rural studies, the Santa Catarina Agriculture and Rural Extension Research Company/Epagri, in Chapeco, has been applying action research in extension and rural development activities, especially those related to health and discomforts of rural work and the treatment afforded to animals. Other institutions, such as the federal universities and the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corporation, have been showing interest in applying participatory methodology and action research in sustainable development initiatives in rural areas.

The health area also has many applications, with various events and ongoing domestic and international initiatives. In nursing schools, such as the one belonging to the University Hospital of the Federal University of Juiz de Fora, nurses and nursing assistants are being trained to use these methodologies. The Post-Graduate Action Research Institute of the Ribeirão Preto Nursing School, /University of Sao Paulo is engaged in research and development related to the applicability of action research (Coscrat & Bueno, 2010). Action research initiatives can also be found in occupational therapy (Pacheco, 2014) and other areas that promote health.

Various public universities have been created in recent years with the aim of interacting more closely with society. They have used action research and participatory research to spread their actions more widely and deepen their knowledge of problems in order to find appropriate solutions. Some examples are given below.

The Federal University of São Paulo, which grew out of the former Paulista School of Medicine, has expanded its sphere of action to include municipalities of the greater São Paulo area and seeks to facilitate its insertion and activities in these new areas by using participatory methodologies. The academic mission of the Federal University of the ABC region, located in the industrial region of the ABC, is to create an environment that favors social development and seek solutions to regional and national problems, using participatory methods. The Matinhos Campus of the Federal University of Paraná encourages the generation of knowledge and extension projects, aimed at restoring local culture, developing the coastal region observing its specific features and applying action research in education, health, and the environment (Sulzbach & Denardin 2013). The Federal University of Fronteira Sul, which is a popular

and regional institution, located in an area near the country's southern border with campuses in five municipalities of three states in the south of Brazil, seeks to apply action research in rural areas to link teaching, research, and extension studies interacting with the population in areas covered by the university, in order to ensure social inclusion and strengthen citizenship (Beningá, 2011).

The Federal University of Minas Gerais also conducts participatory research and action research in various areas, particularly in the sphere of university extension practices. Márcio Simeone Henriques (2007) encourages participatory methods in urban communication, social mobilization, and policies. The university has developed various projects in the educational action research area, including the abovementioned contribution of Diniz-Pereira (2008).

As has been shown, action research has been applied in countless experiences and universities throughout the country. A last example is provided by the University of the Vale do Rio dos Sinos, a private institution with campuses all over the country's southern region which has been implementing innovations in this methodology in its undergraduate and post-graduate programs, with Danilo Streck (2011; Streck et al., 2014), mentioned above, playing an important role.

10.7 THE RENEWAL OF ACTION RESEARCH AND PARTICIPANT RESEARCH

In the social sciences and in methodological discussions, the term “participation” has various meanings, forms, types, degrees, and intensity. It is sometimes confused with other terms such as “collaboration” or “cooperation.” Moreover, the term is also used rhetorically and in political or ideological discourses. We should note that the term participation or the adjectives “participant” or “participatory” are often associated with research or investigation as if it were easy to characterize—yet, in actuality the research may or may not be participatory. This dichotomic view seems to be mistaken.

In 1980, Henri Desroche published a study containing a complex typology of the forms and intensities of participation in action research projects, which was translated into Portuguese in the 2000s. This typology has three dimensions: investigation, application, and implication. By combining eight types of participation according to different degrees of intensity, it establishes a rating scale from the strongest or “integral” to the weakest or “occasional” (Desroche, 2006). Desroche's conception has had an important influence on action research and has been adopted, sometimes in a modified or critical form, by other researchers (El Andaloussi, 2006). It provides a clear classification of research projects and their *modus operandi*, taking into account the individual or collective dimensions of the interaction that occurs during the process.

Participation in research must not be conceived or perceived in a binary way, in an all or nothing fashion, but rather in terms of subtle differentiations. Participation refers to a quality expressed, felt, or perceived in the rela-

tions between the people or parties involved. Various attempts have been made to quantify participation using social indicators, scaling techniques, or socio-metric measurements. However, in the sphere of qualitative research, we can consider some degrees of participation defined only in qualitative terms.

Thus, the notion of participation in the sphere of methodology should be defined with great care. It cannot simply be imposed without discussion on a population whose culture does not necessarily attribute the same meaning or importance to it. It is important to discuss with interested parties how they see their own participation in the research process and its possible consequences in real life.

In philosophical terms, this participatory approach has been influenced by existentialism and humanist Marxism, which were especially important in the middle of the last century. Ideological and political influences have ranged from the reformist and modernizing Christian democratic conception to the radical socialist conception associated with the ideas of revolution or liberation theology. In a more circumspect fashion, this perspective influenced many militants in the re-democratization cause during and after the military dictatorship period.

Today, the political situation and prevailing ideologies are very different. The participatory proposal may evolve due to new forms of organization or communication. Values and beliefs also evolve. In order to foster participation, actors who are attached to democratic values can develop their initiatives, including those related to research and planning, using action research methods. But, it is necessary to review and enrich approaches, theories, and procedures in light of the changes and improvements that have occurred in recent decades. We emphasize the importance of problematizing the relation between action and cognition, given that it is precisely by establishing favorable conditions for the generation of knowledge rooted in practices that action research seeks to distinguish itself from conventional research.

Today, most practitioners have a rather narrow understanding of this question, limiting themselves to an imprecise reference to the link between theory and practice or to the action-reflection-action cycle. Therefore, a great effort must be made to develop the conceptual and theoretical rigor needed to overcome these limitations and perhaps discover new possibilities of articulation.

In addition to the question of action, we have that of the actor or individual or collective subject. In action research, the actors occupy center stage whether as individuals or groups who are active in the situation investigated or as researchers, partners, and other participants in the process. The various types of actors should be concretely defined in each field of investigation.

The ideas of André Morin, Hugues Dionne, Guy Avanzini, and Khalid El Andaloussi have been widely publicized in recent years, accompanied by the revisiting of Henri Desroche's (1914–1994) original contribution. Danilo Streck (2011; Streck et al., 2014), from Rio Grande do Sul, promoted a broad range of concrete initiatives, with articulations between action research practitioners

at the regional, national, and international levels, thus helping to update and diversify methodological resources.

Another way of strengthening the participatory research approach is to recover the memory of research projects, educational experiences, life trajectories, groups, and individual and collective actors, which have generated valuable knowledge, but which risk falling into oblivion due to academic rules and the constraints of the publishing industry.

In various parts of Brazil, particularly the Northeast, one can find rich collective experiences and trajectories of people—educators, trade unionists, community leaders, progressive priests, and the like—whose teachings deserve to be remembered. Thus, to begin our contribution to this process, we mention two people whose works are extremely important: Charles Beylier, priest and sociologist, who died in 2004 and spent 35 years in the Northeast, with a large contribution in anthropology and social intervention in poverty fields (Thiollent, 2006); and João Bosco Pinto (1989, 2014), who developed studies in rural sociology and education, already mentioned in this text, who died in 1995, in Pernambuco. These are just two names of people whose contributions should never be forgotten. However, a thorough investigation would reveal dozens of similar cases, including groups, whether militant or otherwise, who were active in various contexts at different times.

Many researchers in Brazil are proposing that action research should be updated. This renewal of action research and participatory research would be based, on the one hand, on the legacies of Paulo Freire, Orlando Fals Borda and the whole Brazilian and Latin American school, the parallel influences of English- and French-speaking schools of thought, and the studies devoted to retrieving the works of other significant authors. And, on the other hand, on new international interlocution arrangements that have already been initiated with Europe and are being activated with the Americas, in addition to potential articulations with the Asian world and different kinds of African experiences.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the discrimination that still exists in certain universities and research bodies, action research, as we have seen, has expanded its presence enormously in Brazil in recent decades, especially in studies of the health, environmental, and health areas and others they engage with. This undoubtedly shows that participatory research constitutes a powerful tool for gaining a deeper understanding of the collective aspects of the problems faced in this and other areas of knowledge.

Given the great number of existing and unresolved social problems of different kinds that require diagnoses, identifications, solutions, interpretations, and assessments, it is clear that participatory methodologies, as long as they are adapted to current conditions, have a very promising future. The quality and effectiveness of actions undertaken using them are much greater than those that use conventional, unilateral methods with their authoritarian bias.

However, participatory methodologies also risk losing their essential nature. Participatory methodology is often used by those who exercise social and political responsibilities to achieve certain objectives. In this context, the approach can fall prey to the seduction of power and the power of seduction. This possibility is to be resisted, so as not to become a procedure that is used only when convenient or as a mere consultancy technique. In other words, participatory methodologies, like other methods, are subject to misuse by practitioners.

It is necessary to maintain a strong commitment to actors, who should be seen as effective participants, not just mere extras to be consulted regarding minor matters. To work with indigenous peoples, for example, we consider that it is necessary to know the languages they use, in their own cultural context. This principle could be extended to all linguistic communities in the name of respect for cultural diversity.

It is necessary to adopt a critical stance in the production of knowledge. One should not merely respond to immediate demands, given that the aim is to construct new knowledge that is critical regarding the prevailing situation and puts forward proposals regarding possible actions or action strategies.

The action research approach must privilege the investigation, creation, or production of local knowledge. Clearly, at a time of globalization, we cannot withdraw into our islands of coexistence and speak only the local dialect. However, an effort must undoubtedly be made to be able to engage in a dialogue that is attuned to our interlocutors.

It is increasingly necessary to recognize the complexity of the situations investigated; thus, it is necessary to join knowledge from various disciplines by articulating spaces of interlocution and concrete interventions in interdisciplinary projects. The complex problems of our time need to be approached through an effective dialogue between the researchers and actors involved in the situation-problem, in a complementary relationship between scientific knowledge and other areas of thought. This can constitute both a way of producing knowledge that can be useful for solving problems, through the interaction between theoretical and practical knowledge, and a means of involving people from communities in processes aimed at developing knowledge and solutions for the problems they are experiencing.

Problems that involve human beings such as, for example, those related to environmental imbalances or control of epidemics could be overcome not only by specialists searching for solutions among themselves but also through their participation in a dialogue with the subjects of the situations and the risks. This requires adequate means and processes that favor social learning.

Attracting and mobilizing researchers, project managers, and communities presupposes the preparation of a common agenda of priorities, development of a similar perspective on the theme/problem and in relation to the quest for a solution on the part of those involved, together with an appraisal of the time and resources that can be contributed by parties, among other elements. Achieving this involves an interactive dialogue, conflict mediation, and a cycle

of reflection and action regarding the problem/theme. These points must be prioritized in the conduction of this kind of process.

Research action groups, working in seminars, workshops, or even in networks, nearly always use an interdisciplinary approach. The action research can be applied simultaneously to knowledge of various social or cultural origins. The groups composed of researchers from different disciplines or professions and people, whether they are leaders, representatives, or ordinary people, can lead to the development of closer links between academy, project managers, and society.

NOTE

1. Important, but less widely known, is the work of João Bosco Guedes Pinto (1934–1995) who left behind a great contribution in terms of studies on the sociology of rural development, adult education, participatory methodology, and action research. His liberating perspective, strongly inspired by the work of Paulo Freire, resulted in an original approach, contextualized in 1960s to 1990s Latin America (Duque-Arrazola & Thiollent, 2014).

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Community Action Research in Ireland: Improving Educational Outcomes Through Collaboration in the Dublin Docklands

Josephine Bleach

Collaboration is key to the work of the Early Learning Initiative (ELI), National College of Ireland (NCI), a community-based educational initiative in the Dublin Docklands. Over 4,000 children, parents, and professionals actively engage in ELI's programs each year. Influenced by Bronfenbrenner (1979), we aim to enhance children's complex interactions with their immediate environment and provide sustained and integrated community-based educational support to children and their families. Community action research (Bleach, 2013, 2013b) is used extensively to develop innovative programs as it harnesses the expertise and experience within the local families and communities to improve educational outcomes for children.

This chapter will explore how, over the past seven years, cross-sectorial learning networks were created to work together to improve outcomes for children. The key elements of our community action research process will be explored along with its impact on children, parents, and professionals in the area. The changes in our theories and practice as a result of our engagement in action research will be described. The challenges we faced and our learning as a result will be highlighted. An underlying theme of the chapter will be how programs develop through reflection on and discussion about practice rather than adherence to a previously formulated theory (Koshy, 2005, p. 21).

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11.1 CREATING A LEARNING NETWORK

According to Senge and Scharmer (2001), action research begins by creating a learning community that works together to ‘nurture and sustain a knowledge-creating system’, based on valuing equally each other and the following three interacting domains of activity:

- Research: a discipline approach to discovery and understanding, with a commitment to share what is learned.
- Capacity-building: enhancing people’s awareness and capabilities, individually and collectively, to produce results they truly care about.
- Practice: people working together to achieve practical outcomes.

This section will describe how ELI has created ‘functioning cross-sectorial networks’ (Share, McCarthy & Greene, 2011, p. 46), consisting of parents, children, and staff in the local early years services; schools; and corporate, statutory, and voluntary organizations that work together to enhance children’s learning. As the lead organization, NCI took responsibility for the financial, management, contractual, reporting, and governance requirements of Early Learning Initiative [ELI] (2010). The ELI team, of which I am the Director, facilitated the community action research process. Representatives of each organization at management level met biannually in June and September to discuss and agree the overall direction of ELI and the yearly plan. In addition, working groups of front-line delivery staff met three to five times a year to develop action plans and materials for each program. Each working group member, with the support of the ELI team, was responsible for communicating and leading the process/activities within their own organization.

A snowball or phased approach was used to recruit members of the learning community. As a need was identified, representatives of relevant organizations would meet to design a program. Once piloted successfully, it was then extended to other services. A good example is the National Early Years Access Initiative (NEYAI) Docklands Early Numeracy Program, which was funded by Atlantic Philanthropies, the Mount Street Club Trustees, the Department for Children and Youth Affairs, and the Department of Education and Skills. It began in 2011 with nine early years services, six primary schools, and one after-school service coming together to agree upon numeracy curriculum priorities and to design relevant service and home-based learning activities. In 2012, it was extended to the public health nurses, with Dublin City Libraries getting involved in 2013. Each group brought their own unique perspective and experience to the program, thereby extending and enriching the learning experiences for all. In 2014, the program was expanded further with support from the Area-Based Childhood Program, funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and Atlantic Philanthropies (Department of Children and Youth Affairs [DCYA], 2014).

Key criteria for inclusion in the learning community were each individual organization’s commitment to improving the quality of the service they provide

to children and their families along with their ability to work in partnership with others. The disposition and skills of the participants from each agency to engage in an open dialogue of equals were critical as was their ability to share their knowledge and practice with one other. Each individual organization's commitment to implementing the agreed action plans was also important as well as the willingness of their staff to provide feedback on their experience to the wider learning community. While each member of the group had a different role and level of expertise, each was treated as equal in personal and professional value (McNiff, 2010). As a result, an ethos of genuine partnership and respect was at the heart of the network.

11.2 COMMUNITY ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS

ELI's community action research process was a complex annual cycle of communication, evaluation, planning, and implementation (see Fig. 11.1) through which we, as a learning network, investigated and evaluated our own practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006).

The first step in the process was to establish concrete contexts for working together. As early learning is the foundation for all subsequent learning, our network prioritized developing children's social, language, literacy, and numeracy skills from an early age through high quality adult-child interactions and a stimulating learning environment. The action planning process, therefore, revolved around how we, as a community, were supporting children's learning. Irish national guidelines, in particular *Síolta*, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education (Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education [CECDE], 2006) and *Aistear*, the Early Childhood Curriculum

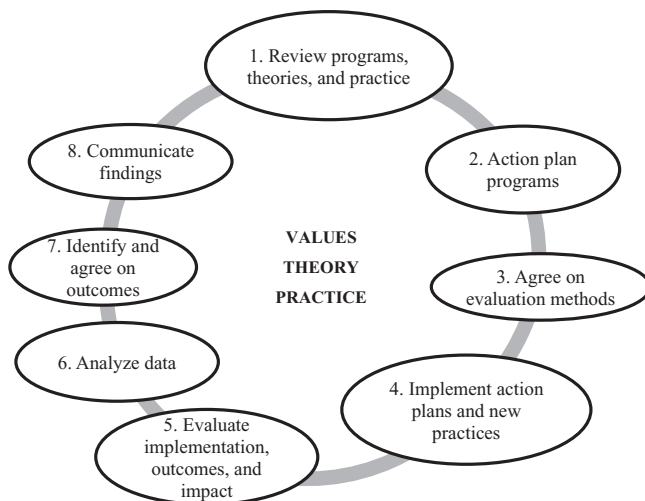


Fig. 11.1 Community action research cycle

Framework (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment [NCCA], 2009), were the starting points for our action plans as all organizations in the network were required to implement national policy.

With these principles in mind, each action research cycle began with a network meeting to review existing programs. Facilitated by the ELI team, these meetings began with a reminder of the process along with program updates and evaluation findings. This was followed by a discussion on what was working and what changes were needed. Areas for improvement were then prioritized and action plans developed. Encouraging participation and allowing everyone to ‘amicably disagree’ and ‘comfortably inhabit a position of not knowing everything’ (Frankham & Howes, 2006) ensured that everyone engaged in the discussion and subsequently took responsibility for the implementation of the agreed action plans. Over the past seven years, our action plans have focused on developing on literacy, numeracy, and educational guidance programs, which improve outcomes for children and young people.

Implementation began with individual site visits by the ELI team. On these visits, the front-line staff involved in delivering the program had the chance to tease out the implications of the action plan for their service and highlight any issues that might arise. In turn, the ELI team encouraged staff to adapt the action plan to their service. Follow-up phone calls, emails, and visits provided additional support, if required. Good practice and implementation issues were brought to the next network meeting for discussion.

Continuous self-evaluation (Koshy, 2005) is a feature of action research. Systematic evaluation of programs provided the evidence for decision-making, action planning, and program implementation. Multiple methods of gathering data were used, with the ELI team gathering verbal and written feedback during on-site visits, training sessions, and at the end of each action research cycle. Participants in each program were regularly asked to describe their learning, which aspects worked well, and what improvements were needed. In addition, child outcomes were assessed on a regular basis. The qualitative data emphasized the process and allowed the participants’ perspectives to be taken into account (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2001). It also showed the immediate effects of the program, thereby enabling us to adapt the program as it was being implemented. Quantitative data allowed us to measure service delivery and outcomes. For example, attendance records were kept for all programs including the Parent Child Home Program (PCHP). In 2011–2012, each family received on average 40 visits, which is less than the required 46 visits, allowing us to take new action and increase the average number of visits to 45 in 2012–2013 and to 48 in 2013–2014.

Communicating the evaluation findings to the network members was a core element of the process. The data were discussed at every meeting and amendments to the program agreed upon. At the end of each year, an overall review of each program, using the evaluation findings, took place. These data informed the next community action research cycle, allowing us to amend the program manuals and write the annual report. As a result, refining theory and practice were ongoing activities throughout the process.

11.3 PROGRAM IMPACT

Seven years of experience in working on action research projects has developed a sense of ownership and responsibility for the educational welfare of children from all involved. The ‘educational capital’ (Bleach, 2010) of the community has increased, and the educational and career aspirations of all the stakeholders have been raised. This section will examine the impact of the community action research process using the findings from both external and internal evaluations.

Approximately 4,000 children, parents, and professionals take part in an ELI program each year with 97% of professionals, students (11–21 years), and parents who filled in evaluation forms from 2008 to 2014 ($N = 3,174$) finding the program they were involved with useful to their practice. However, not everyone filled in an evaluation form. Approximately 82% of young people and 70% of professionals who were involved in an ELI program completed an evaluation form each year. The rates for parents varied depending on the program. For some programs like PCHP, in which 78 parents participated in 2013–2014, 82% or more parents completed forms. The numeracy program, on the other hand, had over 1,000 parents involved each year, and only a random sample of 15% completed evaluation forms.

Children’s literacy and numeracy outcomes have improved, and they are experiencing a more positive learning environment. Assessments on children (18 months—3 years) involved in PCHP have shown that these children, unlike children in similar disadvantaged areas, are performing at levels expected for their age (ELI, 2013; Share, Doyle et al., 2011). Similarly, numeracy assessments administered on children aged 3–4 years indicated these children’s numeracy concepts and skills were on a par with those in a more economically advantaged area (ELI, 2013). The results from the NEYAI National Evaluation were similar to those of the Docklands’ local evaluations with children aged 3–4 years in the Docklands doing very well, particularly in language and cognition, compared with their peers in other projects (McKeown, Haase, & Pratschke, 2014). Parents and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) staff made the following observations on children’s learning through the programs:

My child has learnt so much over the last two years from PCHP. We look out for signs & shapes when we are out walking. She has learnt to tidy up after herself. She can sit easy for 30 min to listen & learn. (Parent—ELI, 2013, p. 15)

Through the NEYAI Docklands Early Numeracy Program, the children, I feel, have learned an understanding into basic numbers. They talk about numbers, shapes, etc. in a fun way. They seem to enjoy when we sit down as I try to make them feel it is a game and we can have lots of fun. (ECCE Practitioner—ELI, 2013, p. 29)

The majority of students in the primary schools are faring well in terms of educational outcomes and in their attitudes to education (ELI, 2013; Share & McCarthy, 2011). Standardized test results from the Docklands primary schools show that children in second class (age seven years) there are scoring to national norms in Math. While children in sixth class were scoring

below national norms, they were still above the norms for other disadvantaged schools in Ireland.

The professional development provided to Early Childhood Care and Education practitioners made them more aware of and more skilled in supporting children's learning outcomes. Ninety-nine percent (N = 997) of Early Childhood Care and Education practitioners (N = 1,005), who filled out evaluations forms, agreed that ELI's training programs supported them to improve the quality of their practice. The results from the independent evaluation by the Children's Research Center, Trinity College, Dublin, corroborated this. It found that there were 'big changes' in practice as a result of the project (Share, Kerrins, & Greene, 2011).

Parents were very positive about all of ELI's programs, which they felt 'promoted interaction with their child' and 'were good for learning' (ELI, 2013, 2014; Share & McCarthy, 2011; Share, McCarthy, & Greene, 2011). Ninety-nine percent (N = 451) of parents (N = 452), who filled out evaluations forms, agreed that they felt confident in using the strategies with their children. A pilot longitudinal research study was carried out in 2013–2014 with 15 of the first PCHP families (ELI, 2014). It found that six years later, these parents were continuing to use the skills they learned through the program. The PCHP books and toys were still being used by these parents to talk, read, and play, not only with their PCHP child but also with their other children. Their children were doing well at school, having started school with the literacy and numeracy skills needed to succeed. One parent explained:

Absolutely, 100 percent (It prepared him for school). He understood the purpose of a book. He was comfortable with looking at a book just for pictures, for images, for what information was there, it didn't have to be a word, he couldn't read at the time. The idea of listening, it improved his English. There were toys and they were great for his maths. It helped me as a parent to prepare him for school and it helped his interest in books. (Parents—ELI, 2013, pp. 24–25)

Seven years of working on community action research projects has brought an enthusiasm and excitement about learning to the Docklands Community (Bleach, 2013; Share, McCarthy & Greene, 2011). Relationships between the various stakeholders in the community have improved with the process 'bringing the family and all the educational sections together, bonding links in the community' (Bleach, 2013, p. 258) and helping 'to foster a learning environment where home and school learning comes together' (p. 258). It has supported the implementation of change in a way that enhanced all our capabilities, both individually and collectively, to produce results we truly cared about.

11.4 LEARNING THROUGH COMMUNITY ACTION RESEARCH

Engagement in the community action research process increased our reflective, relational, and representational knowledge (Park, 1999, 2001). This section will explore how our practice and theories changed as a result of community action research. It will also describe the challenges involved and our learning as result.

11.4.1 *Enabling Change in Practices*

Community action research has enabled us to change our educational practices collectively by thinking differently, acting differently, and relating to one another differently (Kemmis, 2009). Each of these three elements was intertwined. As one aspect changed, it affected and led to alterations in the other two.

Thinking differently began with creating a collective moral purpose (Fullan, Cuttress, & Kilcher, 2005), entailing continuous reflection and discussion on the deep ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions (Connel & Kubisch, 1998) that are often lost among the easier ‘what, who and when’ questions. Throughout the year, through each interaction between the ELI team and members of our learning networks, there was a continued focus on the ‘why’ and our mission of ‘Working in partnership with local communities to support educational journeys and achievements’ (ELI, 2013, p. 6). Meetings, program materials, newsletters, and Facebook were used to communicate our key principles.

A discussion at one working group meeting, when a suggestion to ask parents if their children enjoyed the numeracy activities was challenged, highlighted how the ‘why’ questions informed the process. After a robust discussion on the ‘why’ of our numeracy program, we agreed that it was more appropriate to ask parents what their children learnt from the activities. Asking parents if their children enjoyed the activities diminished their role as educators and active participants in their children’s learning and the program. For many participants, this type of group reflection on theory and practice was a revelatory experience, particularly when they had to challenge their own and other’s conceptual frameworks, biases, and assumptions (Darlington & Scott, 2002). The more participants thought about what they needed to do differently in relation to their interactions with others, the more their capacity to develop ‘living theories’ of practice improved (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006).

Acting differently began with us as individual participants and organizations, coming together as a learning network to work collaboratively on programs that would improve outcomes for children. It entailed us systematically engaging in the action research cycle by first answering the ‘why and how’ questions and then agreeing and delivering on the ‘what, who, and when’ questions. As a result, the whole community in the Docklands is involved in the action research process. Over the past seven years, innovative programs have been developed to improve children’s language, literacy, and numeracy skills. Professionals and parents are proactively working together to ensure that children have skills and support they need at each stage of their educational journey.

Relating to one another differently tended to follow thinking and acting differently. The more action research cycles participants experienced, the more their trust in the process developed. Relationships improved, and participants valued the opportunity to engage with others. As a result, they were more open to examining their own practice and engaging with the practical wisdom of the other participants. It also gave participants the opportunity to see how others were coping with real problems in similar contexts (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013) to their own.

11.4.2 *Developing Theories of Practice and Learning*

Action research entails the integration of theory in and for action (Winter, 1998). Not only does it seek to integrate the theories it draws upon but also the action research process itself generates its own form of theory. ELI began with a community consultation and survey conducted by the Dartington Social Research Unit (2006) along with research on best national and international practices. This initial exploration provided us with a preliminary theory that suggested strategies for action (Miller-Brydon, Greenwood, & Maguire, 2003). As outlined in section “[Community Action Research Process](#),” early learning was considered the foundation for all subsequent learning. While local parents had high educational aspirations for their children, they did not understand their pivotal role and were not confident that they had the skills to support their children’s learning. With support for parents as the primary educators of their children a priority, involving local people in the decision-making processes was perceived as key to educational change.

Starting with the first action research cycle (see Fig. 1), a cumulative and iterative process of theory building, testing, and refinement (Blamey & Mackensie, 2007) was developed. Translating practice into theory was difficult, especially as emerging theory had to be weighed against established theory and national policy. Everyone, children, parents, and professionals, had to think abstractly and objectively about what had been learned and what needed to be done next (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Some in the learning network found it a challenge to make explicit theories and practices that were until then implicit (Bleach, 2013b).

Others found the language and concepts being used problematic and felt that they had not the ‘words’ or language to express their opinions. They also needed to develop the confidence to speak about their practice in front of others.

Learning from other crèches and overcoming my fears and speaking out in front of everyone with my thoughts and input to the discussion. Learning new words and what they mean. (Early Childhood Care and Education practitioners—ELI, 2011, p. 17)

Providing regular opportunities for dynamic conversations (Schön, 1983) through the action research process enabled us, as a learning network, to refine existing theories and to generate new ones. For example, parental involvement was continuously raised as challenging by the professionals. Yet, when parents were surveyed as part of the numeracy program, only 38% said that the service had organized activities for parents. This flagged issues of power and control (Bleach, 2010; Townsend, 2013) in the relationship between parents and practitioners, which was discussed at the next network meeting.

Articulating our theories in ways that made sense to others was difficult. Clear explanations, along with the right mix of narrative, graphs, and images were needed. Many of the more robust and thought-provoking discussions were with our corporate partners and statutory funders, who challenged our

assumptions and raised issues that we had not considered. For example, ELI's initial logo of a mother and child was questioned by one of our corporate partners as not reflecting our theory that paternal involvement in children's learning is just as crucial as maternal. This initiated a series of conversations among the learning network, which resulted in our logo being changed and a renewed determination to acknowledge and respect the important role fathers' play in their children's lives. Grappling with theory in this way helped us improve both our theory and practice.

11.4.3 *Challenges*

Working with real people within real social systems, people do not necessarily act as you wish and things do not always go according to plan (Bleach, 2013b). Leading the action research process was challenging for both the ELI team and the network participants. All the organizations involved were working 'in an environment of rapid change—in terms of national policy and the infrastructure for the delivery of early intervention and prevention services, with both funding cuts to existing services and new funding initiatives' (Pobal, 2014, p. 3). Finding the time and energy to engage with ELI was difficult with many services requiring a lot of support to participate in our programs. As the lead organization, the ELI team had to be careful of their effect on the process and be sensitive to how their values, perceptions, actions, feelings, and the like could influence the other participants. They also had to ensure that all voices were heard and the views of one person or one organization did not take precedence over the views of other participants. Particular attention was also paid to the reliability, validity, and objectivity (Creswell, 2003; Robson, 1993) of the feedback received from participants, and triangulation was used where possible. Understanding how different mind-sets and political interests experienced working together and how they were processing and interpreting that experience (Coghlan & Brannick, 2001) was critical.

The demand from funders and policy makers for programs to be evidence-based (Bleach, 2013b) had to be balanced with the inherent tensions in a community development project. Managing these conflicting positions was an ongoing challenge for our network, particularly as stakeholders applauded ELI's flexible and non-prescriptive approach and saw it as key to the program's success (Share, McCarthy & Greene, 2011, p. 7). A key decision was to design our own 'bespoke' programs through community action research rather than use the 'off-the-shelf' prescriptive programs, approved by policy makers. This allowed new language, theory, and practice to develop incrementally, thereby preventing fragmentation and overload for services (Fullan et al., 2005). Involving participants as co-constructors of programs (Bleach, 2013) enhanced their capacity to make the changes needed to improve outcomes for children.

However, policy makers and funders still required robust evidence of the impact of our programs. Producing this evidence required us to have a disci-

plined evaluation strategy and explicit criteria against which the authenticity of our data could be checked. Indicative evidence (Veerman & Van Yperen, 2007) that a program was successful was based on the following criteria: participation, learning outcomes, educational aspirations, satisfaction rates, and impact. Programs were considered successful if 95% of the participants found them useful; all the program goals were attained in 90% of the cases; and 80% of the participants were within the normal range according to a standardized assessment instrument. The results were compared to Irish national norms and data collected through external and internal evaluations. Gathered systematically, over several action research cycles, these data were used to provide indicative evidence of effectiveness and causality.

11.5 CONCLUSION

Change is a complex, analytical, political, and cultural process of challenging and changing the core beliefs, structure, and strategy of a community (Pettigrew, 1987). The community action research process provided direction, meaning, and motivation to our learning network (Tuohy 1997). It enabled us, individually and collectively, to increase our reflective, relational, and representational knowledge (Park, 1999, 2001). We learned that to reach from knowledge to doing required practice; to reach from doing to knowing required articulation and critical inquiry that led to reflective insight (Freidman, 2003).

The learning network provided a safe, yet challenging, space for participants to discuss and analyze theory, research findings and lived experiences. Its use of the action research process supported continuous improvement and community building as well as developing our capacity for dialogue with each other, policy makers and funders (Bleach, 2013b).

Over the past seven years, there have been ‘big changes’ (Share, Doyle, et al., 2011) in our practice. Our initial theories have evolved and developed through each action research cycle. Our skill in working collaboratively to provide a positive, supportive, yet challenging learning environment for children has increased. Evaluations indicate that the educational outcomes for children in the Docklands are improving (ELI, 2013; McKeown et al., 2014; Share & McCarthy, 2011) and that parents are more engaged in their children’s development. Learning is being perceived as enjoyable and something to be shared across the community.

With funding from the Irish Government’s Area-Based Childhood Program (DCYA, 2014) and our corporate partners, ELI is at the beginning of another action research cycle in which we will incorporate our learning from designing and implementing innovative programs over the last seven years. Despite the challenges facing us, our ‘cross-sectorial networks’ (Share, McCarthy & Greene, 2011, p. 46) are committed to continuing to use community action research (Senge & Scharmer, 2001) to improve outcomes for children and their families through bottom-up, flexible, continuous, and cooperative change.

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Creating a Pedagogy of Vocational Training for Young People Not in Education, Employment, or Training

Gil Mason and Joan Walton

Liverpool, England is a city of high deprivation. Twenty-seven percent of young people aged 16–24 are not in education, employment, or training (NEETs). Government initiatives to remedy this situation have a success rate of less than 2%. An analysis of these initiatives shows that most follow traditional didactic pedagogic principles, which do not engage or motivate the learner.

Grounded in Heron's (1996) participatory world view, and reflecting personal values of fairness and social justice, Mason, the leader of a community social enterprise, used a participatory action research (PAR) methodology to engage young people and other community members in a process which would enable them to achieve the learning outcomes as identified by the government funding body. After looking at and taking ownership of the learning outcomes, the young people created the concept of a community café. They engaged in market research to find out what the community wanted, devised a menu, bought and prepared the food, served customers, and, at the end of the day, ensured the café was clean and the finances up-to-date. All involved gained vocational qualifications in customer service, food hygiene, and employability. Ninety-eight percent of young people who started with the project were successful in gaining qualifications. The international accrediting body, City & Guilds, has identified this as a flagship project.

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The chapter concludes with a recommendation that, if today's youth are to become mentally healthy and financially independent in their later years, there is a need for a transformative shift in the ways in which government bodies perceive and fund projects for young people. The PAR project reported in this chapter generates knowledge that could guide the achievement of such a transformation.

12.1 SETTING THE CONTEXT

We are co-authoring this chapter in our respective roles as part-time PhD student (Gill) and PhD supervisor (Joan). Gill is director of a social enterprise organisation in Liverpool; Joan is an academic at a UK university. We first met during an event which early years' practitioners had played a major part in organising. The practitioners had been involved in a collaborative enquiry that was exploring how they could, individually and collectively, improve their practice with children, and were presenting their findings. Joan had initiated this enquiry using participatory methods to encourage their active involvement. Gill realised that she also used such methods in her professional practice, but did so intuitively rather than having a theoretical rationale for her approach. She registered for a PhD, wishing to reflect on, theorise, and improve her work using PAR, and to write a thesis that would make an original contribution to knowledge by providing an explanation for how social justice and fairness could be achieved for marginalised young people.

As joint authors of this chapter, we have a shared interest in researching what needs to happen to address issues of social disadvantage and marginalisation, and to developing an approach to research which will generate knowledge about how to achieve social justice locally and globally. In working together, both in our supervisory relationship, and in co-writing this chapter, we are in agreement that, to understand who we are and what we do today, we need to understand the nature of historical influences on us. In order to make better sense of the narrative about the project that is the focus of this chapter, we are including brief autobiographical information that we consider to be relevant in this context.

12.1.1 *Joan*

I began my working life looking after children in the care system. These children came from dysfunctional families, and experienced huge emotional suffering. I wanted to find the knowledge that would enable me to ease their suffering, and realised that, not only did such knowledge not exist but conventional academic research did not address such questions. Since then, I have believed that we need to expand our views on the nature of research. Rather than accept a mechanistic view of the universe, and assume that the 'truth' is out there waiting to be discovered, as conventional science suggests, we should instead see the universe as participatory and explore the possibility that we can create reality. Why can't we decide what kind of knowledge we need, and create research methodologies that will generate that knowledge? Traditional research is based on an outmoded view of the world—that is, it is based on a belief that

reality exists independently of the researcher, and that it is possible to discover the ‘truth’ of all that exists through the eyes of an objective observer. However, the knowledge we need is to do with issues such as how can we create a world where we live in peace and harmony with ourselves and each other, and where the conditions exist for all human beings to flourish? We need to generate research methodologies that will help address the many crises that threaten us, including, for example, environmental, economic, and mental health. In my work with Gill, we are developing and evaluating one such methodology—PAR, in one specific context—with young NEET people in Liverpool.

12.1.2 Gill

I was greatly influenced at an early age by the poetry and literature I learned from an inspirational English teacher. It was during these classes that I developed a passion for social justice, influenced in large part by the writings of Thomas Hardy. One such poem was “The Reminder” (Hardy, 1919):

While I watch the Christmas blaze
 Paint the room with ruddy rays,
 Something makes my vision glide
 To the frosty scene outside.
 There, to reach a rotting berry,
 Toils a thrush,--constrained to very
 Dregs of food by sharp distress,
 Taking such with thankfulness.
 Why, O starving bird, when I
 One day's joy would justify,
 And put misery out of view,
 Do you make me notice you!

It is the last three lines that really impacted on me; there is a realisation that ‘out there’ misery exists whilst I am comfortable ‘in my warm room’.

This awareness was reinforced after reading Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*, in which Tess, through no fault of her own, moves from one miserable situation to another, in a life that includes rape, the death of her child, and living a servile existence. Our teacher said this book would change our lives—and it certainly changed mine. I realised that each of us, like Tess, is defined by our upbringing, and by the social context in which we live, which shapes the choices we have, and influences the kind of people we become. Tess struggles against her past, believing she has the power to overcome it. She is not able to achieve this; but I sympathised with her efforts and personal heroism as she tried so hard to create a good life for herself. It just did not seem fair!! I felt that if people around her had made the effort to understand and help her, she would have succeeded.

All my professional roles have been influenced by these values of fairness and social justice. They have included working with children and young people excluded from mainstream education; being a teacher with children who were blind and partially sighted; and working as a basic skills tutor with young adults

who were ex-offenders, with the aim of enhancing their literacy, numeracy, and employability skills to enable them to gain employment.

Whilst fulfilling these and similar roles, I was always acutely aware of the lack of equality experienced by the marginalised learners with regard to training and education, relative to more privileged sectors of society. In my view, they had a lack of choice, and experienced methods of teaching which did not take proper account of their various disadvantages, thus often compounding their disaffection with any form of education.

Driven by a desire to change this, I moved into working for a large organisation responsible for creating and accrediting qualifications. My vision was to influence the shape and design of vocational qualifications nationally and internationally, which I did for eight years. I then moved on to opening my own social enterprise and vocational training centre to influence the delivery and funding of vocational education within a deprived community in Liverpool. It was when occupying this role that I initiated the project that forms the focus of this chapter.

12.2 PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR)

According to Kemmis and McTaggart (2005), participatory research is a philosophy of social research that has its roots in liberation theology and neo-Marxist approaches to community development, particularly in Latin America. They identify three attributes that can distinguish participatory research from more conventional research: shared ownership of research projects, a community approach to identifying social problems, and an emphasis on community action. There is a commitment to social and economic development, which is responsive to the needs and ideas of community members. Consequently, the research has a political dimension, as a major aim is to challenge the power structures that often reinforce existing inequalities. Although Kemmis and McTaggart suggest that participatory research is often associated with social transformation in the Third World, Gill is working in a social context where inequalities are rife, and many people are struggling to survive, and hence the notion of, and hope for, social transformation is significant. It is not only in the Third World that severe poverty exists, and people are having difficulties in coping. The situation is so serious in many parts of the UK, including in Liverpool that, for large numbers of people, getting enough food to eat is a challenge. Charities are creating food banks as a means of providing crisis support for individuals and families most in need. In a population of over 64 million in the UK, 13 million live below the formal poverty line (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2014), with the situation getting worse rather than better.

It is for reasons such as these that have influenced our belief that we need a different kind of research. For example, there has been a considerable amount of research, which includes the identification of increasingly sophisticated criteria to enable measurement of the impact of poverty on child well-being, so that global comparisons can be made (Ben-Arieh, 2010; Bradshaw, Hoelscher, & Richardson, 2007; Bradshaw & Richardson, 2009). However, there is not the same volume of research which addresses the problem of how to eradicate

poverty, as is evidenced by the worsening of the situation, even in developed and relatively affluent countries such as the UK.

Because there has been such a tragic failure on the part of the political and educational situations to address the situation effectively, it seems that a new approach needs to be taken. Traditional forms of research have not generated the knowledge we require to find solutions to the grave problems that are being experienced in many local communities.

12.3 GILL'S STORY OF THE PROJECT

I had read extensively about other people's ideas, beliefs, and theories, and I had reflected on these in the context of my own ideas and experiences. As a consequence, I had come to a way of understanding the world, myself, and the young people whom I wanted to help achieve a more productive life, which they experienced as meaningful and rewarding. Influenced strongly by Heron (1996) and Bateson (1972), I could relate to the idea of a participatory universe in which everyone and everything was interconnected, and no one person was essentially superior to anyone else. I was even more committed to my core values of fairness and social justice, about which I had felt passionately since reading *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. I also believed that all young people yearned to contribute in a positive way to society; but unless they experienced that society as valuing them, giving them choices, and enabling them to make decisions concerning their own lives, then they could feel rejected, with no possibility of flourishing in a positive way in their local communities.

My challenge then was how to put these values and world views into practice in a government-funded project where the young people were required to meet certain specified learning outcomes in order to achieve a vocational qualification?

The overall aim of this project was to prepare young people for work and to help them find appropriate employment. Gaining qualifications was an important element, but as most of the young people had had negative experiences of the educational process, I was not going to be successful in convincing them to participate in yet another tedious training session that was imposed on them. I had to take a different approach, which—in keeping with my relational, participatory world view, and my values of fairness and inclusion—encouraged them to engage through developing relationships with me, with staff, and with each other.

The project ran for a period of 10 weeks, from the end of July 2014. My previous experience of working for City and Guilds, the awarding body, had informed me that the majority of programmes, which were given the same government funding as we would receive, were failing these young people. The funding was given when young people registered for an award, and for attendance; there was no monitoring of the quality of education that was provided. From what the young people were telling me, they were not being given any training that they experienced as worthwhile. For example, some young people had attended a programme run by another provider, which led to an

Employability qualification. A learning outcome was ‘to learn and understand appropriate dress code for an interview’. They were given multiple-choice questions, one of these being ‘If I was going for an interview, I would wear (1) a clown’s suit; or (2) a smart suit’. They would then be given a sheet of paper that showed different interview outfits, and were asked to colour them in, using colours they thought to be appropriate for the clothes.

I was determined that our organisation would offer more meaningful experiences for the young people who attended our project! The question was, given so many of them were disaffected by educational programmes, how could we not only actively engage them in the learning process but ensure that any qualification they gained would lead them on to further productive work or education? My reflections led me to the creation of a process that involved the following elements:

- actively engaging all participants through building and sustaining relationships;
- collaboratively planning the curriculum; and
- evaluating the outcomes.

12.3.1 Actively Engaging all Participants in the Project Through Building and Sustaining Relationships

The Participants—Young People and Staff The target group of young people for the project were those who were NEET, or were at risk of becoming NEET, as they had disengaged from school and were deemed to be in danger of being ‘lost’ over the summer break.

I welcomed all of the learners personally having informally interviewed the majority of them previously to tell them a little bit about how the summer programme might run, and asking how they would like it to be. They were cynical, but they were prepared to give it a chance. The fact that they were receiving an incentive of £10 for each session they attended was undoubtedly a factor in persuading them to come to the first meeting.

In addition to myself, there was a team of six tutors working on the project, all of whom were qualified vocational tutors and assessors. Five had many years’ experience of delivering vocational training and education to post 16 learners; however, this was the first time they had delivered to so many young people for a short intense period of time. One staff member was newly qualified with little relevant experience, though she was present in a pastoral care role, and had a considerable amount of empathy for the learners.

For this particular project, we also employed four learning mentors aged 18–25 years, who had previously been learners themselves in the organisation. Their role was to support group members. These four mentors, after having experienced an induction to prepare them for their role, became an integral part of the programme as role models, and as friends to the younger members.

The First Group Meeting When at the first group meeting, I stood in front of those young people and the staff committed to working with them, I did not have an idea about what I was going to say! My thoughts were racing. I had heard of their bad experiences in other projects; I knew that they thought this was going to be another waste of time, and although the £10 had attracted them to this meeting, it would not in itself be enough to commit them to further attendance. I had a tiny window of opportunity to persuade them that this was going to be a different kind of project.

However, I truly believed that all people at some deep level want to learn, and motivation to participate in learning is greatly increased when they are made to feel a part of something worthwhile and there is recognition that they have skills and abilities that can be used. So how was I going to achieve that feeling in these demoralised and disaffected young people? I felt the need to stay rational and calm, and reassure them that, with us, they would experience something different that we could do together.

I was, rather furiously, ‘reflecting-in-action’ (Schon, 1983), drawing on all my previous learning and values. I was no expert in this; perhaps I should truly see them as equals? So trusting in this intuitive thought, I found myself saying: ‘Can you help me? Can we work together to create something that you will enjoy, and you will feel is worthwhile?’

They were responsive to my request for help. I realised that, rather than me appearing as ‘weak’ in their eyes, they found it empowering to be consulted in this way, right from the outset. I asked them what their vision for the future was. There was a wide range of responses, from being a rock star to getting married. However, one consistent theme came through: ‘I would like to run my own business; I want control of who I am, and what I do’. They were not interested in the academic learning of school education. However, they were motivated to learn vocational skills if it would mean they could develop their own enterprise.

As the meeting continued, my staff and I spoke to individual young people. They were enthused with the idea that they might be able to create their own business—and they could have a say in what that was. Most expressed a sense of underachievement, and all were keen to gain proper employment. They did not like the image of the ‘lazy youth’, but up to now, had not felt that they had been given proper opportunities to be any different. My aim was to create a positive learning environment, where there were clear boundaries, and where learners were not afraid to fail (Lloyd-Jones, Bowen, Holton, Griffin, & Sims, 2010).

However, I knew I could not do that using an authoritarian mode, relying on didactic methods of communication. Following my values of fairness and inclusion, it was important to show learners respect, and let them know that they are cared about (Bielby, Judkins, O’Donnell, & McCrone, 2012; Gutherson, Davies, & Daszkiewicz, 2011; Hayward & Williams, 2011). Learners needed to be involved in the decision-making in relation to their learning at all stages of the process (Gutherson et al., 2011). This included being involved in planning the curriculum.

12.3.2 *Collaboratively Planning the Curriculum*

We showed the young people the *Handbook for the Award in Employability Skills*, and the learning outcomes from which they could choose. We asked them what they would like to do. There was considerable and lively discussion, but eventually agreement was reached that we should create a community café.

This idea had immediate benefits for the young people, which helped increase their desire to develop relevant knowledge and skills so that the café would be a success. The café would be a source of food for themselves, as well as for other community members; it would teach them practical skills; and it would provide them with the opportunity to develop a business that not only would be useful to the community and potentially make a profit, but could show the community that they were worthwhile citizens.

All these factors helped enhance their motivation. They divided into teams, and then rotated who did what task, so that every team would be able to try out each of the tasks. In the process, each young person discussed with staff members what their individual and team learning needs were; and also participated in negotiating how those learning needs were met.

The range of tasks that needed to be undertaken were identified, including

- cooking;
- cleaning;
- ordering the food;
- market research, in order to find out what the local community would like to eat;
- delivering food around the community; and
- designing and marketing menus on a weekly basis.

One day each week was spent in collating evidence and building their portfolios, which were then submitted to City and Guilds, the awarding body, for assessment. Imaginative forms of assessment were used to suit individual need; for example, we developed a video diary room, so that learners who found it difficult to express themselves on paper could reflect on camera.

12.3.3 *Evaluating the Outcomes*

Of the 62 learners who attended the first session of the project, 60 stayed for the duration of the 10-week programme, and all gained qualifications in employability, food hygiene, and customer service. There was a 98% success rate in these qualifications, compared with a national average of 54% for learners coming from similar backgrounds. All involved in the project made positive progressions—for example, into a further education programme, an apprenticeship, or a full-time paid job.

In terms of its initial brief, then, the project was an undoubted success in terms of its formal aim of enabling young people to gain meaningful qualifications and useful work experience that would help make them more employable. However, in addition, there were a number of unexpected outcomes. For example, because most of the young people lived below the poverty line and

often arrived at the project feeling hungry, it was possible for them to be fed without stigma. Many of them were moving into independent accommodation, and hence the cooking and cleaning skills they acquired were invaluable.

A major outcome was the quality of relationships that were developed amongst the staff and young people. In their feedback, a number of the learners commented that they felt part of a family, which was enhanced by rituals such as sitting at the table and eating together at regular times.

The young people began to use their initiative to create different kinds of projects that reflected their interests, but were also contributing to the quality of life of the community. A pensioner's lunch club was set up; two of the learners started their own band and sang to the pensioners, taking the time and effort to learn the old favourites that their audience requested. Some of the other project members organised a summer play scheme and a fun day for young children aged 3–7 years. As their reputation grew around the area, local community groups began to order 'brown bag lunches', which they paid for, and ensured that a real income was being generated by the project.

The significance of the outcomes can perhaps be better understood by reading the stories of the individual children who participated. Two are included here:

Natalie Natalie was a care leaver—as were a large number of the young people who engaged with the project. In a comprehensive review of the research literature on care leavers, Stein (2005) discovered a consistent finding to be that the majority move to independent living between 16 and 18 years of age, whereas most of their peers remain at home until well into their 20s. Unlike most young people who can return to their family home in times of crises, care leavers have nowhere they can go if life becomes difficult (Dixon & Stein, 2005). They are expected to undertake their journey to adulthood, from restricted to full citizenship, far younger and in far less time than their peers (Lister, 1998). They do not have the psychological space or opportunity to deal with issues over an extended period of time with appropriate support, which is how most young people cope with the challenges of transition (Coleman & Hendry, 1999). Consequently, the transition to adulthood from childhood is highly pressured.

Natalie was 17 years of age. Since the age of six, she had been placed with 11 different foster families, before living independently from her 17th birthday. She remained in contact with her biological mother; however, due to her mother's alcohol and drug use throughout her life, their relationship was turbulent. School attendance at less than 20% was sporadic, and although she sat five General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSEs), the grades she achieved were considerably lower than the national average.

Before joining the summer programme, she had attended the programmes of four other providers, three of which asked her to leave, due either to unacceptable behaviour or to poor attendance. In our summer project, Natalie's attendance was 100%. As it progressed, she showed an increasing improvement in her attitude and motivation. After completing the programme, she was accepted onto a higher-level mainstream Further Education course. She now

has achieved an accredited Level-2 qualification in catering, and is aiming to set up her own business whilst undertaking Level 3.

When asked how this project was different, she said:

All the other places I went to looked at my case notes, decided I was going to be “trouble”, then treated me as though I was. I only needed to play up once, and they would punish me. Here, you didn’t prejudge me; my history didn’t matter to you. Even when I was feeling angry or frustrated, you were patient with me, and took the time to find out what was wrong with me. I realised that actually you cared about me; and then I wanted to do well, and make you proud of me. You gave me responsibility, and I loved it. I now feel I have a future, and people who will support me with what I want to do, not giving up on me even when I make mistakes.

Steven Steven also had a background in care. He had been with foster parents since the age of eight, and lived in four different homes. His attendance at school had been poor, and at one stage he was placed in a secure educational unit for young people with behavioural problems. He had run away over 30 times from different placements. When the project started, he was on a one-to-one support order. Due to the intensity of this support, he struggled to find a learning provider who would enroll him, as it was thought his support needs were too high.

Initially it looked as though, despite all our efforts, he would not succeed on the programme. In the early stages, he became aggressive and frustrated in the training sessions and could not cope with making mistakes. However, we did not want to give up, and for a period of time, we also gave him one-to-one support. We used distraction techniques, reacting to him on an individual basis: that is, when he started to become frustrated and angry, we aimed to take his attention away from that and focus on something that would make him feel more positive. Through getting to know him, and responding to what was going on for him at any particular time, we discovered that he dearly wanted to learn to play the guitar. We were able to obtain an old guitar for him and arranged for him to have lessons.

This led to a transformation in Steven’s behaviour. He loved playing the guitar. He was encouraged to play and sing for a group of older people at a pensioners club and then began to write songs specifically for them. The older people thought he was wonderful! His aspirations began to grow, with the wish to become an actor. However at this stage, he acknowledged that if he wanted to follow his dreams, he would need to work on his personal development and get some structure into his life. Finally, though, he had found meaning in his life, and had the motivation to make these kinds of efforts.

A major point of feedback from all learners at the end of the project was that they had felt engaged from the beginning, whereas in other settings, they felt that their specific needs were ignored. Many of them had chosen to avoid education, or not engage with any form of training that was offered to them, because they felt it a meaningless process where they were treated as objects to be processed through a machine, rather than as individuals who were valued for themselves.

12.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT

There were many ‘success’ stories such as these. The project culminated in a celebratory evening with the Lord Mayor attending, and also Chris Jones, the Chief Executive Officer of City and Guilds, the largest vocational awarding body in the world. Earlier in the day, he had travelled around Liverpool, talking to a number of people who had been involved in the project. The main significance of this study is that it provides an account and explanation of the value of PAR as a means of developing a pedagogy of vocational training which engages disaffected young people, and supports them gaining success in education and employment. When reflecting on the learning from the enquiry, we were aware of the integration of first, second, and third person perspectives. According to Reason and Bradbury (2001), first person enquiry provides a basis for exploring the nature of the researcher’s own value-based engagement with the focus of study; second person focuses on enquiring with others, and third person both draws on a varied source of information, and disseminates findings to a wider audience.

In reporting on the significance of the project, we use these different perspectives to differentiate between the different levels of learning.

12.4.1 *Engaging in a First Person Enquiry: Values, Beliefs, and Reflection*

Throughout the whole of the project, we were aware that the mindset of the action researcher will and should influence the outcome. In a context such as this one, where the aim is to improve the quality of educational experience of the young people, it is important that the researchers are aware of their own ‘consciousness’ and are completely honest with themselves. They need to ask themselves questions such as: Am I genuinely committed to making a difference in the lives of these young people? Am I prepared to work hard and learn how to change who I am and what I think in order to improve my practice to achieve more positive outcomes for the young people?

The specific factors that we felt were critical to the success of this project included

1. Recognising the importance of having a participatory worldview, which perceives an interconnection between every human being
2. Truly believing that every human being, whatever the origins or life circumstances, is of equal significance, with an equal right to live a meaningful life
3. Having a set of relational values, which when lived in practice will guide decisions about how to support others live meaningful lives, such as social justice, fairness, and inclusion
4. Continuously reflecting-in-practice and reflecting-on-practice (Schon, 1983) to evaluate whether values are being lived fully in practice, and how to increase the resonance between the values and the behaviour

12.4.2 *Engaging in Second Person Enquiry: Relationship, Dialogue, and Collaborative Action*

As we were using PAR in this project, the relationship of ‘I working with you’ was the principal dynamic. As we discussed what enhanced participative working, we identified a number of factors, including

1. See the quality of the values-based relationships you develop with all participants as of primary importance.
2. Develop emotional intelligence, so that you improve your ability to recognise and respond appropriately to your own feelings and emotions, and to the feelings and emotions of others.
3. Recognise that not everyone, including staff as well as young people, have had the emotional stability and experiences in their lives that foster emotional intelligence; so be prepared to be patient, and create environments where these skills and qualities can be learned and sustained.
4. Engage in dialogue, and encourage the active participation of all involved, at all stages of the project.
5. Be prepared to admit ignorance, to ask for help, and to role model being someone who needs and is prepared to learn.

12.4.3 *Engaging in Third Person Enquiry: Information, Dissemination, and Feedback*

This project does not exist in isolation from others, nor are we approaching it uninformed by the experience of others. Consequently, being aware at all stages about the relationship between our experience and the learning of others is an important part of the process. For us, engaging in third person enquiry included

1. Reading up on similar work that has been done by others, including books, academic articles, and project reports; and critically evaluating it in relation to own worldview and values. In our project, this particularly meant reading theories on, and projects using, PAR.
2. Disseminate findings and learning as widely as possible, and use feedback to inform next stages of the project. We involved the young people throughout, and as a result we were, individually and collectively, able to articulate the learning that had been gained to, for example, the large number of people attending the awards evening, including the chief executive of the awarding body.

12.5 CONCLUSIONS

The UK government claims great concern over the increasing number of NEET young people. This concern led to the commissioning of the Wolf Report, which was published in 2011, in which the remit was to consider how

vocational education could be improved to promote successful progression into the labour market and into higher-level education and training routes. In his foreword to the report, the then Secretary of State for Education, Michael Gove, wrote:

Far too many 14–16 year olds are doing courses with little or no value because performance tables incentivise schools to offer these inadequate qualifications. As a result between a quarter and a third of young people between the ages of 16–19 are, right now, either doing nothing at all or pursuing courses which offer no route to higher levels of education or the prospect of meaningful employment. (Wolf) is correct to say these young people are being deceived and that this is not just unacceptable but morally wrong. (Wolf, 2011, p. 4)

Yet, despite this recognition from a leading politician, there has been no deep change in the way that government is addressing these kinds of problems, and hence core issues remain and indeed expand. In a research project sponsored by the Nuffield Foundation (Hagell, 2012), it was identified that the levels of anxiety, depression, and behaviour problems are increasing in adolescents. If allowed to continue, the rise in mental health issues will on its own lead to a growth in young people who feel marginalised, and will result in not being in employment, education, or training. This situation continues to exist, because there is little knowledge about how to address the major life issues which are disadvantaging many young people. The claim that forms the basis of this account is that traditional research does not use appropriate methodologies to gain the necessary knowledge.

It is our hope that, in this chapter, we have provided evidence of one approach to marginalised young people that works. If the learning we have identified from it could be used to inform the development of further projects, this could provide one way forward for enabling the young people of today to be the self-supportive and independent older people of tomorrow.

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The Experience of Lesson Study in the UK

Phil Wood, Alison Fox, Julie Norton, and Maarten Tas

13.1 INTRODUCTION

Action research has a long tradition in the UK education. From the pioneering work of Stenhouse (1975) focusing on curriculum development, through the work of Elliott (1991, 2007) to that of Somekh (2006), McNiff and Whitehead (2000), Whitehead and McNiff (2006), and Townsend (2013), a strong orientation towards practitioner research has evolved and become embedded in many schools across the country. However, there are reoccurring elements within action research, characterized by participation in a practical and democratic process through which practical knowledge emerges,

It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities. (Reason & Bradbury, 2006, p. 1)

There are different approaches to action research, which all have these characteristics at their core. One such approach is that of Lesson Study, described by Dudley (2014, p. 1) as a ‘highly specified form of classroom action research’.

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There are varying opinions concerning the nature of Lesson Study in relation to action research. Stepanek, Appel, Leong, Turner Mangan, and Mitchell (2007) see them as similar and allied approaches to practice development but distinguish them on the grounds that action research focuses more on a research project than on practical collaborative development. However, Pérez, Soto, and Serván (2010) identify Lesson Study as a form of participatory action research focusing on in-service teacher professional learning. We would agree that there are so many overlaps between these approaches that Lesson Study can be identified as a form of action research, which has spread very rapidly from its long-established origins in Japan to become a valued approach to pedagogic innovation across a number of countries worldwide.

Lesson Study is a teacher-led collaborative process for improving pedagogy and student learning. It is a deceptively simple, yet powerful, approach which involves teams of teachers engaged in collaborative planning-teaching-observation of learning, followed by lesson evaluation and refinement (Fig. 13.1). Typically, a Lesson Study cycle involves a small team of teachers planning a ‘research lesson’. To begin with, teachers reflect upon those elements of the curriculum in which their students appear to show poor understanding, in other words, elements where ‘learning challenges’ exist. Having identified a single learning challenge they wish to focus on, teachers then work together to design learner-responsive pedagogies through a collaborative planning process. This involves discussing and developing a detailed lesson plan which includes

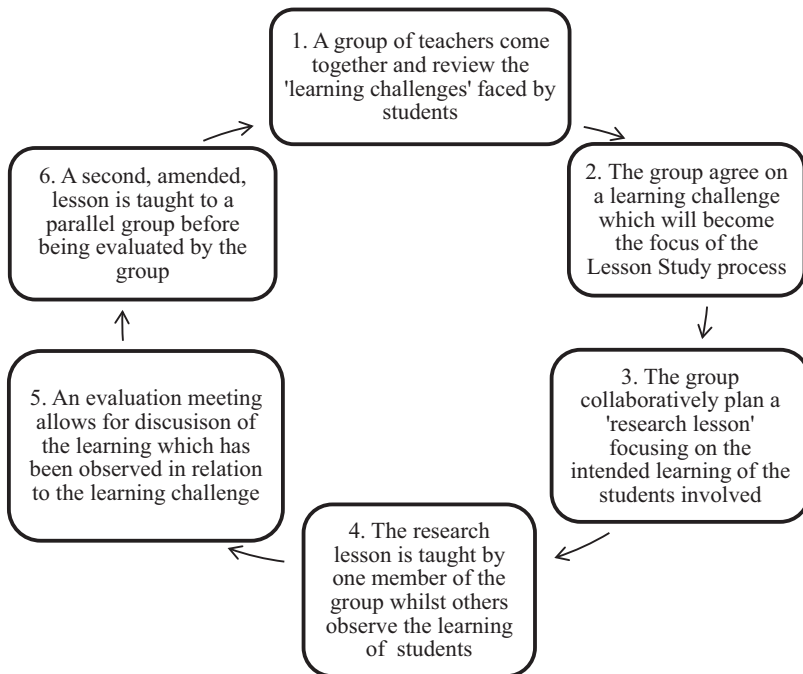


Fig. 13.1 Outline of the basic lesson study process

explicit discussion of the expected learner response and involvement, as well as deciding on the development of teacher-designed activities. Once the ‘research lesson’ has been developed, one team member teaches the lesson whilst the others observe. Importantly, the observation focuses on the students and their responses as well as focusing on the teacher; in the UK, the process has developed to focus predominantly on the learning of students as discussed below. Therefore, first and foremost, the observation allows for a systematic analysis of the effects on students’ learning (how the learning challenge is met). Once the lesson has finished, the group then evaluates the lesson, drawing on the observations of student learning, in order to reflect on what has been seen and to revise the lesson for teaching to a parallel group where possible and appropriate.

13.1.1 *A Brief History of Lesson Study*

Lesson Study (*jūgyōkenkyū*) originated in Japan between the 1870s and the early 1900s (Nakatome, 1984; as reported in Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004). It began as a grass roots activity amongst teachers who formed regional learning groups to share ideas about pedagogy and to design lessons together (Katagiri, 1990; as cited in Sarkar Arani, Fukaya, & Lassegard, 2010). By the early twentieth century, Lesson Study groups at elementary schools affiliated to teacher training colleges became common and the use of Lesson Study in teacher training is said to have facilitated educational reform and the development of a more unified school system which contributed to the modernization of the Japanese education system (Sarkar Arani et al., 2010). Researching classroom practice through collaborative inquiry thus became deeply embedded in professional practice in Japan from an early stage and allowed teachers to explore more child-centred approaches to pedagogy with opportunities for independent learning, despite the confines of the national curriculum (Sarkar Arani et al.).

Lesson Study has continued to play a central role in pedagogic development, and can be viewed as the linchpin of continuous school improvement in Japan today (Lewis & Tsuchida, 1997; Sarkar Arani, Shibata, & Matoba, 2007; Takahashi & Yoshida, 2004). It remains a core component of school-based, in-service training, known as *konaikenshu* (Nakatome, 1984; as cited in Fernandez & Yoshida, 2004). Fernandez and Yoshida (2004, p. 16) emphasize that whilst *konaikenshu* is voluntary, many teachers devote a significant amount of time to it, and many schools view it as ‘quasi-required’. Stigler and Hiebert (1999) describe how Japanese teachers meet regularly in Lesson Study groups to plan, implement, test, and improve ‘research lessons’. Teachers work collaboratively with colleagues from the same year group or subject, and sometimes form special committees to focus on specific curriculum areas, such as information technology. The aims of a Lesson Study may be informed by the school improvement plan, which sets specific goals each year, and the process can last from several months to a year and beyond; hence it is described as a long-term, continuous improvement model, which has ‘an unrelenting focus on student learning’ (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999, p.121). According to Stigler and Hiebert (1999), Lesson Study groups in Japan, therefore, perform a dual function: they

provide ‘a context’ within which teachers can be mentored and trained; but also provide ‘a laboratory’ where new teaching ideas can be developed and tested.

During the 1990s, as global educational competition intensified, a number of studies emerged which analysed how educational innovations from across the world might act as blueprints for system improvement globally. The potential of Lesson Study as a tool for developing innovative practice gained attention beyond the borders of Japan during this period. Instrumental in this process was the publication of Stigler and Hiebert’s (1999) book *The Teaching Gap: Ideas From the World’s Teachers for Improving Education in the Classroom*, which led to a surge of interest in Lesson Study within the USA. This resulted in a rapidly expanding research literature on Lesson Study within the USA (e.g., Fernandez, Cannon, & Chokshi, 2003; Lewis, 2009; Murata, 2010, 2011) with increasing popularization of the approach within the English-speaking world, particularly in Canada. Lesson Study also spread across East and Southeast Asia, particularly in China, Singapore, and Hong Kong, where a variant known as Learning Study (Pang, 2006) has become popular.

13.1.2 *The Introduction of Lesson Study in the UK*

Lesson Study appeared in England only four years after the publication of Stigler and Hiebert’s (1999) book. At this time, there was keen interest within the English education system regarding possible mechanisms for promoting a ‘learning to learn’ approach within schools. At this time, a large-scale research project, the Teaching and Learning Research Programme (TLRP), was launched. It comprised multiple research projects, involving over 500 researchers from 2000 to 2011 (Pollard, 2007). Dudley (2012), in an overview of the early adoption of Lesson Study in England, discusses how he was involved in bringing the approach to the UK as part of this programme. This developed through his association with the *Learning How to Learn: In Classrooms, in Schools and in Networks* development and research project, which explored the rolling out of assessment for learning strategies and how they could be embedded within practice across schools. Dudley’s work on embedding Lesson Study in the English context began with a pilot of 14 schools in 2003, which focused on the degree to which the approach would be viable within an English context. Certain adaptations and new insights were gained through this pilot study, which indicated the need for different approaches from the ‘traditional’ Japanese system. One important adaptation was the change in emphasis from a focus on the observation of teaching to a focus on student learning. To ensure effective observation, however, each observer only attempted to observe three students rather than the whole class. The students who were observed were called ‘case students’ and were identified by the Lesson Study teachers prior to the research lesson. Secondly, teachers canvassed the views of the case students, so that their perspectives could inform post-lesson discussions concerning further pedagogic development. In general, it was found that impact was greatest where school leadership gave strong backing and time for Lesson Study to grow, and where networks across schools were established (Dudley, 2012).

Dudley's study (between 2003 and 2006) within the TLRP, whilst only small-scale, provided rich evidence that Lesson Study could not only work within a UK context but also have positive learning outcomes for both teachers and students. He was also able to emphasize the utility of Lesson Study as one approach to developing professional learning through national literacy and numeracy strategies that were also being developed at this time in an attempt to raise standards in core areas. This led to the publication of *Improving Practice and Progression Through Lesson Study: Handbook for Headteachers, Leading Teachers and Subject Leaders*. (Dudley, 2008). This work resulted in an increasing use of Lesson Study, particularly within the primary school sector in England. It also provided early evidence of the efficacy of Lesson Study in improving learning outcomes (e.g., as evaluated by Hadfield, Jopling, & Emira, 2011).

13.2 INSIGHTS FROM RESEARCH INTO LESSON STUDY IN THE UK

It is important to stress that the research evidence of impact in Lesson Study in the UK lags behind the rapidly increasing popularity of the approach within the education system. The small number of published accounts belies the rapid adoption of Lesson Study across an increasing proportion of schools, through partnerships with universities, educational social enterprises and charities, and through informal networking across schools.

The emerging research literature in the UK shows the development of strands of Lesson Study activity across a number of sectors. Three key areas of research evidence have developed:

1. Inclusion and special educational needs
2. Initial teacher education
3. Continuing professional development

13.2.1 *Inclusion and Special Educational Needs*

Probably, the largest scale Lesson Study project to have been developed to date within the UK is the *Raising Levels of Achievement through Lesson Development for Students with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)*. This project aimed to develop the understanding and practice of mainstream secondary school teachers in relation to the teaching of students with MLD. It included 77 teachers across more than 30 schools, focusing on interventions in literacy, humanities and arts with 11- to 14-year-old students. Ylonen and Norwich (2012) showed that at the start of the process many teachers had an inconsistent and generally poor understanding of the complexities of inclusion and of the concepts relating to moderate learning difficulties. Teachers were given support in developing their understanding and use of Lesson Study as a tool for planning and executing new pedagogic approaches, which helped them gain a deeper

understanding of the needs of individual students. A design-based research approach was taken, which included the use of questionnaires, interviews, and reflective writing; students were also interviewed after lessons. Over two cycles of research, Norwich and Ylonen (2013) found evidence for clear positive outcomes centred on the collaborative work between teachers who were discussing and executing more effective teaching approaches for students with moderate learning difficulties due to a clearer understanding of their learning needs. As a consequence, teachers reported that they saw Lesson Study as a very positive collaborative opportunity for continued professional development (CPD). Ylonen and Norwich (2013) suggest that one of the reasons that Lesson Study was a popular form of intervention when compared to more general approaches to collaborative or participative action research was its specific classroom focus and clear structure for reflecting on, and enhancing, practice. However, Lesson Study is time-consuming and this poses a challenge in a system where there are already huge time pressures on teachers.

Norwich, Dudley, and Ylonen (2014) have further extended their reflections on their MLD-focused project by suggesting that Lesson Study can also be used as an assessment tool. As noted earlier, whilst Japanese models of Lesson Study are based on observation of all learners, many schools in the UK have adopted Dudley's amended version of the process (Dudley, 2011), which focuses on a small number of 'case students'. Norwich et al. (2014) suggest that this amendment offers opportunities for focused observation of students with moderate learning difficulties to gain more detailed insights into their abilities as well as their progress. This demonstrates the flexibility of Lesson Study as a process as it is reshaped for specific purposes in particular contexts.

13.2.2 *Initial Teacher Education*

A different application of Lesson Study within the UK is its use in supporting the development of pre-service teachers. Davies and Dunnill (2008) adopted a variant of Lesson Study, known as Learning Study (Pang & Marton, 2003, 2005) as part of a university-based, initial teacher training course. Unlike Lesson Study, Learning Study specifically focuses on the variation in the way individuals understand a particular phenomenon that has been chosen as the focus for a forthcoming lesson. Having understood this variation, the lesson is planned to support students in developing their understanding of carefully developed learning goals. Davies and Dunnill (2008) worked with a total of 69 pre-service teachers of business and economics, and design and technology in two cohorts over a two-year period. By working in groups with school-based mentors, they found that the pre-service teachers moved more rapidly towards more complex and nuanced ways of understanding and executing the process of teaching than was the case for trainees not involved in the approach.

In a further variation on Lesson Study, Tas (2014) integrated an incremental Lesson Study approach into the early stages of pre-service teacher training with small groups of trainee science teachers. This model relied on groups of

pre-service teachers working with a school-based mentor/teacher to develop lessons which would then be team-taught. At the beginning of the process, the group of pre-service teachers were introduced to a lesson which had already been planned by their teacher-mentor, and with an understanding of the lesson, they then observed chosen students in an authentic classroom setting, before each teaching for a few minutes. Once the lesson had concluded, the pre-service teachers then interviewed the students they had observed, before they and the mentor collaboratively evaluated the lesson. Each group then collaboratively planned a second lesson with their teacher-mentor, where once again the mentor taught the majority of the lesson and the pre-service teachers interviewed observed students to inform the evaluation phase. In the final stages of the process, the teacher-mentor gave the pre-service teachers the learning outcomes for a third lesson, which they then planned and resourced themselves, before teaching, observing, and interviewing students once again, before a final evaluation meeting. Pre-service teachers who were involved in this adapted version of Lesson Study all testified to an increased level of confidence across the three cycles due to what they perceived as a safer introduction to teaching, which also gave them a more critical insight into planning and pedagogic processes than available in more traditional approaches.

Cajkler, Wood, Norton, and Pedder (2013) have used Lesson Study within initial teacher education as a vehicle for developing pedagogic understanding and practice within the practicum element of pre-service teacher training. In a small-scale pilot study, focusing on two pre-service teachers in geography and modern foreign languages, a process was developed, which more closely followed a standard Lesson Study approach. The pre-service teacher and their school-based mentor worked as a pair through the Lesson Study cycle. The mentor taught a lesson after joint planning and led the evaluation of student learning and amendments to the lesson plan. The pre-service teacher then taught an amended version of the same lesson to a parallel group. This approach was later extended to demonstrate its potential within a larger group of 12 students across the same two subjects (Wood & Cajkler, 2013). The pre-service teachers in these studies stated that they felt that they understood the process of planning and its relation to the act of teaching more clearly as a result of working collaboratively with a more experienced teacher. As a result of direct and explicit discussion of pedagogy, participants also believed that this would impact positively on their own rate of progress in understanding and developing their capacity to teach. Teacher-mentors were equally positive about the use of Lesson Study and believed that the process had not only aided pre-service teachers in making more rapid progress in their practicum work but also a positive impact on their own pedagogic understanding and practice.

13.2.3 Continuing Professional Development

Small-scale research projects have considered the use of Lesson Study within the more general context of CPD of in-service teachers. In two studies focus-

ing on the work of teachers in an inner-city secondary school, Cajkler, Wood, Norton, Pedder, and Xu (2014), and Cajkler, Wood, Norton, and Pedder (2014) worked with subject teams in modern foreign languages and mathematics. In both cases, the subject teams developed the use of Lesson Study independently after being introduced to the process by the research team. They used a Lesson Study cycle akin to the one in Fig. 1. Each group worked over a six-month period and were advised to spend as much time on any one cycle that was required to allow them to develop rich and reflective dialogues concerning their chosen learning challenges. As a consequence, both groups completed two research lessons over the course of the project. These studies found that teachers valued the opportunity to collaborate and share ideas, leading to evidence for incremental learning. The use of student-orientated observation challenged many of their assumptions concerning the activity and ability of their students, as well as revealing some of the difficulties that students encountered during lessons. This led to teachers reviewing expectations about what particular students could achieve and what quality meant in terms of the planning and execution of lessons. Once again, the collaborative approach to Lesson Study was seen to lead to a greater willingness to take risks. As with other studies, the principle challenge reported was the amount of time taken to complete a cycle of Lesson Study leading to questions as to whether the process is sustainable in the longer term.

Dudley (2013) worked with five teachers across two schools to explore how the Lesson Study approach might aid teachers in the development of their pedagogic thinking, focusing on the role of talk in the collaborative elements of the process. His evidence demonstrates that the discussion at the centre of collaborative planning plays a major role in making teacher thinking visible, a process that so often remains tacit within teacher expertise; making assumptions and values explicit makes them available for debate and critique. As with other studies, the inclusion of student interviews was also seen as particularly valuable in gaining insight into their complex needs as they learn.

What all of the above studies demonstrate is that whilst Lesson Study has only been adopted within the UK for a short period of time, it has begun to develop in a wide range of contexts and forms, each designed to support teachers to make greater sense of their work collaboratively. Across all areas of research, there is clear evidence that teachers of different levels of experience and expertise have found the practical and collaborative nature of the approach extremely useful in helping them to understand how they might develop their practice further. Cajkler and Wood (2015) explain that Lesson Study allows teachers to unpack the 'pedagogic black box' by making the complexity of teaching and learning within a given context more explicit and therefore open to discussion. There is also strong evidence that Lesson Study encourages teachers to take risks in experimenting with, and extending, their practice so leading to a greater degree of professional confidence.

However, many of the studies reported above are small-scale and demonstrate the utility of Lesson Study within the bounds of relatively short-lived

projects. There is little evidence at present that the positive impacts which are commonly expressed, especially given the recurrent messages of how time intensive it is, can be sustained within a more systemic framework. Therefore, the wider adoption of Lesson Study within the UK as a system-wide and sustainable approach to professional growth and development is still uncertain. It is important, therefore, to consider how Lesson Study might be brought to scale through a discussion of the potential cultural restrictions and barriers to teacher-led collaborative growth and how these barriers might be overcome through the evolution of wider collaborative networks.

13.3 LESSON STUDY—TENSIONS OF A ‘GROWTH’ APPROACH TO TEACHER LEARNING IN A PERFORMATIVE CULTURE

Since the late 1980s, the education system in England and Wales (the system is separate in Scotland) has seen a trend of increased marketization (Stevenson & Wood, 2013). This has resulted in a shift from a system that relies on trust and a societal belief that teachers are, and will act as, professionals who always try to maximize the positive impact of their actions on students and the wider education system, to one based on managerial controls (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009; Ryan & Bourke, 2013). Osgood (2006) reports a change in perception of teacher work from that of respected individual teachers providing a public service to one where their work is defined by policy and the market. This has led to a narrowing of the accepted nature of this work and to what has become termed a ‘tick-box’ professionalism (Goepel, 2012) in a system founded on performativity (Ball, 2001, 2003). This has led to the development of a system which has become driven by numeric targets and data analysis, leaving little room for the expression of autonomous teacher professionalism (Evans, 2008; Storey, 2007; Whitty, 2000). For Lesson Study to have a positive impact on the work of teachers, this narrow definition of teaching needs to be questioned. This cultural context is in danger of restricting the potential for Lesson Study, and all forms of action research, to have positive impacts on teachers’ practice and therefore the learning of students.

An important alternative perspective on the work and growth of teachers is offered by Hargreaves and Fullan (2012). They critique a view of teaching which characterizes teacher work as emotionally draining but essentially easy. This *business capital* view of teaching explains the need for hard work at the start of a teaching career to ensure that teachers become expert relatively quickly. Teachers are expected to develop this expertise through intensive analysis of student achievement data, termed an ‘existence of calculation’ by Ball (2001 Professional development activities, p. 223). Support for teachers in deciding what constitutes effective teaching practices has traditionally been offered through the sharing of ‘good’ or even ‘best’ practice (Fielding et al., 2005). Such language is common within the business world and is founded on

a transmission model of practice development. Professional development activities associated with this approach, particularly those which are school-led, involve teachers in explaining particular practices and other teachers choosing to adopt and adapt these into their own classroom settings. The UK State of the Nation review of CPD, which surveyed over 1000 teachers and conducted 12 school case studies, found that 77 % CPD activity was through workshops and seminars, as opposed to collaborative activities such as coaching, mentoring, and joint practice development (Pedder, Storey, & Opfer, 2008). Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) suggest that thinking in terms of *business capital* leads to the creation of a workforce which has little critical understanding of the complexities of education and pedagogy.

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) go on to outline an alternative theoretical framework based on the view that teachers need to become critical, autonomous professionals. This assumes a continuous process of practice growth which comes from reflection, application, and the use of evidence, mediated by increasingly 'wise' judgments. This process is identified as the growth of *professional capital*, constituted of three elements: human capital, social capital, and decisional capital. *Human capital* is characterized by the knowledge and skills which emerge as a teacher develops a personal understanding of their work through being exposed to a myriad of experiences and influences. Hargreaves and Fullan suggest that a central influence on the growth of human capital is collaborative work with other teachers. This connectedness develops *social capital*, as collaborative opportunities offer teachers exposure to new ideas and ways of working which they may not be aware of in their own practice. However, for collaboration to have maximum impact, the teachers involved need to have control over the work they develop; in other words, they need to have *decisional capital*. By giving both individuals and groups of teachers the opportunity to make professional decisions for themselves, wise educational judgement can emerge over time (Biesta, 2014), building the basis for the growth of better practitioners.

The nature of professional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012) fits well with the intended aims and philosophy of Lesson Study, and could act as an underlying rationale for the use of the approach in schools. Through teachers working together, authentic learning issues which impinge on student learning can be collectively identified and explored. Thus, Lesson Study can help teachers develop insights and solutions which aid in developing the work of the group, and the individuals within it. Even in an education system as data-driven as that in England and Wales, this formative approach can establish itself as a useful tool for professional growth, empowering teachers to develop as critical, autonomous professionals. However, embedding such an approach needs to be considered in relation to the challenges which might be faced by schools in the present performative culture.

The rise of marketization in English and Welsh education in the 1980s and 1990s led to greater standardization of practice, and the emergence of governmental top-down accountability. This led to schools in England and Wales being required to follow a National Curriculum and Common Assessment

Framework from 1991 onwards. Consequently, schools were placed in competition with one another based on their performance (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Given this shifting political context in English and Welsh schools, we need to be sensitive to the fact that we may be asking teachers to work counter-culturally if we encourage them to develop practice together, such as in Lesson Study groups as an audit culture has developed which has the ‘measurement’ of teachers at its core. When asked to collaborate, teachers need to feel a sense of security, to feel reassured that they can safely expose their views to others, critique current practice, and make suggestions.

It is evident that the activities involved in Lesson Study require teachers to take significant time from their own teaching. This chapter has outlined how few opportunities there are currently for such focused and observational-based collaboration, at least in UK schools (Cajkler, Wood, Norton & Pedder, 2014; Pedder et al., 2008), attributable to the profession’s performative culture, high-stakes testing, top-down curriculum reform and associated workload pressures. Other school systems, considered effective in terms of student attainment measures, such as Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), have demonstrated that this is not the professional work culture of teachers worldwide. There are systems where teachers can find space and time for collaborative teacher professional development, for example, as reported in Finland (Sahlberg, 2011) and in Southeast Asian countries such as Taiwan (Wang & Fwu, 2014) and Hong Kong (Pang & Ling, 2012).

The way forward points to the need to pay attention to the role of leadership in supporting the potential power of teachers in interdependent, joint practice development. This requires schools to ‘buy-in’ to a vision of a self-improving school system based on inquiry and evidence-informed practice (BERA-RSA, 2014; Morrison, 2013). A number of different models of collaborative teacher development exist, including the notion of *professional learning communities* (Lieberman & Miller, 2008; Nabhani, Busher, & Bahous, 2012) and that of *learning communities* (Lieberman, 2009). But it is the notion of ‘inquiry communities’, which foregrounds the joint transformation of professional knowledge (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1992, 1999; Levine, 2010), which best matches a vision for scaling-up Lesson Study. It is the adoption of such communities which will be needed if Lesson Study is to avoid being a passing fad and instead become systemic in nature (Lewis, Perry, Hurd, & O’Connell, 2006).

To accomplish the above challenges, there is an important role for school leaders. The powers they hold will need to be used in a way that supports the growing decisional capital of those involved in Lesson Study. Rather than gaining the assent of teachers for a leadership-derived vision in which they are ‘expected’ to work together in a particular way, teachers will need to feel that this vision will accommodate the agendas which emerge out of joint professional development. Teachers will need to have confidence that their priorities for investigation, emergent through Lesson Study, will be heard and valued and that this becomes the vision for the school moving forward.

This is a more radical view of leadership than models relying on a formula which gives leaders an ultimate recourse to veto, thereby retaining implicit, but direct power over the process. If a school's leadership decides that collaborative practice development is the way forward they will need to work out how best to facilitate such practices and promote a culture which will deal with the inevitable power hierarchies and interteacher tensions that exist in any organization. To enable the growth of social capital of teachers, leaders will need to ensure professional support thereby allowing staff to work closely with one another as required for successful Lesson Study. This requires trust to be established between teachers to allow them to release the human capital held by one another as individuals (Coleman, 1988; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012), but more importantly requires teachers to trust leaders not to embed Lesson Study as a feature of accountability or competence structures. We believe that if Lesson Study becomes another 'lever' for teacher measurement, its impact will be lost, as its potential for discussion and risk-taking will disappear.

Schools are internally connected yet retain different identities, as subject departments and curriculum teams often work in semi-autonomous environments, a process which has been termed 'loose coupling' (Orton & Weick, 1990). Lesson Study provides an opportunity to embrace this diversity, whilst making positive use of the internal connections. Different groups of teachers will inevitably focus on different issues, each of which presents themselves in a range of subject areas. This allows for a wide spectrum of experimentation within the organization at any one time, allowing pedagogic practice to evolve locally in response to particular problems. However, if the organization ensures sharing of insights through reporting and sharing of new practices, the rate of organizational-level innovation can increase rapidly. The imperative here, however, is that new practices cannot be dictated from above, but must be shared and adopted where the teachers, as professionals, deem them to have utility. In this alternative 'bottom-up' model of organizational innovation, Lesson Study groups become a mechanism for developing strong, effective, collegial links, and leaders have a role in supporting teachers in making fertile connections between groups. Further structures for sharing insights might include the linking of one Lesson Study group to another by connecting teachers as a weak link or 'bridge' between groups. This might be achieved by using research coordinators to share the benefits of a range of activity or may occur by creating spaces for groups to meet regularly to share ideas and approaches.

In theory, leaders are well placed to have an overview of collaborative activity in a school, although in practice they often do not have the full picture of the ways members of staff network and the quality of their professional relationships (Carmichael, Fox, McCormick, Procter, & Honour, 2006). Teachers need to be allowed to develop trusting relationships in order to build professional capital and allow a school to develop a truly collaborative 'inquiry community'. This is certainly a further challenge that requires school leaders to reimagine their role as one of facilitator as opposed to 'manager' in supporting evidence-informed practice development. At a fundamental level, this requires leaders to trust the

professional abilities and wisdom of their own staff body, because this is vital if professional knowledge borne from such powerful inquiry as Lesson Study is to inform school-wide and, even system-wide, improvement (Lewis et al., 2006).

13.4 CONCLUSIONS

In only a decade, Lesson Study has grown rapidly in the UK to become a well-known and increasingly central approach to organizational change. The available research only begins to give a basic impression of both the variety of contexts within which the approach is taking hold and the ways in which it has been modified to suit local contexts. For over two decades much effort to improve practice has come from external, national agencies and frameworks, projected into schools that have fulfilled the role of passive recipients. Lesson Study offers a very different opportunity to schools and teachers. Discussion of pedagogy linked to cycles of practice development provide an opportunity for teachers to play an active and central role in both the development of their practice, and hence also their professional abilities. Involvement in classroom research is consistent with the recent move towards teachers taking a more explicit interest in educational research and its ramifications for their practice. In this sense, Lesson Study has reached the UK at a potentially opportune time. However, tensions still remain within a system which is heavily driven by a New Public Management framework and its associated reliance on numeric data, accountability structures, and consequential heavy workloads. Discharging these responsibilities leaves little time for teachers to engage with the process of Lesson Study, which itself requires a considerable input of time over a prolonged period if it is to operate to its potential. These tensions are at the centre of questions relating to the sustainability of Lesson Study at a systemic level. However, there is strong anecdotal evidence that some schools are managing to integrate the approach in creative and original ways. As such, research in the UK currently needs, in part, to understand and evaluate the different variants of the process, which become successful in providing space and time for professional dialogue, whilst also operating within the wider performative culture of English education.

If Lesson Study is to become a systemic approach, it will require at least two major shifts in current policy and organizational frameworks. Firstly, head teachers will need to spend time understanding the approach and utility of Lesson Study as a pre-requisite for creating space and time for teachers to act as autonomous professionals in changing and developing their practice. This is no easy task, given the external pressures on leaders. To create formative, collaborative inquiry-led communities, there has to be a strong base of professional trust within organizations. Secondly, a large-scale shift in policy priorities will ultimately be required, which move from a preoccupation with mechanisms for improving attainment to those focusing on pedagogy and professional growth. In both cases, the changes required are not only political but also cultural and therefore cannot be expected to happen rapidly.

Action research is sometimes criticized as being context-bound and small-scale. Critics see such traits as weaknesses, as insights are not immediately generalizable and do not offer easily digestible ‘soundbites’, such as effect sizes or apparently clear-cut results. However, in an education system that is going through a great deal of change, it is the small-scale and incremental changes in practice, inherent in joint professional development, which offer not only new insights into practice but also opportunities for professional growth. Politicians currently see a ‘medical’ model (Goldacre, 2013) of research as giving ‘certainty’ in deducing ‘what works’ in educational practice, a notion which itself has been critiqued (Biesta, 2007, 2010). Action research instead offers a model for joint professional practice which works *with* the complexity of pedagogy rather than trying to simplify and reduce it. As a form of action research, Lesson Study demonstrates the potency of intervening in and transforming pedagogic contexts, but also holds the potential to bring such change to scale, thereby putting systemic adaptation at the centre of teacher work. Much of the detail of how extra-organizational collaboration might be possible is still unclear, but Japan already offers a blueprint for a system whose transformation is built upon the insights of the collaborative work of teachers involved in a constant process of professional growth through action research

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A Snapshot of Action Research in and by Higher Education in Southern Africa

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14.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In a region where poverty and disadvantage is endemic to most of the population, there is a need to embrace conceptualizations of research and knowledge that challenge traditional understandings that may no longer be relevant for social scientists tasked with addressing extremely complex issues such as HIV

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and AIDS, poverty, gender inequality, violence, and other social injustices common in the African region (Wood, 2014a). As academics, we believe that we have a moral imperative to speak out against the injustices that prevail in society, and to ‘offer a vision of a new society based on new ways of seeing and living’ (Volks, 2012, p. 9). And the best way for us to do this is through research.

In this chapter, we argue that action research provides an epistemological and methodological research paradigm that is emergent, collaborative, and rooted in a democratic value system; that recognizes knowledge is not the sole prerogative of a select group of scholars; and that acknowledges the cultural and intellectual assets embedded in communities, integrating indigenous knowledge with existing propositional theories to create a new scholarship for a new epistemology (Schön, 1995). We position action research as an approach that will enable the production of ‘transformative knowledge’ (Odora Hoppers & Richards, 2011, p. 35), leading to the ‘transformative human development’ that is so needed on this continent.

This argument stems from our recognition of the importance of research having an indigenous character. Too often, researchers from developed countries impose ‘solutions’ for our social problems, derived from evidence-based trials in their own contexts and fail to take into consideration the many social and cultural differences found in the African continent (Mirembe & Davis, 2001). We need to develop indigenous epistemologies and practices to address the many challenges we face, generated by Africans living in an African context.

We report here on our attempts to conduct action research that has a transformative potential, outlining both our successes and challenges. We concentrate on the two main genres of action research in our region, namely action research for professional development of academics, students, and practitioners; and more participatory and collaborative forms of action research for community engagement. However, although the two sections are separated for ease of reporting, many of the examples contain elements of both participatory and self-study action research, indicating how these distinct approaches are being merged and melded together to suit the African context and needs.

14.2 CONCEPTUALIZING ACTION RESEARCH FROM AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

The first point we must make is that there is no one ‘African’ culture or worldview. Africa is made up of many different cultural and linguistic groups, making such generalization impossible. However, the common denominator in most of Africa is poverty and its resultant social problems. In South and East Africa, with their history of colonization, slavery, and (in the case of South Africa) apartheid, there is a vast divide between rich and poor, the powerful and the powerless. Academics are generally located in the more privileged sectors of society, with very different lived realities from those they ‘research’. As such, there is a real danger that we may continue to colonize the minds of our students and research participants, unless we develop methodologies that are truly participatory, democratic, and inclusive, aimed at generating contextually and culturally relevant knowledge. This is why we position ourselves as action researchers, dedicated to conducting

research that emancipates rather than subjugates. We understand human dignity is eroded, unless people are allowed to participate in building a better world for themselves (Odora Hoppers & Richards, 2011). Our role as academic researchers is to partner with them to raise awareness of alternative realities and the possibility of taking action to attain them. This applies as much to ourselves as to our research participants—as action researchers, we also have to be committed to continual critical self-reflection to improve our own practice as academics.

14.3 ACTION RESEARCH FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This section explains how several academics in southern Africa are contributing to the transformation of the academy in line with democratic and life-enhancing values, through embarking on self-study action research in order to generate living theories (Whitehead, 1989). By so doing, they make significant contributions to the growth of educational knowledge as they exert a positive and sustainable educational influence upon the faculty, institution, and others within their spheres of influence (Wood, 2010).

Likewise, developing students as action researchers helps to ensure that graduates, and particularly those studying for a profession, such as teaching, will be more likely to continue to use it to improve and transform their work and workplaces. In South Africa, despite the many new educational policies that have been promulgated since the advent of democracy in 1994 (see e.g. Department of Education, 2001a, 2001b, 2002), access to quality education at school and tertiary level is still restricted for most of the population. Not only is physical access limited by financial and qualification constraints but, once admitted to the institution, lack of epistemological access (Morrow, 2009) continues to negatively impact on the success of students. As higher education practitioners, we should be doing our best to provide ways for both faculty and graduates to improve their practice to make it more democratic, inclusive, participatory, dialogical, and respectful of diversity. Action research for professional development follows an iterative process of reflect-plan-act-reflect to improve practice in line with life-enhancing values. Reflection not only is confined to analysis of practice but also involves interrogating assumptions and frames of reference (Wood, 2010). To do this effectively, we have to collaborate with ‘others within our social context, discussing and sharing our insights and mutually influencing each other in order to arrive at transformed practices which are mutually beneficial to all’ (Wood, 2010, p. 107).

The idea of emancipatory action research and participatory action research (PAR) found a home in the South African anti-apartheid teaching fraternity, where the clarion call for ‘People’s Education for People’s Power’ motivated teacher activists to oppose apartheid education in their classrooms. In South Africa, an emancipatory form of action research as an educational initiative was first discussed in a book entitled *Action Research: Justified Optimism or Wishful Thinking?*, edited by Flanagan, Breen, and Walker (1984). The idea of action research as a research methodology was given more prominence when it became part of a formal and structured master’s program in the Education Faculty at the University of the Western Cape in 1987. Currently, there is burgeoning (re)interest in action research as a means of helping to transform South African education.

The examples below are glimpses into how academics in higher education are using practitioner-self-enquiry to improve their own practices and/or to teach students how to become reflective practitioners, able to continually find ways to make their practice more contextually relevant. We repeat that this is only a small sample of action research studies—there are many more that are worthy of inclusion, but the scope of the chapter does not allow this. In keeping with action research principles, we let each researcher speak for his/herself to explain how they are practicing action research to contribute to educational transformation.

14.3.1 *Lesley Wood*

Formerly based at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, I founded the Action Research Unit at that institution. My colleagues and I were heavily influenced by the work of McNiff and Whitehead from about 2006 onward. Having come into education from social work, I am particularly concerned about how social issues negatively impact on education in Africa and started to develop programs to help teachers to cope with the multifaceted challenges that the HIV and AIDS pandemic presents for teaching and learning (see Wood, 2009a, b, c, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014a, b). My research indicated that these challenges would be best addressed by those who were facing them on a daily basis—the teachers, learners, parents, and school management—rather than by researchers who had little idea of what it was really like to live in such socioeconomically disadvantaged circumstances. I work with teachers and learners to critically reflect on their practice in terms of HIV-related issues to identify problematic areas; to develop plans to address these issues; to implement their action plans; and to critically reflect on their evaluations so as to inform future action. The findings in my published work are evidence of how action research tends to motivate, energize, and give hope to those who had previously despaired of ever being able to make any difference. Based on my learning, I used the data to write some conceptual articles about the value of action research for transforming education (see Wood, Morar & Mostert, Wood, 2010, 2014b). I also worked with school leaders on several projects (Van der Voort & Wood, 2014; Wood & Damons, 2013; Wood & Govender, 2013) to help them learn how to become transformational leaders. Some of these projects can be accessed online (<http://aru.nmmu.ac.za/>).

14.3.2 *Pieter du Toit*

I have been involved in numerous action research endeavors as part of scholarly communities of practice (see De Boer, Du Toit, Scheepers, & Bothma, 2013; Du Toit, 2012, 2013). I use action research in my work in academic development to encourage transformation—ranging from programs such as a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education to informal mentoring and workshops. I apply the concept of whole brain thinking to action research (see e.g. Du Toit, 2009; Du Toit, 2012; du Toit et al., 2012; Hugo et al., 2013; Scheepers, De Boer, Bothma, & Du Toit, 2011) to enable practitioners to create their own living theories (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006).

Two notable action research studies resulted from workshops that I conducted at a public university in Mozambique with whom my South African institution partnered to enable the Mozambique students to undertake doctoral studies. Fringe and Dos (2013) embarked on an emancipatory trajectory of action research on his mentorship practice and involved each participant in doing action research on his or her own practice with a view to transforming it. At the same university, another colleague embarked on mentoring schoolteachers and introducing action research as an emancipatory process for professional development. Irrespective of the circumstances in the schools where the participating teachers had to execute their respective action research projects, they took up the challenge and experimented with innovative ideas. In this way, they were liberated from their beliefs that they were unable to exert agency for change. In addition, this study showed that learners also benefitted from renewed motivation and energy (Tembe, 2011).

14.3.3 *Omar Esau*

As a lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of Stellenbosch, I was attracted to action research because of the energy it gave me as an educator to oppose hegemony and injustice. In my work, I prepare pre-service teachers to become teacher-researchers by introducing them to action research to encourage them to become more critical, imaginative, and argumentative (see e.g., Esau, 2012, 2013). My action research projects draw from the critical pedagogies of Freire (1972), Fals Borda (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991; Quigley, 2000), and the youth action research to counter hegemonic education advocated by various international action researchers (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Fine & Torre, 2008; Noffke & Somekh, 2009). Action research also helps me to continually refine my own learning as I reflect on my practice with these student teachers to allow ‘teachers’ voices and those of their students as partners in the research enterprise to be heard as producers of educational knowledge’ (Walker, 1990, p. 61). We are not only concerned with changing and improving practice in the classroom but also with changing unequal relations in the wider social context. We view processes in the school in relation to the macro environment in which the school is situated and critically reflect on how knowledge is socially constructed and how it, in turn, shapes and changes reality. Although the action research process is time-consuming, I find that pre-service teachers learn how to use it in practice to more fully understand their teaching and the particular needs of their learners. This is an important learning in contexts where learning is adversely impacted by various socioeconomic and cultural issues. Feedback from students indicates that collaborative action research not only impacts the learners and teachers they engage with but also helps them to develop knowledge and skills to bridge the theory-practice divide that is so common in higher education in South Africa.

14.3.4 *Angela James*

As a teacher educator, I currently engage undergraduate student teachers in action research and other strategies in researching their Service-Learning in

Biology Education. I used action research in my research (see <http://upetd.up.ac.za/thesis/available/etd-05022009-182337/>) to explore how pre-service teachers enhanced their practice by critically reflecting on their personal theories (beliefs), emotions, and desires about their professional roles. The research question that drove the study was: How do student teachers construct and use *phronesis* (practical wisdom) to enhance their professional development? I focused on each student teacher's experience of constructing and using *phronesis* and their practice of facilitating learning as 'practical theorizing' (McNiff & Whitehead, 2005, p. 6), drawing on their reflections, planning, actions, reflections on the actions, and their change and learning (Schein, 1996). I tracked the students for a year, using an adapted Coghlan and Brannick (2001) model to guide the action research cycles for the data collection process. The model described the context and purpose and fed into six steps: experiential reflections; reflecting and interpreting; planning action; taking action; reflecting on taking action; and interpreting and evaluating action. The reflective discussions on their perceptions, beliefs, and actions informed their understanding of themselves as facilitator of learning, thereby enhancing their competence. The reflective sessions informed revealed how students constructed knowledge by starting from an internally motivated realization that each individual had of who they are as a person, their beliefs and feelings about facilitating learning, and their reasons for wanting to become teachers. They then used this knowledge to construct their own theories of facilitating learning for the contexts in which they were teaching. The ability to generate this practical wisdom is vital when working in challenging social, material, and linguistic circumstances.

14.3.5 Paul Mokhele

I am a leading member of Transformative Education/al Studies (TES), an inter-institutional project of Walter Sisulu University (situated in rural Transkei); Durban University of Technology (a former Technikon), and the University of KwaZulu Natal (a leading research university). This National Research Foundation (NRF)-funded project has been running for four years, and there are still methodological debates among the project leaders as to the differences/similarities and respective validity of self-study research and action research for professional development. Research is about generating data. We (members of TES) use self-study inquiry as an approach to generate data for action research (Harrison et al, 2012). We put our *self*s (self-study) in the middle of our *action* in order for us to understand our different practices better. The question we ask is: Who is this being (*self*) taking *action* to solve a particular problem and/or influence other beings (*them-self*s). We do this by bringing our values, emotions, passions, and stories into our practices. TES aims to support academic staff pursuing master's and doctoral studies using self-study action research. Although we both aim to improve practice, there are methodological divides within the project between those who adhere to action research designs and those who use autoethnography and other self-study practices. The cyclical nature of action research seems to be a barrier for many academics, while the self-study approaches are viewed as too

subjective. However, we are working hard to show academics in our institutions that improving our teaching-learning is part of transformation in our universities. If we are serious about generating alternative perspectives of education, we must place our lived experiences at the center of our inquiries (Mokhele, 2014). My thesis was an account of how I learned to reframe my beliefs and practices about education and of the influence I had in the transformation of my students and colleagues toward becoming independent thinkers, interactive teachers, and promoters of transformational learning (<http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living/shtml>). Some of the accounts of the TES projects can be found at <http://www.perspectives-in-education.com>, in which we discuss the challenges facing action researchers in higher education. Our publications are evidence of how we are able to collaborate in transforming our practices.

14.3.6 *Ansurie Pillay*

As a South African living under Apartheid, my own education was within a system that ‘engineered race, class, gender and ethnic categories to serve and reinforce the political economy of the racial capitalist system’ (Vally, 2002, p. 81). The post-Apartheid educational system faces different challenges, many of them by-products of the former repression. Today, as a teacher educator in a School of Education, I feel bound to act to make a difference to a system that appears to be in continual crisis (Bloch, 2009). I do this through action research, employing cooperative, experiential learning strategies to encourage student teachers to use literary texts as catalysts for transformation through their teaching. At the core of the collaborative action research process is critical reflection to enable the students to grasp their potential as agents of change, as opposed to reproducers of the status quo. I contend that if student teachers are empowered with sound disciplinary knowledge, effective pedagogical tools, and an understanding of how to bring about academic and social change, then they can make a difference to the lives of their learners, irrespective of context or resources. My doctoral study (Pillay, 2013) is a good example of the action research processes I employ with teachers. I used a critical research paradigm and qualitative research approach, framed by a critical pedagogy theoretical framework. These choices appeared to offer the most powerful ways of strengthening student teachers’ practices and deepening and transforming their knowledge, so enabling their emancipation and empowerment in their classrooms (Boog, 2003; Whitehead & McNiff, 2009). The study provides evidence of the fact that action and reflection together with theory and practice can be used to understand, confront, and improve systems and practices (Reason & Bradbury, 2006). Action research allows student teachers to plan solutions, devise interventions, analyze and verify data, and reflect on successes and failures. The students experience all aspects of the process, and their involvement in the various stages of the action research cycles has equipped them to conduct research in their own classrooms. As a result, they exert influence over the transformation of their own lives (Boog, 2003), which I regard the most liberating aspect of action research. Constant, active dialogue and critical reflection between the

students and me enables transformative practices to emerge and strong personal and professional identities to be formed. They identified the benefits of critical reflection in their growth and development and, it is expected, they will pass the need and desire for lifelong learning onto their future learners.

14.4 PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AS A MEANS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

We understand PAR to abolish the notion of the academic researcher as the ‘expert’ who imposes his/her own knowledge to guide the process. Instead, it regards participants as practitioner-researchers who, by dint of their insider knowledge, are viewed as the most capable of finding workable ways to improve their own educational/social situations. The process rejects traditional hierarchical notions of supremacy in favor of true democratic collaboration, where inclusivity is practiced and all participants are seen as equally competent to make a worthwhile contribution to the inquiry. The focus is therefore on helping participants to take responsibility for their own thinking, attitudes, and actions (Wood, Morar, & Mostert, 2007). This allows for the formation of a personal identity among participants as coresearchers since change occurs as a result of critical self-reflection rather than external imposition. Shifts on cognitive, affective, and behavioral levels are therefore more likely to be sustained as they become part of the personal and professional identity of the participant (Batagiannis, 2011).

PAR is said to have acquired its name in Tanzania, Africa (Hall, 1992; Park, 1999), thanks to the work of M.L. Swantz. A Fin, she lived in Tanzania when she was employed by the University of Dar es Salaam as a Senior Research Fellow in the early 1970s (Swantz, 2008) and began working with university students to investigate ways of contributing to national development. Based on her experience of trying to improve community welfare while living with the family of a medicine man in a village 50 km from Dar es Salaam, she was inspired to begin university-based projects to contribute to development. From the university setting, she began to foster an awareness of the practical need to connect research to national development. Her concern was to keep the university in touch with practical reality and the nation’s goals, especially through facilitating ongoing communication between researchers and community. Swantz carried out many PAR projects in Tanzania in the 1970s, which became the reference point for most other action research projects that were subsequently developed in Tanzania. Swantz’s (2008) PAR projects resonated strongly with President Nyerere’s developmental vision for Tanzania (*ujamaa*), which supported the participation of citizens’ organizations in development. In a 1971 visit to Tanzania, Paulo Freire observed Swantz’ methodologies which he then introduced to international social scientists (Dover, 2008; Hall, 2005). Subsequently, Swantz, along with other Tanzanian researchers, contributed significantly to national development through the use of PAR.

Although PAR might have first been named in Africa, what has happened in the last 40 years? A Google Scholar search of PAR in South Africa did not reveal many studies conducted by African researchers in higher education. It may be that they are using it as a methodology but are not including it in

the title or key words. However, there is an emerging body of knowledge about how it is being used in Faculties of Education as a means of community engagement for social change.

14.4.1 Lesley Wood

I lead a NRF-funded project which aims to develop capacity among academics for community engagement by generating knowledge on how this could be done in a way that meets both research and community development needs. There are eight postgraduate students working within this project, each with their own PAR project dealing with topics as diverse as teenage pregnancy, provision of psychosocial support to vulnerable children, helping teachers to implement inclusive education, involving alumni in school improvement, and working with Heads of Department to improve their instructional leadership. Action research is a powerful way of bringing about epistemological, ontological, and practical changes in the lives of both academics and community researchers. Findings indicate that both students and community members find PAR to be a humanizing, energizing, and motivating experience, but there are also many frustrations for academic researchers who have to work within a limited time frame and adhere to rigid institutional requirements in terms of ethics and proposal development (Kearney, Wood, & Zuber-Skerritt, 2013; Wood & Zuber-Skerritt, 2013). This project has been enhanced by collaboration with Australian action researchers, notably Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt, one of the champions of action research worldwide.

14.4.2 Catherine Dean

I am a teacher educator in a private university in Kenya. Action research in East Africa tends to be driven by nongovernmental organizations that partner with international donors, rather than being based in the academy and led by academics. Apart from a few courses that are directly concerned with community development, PAR does not seem to be a focus in higher education. I believe the pioneering work we are doing at Strathmore University is a good beginning to introduce action research as a methodology in various programs. As in most of sub-Saharan Africa, poverty and disease continue to negatively affect the education system in Kenya. At Strathmore University, we decided to use action research with public primary school teachers who were completing a Diploma in Educational Management to help them overcome the many poverty-related challenges they faced in their schools. We chose action research as the methodology because of its potential for transforming the lives of the teachers and their students, as well as the material conditions in their schools. The design, implementation, and outcomes of the teachers' projects illustrate the effectiveness of action research in bringing change to people and the community. Samples of the action research carried out from Strathmore University can be accessed at <http://www.shss.strathmore.edu>.

In spite of the 'successes' of action research reported above, there remain challenges, which are probably not very different from those experienced by action researchers in other countries.

14.5 CHALLENGES FACING ACTION RESEARCHERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The challenges emanate from both inside and outside the academy. The tight deadlines and administrative regulations imposed by higher education for conducting research makes participatory work with communities difficult since it takes time to build trust and develop a good working relationship. Another challenge emanates as a result of some higher degree committee members who still valorize third person-scientific research/traditional forms of research. Action research for professional development is thus not accorded the importance that it deserves. In addition, many postgraduate proposal guidelines and/or evaluation rubrics do not allow for the dynamic and flexible process of action research. Also, ethics committees are loath to adapt their rigid requirements for anonymity to suit the open and transparent nature of action research.

Similarly, working in contexts where people have been denied agency for political, social, and economic reasons, it is not always an easy task to engage community members in an authentic way. Community members are not used to ‘doing it for themselves’, either because they have been socialized to believe that they do not have the potential to change their own situations and/or because they believe their situation is too hopeless to change. There seems to be a general expectation among teachers, school management, and parents that the education ministries should initiate change and that the teacher’s job is merely to implement policy. However, once teachers begin to understand how they can take collective action, involving parents and the wider community in school improvement, their agency is improved, and they begin to take ownership of the task of improving their own circumstances. The collective action also helps to allay any fears that individual teachers may be victimized by local education authorities for challenging policy that may not be contextually relevant or possible to implement as intended.

Another challenge of community-based action research is how to sustain change when project funding comes to an end and academics withdraw. Due to the limited time allocated to funded projects and postgraduate studies, the involvement of academic researchers cannot be sustained, and community members have not had sufficient time to develop their own resources.

However, these very challenges are providing us with opportunities to creatively engage with various stakeholders to promote action research as a valid, worthwhile, and necessary methodology to address the problems facing higher education and society in general in South Africa.

14.6 SO, HOW DO WE ‘GROW’ ACTION RESEARCH IN SOUTHERN AFRICA? THE WAY FORWARD

It is clear to us, after collaborating on this chapter, that there is much ‘action’ going on. We need to initiate more collaboration and grow our networks, both nationally and internationally. Some of the initiatives already underway are described below:

A virtual network—Action Research Africa Network was set up with the help of Jack Whitehead, after the Action Research Conference hosted by Lesley Wood and her colleagues at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in 2010. Many of the members of this network also belong to the International Practitioner-Researcher Network, also set up by Jack.

Several of us are networking with international action research associations/networks such as the Collaborative Action Research Network—various study days have been held in South Africa and Lesotho—the Action Research Network of the Americas and the Action Learning Action Research Association (ALARA). Such endeavors allow African action researchers to form networks and strategies for future collaboration.

Several institutions have benefitted from working with international action researchers, particularly Jean McNiff, Jack Whitehead, and Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt, in the last few years. This collaboration has helped in the development of interinstitutional and international research proposals that have resulted in funded projects that allow for collaboration across institutions and internationally (e.g. the TES and NRF grants discussed above).

Evidence of the growing interest in action research in education is the fact that national research associations such as the South African Education Research Association and Higher Education Learning and Teaching Association of Southern Africa now have Action Research Special Interest Groups, thanks mostly to the drive of the contributors to this chapter. In 2003, the University of Pretoria hosted an ALARA World Congress, at the time called Action Learning, Action Research, and Process Management Association; in 2015, ALARA held another World Congress in South Africa, hosted by North-West University, which further promoted action research and permitted new international collaborations to be fostered and contacts to be made. An interesting point to note is how working on this very chapter has helped to promote action research in Africa since we authors presented a seminar at the 2015 World Congress, based on our collective work. We see this as evidence of how the project to construct this Handbook has actually resulted in the forging of stronger networks—an unexpected outcome perhaps, but one typical of action research.

As to the way forward, we wish to expand our networks to build up a database of local, regional, and international experts in action research whom we can invite as supervisors and examiners for postgraduate theses. Other possibilities are the establishment of an African journal of action research and an annual conference, both of which would create opportunity for African action researchers to disseminate their work and encourage international researchers to engage with us.

We still have much work to do to ensure that action research is accepted as a valid methodology for higher education researchers to improve their own practice and to help others to improve their quality of life. By growing our networks both within and outside the region and by adopting a critical, reflective stance to this work, we hope to actively address the challenges that we currently face.

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Community-Led Mapping for Empowerment: Collectivizing Adults for Action in the Slums of India

Manoj Rai

India is the largest democracy in the world. According to Census of India, 2011 (Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs), India has 122 major languages and 1,599 other languages. While the traditional Indian society, stratified on the basis of the Indian caste system, was defined by social hierarchy, modern India is technologically advanced and one of the fastest growing economies. India is a vast country with diverse castes, classes, languages, geographical regions, and climatic conditions. But Indian traditions, cultures, and governance system bind the country into a unified nation of more than 1.3 billion people.

India is what the Indians want to make of it. Many social reformers, social enablers, and other change agents have used various methods and tools to promote social justice and inclusive economic growth in the country. They aspired for paradigm shifts and used various means and methods to understand the realities in their conceptual, social, philosophical, and cultural frameworks. Understanding the realities through collective wisdom, these social and political actors catalysed collective actions and rational thinking for improvements in the socio-economic situations of the people. The works and approaches of ancient Indian social reformers are perhaps the oldest examples of action research in India. However, these reformers were not called action researchers.

Perhaps, the most frequent “regular recordings” of the term action research in India are found in the works of political and social scientists of the late

M. Rai (✉)
Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), New Delhi, India

1970s and 1980s. During this period, organized efforts of many voluntary agencies were very visible, impactful, and systematically documented. Many of these voluntary agencies were considerably inspired by the thoughts of Paulo Freire (1982), new thinking on adult education research (Hall, 1975), the Civil Rights Movement (Horton & Freire, 1990), social movements such as the *Bhoomi Sena* (Rahman, 2011), and key initiatives such as the Participatory Research Network created in 1978 and based in New Delhi. According to Hall (1992), the initial International Participatory Research Network, based in New Delhi, “benefited from an interdisciplinary development drawing its theoretical strength from adult education, sociology, political economy, community psychology, community development, feminist studies, critical psychology, organizational development and more” (p. 16).

Organizations such as the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) were established in the 1980s. PRIA became the leader of action research approaches in organization development, adult education, and democratic governance in this early period. The detailed history and works of PRIA are provided in another chapter of the Handbook (see Chap. 27).

15.1 URBANIZATION IN INDIA

Just after its independence from British colonial rule in 1947, India’s rural population was recorded at 83%, as shown by archive data in the website of Census of India (Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs). The contribution of the agriculture sector to the Indian economy was estimated to be 59% in 1951. The contribution of the urban sector to India’s gross domestic product (GDP) at that time was a mere 29%. However, according to one report by the Government of India (Planning Commission of India 2005), urban sectors are now contributing more than 62%, and their contribution to the Indian GDP is likely to be 75% by 2021. On the other hand, the contribution of agriculture to India’s GDP has drastically declined to 14% in 2013–2014 (Central Statistics Office, 2015).

These data imply that the Indian economy has been completely urbanized. The urbanization of Indian economy is also reflected in the fact that India, a traditionally rural country, is on the fast track of urbanization. The data from the latest national Census, held in 2011, found that, in the history of the country, the increase in urban population was more than the increase in rural population. The rate of urbanization in India increased from 27.81% in the 2001 Census to 31.16% in the 2011 Census (Government of India, 2011). The increased pace of urbanization has been mainly attributed to rural-urban migration. It is certainly a new experience for the developing dynamics of the country.

Rural migrants move to cities in search of better amenities for their lives, but cities are not always so welcoming due to their very nature of being informal and indifferent. Thus, the city life for a migrant usually begins with settling in informal and unliveable and/or dilapidated housing in neglected corners of the cities. The grouping of such “houses” is often termed “slums.” The Indian

Census Organization defines slum as mainly those residential areas where dwellings are in any respect unfit for human habitation by reasons of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangements and designs of such buildings, narrowness or faulty arrangement of streets, lack of ventilation, light, sanitation facilities, or any combination of these factors which are detrimental to safety, health, and morals (Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, 2011). If 60–70 households live in any such locality, that locality, as per Census, is counted as a slum. Using these criteria, Indian Census 2011 reported that 65 million people were living in different slums in India in the beginning of 2011.

As per Census 2011 data, India is one of the youngest countries in the world as about 65% of the Indian population is below 35 years of age. The younger population has higher aspirations and more mobility, and cities pull them for better economic opportunities and better facilities (infrastructures). On the other hand, the older population find rural lives economically more constrained due to the decline in agriculture productivities and the lack of other economic avenues in rural areas. These factors push them to migrate to cities. Accordingly, both pull and push factors operate to accelerate migration to the cities. Out of all migrants to cities, a large number of migrants are actually rural poor who switch to the cities to address their perpetual poverty conditions. Unfortunately, most of them become trapped in vicious cycles of more complex and more inhumane urban poverty. The economic conditions of these newer migrants to cities coerce them to temporarily settle down in “cheaper” informal housing settlements in the cities. However, these temporary settlements quite often become near permanent habitation, and the vicious sequence of vulnerabilities follow the majority of the urban poor.

Most informal settlements are actually slums, although they may have different names in certain parts of India. Most provincial governments refer to these slums as *Kachchi Basti* (temporary habitation), *Jhuggi Jhopri* (cluster of huts), or *Malin Basti* (dirty habitation) in their official records. These official names, which degrade the habitation, reflect the neglect of slums. Moreover, different government agencies (central government, provincial government, and local government) in India define slums differently and thus contribute to accentuating the ambiguities about present and future slums. Demeaning names and varying definitions of slums in India also reflect the prevailing social and political attitudes towards slum dwellers and their ever increasing problems and challenges.

15.2 NEGLECTED SLUMS AND ISOLATED SLUM DWELLERS

City governments acknowledge the existence of different slums in the city by official notifications to “officially accept” the existence of slums. There may be many slums that exist but are not recorded by the government. Based on Indian Census (2011), it is important to mention them, although only notified or registered slums have been accounted for. Accordingly, the Indian Census 2011 excluded the counting of roughly 37% of existing but non-notified slums (Registrar General of India, 2011) in different cities of India. Interestingly,

different development/poverty schemes of the national and state governments do accept the existence of these slums and so provide related benefits to the dwellers of non-notified slums. The ambiguities in the definitions of slums have reached the extent that even the simplest data on the number of slums in particular cities are inconsistent, unreliable, and invalidated.

In the cities where it is located, PRIA has assisted slum dwellers to facilitate the identification and counting of slums in the city. During this simple counting, it was found that the number of slums actually existing in the cities is often more than the number of slums officially mentioned in government records. It is difficult to understand why municipal governments do not have the correct number of slums in their cities, even though most “excluded” slums have existed in the cities for decades and have also been receiving some form of benefits (however little that may be) from the municipalities and national development schemes. Whatever the case may be, the official figures of the Indian Census of 2011 state that 13.7 million households or 17.4% of urban Indian households live in the slums. This means that one in every six urban citizens in India lives in a slum (Photograph 15.1).

Exclusion of slums from development schemes is a two-fold exclusion. First, the development tradition in India has been predominantly rural-focused and is still politically skewed in favour of rural India. Thus, urban places have remained neglected in India. The second fold of exclusion is within urban development spheres. As experiences suggest, most urban services are accessed and consumed by the non-poor (middle and upper) classes in the Indian cities. Poor pockets hardly receive any benefits; certainly, nothing in comparison to their social and economic contributions to the cities they live in. It is a well-known and widely accepted fact that poor/informal sectors drive cities to prosperity. But the poor are excluded from the proportionate benefits of urban prosperities. PRIA’s recent national study (PRIA, 2013) estimates that



Photograph 15.1 A slum settlement called “*Fus Ka Bangla*” in Jaipur

the average contribution of slum dwellers to their city's GDP is about 7.6%, which is quite a significant economic contribution. What percentage of its total budget does the city government spend providing urban services to the poor? There are no official estimates available to answer this question, but one can easily make estimates after seeing the conditions of the slums in Indian cities.

The neglect of slums is not limited to only municipal and/or service delivery agencies. Even Civil Society Organizations and other development actors in India have knowingly or unknowingly remained indifferent to poverty in the slums. Despite the Civil Society presence and the support that can be discerned in almost all pockets of rural India, it is very difficult to find a good number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working with slum dwellers. When PRIA undertook a crude mapping of civil society organizations working for urban governance and urban poverty in ten cities in 2012, it was found that more than 95% of city-based NGOs (those with offices and residences in cities) actually do not work in the cities where they reside. Their work areas are villages near or far from cities. This trend is perhaps due to the fact that Indian civil society organization has historically remained pre-occupied with rural poverty and issues and urban complexities have remained largely ignored.

External exclusions of slums are further compounded by the internal weaknesses of the slums. In most parts of the country, except perhaps in *Maharashtra* and to an extent in *Tamil Nadu*, slum dwellers do not have any association or collective platform to raise their voices against the absence of basic amenities in the slums. The absence of civil society support and the absence of associations or any collective platform of slum dwellers make individual slum dwellers more vulnerable to the informalities of the cities and the exploiters in society. Perpetual vulnerabilities have also contributed to deviant behaviours and negativity among slum youths.

15.3 STRENGTHENING COLLECTIVE VOICES AND CAPACITIES OF COMMUNITIES

Taking note of urban contexts and the need to strengthen voices of Civil Society and Communities, PRIA and its partners started working intensively with the slum communities in 2011. The process of collectivization and capacitating the community are part of an integrated process. Collectivization begins with the formation of small groups in the slums. After capacity building, the small group achieves small successes. These smaller successes enhance convening powers of the small groups to enlarge their membership base. The bigger collective later attains bigger successes, and thus a cycle of collectivization, capacity building, and community-led success starts rolling in a sustainable manner.

15.3.1 *The Settlement Improvement Committees (SICs)*

A SIC is a group of mostly young adults who live in a particular slum and volunteer to work on the community issues there. Usually, an SIC is composed of 14–15 members and has one or two group leaders. The SIC is a representative

group of the community and acts as a bridge between the community and the external world. The main functions of an SIC are: information dissemination, convening and facilitating community dialogues, supporting the community by accessing governmental schemes, representing the community at different levels, and taking pioneer actions for community benefits.

Currently, PRIA and partner organizations work in 18 cities in 10 provinces of the country to facilitate collectivization of the communities. One of the main objectives of this initiative is to collectivize slum dwellers and strengthen their collective voices to demand their democratic rights. PRIA also facilitates the engagements of community collectives with the service providers and other external challenges.

Unlike the rural poor who were born and brought up in villages, slums dwellers in a particular area are usually a mixture of migrants from different parts of the country. This is why they have different historical roots and, often-times, different community traditions. Thus, the slum population is somewhat culturally heterogeneous. Moreover, individuals and families are mostly daily wage earners struggling with limited time, energy, and resources. The majority of individual slum dwellers are engrossed with their personal challenges. Also the community as such has no experience with collective actions, which makes collectivization efforts more challenging.

After a number of consultations, trials and errors, and convincing efforts, it was found that the younger generation in slum dwellers are relatively more responsive to the collectivization calls. So, PRIA's initial successes in collectivization began through forming groups of younger adults in slums. The groups included both males and females, with women often outnumbering men. The initial sensitization and orientation of these groups of young adults regarding their rights and roles was very useful in enhancing their social engagement with issues in the slums. Later, the small groups decided to form what they called initially Slum Improvement Committee (SIC). The local names of these committees were different according to each slum, but all groups initially called themselves "SIC" so as to emphasize the objectives of the group. The initial objective of SICs was to collectively voice demands for improvements in urban services (water, sanitation, electricity, approach road, and law and order issues) in the slum.

Over a period of time, more than 200 SICs have been active in many slums across cities and provinces in India. The success of SICs in improving the quality of lives in slums has been widely accepted by the community and local service delivery agencies. Many of the related case studies can be found on PRIA's blog: <http://terraurban.wordpress.com/>. With the passage of time, the SICs too have undergone structural changes. The committees which used to be exclusively youth members, now include older members also, though SICs are still often youth majority.

As the SICs marched forward, they became sensitive to the demeaning and derogatory use of the term "slum" in common languages and governments records. So, the SICs proposed to call themselves Settlement Improvement

Committees (SICs), with the word “slum” replaced by a more respectful word, “settlement.” That way, the popular acronym SIC remained the same. But the name change also helped the SICs to broaden their objectives. The SICs now coordinate internal mobilization of slum dwellers, generate Global Positioning System (GPS) data on community profile and services, facilitate orientation to the community, and lead communities in direct engagements with service delivery agencies. The basis of such engagements are often GPS data (on plight of services) generated by the communities themselves.

15.3.2 *Capacity Building*

Community Mapping As discussed earlier, many of the slums do not exist in official records or official maps of most city governments in India. However, slums are sometimes presented as mere black circles on maps, as if these settlements are uninhabited. Quite often, government surveyors causally misreport slums’ locations and ground realities. These misrepresentations or under-reporting of the realities pose bigger challenges for the urban poor in availing appropriate public services. Not being part of the official records questions the very existence and the identity of slum dwellers. In the absence of “formal identities,” slum dwellers become ineligible for availing benefits from municipal services and schemes. So, the SICs and PRIA agreed to find alternative ways to self-define identity and generate updated reliable data on the profile of slums. It was agreed to use GPS mapping techniques for emphasizing the “legitimacy and accuracy” of the data Bhanoo, S. (2014). Plans were also made to upload the GPS map of the slums on Google Earth. That could at least provide proof of existence and an alternative cyber identity. Since most SIC members are young and techno-enthusiastic, they showed great interest in learning the operation of GPS tools. PRIA provided the tools and the basic theoretical orientation followed by on-site handholding support for GPS mapping. The whole process of learning the GPS mapping and uploading the data on Google Earth took about 10 days initially. It may be noted here that most SIC members are barely literate.

Ketwari Mohalla (in Patna, Bihar) was the first informal community settlement (ICS) to be mapped by the SIC members of that slum. Since the community knows its details better than anybody else, the quality of data generated was excellent. Besides establishing an alternative identity to their “informal” community settlement, this process generated curiosity and interest among non-SIC members of the slum. More and more slum members joined the mapping process. Therefore, the GPS mapping exercise also helped in sensitizing and mobilizing the whole community around the need of joint collective actions for the improvement of services in the slums. So far, Ketwari Mohalla-type initiatives have resulted into the preparation and uploading (onto Google Earth) of community-generated GPS maps of more than 50 slums.

Members of the SIC made their community aware about the need and process of GPS mapping. They highlighted the benefits of GPS mapping to communities through community meetings and stories. Facilitation of the process initially was a joint effort of PRIA and the SICs. PRIA initially asserted to the SICs that such mapping would provide ICS dwellers more opportunities to contest and make claims more effectively. PRIA's engagement with GPS mapping now has reduced considerably. Older SICs train and support new SICs in other neighbourhoods. The SICs convince their communities about the importance of collectivization and mapping by sharing success stories of older SICs in the cities.

GPS mapping of the community has been very useful because:

- (i) It provides a permanent "e-identity" to the ICS as its existence related data becomes available on Google Earth, which can't be manipulated. The government records are often doctored by the vested interests in the cities.
- (ii) It facilitates support for individual members of informal settlements in claiming their property rights and/or claiming a share in common public resources.
- (iii) It provides an alternative but real picture of available infrastructure and facilities in the settlements.
- (iv) It helps all members of the community claim the benefits of development schemes as GPS data show the existence of each and every member of the community, mapped by their own SIC.
- (v) The whole exercise provides the community with a sense of pride and ownership (Photograph 15.2).

The youth are encouraged to take up community-led GPS mapping in their ICS settlements. The process of ICS mapping with the help of GPS and



Photograph 15.2 SIC member mapping houses in a slum of Jaipur

uploading the map on Google Earth/Map is also explained in a separate practice manual, written in local languages. With support from PRIA and partner organizations, the youth of Ketwari Mohalla, for example, took it upon themselves to map their own community (Photograph 15.3).¹

The experiences so far in facilitating community mapping suggest that they are not only powerful but also a self-sustainable tool for community empowerment. The cycle of collectivization and data-based community advocacy lead to self-sustaining cycles of successes in terms of tangible benefits for the community.

Facilitating Engagement of the Community with Agencies (Community Advocacy) The JP Colony in Vidyadhar Nagar Zone of Jaipur has one slum which was inhabited in the year 1981 after the floods of Jaipur. At present, 450 families reside in the slum, the majority of whom are from the Muslim community, with a few families from Maratha and Rajputs. The SIC in this slum is quite active. Through community mapping, it identified that 70 families did not have their land rights. PRIA supported the SIC in getting the application forms for land rights, informed them which documents to submit with the application form, and where to submit their forms. The SIC facilitated submission of forms and also asked the families to keep a photocopy of documents submitted for future follow-ups.

The government of Rajasthan organized a camp “*Prashasan Sebro ke Sang*” in JP Colony on December 21, 2012. During the camp, SIC enquired about the status of their applications for land rights. It was found that files of 30 slum dwellers of the colony were missing. The SIC discussed the matter with Mr. Kailash Chand Sharma, Zone Commissioner and Mrs. Anju Chaudhury. Mr.



Photograph 15.3 GPS mapping by the community in Patna

Sharma suggested filing fresh application forms with the photocopies of documents submitted earlier. The families, whose files went missing, filled in the application form but this time demanded that authorities collect their forms from their slum. The SIC visited the municipal office periodically to get information of their land rights. Finally, on February 27, 2013, the *Ward Councillor* along with the Junior Engineer and other officials from the Jaipur Municipal Corporation came to collect their application forms. Their plots were also measured and the requisite amount was collected from the families applying for land rights. Finally, land rights were restored.

The linkage between communities and the government/service delivery agencies have been almost non-existent in India. This has been mostly because of two reasons. First, communities have never been able to approach the government directly. Second, even if approached, they were not able to put forth their demands realistically and convincingly. Thus, PRIA planned to address these two gaps so that engagements between communities and service delivery agencies were direct and fruitful.

In order to bridge the aforementioned gaps, the communities are collectivized with the support of their SICs. The capacities of SICs are enhanced in terms of community mapping, linkage building (with peer SICs, communities and NGOs as well as Government agencies), social accountability tools (how to monitor the services), and evidence-based advocacy with the relevant authorities. The agencies of government and service delivery are also sensitized and encouraged to dialogue with the communities. An enabling environment is created for rational dialogue between the SICs and officials. These dialogues are sensitively facilitated by PRIA and/or partner organizations so as to initiate a process of continuous interactions between communities and agencies.

15.4 FEDERATIONS OF SETTLEMENT IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEES

As SICs across the ICSs enhanced their engagements with the local agencies, it was realized that some of their local problems could not be resolved by local officials as they do not have appropriate power or authority to do so. These problems could actually be addressed by the higher authorities in the city administration or provincial governments, who have appropriate powers to rectify the issues. However, the reach and influence of single SIC in regards to higher authorities can be very difficult. As a way to effectively influence the higher authorities, *collectivization of collectives* was visualized, and the idea of forming federations of SICs came into being. A city-based SIC Federation comprises all or most of the SICs in the city. For example, all SICs in Patna city of Bihar have formed a city SIC Federation to influence the policies of city and state governments. They have agreed to collectively demand improvement in services for all ICSs in the city. The city SIC Federation has been mandated to speak on behalf of all SICs (after due process of advance consultations, wherever possible) in a larger forum. As an operations mechanism, a ten-member

core committee composed of SIC representatives from different parts of city was formed through collective consensus. The core committee has evolved participatory guidelines for:

- (i) communication pattern of the federation,
- (ii) formation of coordination committee
- (iii) periodic meeting pattern
- (iv) the selection of issues (identification, prioritization, selection of cross-cutting issue, and finalization) (Photograph 15.4).

One of the collective actions of SICs in Patna has been to develop a proposal for improvements in sanitation services and housing in the ICSs of Patna. This proposal is to be submitted to the Minister of Urban Development, Government of Bihar, who has already assured the Federation of providing financial and technical support for the proposal.

The SICs individually and SIC Federations collectively are also engaging with their elected municipal *councillors* and elected *Urban Local Bodies* (ULBs). These engagements have varied in nature—ranging from demanding accountability to collaborative actions for improvements in settlement situations. Some examples of SIC–ULB engagements are given below:

15.4.1 Example 1: Demanding Accountability of Municipal Corporation in Raipur

During the summer of 2014, half of the city of Raipur (capital city in Chhattisgarh province) was under the grip of jaundice, a water-borne disease. It was spreading like an epidemic in the city. The two ICSs of the city, namely *Dindayal Upadhyay Nagar* and *Waman-rao lakhey Nagar*, were the most affected localities. Pregnant women were the most vulnerable in these ICSs. In a short period of time, 25 persons had already died due to this disease. The



Photograph 15.4 Meeting of Core Committee of Patna SIC-federation

poor sanitation and sewage system of the city, pitiable water supply system, and lack of proper cleanliness of drains, canals, and water tanks in the ICSs were responsible for the prevalence and spread of the disease.

A meeting was convened to discuss the roles of civil societies in the spread of jaundice in affected ICSs. Representatives of different civil society organizations, ICSs, and doctors were also invited to provide possible support to tackle the disease. One local doctor, Dr. Biplav Bandopadhyay, reported that jaundice occurs due to the mixing of faecal contaminated water with drinking water. The only remedy to get rid of Hepatitis E is to consume boiled water. It was confirmed in the meeting that a municipal corporation is responsible for providing clean and safe water to the city and to ensure the cleanliness of the water sources.

The SICs along with some local NGOs submitted a memorandum to the Governor of the State and the Commissioner of the Municipal Corporation demanding immediate action for cleaning the water tanks and other sources of water and also organizing health camps in affected ICSs. A people-council (*JANSABHA*) was organized against the municipality under the banner of the *Chhattisgarh* ICS initiative in *Budha-Talab* area of Raipur. PRIA is also a part of the *JANSABHA*. A Public Interest Litigation was also filed in court against the municipal corporation for supplying polluted drinking water to the city. Several elected councillors also supported demands for immediate action by the municipal corporation, and the pressure generated by the SICs and NGOs yielded results. The drive for cleanliness coupled with the safe water supply from municipal corporation helped ICS dwellers get rid of the deadly jaundice.

15.4.2 Example 2: Sharing of GPS Report with Municipal Commissioner to Ensure Benefits of Governmental Schemes

The SIC of *Chandrasekhar Nagar* along with other members of the ICS mapped its habitation using a GPS tool, provided at the local office of PRIA. The SIC facilitated community analysis of the data compiled during GPS mapping. The SIC also prepared a report explaining the entire process and also highlighting the major problems faced by the ICS dwellers. The local office of PRIA provided guidance and support in writing the report. The SIC decided to meet the Raipur Municipal Commissioner and share the report with him. This ICS had been illogically excluded from parallel GPS mapping conducted by the government, which was planning to provide affordable housing for mapped ICSs (Photograph 15.5).

The SIC wished to use this opportunity to draw attention of top officials to the deliberate exclusion of the ICS from the benefits of housing schemes of the government. The Municipal Commissioner was pleasantly surprised to know that barely literate SIC members prepared “sophisticated GPS maps” within their ICS. The GPS map was obvious proof of the existence of ICS, and it also provided convincing evidence on the plights of housing conditions in the settlement. The commissioner assured the SIC members that he would



Photograph 15.5 SIC Members sharing Report with the Municipal Officer in Raipur

look into the matter and address the issues as per law. Later, the settlement was “officially included” in the list of settlements and entitled to the benefits of all governmental schemes. After some time, the commissioner promised the SIC to resettle the whole ICS in a nearby housing complex constructed by the BSUP (*Basic Services for Urban Poor* is a development scheme of the government meant to provide highly subsidized housing for urban poor). Both parties were happy with this development. At present, however, there are some bureaucratic bottlenecks delaying the resettlement of settlement dwellers to better housing facilities of the BSUP nearby, as promised by the commissioner. The SIC has taken up the issue with the local political leaders and other authorities for speedy implementation of the Commissioner’s promise.

15.5 FORUM OF INFORMAL URBAN POOR WORKERS (FIUPW)

Segmented and scattered voices of the urban poor are not limited to the local levels. This problem is also discernible at national levels. There are a number of powerful and large national/regional associations of urban livelihood groups such as vendors, hawkers, ragpickers, rickshaw pullers, construction workers, and domestic workers. These associations continue to raise issues related to improvements in working conditions of their members. However, all of these associations rarely come together to jointly demand improvement in the conditions of the urban poor as a whole.

After a series of consultations with individual associations, PRIA convened a joint meeting of these associations to explore possibilities of synergy in the efforts of the different associations. After almost a year of sustained efforts to overcome initial inhibitions of individual associations, the majority of the associations agreed in 2012 to form a forum of associations. It was proposed to name this “association of associations” as the *Forum of Informal Urban Poor Workers*. These associations asked PRIA to initially act as secretariat of the forum until 2015 when the associations would collectively review the progress made in establishing an internal secretariat of the forum. Currently, FIUPW has about 30 members, with most being national associations of the poor. The objectives of FIUPW are:

- To provide a common platform to associations and federations working for the urban poor;
- To build a strong FIUPW network within different states;
- To identify common issues in urban poverty and jointly work to address them;
- To find out the present status and contribution of unorganized sectors in the cities;
- To compile and disseminate information related to schemes, services, policies, and benefits for urban poor;
- To develop advocacy tools and decide on division of labour to sustain advocacy efforts; and
- To influence manifestos of political parties (for enabling urban policies) during the elections at local, provincial, and national levels.

During the two years since its formation, FIUPW has gained in strength and capacities. It successfully influenced political parties during recent provincial and national elections to include unambiguous statements on urban poverty and urban governance in their political manifestos. Perhaps, for the first time in the history of democratic elections in India, almost all political parties delineated their thoughts and possible actions on urban poverty and urban elections. Besides political influencing, the FIUPW co-organized a number of advocacy and action planning workshops to highlight issues of urban poverty and urban governance. The FIUPW has also facilitated joint initiatives of two or more of its members (Terra Urban, 2015).

15.6 LEARNING AND CHALLENGES

Urban communities, in general, and urban poor in particular, are relatively passive to the collectivization process. But the community collectives are action-oriented as these actions bring visible changes in the lives of communities. Thus, it is important to collectivize the communities to help them act together for the common public good. While collectivization is an important and a significant step forward, it is not sufficient in itself. It is also not a one-time event. Collectivization is a continuous and multi-level process. For

example, collectivization at the local level may lead to collectivizations at city and national levels. The constituents of collectives can be different at different levels. Collectivization itself does not bring results unless collectives are capacitated and provide handholding support to achieve initial successes. It is also important to showcase the successes due to collectivization. Successful actions remain a cementing factor for the collectivization process.

GPS mapping or community mapping is very simple, but it is one of the most effective tools for community empowerment. It brings quick and visible results in terms of community consciousness, availability of updated data, pride of cyberspace identity, and above all, the tangible benefits regarding improvements in local public services due to evidence-based advocacy. Since GPS is a technology tool, it attracts energetic youth in the community to channel their energies for a social cause. GPS mapping is something modern as well as a very serious business for youth in general. The community mapping tools are helpful in mobilizing and collectivizing communities around commonly understood and internalized issues. That itself is a great source of internal strength to the community.

The data from GPS and the collective strength from the community help SICs to effectively engage with significant external actors (service delivery agencies and the government). The SICs of different informal settlements in Bihar are collectively negotiating with the government to formally accept the GPS map of the settlement prepared by the community. If that happens (the government uses the community-led GPS map as the official map of ICS), community-generated data on infrastructures and facilities in ICSs could significantly shift development dialogues in favour of the hitherto marginalized communities. Communities are also using Participatory Social Network Analysis (another tool being used by PRIA in its intervention areas) to identify significant enablers/supporters for their rights and services. This helps communities to specify the targets for future engagements. It is true that, wherever GPS mapping has been undertaken, there is vibrancy in the settlement. Communities have become more aware, more demanding, and accountability seeking. All these have resulted into slow but steady improvements in the social and physical lives of settlement dwellers.

The overall experience of collectivizing different ICS dwellers, facilitating the formations of SICs/SIC Federations/FIUPW and capacitating them, have been very positive, with many visible successes at local levels. However, PRIA also recognizes the challenges that come with this work. The lack of time, resources, and patience among ICS dwellers can at times be difficult. This is why it is important to think of the sequence of small but quicker successes continuously rather than one-time big success. Yet, this poses a dilemma. If the time, energy, and resources initially invested in getting communities ready for collectivization, for gaining capacities, and accepting and using such knowledge is initially high, while the initial success is “low,” that is, small, the work of collectivization has to be accompanied by an increasing awareness that the investment in communities gives high returns in the long run.

NOTE

1. The map can be accessed at: <https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=zEhzo2P-WpoE.ksyCrHfOB62w&ic=UTF&msa=0>

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Learning About Action Research in and From the Middle East

Jean McNiff

This chapter is about learning about identity through action research. It draws mainly on my learning from the experience of developing professional education programs in the Middle East on behalf of higher education institutions, using practice-based approaches. It identifies some problematic issues arising from the experience, specifically in relation to identifying oneself as a person acting in the world with ethical intent. While I cannot claim in-depth knowledge of the Middle East, only having worked intermittently in Bahrain, Dubai, Israel, Palestine, and Qatar, I can definitely claim to have learned a great deal from the experience, with possible relevance for other higher education providers who may wish to do the same. The chapter is therefore more about my learning from experience in a specific part of the world than about the experience itself. I make sense of the learning by drawing on similar involvements in other parts of the world, since the world (and a person's practice) is more than the sum of its parts, and what happens in one part has potential for influencing other parts through dynamic webs of relationships through time and space.

First, here are some other contexts, related to the Middle East, where I actively began to interrogate the concept and experience of identity.

16.1 CONTEXTUALIZING THE RESEARCH

I first went to the Middle East by way of Northern Ireland where I had been working during the late-1990s with groups of teachers on the program then called Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU). EMU was the Northern Ireland equivalent of the British Personal and Social Education curriculum (PSE, later to add Health to transform into PSHE). I had earlier been a deputy head teacher in England, with additional responsibility for support-

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ing local schools in developing a PSE curriculum, using an action research methodology, and had also completed a PhD into the principles and practices of PSE. The aim of the work with EMU now was to help teachers learn about action research in order to develop collaborative pedagogical practices that would contribute to closer relationships in the local community. The emphasis here was to challenge traditionalist ways of ‘either-or’ thinking and develop more inclusionary epistemologies and relational forms of thinking. It was also hoped that, through the development of such epistemologies and logics, teachers from all political colors would come to work together in greater harmony.

We produced a collaboratively written end-of-project report (McNiff, McGeady, & Rose, 2001) which is available on my website. Subsequent feedback from the international community then showed that many saw the project as located within the field of peace education. This was evidenced, in 2001, by an invitation to visit Palestine to work with a teacher education institute whose aim was to forge peaceful relationships with Israeli neighbors. The institute was near the Palestine–Israeli border, which meant that I experienced at firsthand the difficulties of border crossings on visits into Israel with Palestinian colleagues and many of the other practical and psychological effects of segregated living. This was at the beginning of the second Intifada, and I recall, while driving with a colleague through the streets how youngsters threw stones at us and how my colleague cheerfully cried, ‘He got me!’ as a stone hit the car. Later experiences, including a visit to shell-shocked Jenin, showed that stones were no match for rockets.

On my return to the UK, I wrote up papers from the visit and posted them on my website, saying that the papers had been presented in Palestine. To my surprise, within days I received a number of emails from Israel, saying that I was prejudiced, sided with Palestine, and was wrong in thinking that Palestine even existed (recall the propaganda postcard with the address ‘Palestine’ crossed out and an official ‘Return to sender’ stamp). I responded to the senders and also forwarded the correspondence to a Palestinian colleague requesting advice about how to make sense of it all, to which the colleague responded, ‘Pay no attention to it. What more can you expect from Israelis?’ I received no further communications from Israel.

A year later, in 2002, to my greater surprise I received an invitation from an Israeli institution to conduct a countrywide lecture tour. The tour turned out to be a wonderful experience, although I was often portrayed, and even introduced once in a public lecture, as pro-Palestinian. I constantly emphasized that I was pro-everyone who wanted to find ways of living together considerately, but to no avail. As before, I wrote up the papers and posted them on my website, saying I had presented them in Israel. This led to a repeat counter performance, including an email from the same Palestinian colleague who had advised about Israelis, saying:

In the Middle East we were the first to invite you to visit and I thought you had a good visit. But now I find out what a coward and hypocrite you really are. Don’t even bother to respond to this email. Just store it in your files and think about it every now and then.

I did think about it and still do. I responded, but heard nothing more.

How to understand? I went back to the earlier experience of Northern Ireland, where you were invariably required to declare your allegiance for this or that; you could not be both-and or neutral. You were frequently positioned in ways that you would not position yourself, reminiscent of the old joke of the Jewish man who sets up business in Northern Ireland and is asked, 'Are you Catholic or Protestant?' He responds, 'I am neither. I am a Jew'. 'Yes', comes the response, 'but are you a Catholic Jew or a Protestant Jew?' You could not be neutral, or see both sides, or decide against taking sides (which is to take a side, but of a different kind). You were usually expected to declare yourself and refusing to declare could lead to misunderstandings. My work, therefore, which was supposed to encourage practitioners to develop critical insights into their thinking, became more an experience where I began to develop increasingly critical insights into mine. The repeated experiences of working in divided and divisive cultures later led to a more focused train of inquiry about why the 'either-or' route is often seen as normative and why identity tends to be categorized along one single static dimension rather than from multiple dynamic perspectives. This learning continues and also has direct relevance to recent work in the Middle East.

16.2 IDENTITY AND CULTURAL PLURALISM

It was through listening in the late 1990s to John Hume, then leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party in Northern Ireland, that I began to understand that a too-ready tendency to box up identity could lie in the underpinning epistemology espoused by the culture, especially if this involves a commitment to a one-dimensional, conceptual form of logic, informed by a taxonomic view of values. John Hume was speaking about the stalemate in the peace process between the British Government, who required the Irish Republican Army (IRA) to lay down their arms prior to negotiations, and the IRA itself, who refused to do so. He maintained that both decommissioning and expectations of the other begin in the mind; therefore, social and political actions, such as the physical laying down of arms or the expectation of it should be understood as manifestations of a form of logic rather than as spontaneous value-free actions. This same epistemology that positions people along a single dimension of race, color, religion, or any other attribute uses a monological form of thinking that sees people in terms of 'either this or that' (remember George W. Bush's 'You are either with us or with the terrorists'). According to Sen (2007), this practice stems from what he calls 'high theories of cultures and civilizations' that 'force people into boxes of singular identity' so that they are understood 'not as persons but predominantly as members of one particular social group—or community' (p. 176). Further, in my view, this allegiance to 'high theories of cultures and civilizations' stems from a deeper tendency to commit to high theories regarding the rightness of divisive 'either-or' forms of logic, with assumptions about achieving final solutions to initial problems. In

another context (in 2010, in the Holocaust Museum at the Wannsee Center near Berlin, itself linked with the Middle East through space and time), I saw the outcomes of the implementation of one such Final Solution, to the so-called Jewish problem, now referring to those same people whose descendants included those I came to know and love in Israel.

Through these experiences, several until now, only vaguely perceived issues began to click into sharper focus: (1) that action research has the potential to combat reductionist ‘either-or’ forms of thinking (Flood, 2001, says this was the genesis of action research); (2) that the biggest culprit for sustaining a reductionist epistemology and divisive form of logic is the Academy (the higher education sector that forms the main context of my work) through its deep commitments to orthodox social science methods and propositional forms of epistemology and logic; and (3) (something I really should have realized before) that this same Academy had now co-opted action research and was implanting into it its own reductionist epistemology. It therefore now became obvious that a new institutional brand of action research had emerged, so that two forms of action research were now visible: an open, persons-oriented form whose aim was to offer multiple options for dealing with everyday social dilemmas through emancipatory discourses; and a closed, institutions-oriented form whose aim was to conserve the systemically endorsed epistemological status quo along with its accompanying organizational structures of power and status.

These two forms exist today and are clearly distinguishable. The first (though it has not always been called action research) is an open, problem-posing form that focuses on concrete everyday practices. Methodologically, it acknowledges the immanent emergent and transformational nature of growth and learning. It has a long line of epistemological ascendancy from early process philosophers in the East and West, including, for example, works by Spinoza (1996) and Goethe (1957), and, more recently, in von Bertalanffy (1969), Bergson (1911/1998), Dewey (1991), and Bateson (1973), many now linked with systems theory and complexity theory (Mason, 2008). This form of action research may also be linked with the literatures of inquiry into everyday practices (Brinkman, 2012; de Certeau, 1984; McNiff, 2013a—the kind I hoped to promote in the EMU work and elsewhere) and is reminiscent of Bayat’s description of his (2009) book, where, he says, ‘life as politics’ is:

about agency and change in the Muslim Middle East, the societies in which religion seems to occupy a prominent position. More specifically, [the essays in the book] focus on the configuration of sociopolitical transformation brought about by internal social forces, by collectives and individuals. Here I focus on the diverse ways in which the ordinary people, the subaltern—the urban dispossessed, Muslim women, the globalizing youth, and other urban grass roots—strive to affect the contours of change in their society by refusing to exit from the social and political stage controlled by authoritarian states, moral authority, and neoliberal economies, discovering and generating new spaces within which they

can voice their dissent and assert their presence in pursuit of bettering their lives. (Bayat, 2009, p. ix)

The second institutional, closed, problem-solving form has emerged in recent decades, informed by the same technical rational epistemologies of the social sciences and now intensified through the logics of the new managerialism (see Deem, Reed, & Hillyard, 2007) with its focus on performativity, assessment, and outcomes (Ball, 2003). This second form assumes the same feudal relationships in organizational practices that are seen throughout all imperialist movements: the hierarchical positioning of managers over the managed, and, in professional education contexts, on didactic pedagogies and hierarchical relationships between professional educator and participants. These power-constituted relationships parallel the hierarchical positioning of ‘academic knowledge’ over ‘work-based knowledge’ (Helyer, 2015; Herr & Anderson, 2005; Noffke, 2009). This perspective that work-based and academic knowledge are separate contributes to a related view that ‘practitioners’ work in workplaces while ‘academics’ work in other settings not called ‘workplaces’. In Sen’s (2007) terms, such views stem from the same kind of essentialist thinking that positions all Muslims as terrorists and that (at time of writing in 2007) saw India as a ‘Hindu nation’, in spite of the fact that ‘more than 145 million Muslims lived there (not to mention Indian Sikhs, Jains, Christians, Parsees, and others)’ (p. 177). As well as launching these incisive critiques, Sen satirizes the idea of essentialist thinking through whimsical stories such as the following:

Some years ago when I was returning to England from a short trip abroad (I was then Master of Trinity College in Cambridge), the young immigration officer at Heathrow, who scrutinized my Indian passport rather thoroughly, posed a philosophical question of some intricacy. Looking at my home address on the immigration form (Master’s Lodge, Trinity College, Cambridge), he asked me whether the Master, whose hospitality I evidently enjoyed, was a close friend of mine. This gave me pause since it was not altogether clear to me whether I could claim to be a friend of myself. (p. xi)

This level of casual stereotyping is deeply dangerous, especially when in the hands of higher education practitioners, who, given that higher education is still seen as the body with the greatest legitimizing power to say what counts as knowledge, thereby also still have the power to say who counts as a knower. This was demonstrated as recently as at a 2014 conference when I listened to a prominent academic pronouncing that ‘teachers cannot write’, thus sweeping aside the teaching profession as a crowd of illiterates or from reading Taber’s (2013) view that practitioners should not be misled into thinking that their action research accounts may stand as transferable academic knowledge: ‘[action research] has not been highly valued in the Academy as a means to

generate the kind of public knowledge that contributes to scholarly fields: there are good reasons for that' (Taber, 2013, p. 299).

What reasons? Perhaps, it is a kind of academic protectionism, similar to the kind of trade barriers erected by countries to protect their own exports and financial power. But divisiveness of this kind does violence in different ways. It is the violence done by the 'knower' to the 'trainee' through the normalization of relationships of position power that strips away the right of one to be acknowledged as a potential actor; it is also the violence done systemically through acceptance of the hegemonic relationship that allows one to dictate how the identity of the other should be construed. Arendt (1973) explains her understanding that power may legitimately be called such when it refers to the practices of citizens working together to promote the collaborative transformation of personal and social conditions. However, when the power is concentrated in the hands of a minority of elites who use it to subjugate others, power is better understood as violence. The situation in which one party willfully or unwittingly does not recognize the legitimacy of the other's potential for knowledge creation is one of violence. They adopt a positioning articulated by Marx that 'they [the Other] cannot represent themselves; they must be represented' (as cited in Said, 1995, p. xiii). And these matters are directly relevant to action research, whether it is about emancipation or subjugation and whether its knowledge products are *about* social living or *for* social living.

16.3 LEARNING ABOUT THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE MIDDLE EAST

I espouse the kind of action research that focuses on everyday practices, that is for social living, so I was delighted to be invited to work in the Middle East, anticipating (from reading Hourani, 2005; Nydell, 2006; Rogan, 2011; Said, 1997; and others) that Arab cultures would demonstrate the same open, dynamic, and dialectical forms of thinking that I associated with persons-centered practice-based action research. At the same time, however, I was aware that the 'Middle East' is a political fabrication, manufactured post-World War I through European interventions such as the Balfour Declaration (1917) that carved up the territory, which then went through different politically inspired transformations as the Trucial States, and now the Gulf States (while Israel is something different). Owen (2000) explains the political history of the countries where I worked (while also referring to others) as follows.

[T]he major Arab countries [each transformed from] the colonial state, through nationalism and independence, to the creation of an authoritarian system legitimized by an emphasis on both security and development, and then, finally, to the tempering of this authoritarianism by the opening up of space for independent and even oppositional forces. ... The other Middle Eastern states ... followed somewhat different trajectories in which local factors often played a more powerful role. The small oil states are one good example with the development of their political system shaped largely by their own particular combination of great

wealth and family rule. ... Israel emerged from colonial Palestine as a Jewish state with institutions profoundly shaped by its particular mix of party politics, money from abroad and continuing tension with its Arab neighbours. (p. 239)

I was aware also that colonial powers bring with them their own epistemological systems that are then absorbed to varying degrees into the local culture. This appears to have been (and continues to be) the case in the Middle East. Even I could see cultural and organizational struggles about whether to opt for imported European epistemologies or to honor traditionalist indigenous forms: traditional *souqs* were lined with tiny shops selling Manchester United tee shirts and hair colorants alongside *abayas* and spices; and white-robed men trundled archaic wooden wheelbarrows along dark cobbled alleyways to transport Batman kits, Frisbees, and other imported goods. The struggle is also evident throughout professional relationships, where (to extend Gee's (2005) 'big D'/'little d' distinctions) the grand technical rational Discourses of corporate managerialism vie with the local discourses of respect for indigenous ways of knowing.

These kinds of Discourses formed the political-epistemological contexts in which I worked. My job, sometimes alone and sometimes with others and always on a consultancy basis, in different countries and contexts, was to deliver professional education action research-oriented programs for classroom teachers and educational managers and leaders. Here again, issues about the nature and form of action research became a significant factor in relation to what was promoted as a legitimate form of professional education. Some institutional funders wished for an outcomes-orientation to professional education, whereas others insisted on maintaining the local dialogical culture while importing the 'best from the west'. I was often caught in these struggles and had to make practical-political decisions. As a consultant, I had a responsibility to funders and managers to work with them to achieve their organizational goals, which meant I sometimes had to modify my delivery so as not to appear too radical or challenging of orthodoxies. This meant sometimes balancing my values commitments about how to deliver material such that my own values of intellectual and social emancipation remained intact while honoring often more conservative organizational structures and cultural perspectives. Happily, this seldom proved difficult. On the whole, organizations were delighted with the idea that, through speaking for themselves, practitioners could contribute to a local knowledge base that honored themselves, their profession and the social culture, and positioned them as legitimate participants in global debates about the nature and form of professional education and social evolution.

An example of this celebration of local practitioners' knowledge appears in work from Qatar (McNiff, 2010). Shaikha Hamad Al-Hajri writes:

I have learned the importance of professional patience and courage. I call this 'long patience': it sustains you during processes of lifelong learning. Being a mother of four children and a working lady, I have learned another kind of

patience—‘beautiful patience’—when you live with the hope that things will be better if you remain committed to what you believe in.

I have learned the importance of meeting the other person in their own space. I have to earn their trust for them to allow me to learn from them, and for me to be part of their learning, so that they may come to accept me as a resource for their learning. (Hamad Al-Hajri, 2010, p. 20)

Anbarah Al-Abdallah writes in an evaluation of her own work:

My professional learning from my action research has been significant. Students seem to participate if they have confidence in themselves and their capacity for learning; and different teaching strategies will help me reach different learners. I have changed my perceptions of students: I thought they were helpless, but I now see them as impressive learners. I appreciate the need to move beyond skills and behaviours and focus on enabling students to develop understanding and knowledge. (Al-Abdallah, 2010, p. 24)

And Suleiman Al-Fugara writes:

I believe that this research can contribute to new discourses about what counts as inclusional practices and inclusional schools. ... My action research moves from the aspirational to the realizable: colleagues and I are showing what a research-based inclusional school means in practice.

We hope these new discourses will regard the concept of additional educational support needs as nothing unusual. ... In my view, all people are valuable and should be valued for who they are, not for an assigned label. I believe our school is setting new standards for good practice in inclusional education. (Al-Fugara, 2010, p. 24)

Similar examples are available from other contexts. And I wish to record that it has always been a pleasure and privilege to work with colleagues everywhere in the Middle East.

16.4 ACTION RESEARCH IN LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORK

To help me continue to make sense of what I was doing in the region, I engaged with several especially relevant bodies of literature, including those of identity (as noted) and of cosmopolitanism and localism, an idea initiated largely by Merton (1957) and developed by authors such as Hannerz (1990) and Midgley (2008) (see McNiff, 2013b for an extended discussion). Hannerz defines cosmopolitans as those who are willing to develop open relationships and an outward-looking view toward others, whereas locals tend to stay within themselves, comfortable with their own cultures and systems. For Hannerz, cosmopolitanism requires ‘a stance towards diversity itself, towards a co-existence of cultures in the individual experience’ (p. 239). Localism, on the other hand,

requires a stay-at-home mentality, and, when traveling (drawing on Theroux's (1986) ideas) can lead locals to see everything in terms of 'home plus': for Brits abroad, Spain becomes 'home plus sunshine' and Africa becomes 'home plus elephants and lions' (in Malaga and other popular holiday destinations, you can see lines of English pubs and Unions Jacks, populated mainly by Brits). A localism mentality could be seen as symptomatic of the tendency to see people and places as all of a type and identity as only the possession of certain traits. For some, this kind of narrowing down could be seen as an act of closure: a closing down of human potential or a desire for community.

It is through working in places such as the Middle East that I have learned the need consciously to develop a cosmopolitan stance, and this has led to changes in my conception of how to conceptualize identity and consequent behaviors: in other words, how to think about my thinking. I used to think of identity in terms of fixed attributes: a person was generous, kind, nasty, outgoing, introverted—a kind of trait theory approach. Over time and through trying to work thoughtfully with others, I have come to appreciate that the concept of identity has little to do with personal characteristics: in any case, such characteristics change over time and in relation with other people. A major learning arena for this was in South Africa, from 2005 to 2008, when delivering a master's program to ten black teachers in a township. My original impulse was to 'do good': I saw myself as some kind of hero, a savior who would deliver a much-needed good that they could not get elsewhere. In retrospect, this behavior could be analyzed as a localist mind-set. The teachers, however, did not want or need to be saved: they wanted the degree to which I provided access, as they stated in our after-course evaluation. Their basic utilitarian approach did little for my self-image but a lot for my personal learning. The experience also reminded me of the folly of many aid agencies, as outlined in Calderisi (2006), who deliver aid on their own terms, often ignoring the needs of locals and effectively delivering what Kandor (1982) calls a 'baroque arsenal': now construed metaphorically as a body of knowledge that is irrelevant to local needs and is also possibly out of date back home, while positioning the donor as a savior and the recipient as a debtor.

While teaching me the difference between do-gooding and doing good work, experiences such as this taught me also that the concept of identity always needs to be understood as within and informed by relationships: who we are is influenced by those whose company we are in, whether near and far, living or dead; and this also develops over time. I am a different person because of these different relationships in different places. The cultures of the Middle East, while often different from my own, have offered opportunities for the creation of dialogical spaces for a meeting of minds and a negotiation of new cultural spaces where new practices may be tried out. I have learned that 'identity' as some kind of concrete entity does not exist. What does exist is persons in relation (Macmurray, 1961). We work and live in and through practices, which are grounded in the values we espouse. We create our identities in and

through our practices: these become manifestations of our identities. We can actively choose to be who we are, even in our darkest hours.

Yet, this learning has been embedded within a larger learning about the importance of not confining one's thinking into 'either-or' frameworks but trying, as noted earlier, to transform these divisive discourses into a more dialogical orientation that recognizes all perspectives while not necessarily recognizing the legitimacy of all. This presents a new research direction for how this may be achieved.

16.4.1 Some Implications for the Import-Export of Knowledge Developing Programs

The ideas expressed here may be relevant for institutions, including higher education institutions that aim to export professional education programs into other countries, given that there is always the danger that the export of knowledge could be seen as a form of cultural and epistemological imperialism. It has to be recognized that this is seldom a one-way system; host countries often deliberately import such programs for various reasons, possibly to develop a competitive edge in the global market or to gain academic capital in the search for global recognition. My learning about action research from the Middle East was largely that negotiating different epistemological and cultural systems calls for considerable sensitivity around what different people may perceive as cultural norms and appropriate forms of research, especially action research. All too often, I experienced an assumption that traditional forms of European scholarship were the norm, born out of the conviction, discussed earlier, that this should be accepted as a normative assumption. A major responsibility for providers, especially when visiting other countries, is to challenge such assumptions consistently and encourage practitioners to have confidence in their own capacity for knowledge creation and mobilization through undertaking their action enquiries.

Developing this kind of partnership approach is essential for various reasons, including the idea that the home country should maintain ownership of its scholarly activities and of its own intellectual heritage. This conviction came from a previous experience in Ireland while supporting teachers' informal professional education, where I encountered resistance from local providers to allow the development of master's programs. My response was to negotiate with a UK university to allow me to deliver their master's program as an off-campus initiative, with the result that 70 teachers were awarded their master's degrees. Although these programs were UK-exported, they did not promote specific UK forms of knowledge; rather, they supported the development of local knowledge by adapting existing modules to Irish systems and ensuring appropriate examination procedures. Fortunately, an Irish university was later sufficiently far-sighted to support the development of doctoral programs, which enabled teachers to have their work recognized and legitimated (see <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/theses.asp>).

Developing such programs that celebrate local people's capacity to know what they are doing is essential to preserving cultural memory through the provision of appropriate resources. An example of what can happen when such provision is not available may be seen in present-day Iraq, where the local culture is being systematically wiped out in favor of the installation of western institutions, often linked with large corporations and supported by private armies (Scahill, 2007). These events have been meticulously documented for years (Baker, Ismael, & Ismael, 2010; Fisk, 2006; Packer, 2006). This amounts to the systematic eradication of cultural memory (Gur-Ze'ev, 2003): what Watenpagh (as cited in al-Tikriti, 2010, p. 94) terms 'mnemocide' (McNiff, 2013b). In the words of Chief Sitting Bull, recorded throughout the Crazy Horse Memorial Center in South Dakota, 'When the legends die the dreams end. When the dreams end there is no more greatness'. People should celebrate their greatness.

16.5 NEW RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

A new research program emerges that raises questions about: how identity may be understood as grounded in and emerging from practices; which kinds of practices encourage a view of identity as emergent and transformational; how this may be understood as constituting ethical practice; and what justification may be offered as the basis of this view of ethicality. Important questions arise for professional educators: do we want people to create themselves in an image of our own cultures and live according to our own historical records or do we want to encourage them to think for themselves and live by their own narratives? How do we position ourselves as professional educators and research participants: as givers and receivers of established knowledges or as collective creators of transformational knowledges that incorporate and go beyond either-or forms?

How do we represent ourselves? It is the responsibility of intellectuals, says Said (1994) to critique our own thinking; to tell the truth, says Chomsky (1987) and expose lies. In my view, we are all intellectuals if we think for ourselves, whether we work in universities or chat with others on the street or across the garden fence. Whoever and wherever we are we can quickly form communities of inquiry, where we all ask questions about what matters and find ways of making the matter become reality.

How to overcome either-or thinking at present remains a mystery for me. Perhaps, I shall never find an answer: perhaps, there is none and unwise even to hope for one. Perhaps, the main thing is to hold your thinking open, hold your identity open, and be alert to whatever life may offer.

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Transformative Education for Gross National Happiness: A Teacher Action Research Project in Bhutan

Rosalind Cooper and Timothy Bedford

Since 2010, the small Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan has placed a strong emphasis on Education for Gross National Happiness (GNH; Sherab, 2014). GNH is Bhutan's overarching development goal with socio-economic, cultural, environmental, and political pillars. In addition, there are nine domains such as living standards, ecological diversity and resilience, health and community vitality, and 72 indicators.¹ The holistic GNH paradigm is attributed to the fourth King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, who in 1972 stated that GNH is more important than Gross National Product (GNP)² (Alkire, Ura, Wangdi, & Zangmo, 2012). In other words, happiness and well-being are more important than material wealth, whereas economic growth can result in ecological overshoot that literally costs the earth. GNH is rooted in both Buddhist values (Ura, 2009) and strong sustainability principles (Daly, 2005).

Transformative Education for GNH was a teacher action research project to implement initiatives, chosen by teachers, to support GNH in schools. Our discussions with teachers and observations at schools strongly indicated that the integration of GNH values into curriculum and school culture is a process embodied by teachers rather than imposed through educational policy rhetoric.

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The methodological approach was based on web-assisted transformative action research developed by Bedford (2009). The project was a partnership between Oulun Lyseo Upper Secondary School in Finland,³ the Royal Education Council (REC),⁴ and seven GNH Seed Schools in Paro,⁵ Bhutan, selected by the REC. The main aim of the project was to develop the capacity of seven GNH Seed Schools to develop, implement, and disseminate examples of good practice of Education for GNH. Work undertaken by the teachers in their action researches and subsequent participation in developing communities of practice beyond their own schools demonstrate this aim was achieved.

The project commenced in 2010 with the planning of the first Leadership Training Course for 25 teachers, invited by the REC, which took place in 2011, in Paro. The course was facilitated by ourselves with support from REC personnel. The key objective, determined by the REC and the authors, was for teachers to develop action research, transformative pedagogy, media literacy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum to promote Education for GNH. At the end of the Leadership Training Course, each school had developed a GNH action research plan to implement supported by the REC.

In 2012, there was a second Leadership Training Course in Paro, with mostly the same schools. During the course, transformative pedagogy, media literacy, and ICT skills were explored in more depth. In addition, participants engaged in GNH documentary filmmaking to introduce to their students and developed a new one-year GNH action research plan.

In 2013, we carried out a detailed evaluation of the project with school visits and interviews with teachers and principals. This resulted in our proposal to expand teacher action research in more schools, by utilizing existing project teachers as mentors and facilitators of Transformative Education for GNH action research workshops.

While each of the teachers formulated their own action research questions, our main research question was:

What are the possibilities and limitations of web-assisted transformative action research as an approach for teachers implementing Education for GNH in Bhutan?

Implementation refers to the infusion of GNH values into school policies and practices. In answering the research question, we first discuss the methodological approach for the project based on web-assisted transformative action research. Second, we examine the theoretical framework for the GNH transformative pedagogy on which both Leadership Training Courses were based as well as the new pedagogical approach for teachers to introduce in their schools. Third, we explore the results of our project evaluation demonstrating the extent to which teachers developed the capacity through action research to promote GNH in their schools.

17.1 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Action research is an approach widely used to bring about school change. It is a practice involving reflection and action directed at transforming school practices and structures. The action research process has cycles consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection phases that could involve an individual teacher or a whole school collective effort.

Types of action research can be grouped according to their different aims, interests, and perspectives. For this GNH project, critical (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, 2005), participatory (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1990, 2000), and emancipatory (McKernan, 1996; Zuber-Skerritt, 1996) action research approaches are the most relevant. Such approaches share a common goal of empowerment of individuals and groups to collaborate and establish self-critical communities of practice for personal, institutional, and societal change. Communities of practice enable systematic learning for the development of ideas, actions, their evaluation, and refinement.

Examples of action research in Bhutan have been published, though they have a more technical/practical orientation rather than critical (e.g. Dukpa, 2003; Gajmer & Maxwell, 2008; Maxwell, 2003; Namgyel, 2005). Research has pointed to similarities between key Buddhist values and basic principles of action research (Winter, 2003). Chuaprapisilip (1997) argues that Buddhist notions of insight and mindfulness can help clarify the reflection phase in the action research cycle and that the concept of dependent origination embodies the entire action research cycle. Furthermore, Hattam (2004) offers a comparison of critical theory with socially engaged Buddhism, which he argues are both concerned with awakening and liberating society.

The Transformative Education for GNH project plan fitted into spiraling action research cycles with four phases—Planning, Action, Observation, and Reflection:

- Phase 1: Planning—developing the Leadership Training Course and SUSNET (web-based learning environment).
- Phase 2: Action—Leadership Training Course followed by implementation of teachers' GNH action research plans.
- Phase 3: Observation—evaluation of actions in schools (reports uploaded into SUSNET).
- Phase 4: Reflection—on Phases 1, 2, and 3, followed by the next cycle beginning with planning the second Leadership Training Course.

The web-based learning environment SUSNET is an online Community of Practice—a network to support the teachers in implementing their action research plans for GNH. SUSNET provides:

- mail and chat communication for project members;
- a workspace to share teaching materials and project resources;
- individual workspaces for schools to document their action research; and
- the possibility for shared inter-school GNH projects.

There were two main cycles of action research. The first cycle began in October 2010 with the planning of the first Leadership Training Course held in May 2011. This was followed by the implementation of the teachers' GNH action research plans and our evaluation and reflection on the outcomes. The second cycle began in March 2012 with the planning of the second Leadership Training Course held in May 2012. Following this, teachers continued their action research for an additional year, after which we carried out, in May 2013, a further evaluation including school visits. This article focuses on the project activities until May 2013, the planned end point for the project.

However, since then, a third cycle has commenced with teachers continuing their action research and some becoming mentors and facilitators for creating new communities of web-assisted transformative action research practitioners in other schools in Bhutan. This widening of participation is an important principle of action research (McTaggart, 1997). In our project, participation started with the training team and Bhutanese coordinators, then the course participants, and then widened to include the school colleagues of course participants, members of their local communities, the wider public, and then international engagement through the partnership with Oulun Lyseo Upper Secondary School in Finland.

In addition to our role of developing the Leadership Training Courses, SUSNET, and project evaluation, two Bhutanese coordinators were responsible for (1) giving training course input, (2) recruiting course participants, (3) mentoring teachers implementing GNH action research plans, (4) facilitating teacher progress meetings, (5) compiling and evaluating reports of the teachers' Education for GNH implementation, and (6) identifying further capacity building needs.

To provide an enabling learning environment, a GNH transformative pedagogy was developed as a framework for the Leadership Training Courses.

17.2 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR A GNH TRANSFORMATIVE PEDAGOGY

The Leadership Training Courses were designed to create the conditions to empower teachers to promote GNH in their schools. The quality of this empowerment is about teachers having more drive, ability, and possibility to take action in their school.⁶ Empowered teachers, who possess an ability to understand the processes and structures that are barriers to achieving GNH, Bedford (2009) calls transformative teachers.

Transformative pedagogy as constructed by Bedford (2009) guided the teaching and learning processes of the Leadership Training Courses, which aimed to impact the pedagogical practices of teachers after they returned to their schools.

The theoretical framework for GNH transformative pedagogy consists of three parts: GNH values and principles, critical pedagogy theories, and Transformative Education for GNH.

Ethics is central to transformative pedagogy, and the values and principles articulated by Ura (2009) for GNH value education provide an ethical foundation and a template for adapting the multi-faceted values and principles of GNH to school situations.

The starting point to construct a GNH transformative pedagogy was critical pedagogical theories. A variety of names have been given to these pedagogies including liberatory/liberation pedagogy (Freire, 1970, 1973; Freire & Shor, 1987), engaged pedagogy (hooks, 1994), border pedagogy (Giroux, 1991), and empowering education (Shor, 1992). These pedagogies all focus on empowerment, critical awareness, and action to transform society. The pedagogical principles guiding facilitation of the Leadership Training Course, modified to take into account the different context of the Transformative Education for GNH project, are based on the work of Bedford (2009). The resulting GNH transformative pedagogy is characterized by the seven principles described briefly below.

- Ethical Principle: Shared ethical principles bind together school communities and guide educational transformation for GNH.
- Conscientizing Principle: Conscientization is praxis involving the development of critical understanding as a basis for action to transform schools and society.
- Activist Principle: The activist principle concerns the channeling of critical understanding into critical action to transform schools and society.
- Situated Principle: The situated principle refers to learning that is important and relevant to the life experiences of course participants.
- Diversity-affirming Principle: This principle is concerned with the importance of valuing diversity in schools and society.
- Researching Principle: In order to transform schools, there is a need to connect the theory and practice of GNH.
- Participatory Principle: The participatory principle is about teaching and learning that is experiential, dialogical, democratic, and inquiry-based.

With the methodological approach and pedagogical framework for the Leadership Training Course in place, the next step was to plan and deliver the first course in May 2011.

17.3 DEVELOPING COMMUNITIES OF ACTION RESEARCH PRACTITIONERS/TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHERS

This section explains how we planned and facilitated two Transformative Education for GNH Leadership Training Courses, discusses the implementation of the Bhutanese teachers' GNH action research plans, and describes how actions in schools were observed and evaluated. Together, these actions served to create a community of action research practitioners.

17.3.1 *The First Transformative Education for GNH Leadership Training Course*

The local REC coordinators invited teachers from seven GNH Seed Schools to participate in the project. GNH Seed Schools are publically funded K-12 schools given a greater degree of autonomy than regular schools and chosen by the REC to be developed as models piloting and leading educational reform in Bhutan (Royal Education Council, 2011).

Three teachers from each school were invited to participate in the first Leadership Training Course. Planning the course included writing course materials and uploading them with additional resources to SUSNET. A pre-course questionnaire established participants' prior knowledge of the themes identified for the initial capacity building (GNH, media literacy, transformative pedagogy, and action research) and the availability and use of ICT in their schools.

We produced informative but not prescriptive training materials that could be adapted by participants for facilitating future Leadership Training Courses. Each teacher received a folder with a set of printed course materials covering the seven sections comprising ten workshops, as shown in Table 17.1.

We focus here on some of the capacity building activities directly leading to the teachers writing their GNH action research plans.

Participants worked in three mixed school groups on a visioning exercise to identify their ideas of an ideal GNH school. They recorded ideas on a flip chart to present to other participants and hang on the wall. The next day participants worked in their own school groups to identify where their school was performing well in terms of GNH and the areas where the school faced problems and challenges. Each group produced a flip chart with the positive aspects and reported to the entire group before hanging the poster on the wall. Two further flip charts were produced in each group, one to identify challenges the school could address and the other listing challenges the school could not address. Again, these were presented and hung on the wall.

Table 17.1 First Leadership Training Course program

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
1530–1930	1530–1930	1530–1930	0900–1500
Workshop 1.1	Workshop 2.2	Workshop 4.1	Workshop 6.1
Introductions	Education for GNH: Current Situation	Transformative Pedagogy	SUSNET
Workshop 2.1	Workshop 3.1	Workshop 2.3	Workshop 5.2
Education for GNH: The Vision	Media Literacy	School Actions for GNH	Action Planning & Presentations
		Workshop 5.1	Workshop 7.1
		Action Research for GNH	Evaluation & Closure

In their school groups, participants identified and prioritized potentially achievable actions to promote GNH in their schools and using guiding questions began to write a GNH action research plan. Participants were introduced to planning, action, evaluation, and reflection phases of action research cycles, and discussed methods and tools for accomplishing each phase. The guiding questions enabled participants to reflect on the practicalities of what would become their action research, such as stating who would undertake specific actions within estimated timeframes, identifying barriers to beginning and implementing the GNH action research plan and how they could be overcome, and deciding how actions would be monitored and evaluated. Each school group presented their GNH action research plan. Questions and comments from other participants provided valuable reflections for plan revisions.

During the SUSNET workshop, participants learned how to access and upload documents, and, after the course, their revised GNH action research plans were uploaded. At the end of the course, participants from each school had developed a GNH action research plan with concrete ideas they could use to not only impact on their own teaching but also impact the whole school to promote Education for GNH. Feedback collected from participants indicated that many felt confident to implement their GNH action research plans. As one participant commented:

People always talked about research to be done by teachers but no one knew what research actually means or the procedures. Now I'm confident to carry on with action research after attending the workshop.

17.3.2 Implementation of Teachers' GNH Action Research Plans

To inform about the GNH project and seek to gain whole school support for the action research, the teachers presented their action research plans in their own schools to some colleagues, principals, and school management board members. In some schools, colleagues were asked to be part of the research; in other schools, specific teachers were asked if they would like to participate.

After discussing the GNH action research plans with colleagues, adjustments were made, mostly to define the focus and state who would be involved in the actions. Action research projects included creating a recreational area, providing clean and safe water, increasing parental involvement, fencing off an area to plant trees, and using formative assessment.

The teachers began to carry out their GNH action research plans supported by the local coordinators. We maintained regular email contact with the local coordinators and occasionally directly with the teachers.

17.3.3 Observation and Evaluation of Teacher Actions in Schools

During the first action research cycle, our observations and evaluations of the teachers' action research projects were based on email correspondence with

the local coordinators and teachers, reports from the local coordinators, and teachers' action research reports. We, Cooper and Bedford, met at least twice a month to discuss and respond to current issues and record our ideas for the second course. A local coordinator visited the schools four months after the course to follow action research progress and discuss any difficulties in carrying out the GNH action research plans or using SUSNET. We received a progress summary from the coordinator indicating GNH action research plans were being implemented in all of the schools. The main challenge teachers reported at this stage was connecting to the Internet.

Six months after the course, participants uploaded their GNH action research reports to SUSNET and attended a one-day meeting with the local coordinators to present their first projects, reflect, and develop GNH action research plans for the following six months. We joined part of the meeting via Skype from Finland and agreed that the new GNH action research plans would be ready by the second Leadership Training Course in May 2012.

Participant feedback collected during the first Leadership Training Course, evaluations by the local coordinators, our evaluations and reflections, the teachers' first cycle action research reports, second cycle draft action plans, and project correspondence provided the basis for developing the second Leadership Training Course.

17.3.4 The Second Transformative Education for GNH Leadership Training Course

We planned the program to revise and expand on specific themes our evaluations and reflections on the teachers' action research in their schools had flagged. These were, support in writing a good overarching question and sub-questions to guide the research and guidance to ensure actions were systematically followed through and evaluated. To address these points, we timetabled an Action Research Clinic, with Bedford, for each school group to discuss first cycle reports, second cycle GNH action research plans, and their own specific successes and challenges. Parallel SUSNET Clinics were held by an REC technical support official to review and further develop the use of SUSNET functions. Participants at neither clinic worked in their school groups making Education for GNH films with Cooper.

Participants presented their second cycle draft GNH action research plans to Bedford during the Action Research Clinics, further developed the plans and presented them to the whole group. Again, feedback from all present was welcomed and useful for further refinements.

By the end of the second Leadership Training Course, the teachers had shared key points from their action research reports, revised and presented their second GNH action research plans, and practiced using functions of the web-based learning environment, SUSNET. In addition, each school group made and showed a short film depicting how GNH values are infused in daily school life. The next steps were for the teachers to upload their revised GNH

action research plans to SUSNET, implement the plans in their schools, and write their second GNH action research reports.

17.3.5 Implementation of the Teachers' Second GNH Action Research Plans

Some school groups continued the same theme during their second cycle action research and others pursued new topics. Whereas most themes in the first cycle were related to environmental issues, developing teaching practices were the main themes in the second cycle.

The local coordinators continued to provide local support for the teachers during implementation of the second action plan.

17.3.6 Observation and Evaluation of Actions in Schools

If we had been dependent on only written communications, we would not have appreciated the depth of the work done and successes achieved in all of the participating schools. Neither would we have gained such a meaningful insight into the challenges faced during the action research phases in both cycles.

As part of the project evaluation and dissemination of the outcomes, we spent two weeks in Paro in May/June 2013, visiting participating schools and interviewing the teachers about their action research. We also discussed the project and project outcomes with the local coordinators.

Before our arrival, the local coordinators agreed to a list of open questions we would ask the teachers during our interviews and granted permission for us to use data for our research purposes. We visited the six schools that had participated in both Leadership Training Courses with a local coordinator and carried out one hour, semi-structured open question interviews with each group of action researcher teachers. We also discussed the action research and Education for GNH with most school principals, toured the schools, and observed some lessons.

The interviews provided another opportunity for the teachers to reflect on school practices and their action research and identify further areas for improvement. Some teachers commented that the action research cycles provided a clear and systematic approach for bringing about changes in their schools and had been the starting point for teachers being responsible for educational developments, rather than waiting for external sources to implement change. As one teacher commented: "We were looking for change and we didn't know where to start, so that was I think the course itself showed us the first step of what to do."

Interviews with the teachers indicated most felt ownership of their action research, although some initially played down their contribution to the research they conducted and the transformations that took place in their schools. Many teachers said they liked action research as a tool for professional development

and educational change and could implement action research into their daily practices. We heard about and observed changes toward infusing GNH values in each of the schools, and one teacher commented:

What we have fostered are GNH values because now everybody knows ... to maintain this waste management. So now the children even, whenever they see wrappers and plastics around what they are trying to do is they are picking that up, inserting soil in it, and then they are making fencing out of all this. This is something very good and this we didn't encourage, it came from them.

A few teachers mentioned changes made prior to the Leadership Training Courses; however, the cyclical action research process enabled teacher understanding of what interventions had been successful and why they had been successful or not. The capacity for teachers to implement Education for GNH in their schools increased through acquiring tools to transform teaching methods and to share new teaching practices with others.

Their research demonstrated that putting teachers at the center of school change is empowering, motivating, and an effective method for enabling school change. The teachers chose what changes to make, including building a playground, providing safe water, clearing and reducing waste materials in schools and local communities, introducing formative assessment, applying interventions to reinforce good school citizenship, and increasing student-centered learning activities. To measure the effectiveness of changes, teachers monitored usage of new resources and used questionnaires, classroom observations, written and verbal feedback from students and colleagues, interviews, comparisons of pre- and post-intervention assessments, and reflective diaries.

The web-assisted transformative action research approach created cultures of reflective practices facilitating on-going school change, which strongly indicated developments would continue when the three-year Transformative Education for GNH: A Teacher Action Research Project ended. It was common for the teachers to express their willingness and enthusiasm to share their ideas like this action research teacher:

I really feel that if we can share our ideas to other schools in the country, it would help them to transform for the better. Indeed, I am enthusiastic to work on a few more research to promote Transformative Education for GNH projects.

17.4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Our work demonstrated the possibilities and limitations of web-assisted transformative action research as a tool for teachers implementing Education for GNH in Bhutan. The Leadership Training Courses supported action research planning, the REC supported implementation, and SUSNET provided an initial platform for dissemination. The research fostered a culture of teacher reflective practice as an on-going process for short- and long-term school change.

17.4.1 *Key Factors in Success*

Our project evaluations identified a number of factors supporting development of the capacity of the teachers to plan, implement, and disseminate examples of good practice of Education for GNH.

Inviting a small group of teachers from each school to attend the courses and carry out the action research facilitated peer support and strong motivation. Trust between teachers was evident during the courses and the interviews. Support from the school principal was deemed valuable by the teachers. We found some principals were very aware and supportive, and others were pleased their teachers were taking part but knew little about their achievements.

The training courses were identified as a catalyst for project implementation, and the teachers appreciated that the REC provided the possibility for the courses to take place, and they had time allocated to attend the courses. Our analysis of the action research reports, and evaluation interviews and correspondence with the teachers highlighted a number of key themes, including:

1. Action research was new to most of the participants, but by the conclusion of the project, teachers felt competent to both carry out and report their research.
2. The project motivated some teachers to undertake further studies.
3. The teachers learned that they can make a difference in school, felt they had acquired the tools to be change agents, and gained a stronger sense of belief in their capabilities.
4. The teachers learned the value of reflective practice and strategies for implementing school change.
5. The teachers learned to involve their students more in their activities and the change process, which strengthened the practice of GNH values.
6. Teachers learned to teach other teachers how to do action research.

Models of action research, based on the conditions and practices that fostered the project action researches, could be developed as tools for implementation of Transformative Education for GNH.

Face-to-face contact with the teachers was essential. Meeting the teachers for the second time, during the second Leadership Training Course, provided an opportunity to hear about and discuss the teachers' first cycle action research in detail and find out what the possibilities and challenges had been and, importantly, how the teachers felt about conducting action research in their schools. Meeting the teachers for the third time during the project evaluation visit gave even more insight into the action research projects.

17.4.2 *Challenges Faced*

There was limited time to incorporate action research activities, especially in the beginning when some of the teachers perceived the research as something extra to the school day. Many teachers continued with action research activities

during their free time, and, in some cases, work was shared with other colleagues, students, and parents.

Unavailability of school computers and poor Internet connectivity limited the use of SUSNET. It did not become the vibrant online network for teachers to exchange ideas and share resources we had hoped for. However, we felt it was important to continue developing and using SUSNET as connectivity would improve and most resources in the environment can be accessed by visitors.⁷ The teachers used social media via their mobile phones to contact project participants outside their own school.

It was difficult to finance materials required for some action research activities. Sometimes, parents or the local community provided materials; in other cases, compromises were made or ideas changed.

Teachers said they needed more access to external support for reassurance and guidance during the action research cycles. Action research was introduced to the teachers through the project, and although they had limited knowledge and experience of action research, we felt many teachers underestimated their capabilities as autonomous agents of change.

17.4.3 *Extending the Project*

Some project teachers have become leaders in developing communities of practice through facilitating action research workshops and providing support for subsequent action research projects.

Post-project recommendations, by the authors, included creating a pool of Action Research Mentors from the project teachers. The Mentors would develop a training module and give an Action Research Leadership Training Course to small groups of teachers from new schools, while sustaining action research in their own schools. The Mentors would provide support and develop a community of practice with all participating schools.

After two years of action research cycles, the Mentors and participating teachers would evaluate the conditions supporting and limiting their action researches. The participants would become new Mentors, widening the pool of Action Research Mentors, developing and facilitating an Action Research Leadership Training Course for teachers from new schools at the same time as sustaining action research in their own schools.

17.5 CONCLUDING COMMENT

The inspiring and dedicated teachers demonstrated the power of teacher action research and transformative pedagogy to provide a solid foundation for transforming Bhutan's education system to achieve the country's GNH goals. Putting teachers at the center of educational change and utilizing action research led to identifying, implementing, and evaluating changes in teaching and school practices, rather than waiting for external support or resources. Without the enthusiasm, hard work, and commitment of teachers, the action

researches would not have taken place. Much of the successes of the action researches must be attributed to the resourcefulness and creativity of the participating teachers and their determination to realize Bhutan's development goals.

NOTES

1. For more details on the calculation of GNH, see: http://www.grossnationalhappiness.com/docs/GNH/PDFs/Sabina_Alkire_method.pdf
2. GNP is Gross National Product—the total output of marketed goods and services in an economy.
3. Oulun Lyseo Upper Secondary School is an upper secondary school in Oulu, Finland: www.lyseo.edu.ouka.fi
4. Royal Education Council (REC) strives to implement educational reforms in Bhutan: <http://www.rec.org.bt>
5. For a list of the schools from Paro (Kuzhugchen school from Thimphu participated at a later stage), see <http://education4gnh.webs.com/schools>
6. For a detailed discussion of empowerment, see Bedford (2009), pp. 53–60.
7. User account: gnhvisitor, Password: gnhguest <https://optima.discendum.com/>

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Action Research in the Sri Lankan Education System: A Historical Perspective

Godwin Kodituwakku

18.1 INTRODUCTION

Since the publication of the first document on educational action research in 1967, the action research tradition in Sri Lanka has developed and been supported by a variety of institutions. In this chapter, the following three institutional strands are used to organize the description of the history of action research in the Sri Lankan education system. The strands are

1. Initiatives of action research created by the Ministry of Education (MoE)
2. Action research facilitated by the National Institute of Education (NIE)
3. Action research required by Faculties/Departments of Education of Universities.

In the first two institutions, educational issues were addressed using action research at different layers of the educational system and in collaborations with school teachers, in-service advisors, principals, education officials, school leavers, graduates, and mothers. In the last institutional strand—universities—teacher-students have been able to select their own problems at the school level and then conduct action research to partially fulfill the requirements of graduate-level degree programs.

These strand activities include two approaches to action research that are linked to power, policy, and control over the focus of action research. In the first approach, research is driven by institutional requirements led by external research partners, rather than practitioners. The topics are often NIE initiated with foreign funding. These themes include primary mathematics, peace education & social cohesion, disaster risk management, second national language, and remedial teaching. In the second approach, practitioner led action research

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has been conducted, with more practitioner control over the topic but with the constraint of projects most often being initiated to satisfy course requirements.

These two approaches have led to an interesting set of challenges—the lack of practitioner initiated action research at the grassroots levels, the limited range of “student improvement” oriented topics such as student writing and calculation problems, minimal documentation of best practices, limited understanding of action research methods, and less international representation in conferences, with limited impact. A particular area of need in Sri Lanka is a re-introduction of a narrative tone and personal-professional reflection as an integral component of the action research activity.

Much of this chapter will be written in first person. This is because I have been a part of much of the history I describe. My involvement with action research in Sri Lanka spans 25 years, and I am pleased to now share this history with readers around the world. I now describe the history of action research in Sri Lanka developed and supported by the (1) MoE, (2) NIE, and (3) the universities. Each of these three is addressed in a separate section, and where overlaps exist, I highlight them.

18.2 MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Action research has been supported by the MoE in a number of phases.

1. Action Research with Secondary School Principals—1967
2. Action Research with Teachers—1979
3. A Handbook for School Principals—1986
4. Revival of Action Research at the Ministry of Education—2009–2015
5. National Authority on Teacher Education (NATE)—1997–2002
6. Action Research as a Requirement by Education Circulars

I use these six phases to organize the history of the Ministry of Education’s role in supporting action research.

18.2.1 Phase 1: Action Research with Secondary School Principals—1967

In 1967, Alles, assistant director of technical education, and four colleagues initiated a pilot action research project to explore the improvement of school practices through supervision and assessment of school performance (Alles, de Silva, Fernando, Sirisena, & Warnasuriya, 1967). This 22-page initiative was the earliest educational action research document that we can find. Although the term “action research” was included in the title of the document, the suggested activities have features of collaborative action research. There is evidence that the directors, secondary school principals, and staff members were given a specific form for observations and assessments, but no analysis of these forms exists and no other related material or data were available to assess the outcomes of this introduction of action research. A 2003 interview with then retired Alles, did not add any information about outcomes from this initial effort.

18.2.2 Phase 2: Action Research with Teachers—1979

This first action research initiative was followed 12 years later by a second initiative (Ministry of Education, 1979). Alles, who was at that time a UNESCO consultant, continued to advise the Ministry on this new initiative. For this project, 30 teachers selected through a newspaper advertisement were given intensive training over a one-year period (Ministry of Education, 1979). I interviewed five of the teachers, who reported learning a reflective questioning process developed by Alles to explore their ideas. They continued to revise their descriptions of their action based on this reflective questioning process, which they reported enhanced their knowledge of education. One outcome of this work was that many of these teachers were later promoted to higher positions at the NIE and ministry. Unfortunately, action research reports based on this initiative were not published.

18.2.3 Phase 3: Handbook for School Principals—1986

In 1986, the Planning and Management Development Unit of the Ministry published an extensive handbook for elementary principals (Ministry of Education, 1986) which included a description of the action research process and supervision of action research. It suggested that principals and teachers could employ action research to reflect on and solve classroom and school problems. Specific research topics also were suggested in the Handbook. Again, however, there is no documentation of any action research completed in conjunction with the use of this Handbook.

18.2.4 Phase 4: Revival of Action Research at Ministry of Education—2009–2015

A parliamentary act in 1985 established the NIE as the academic arm of the MoE, and all research-related activities were handed over to Department of Research and Development of NIE. Furthermore, in 2009, the Ministry again created a Research and Development Branch and established nine research units at the Provincial Department level. These research units were charged with promoting action research.

The Ministry, in 2010, selected 100 teachers and in-service advisors to conduct action research at their respective workplaces. Advisors are link agents between teachers in schools and officials of the MoE and NIE and are based at provincial-level offices. They facilitate teachers at schools to implement policies of MoE and NIE. Slightly more than half of the group (53) published action research reports (35 by teachers and 18 by advisors). In 2014, another group of practitioners were selected to conduct action research and they are now in the process of writing reports.

Although awareness programs on action research were conducted at the provincial level, out of nine provincial units, only the Provincial Department

of North Western Province has published two volumes of action and policy-oriented research; the 2013 volume described 27 action research projects, and the one in 2014 included 33 action research projects (Provincial Department of North Western Province, 2013; 2014). The Udubaddawa Education Division (2014) published its first action research collection with 27 action research projects (408 pages) in 2014.

In addition, the Primary Education Unit of the Ministry conducted action research with teachers and in-service advisors specifically on the theme of multi-level teaching. Based on this work, a collection of educational action research reports was published in a 2014 volume (Ministry of Education, 2014).

18.2.5 Phase 5: National Authority on Teacher Education (NATE) 1997–2002

Under the initiative of NATE, 106 Teacher Centers (TCs) were established throughout Sri Lanka to implement continuous professional development of teachers. NATE provided grants to conduct research, and Kaluarachchi & Weerasinghe (2001) and Kodituwakku, Madiwaka, Kaluarachchi, Gurusinghe, Dissanayake, & Jayamanna (2001, 2006) conducted action research using research grants. When NATE was dissolved in 2002, the TCs were placed under the Teacher Education Unit of the Ministry. Some of these centers then used action research for the professional development of teachers, but no reports were published with the exception of the Nikaweratiya TC. This center conducted three series of action research studies in 2010–2012, 2013, and 2014 with 40, 60, and 60 practitioners, respectively, under the guidance of the TC manager. The TC published the first collection of 15 action research reports in 2012 (Wijayakoon, 2011/2012). In 2013 and 2014, the TC contributed 27 and 33 action research articles, respectively, for two provincial publications (Provincial Department of North Western Province, 2013; 2015).

18.2.6 Phase 6: Action Research as a Requirement by Education Circulars

From the year 2001 onward, completion of an action research project has been regarded as an efficiency bar requirement for teacher educators in *Grade 3*. Accordingly, to be promoted to *Grade 2* of the Teacher Education Service, teacher educators have to complete action research along with other administrative requirements. By 2004, all National Colleges of Education were expected to set up action research committees in their respective institutions and the Ministry of Education and Higher Education provided a financial allocation for the year 2005/2006 to conduct action research.

The Ministry has given instructions to all the schools by the new Circular and Guideline number 07/2013, which went into effect beginning January 1, 2014, to use funds for research and teacher creativity to find solutions for teaching issues as well as for managerial problems in schools (Ministry of Education, 2013). Based on the circular, the current practice is conducting action research

orientation programs for practitioners in schools so that they can initiate action research to find field-specific solutions.

18.3 NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

The three main functions of the NIE are curriculum development for schools and teacher education institutes, development of education personnel, and research. Under its mandate on research, out of 25 departments in NIE, 8 have at least some involvement with coordinating or engaging in action research.

1. Department of Research and Development
2. Department of Non-formal Education
3. Department of Primary Education
4. Department of Educational Management
5. Department of Institutional Development
6. Department of Teacher Empowerment
7. Department of Special Education
8. Department of Classical/Foreign Languages & Bilingual Education

Furthermore, under the function of development of education personnel, NIE can conduct degree courses where action research is included as a component of research.

This section of the chapter will discuss how each of the eight departments has supported action research.

18.3.1 *Department of Research and Development*

Practitioner Research and Teacher as Researcher (1988–1996) The Department started *practitioner research* projects in 1989 and continued until 1995. There was no linkage between the Ministry projects and NIE projects. During the period, 23 teachers from schools were selected purposively and guided to collect classroom-based data on themes decided by the Department (Table 18.1). Based on the data, synthesized reports were prepared by the project coordinators. In 1989/1990, Munasinghe, the first coordinator of the project, introduced the ideas of Kurt Lewin including Force Field Theory for the first time in Sri Lanka (Gunawardena, Kularatne, Galappatti, & Munasinghe 1991). Alles, the pioneer of educational action research in Sri Lanka, may have been familiar with these ideas but there were no citations found in Alles' work. Another innovation was the use of field diaries for teachers to record their classroom experiences. These written records were subsequently treated as data.

Teacher as a Researcher Project Series (1996–1998) Department Researcher Sunethra Karunaratne renamed the practitioner research project as “Teacher as Researcher.” From 1996 three groups of teachers were selected to conduct action research under the new theme (Table 18.2). Other changes in the pro-

Table 18.1 Basic data on practitioner research series

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of teachers</i>	<i>Themes decided by department</i>	<i>Coordinator</i>
1988/1990	8	Experiences of primary school teachers	M.A.P. Munasinghe
1991/1992	6	Evaluation of primary students	T.I. Galappatti
1994	4	Behavioral problems of Grades 8–11 children	T.I. Galappatti
1995	5	Questions asked during the science classroom (Grades 6–8)	T.I. Galappatti

Table 18.2 Basic data on teacher as researcher series

<i>Year</i>	<i>No. of teachers</i>	<i>Themes</i>	<i>Coordinators</i>	<i>Department researcher/facilitator</i>
1996	5	Science teaching learning process at Grade 11. Reading difficulties of primary school children. Teacher role in different classes. Grammar mistakes of students. Contour maps in geography.	G. Kodituwakku	S. Karunartane A.K. Peiris G. Kodituwakku M.A.A.S. Dias M.V. Vithanapathirana
1997	3	Concepts on maps in the subject of geography.	A.K. Peiris	G. Kodituwakku
1998	5	Teacher role in a school where insufficient teachers serve. Incidents occurred in a plantation Tamil school. Implementation of Grade 1 new syllabus: Reflections of a teacher.	G. Kodituwakku	G. Kodituwakku G. Kodituwakku & T. Thanaraj G. Kodituwakku

cess included the identification of action strategies, implementing strategies at the classroom level, and the writing of reports by the teachers themselves with the collaboration/facilitation of researchers at the Department. This resulted in the publication of the first action research report written in *Tamil* language in Sri Lanka (Shanmuganesan, 1998). Other reports were in *Sinhala* language.

Action Research with School Principals—1992 In 1992, Dasanayake, a principal working with the Department, suggested implementing a school development program at Kegalle, one of the 25 districts in Sri Lanka. The Director of Research, Kularatne, suggested the use of a new framework for action research. The project was centered on developing school plans and their implementations at ten schools, and we wrote a report based on the new framework for these schools (Kularatne, Dasanayake, Kodituwakku, & Peiris, 1992).

Although action research between 1988 and 1998 was implemented to gain insights at the classroom and school level, between 1998 and 2006, there was

a vacuum regarding action research due to more emphasis being placed on policy-oriented traditional research at NIE. Hence, during the 1998–2006 period, action research was abandoned at the department.

Thematic Courses on Action Research From 2006 onward, action research has been included into the Corporate Plan of NIE, which resulted in my offering two courses on action research for practitioners in the education sector and other interested practitioners in 2006 and 2012. Seven themes (felt need, theoretical background, experiences and reflection, identification of problems, focusing on a problem, planning solutions, and dissemination of findings) were covered. Around 150 participants participated in the two courses.

Educational Action Research Survey—2006 Objectives of the action research survey were to identify (1) historical trends, (2) current conditions, (3) strengths and weaknesses, and (4) suggestions for improvement (Kodituwakku, Rambukwella, & Dissanayake, 2006; Kodituwakku, 2010). Prior to this time, the action research tradition in Sri Lanka had been primarily an institutional-driven effort. Action research based on the professional concerns of teacher educators, school principals, education officers, and teachers was rare. Most of the action research undertaken by trainees in educational institutions was of the project type. Since most of the advisors were trained under the quantitative research paradigm there was a tendency to train their students within that framework giving priority to methodology rather than professional development. Collaborative action research was not common and reports illustrated a low level of reflection.

Action Research with Teachers and In-service Advisors—2007 I was invited to plan and conduct an action research project with external funding from a German International Aid Organization. Using a competitive procedure, we selected 25 teachers and 25 advisors to conduct action research (Kodituwakku & Hettige, 2012). This action research project was launched with the intention of developing reflective professionals at three levels: officers of the NIE, in-service advisors, and teachers at the school level.

The specific objectives of the research project were (1) to inculcate an action research and reflective practice-based professional culture; (2) to develop professional competencies related to the five themes (i.e. remedial teaching, psychosocial care, disaster and risk management, peace and value education, and second language learning) supported by the funding agency; (3) to identify how those themes link with the learning and teaching process and to develop models related to them; (4) to document creative and innovative practices of teachers and advisors for dissemination among stakeholders. The goal was to create grassroot-level proposals for alternative policies in the field of curriculum and teacher education with reference to the roles of teachers and advisors. Teachers and advisors followed the steps of action research, specifically the

identification of relevant problems to their professional fields, the analysis of contexts of the problems, reflection on experiences that evolve through the analysis, identification and implementation of solutions, and the evaluation of the outcomes.

All participants were first introduced to action research through workshops that I conducted. In the workshops, participants were encouraged to make in-depth observations and to understand the experiences of other participants. Based on the range of experiences and observations, each teacher and advisor identified problems for research. The breadth and depth of the problems reflected the different roles of participating professionals. Based on the data collected, participants then defined problems to investigate and designed plans to address the problems.

The outputs of the research were the project report prepared by the Department of Research and Development on the research process, and 50 research reports and policy booklets prepared by teachers and advisors, which presented policy options that could be used by officials and practitioners involved in curriculum development and teacher education. Some of the participants in this action research project were encouraged to present findings at the Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) conferences held in Sweden and in Greece (discussed below).

Action Research to Document Stories of Best Practices of School Principals—2008

The objective of the action research project with seven schools' principals that I initiated in 2008 was to explore the issues, development, challenges, and solutions needed to address student learning in rural schools (Kodituwakku & Dissanayake, 2009; Wasalamudali & Kodituwakku, 2010). A case study approach was used in which principals documented the process of seven already developed rural schools to identify historical reasons and trends for current developments in the schools.

International Presentations Some of the participants in the 2007 action research project described above were encouraged to present findings at the CARN conferences held in Sweden and in Greece. This was a starting point for the educational professionals at the NIE and for the representation of Sri Lankan teachers and advisors at international action research conferences conducted in foreign countries or in Sri Lanka (Table 18.3).

The action research culture in Sri Lanka further benefited from funds provided by CARN to conduct a Study Day in Sri Lanka in August 2010 and publication of an article based on presentations at the CARN conference in Athens, Greece, in the *CARN Bulletin No. 15* (Kodituwakku & Hettige, 2012). A total of 93 practitioners from the education and nursing fields attended the CARN Study Day held at the NIE.

Table 18.3 Participation in action research conferences

<i>Year</i>	<i>Conference</i>	<i>No of AR papers organized by NIE</i>	<i>Paper presenters including teachers/ ISAs</i>
2007	CARN—Umea, Sweden	4	3
2008	Asia-Pacific Educational Research Association (APERA), NIE, Singapore	1	2
2008	Sixth International Conference on Imagination and Education, Canberra, Australia	2	2
2009	CARN—Athens, Greece	9	8
2010	CARN conference November 5–7, 2010, United Kingdom	6	6
2010	12 th International Conference on Sri Lankan Studies, March 18–20, 2010, The Royal Asiatic Society of Sri Lanka and the Open University of Sri Lanka	5	5
2010	Indian Ocean Comparative Education Society (IOCES), November 29–30, 2010, University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka	6	6
2011	Indian Ocean Comparative Education Society (IOCES), September 16–18, 2011, Villa College QI Campus, Republic of Maldives	16	16
2011	CARN conference November 4–6, 2011, Austria	1	3
2013	Indian Ocean Comparative Education Society (IOCES), September 21–23, 2013, Faculty of Education, Khon cane University, Thailand	11	11
2014	CARN conference November 2014, UK	1	1
2015	Indian Ocean Comparative Education Society (IOCES), June 17–18, 2015, Bangalore, India	16	14

Sources: Anomadassi Thero, Kodituwakku, Perera, & Wattavidanage, 2010; Dayawathi, 2010; Ekanayake, 2009; Kodituwakku & Dissanayake, 2009; Kodituwakku & Hettige, 2008a, 2008b; Kodituwakku & Nihara (2008); Kodituwakku, Anomadassi Thero, Perera, Dissanayake, Ratnayake, & Watagodakumbura, 2009; Kudakatiyapege, 2007; Kudakatiyapege & Kodituwakku, 2007; Nellihela, 2009; Perera, 2009; Ratnayake, 2009; Samarawickrama, 2014; Watagodakumbura, 2009

18.3.2 *Department of Non-Formal Education*

The Director of Non-formal and Technical education at NIE has conducted action research at the community level. The first community action research project identified strategies for entrepreneurship development programs for school leavers, human resource development of graduates (Ekanayake, 1993), and informal education (Ekanayake & Kulatunge, 1992; Ekanayake, Wijesooriya, & Dodantenna, 1990). Further action research projects were implemented with mothers to improve student achievement (Kulathunga, 1995).

Ekanayake provided new paradigms for using field-based research both in Sri Lanka and Central Asia (Ekanayake, 2014). He was initially involved in action research as a teacher, and then as a teacher educator and director at NIE, and finally as a basic education advisor for UNESCO/United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and UNICEF in Asian countries (Ekanayake, 1997, 2013). After his retirement, he established the voluntary organization *Association for Educational Research and Development, Sri Lanka* in 2010. This is the first voluntary organization in Sri Lanka to publish an action research book (Ekanayake, 2014; Ekanayake, Kodituwakku, Meetalawa, Perera, & Thilakarathne Banda, 2014).

18.3.3 *Department of Primary Education*

Primary Mathematics Education Unit

The Primary Mathematics Education Unit (funded by the Department of International Development, United Kingdom) under the Department of Primary Education, NIE (1998–2003) published the *Collaborative Action Research Series* (Primary Mathematics Unit, 2004; Primary Mathematics Unit & National Institute of Education, 2003). This action research was conducted by teachers under the guidance of education officials and teacher educators.

In collaboration with the UK's University of Bristol, the Primary Mathematics Education Unit facilitated action research by 25 mathematics teacher educators from 17 National Colleges of Education in Sri Lanka. The focus of the action research was different facets of Mathematics teaching (Weber, Winter, & Thoradeniya, 2001).

UNICEF-Sponsored Action Research Project—2010 In another project, academics from NIE, University of Colombo and Open University of Sri Lanka guided 62 teachers and advisors from primary schools to prepare two volumes of their action research in *Sinhala* and *Tamil* languages in 2010 (Department of Early Childhood Development and Primary Education, 2010).

18.3.4 *Department of Educational Management*

The Department of Educational Management of NIE, in 1990, first introduced action research as a component of research methodology in the Post Graduate Diploma Program in Educational Management. This was the first occasion in Sri Lanka that action research was introduced to a course on education. Since the students in this course are from administrative, principal, and educational services, the later development of action research in different layers of the Sri Lankan education system was facilitated.

18.3.5 *Department of Institutional Development*

The Department of Institutional Development develops curriculum and conducts teacher development programs for pre-service teachers at 18 National

Colleges of Education. The Colleges of Education system operates independently from the nation's universities. From 1998 to 2000, several workshops were undertaken by the NIE with a view to introduce action research to all National Colleges of Education.

Beginning in 1999, a compulsory component of the pre-service National Colleges of Education program was to complete an action research report. Although this regulation was institutional driven, this can be considered as the first instance of using action research for the improvement of professional practice in pre-service teacher education.

In addition to the action research project sponsored for NIE in 2007, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale (GIZ), a foreign donor agency, had shown an interest in promoting action research within the Sri Lankan school system and especially among pre-service teachers from the Colleges of Education. This group sponsored projects along with development of a teacher manual on action research (The Teacher In Service Project, Kandy (Provincial Department of Education), Central Province, n.d.).

18.3.6 Department of Teacher Empowerment

The Department of Teacher Empowerment also introduced action research to the courses leading to graduate degrees. From 1995 to 2005, action research was the required method for the minor dissertation for the Masters in Education (M.Ed), the Bachelors in Education (B.Ed), and Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) courses. This can be considered as the first instance of using action research for the improvement of professional practice by way of in-service teacher education and development. The decision was taken by I.L. Ginige, Assistant Director General, NIE, who produced a cassette on action research for use by practitioners. However, after 2005, action research was no longer approved as a research method for M.Ed theses, as a new administrator took the department in a new direction.

18.3.7 Department of Special Education

In 2002, UNICEF provided grants to conduct action research in special education, and a selected group of teachers conducted action research on different themes. Reports, however, were not published. Weerakoon (2002) conducted action research on the implementation of the concept of inclusive education under a grant provided by NIE. In 2005, five teachers in one school were selected to conduct action research on special education (Sunil, 2005).

18.3.8 Department of Classical/Foreign Languages and Bilingual Education

In 2009, an action research guide for professional development of bilingual teachers was prepared by Asoka (2007; 2009; 2010), and teachers and other officials attended workshops on action research. A number of unpublished action research reports were completed.

18.4 UNIVERSITIES IN SRI LANKA

Of the 15 universities in Sri Lanka, four universities have education faculties or departments, and of those four, three universities have incorporated action research into their courses.

1. University of Peradeniya
2. University of Colombo
3. Open University of Sri Lanka

This section is organized around these three universities.

18.4.1 *University of Peradeniya*

In 2002, Wijesundara, former dean of the Education Department, published the first and only action research article in *Educational Action Research* (Wijesundara, 2002). This article was based on action research she conducted at NIE where she was a chief project officer before joining the University.

However, action research was not formally included in teacher education curriculum until 2008. In 2008–2009, the Education Department at the University of Peradeniya conducted a series of action research projects, and after that action research was introduced to PGDE and M.Ed courses (Department of Education, University of Peradeniya, 2007; 2008; 2009).

Student teachers who were reading for a PGDE and a M.Ed at the Postgraduate Institute of Science, (University of Peradeniya) completed their minor dissertations and theses using action research. They have presented their papers at Indian Ocean Comparative Education Society conferences (Table 3).

18.4.2 *University of Colombo*

At the CARN Study Day, Vithanapathirana (2010) summarized the action research culture in Sri Lankan universities as being at the “stage of early childhood.” She highlighted the role of the University as follows.

Action research has been included in the research methods curricula since the late nineties. The introduction of action research was initially at the higher research degree level (MPhil) and then gradually at diploma and undergraduate levels.... In 2002 for the first time action research became a compulsory component of the Postgraduate Diploma programme in Teaching of English as a Second Language (PGDipTESL). The candidates of the programme are required to complete small-scale action research as a part of fulfillment of the postgraduate diploma. This is a significant landmark in the history of action research development in the Faculty and also an important contribution in terms of improving English language teaching in Sri Lanka (Vithanapathirana, 2010, p. 16).

With outside funding, the National Educational Research and Evaluation Center at the University of Colombo was able to coordinate a multi-

site collaborative action research project on improving remedial education (Vithanapathirana, 2010). Twenty teams from universities, National Colleges of Education, teacher training colleges, and NIE conducted diagnostic testing and a remedial teaching program with teacher trainees and school teachers. The findings were disseminated in several forums both locally and internationally.

18.4.3 *Open University of Sri Lanka*

According to Lekamge (2010), action research was introduced in 2003 in the Open University of Sri Lanka as a strategy to solve some crucial problems faced by the faculty, such as improving the quality of assignments, and improving the effectiveness of procedures that apply for teaching and practice in the PGDE program. At the same time, action research was introduced to the curriculum of the postgraduate programs, and students were encouraged to use this approach for their research studies. Although the faculty supports action research, it has not been implemented as a policy yet.

Problems faced by faculty members interested in action research have included lack of awareness, skills, and cooperation among staff members about action research design and the time needed to plan and conduct action research studies. Problems faced by students have included lack of previous research studies to use as models, lack of research materials in the library, lack of skills needed to conduct action research, and lack of proper guidance. Suggestions for improvement have included providing local or foreign training to staff members, remuneration for conducting action research, opportunities to disseminate findings locally and internationally, and a positive attitude about action research within the institution and among staff members (Lekamge, 2010).

For the four education faculties/departments, only one master of philosophy (MPhil)-level thesis based on action research has been submitted (de Silva, 1998). Vithanapathirana (2004; 2008) gained her Ph.D. from the Institute of Education, University of London, by completing a dissertation based on action research.

18.5 THE FUTURE OF EDUCATIONAL ACTION RESEARCH IN SRI LANKA

Action research coordinated by MoE with teachers and advisors has promoted this method at the school level. However, adoption of the policies envisioned by Alles et al. (1967) to make engaging in action research a requirement for teacher guidance and the facilitation of teacher professional development has not happened. Ministry officials will need to be more involved in action research to develop the appropriate institutional practices.

The NIE is the pioneer organization that popularizes action research throughout Sri Lanka and supports Sri Lankan action research sharing at inter-

national forums. The many efforts made by the institute have to be translated into English so that international review processes can be used to strengthen the action research culture in Sri Lanka.

Academics who have conducted their postgraduate degrees based on the quantitative paradigm guide their graduate students through a lens of quantitative research. As a result, important features of action research often are not present in the action research produced for course requirements. Also, action research as a methodology has not been used in MPhil and Ph.D. level sufficiently, resulting in a limited action research culture at the university level.

As a consequence of developing and using structures/criteria based on the quantitative research paradigm to evaluate action research reports at examinations, the creativity of Sri Lankan students has not flourished. Students tend to select suggested themes (such as writing and mathematical errors of students, or behavior management) limiting the creativity and diversity of action research topics in Sri Lanka. Not enough attention is being placed on the reflective process, with the result that personal and professional changes to the practitioner are not a part of the focus. Shifts in knowledge, skills, and identity of the practitioner-researcher are often ignored when there is an overemphasis on changes in students due to an intervention.

The style and voice of written reports is also problematic. The use of the first person mode to describe action research reports is questioned by academics trained in the quantitative paradigm. They expect to see third person, objective writing, and do not appreciate the multivocal perspective and value-driven stance of action research writing.

Action research culture in Sri Lanka is institutionally driven. Only two books in *Sinhala* (the native language of the largest ethnic group in Sri Lanka and one of the official national languages) (Kodituwaku, 1996; Rambukwella & Gunathilake, 2012) and one in *Tamil* (another official and national language of Sri Lanka) (Thanaraj, 2005) have been published on educational action research theory and practice in Sri Lanka. A further two books based on action research have been published in *Sinhala* (Bharathiratne Banda, 1998; Jayakodi, 2001). The limited number of books has hindered the popularization of action research in the institutional strands discussed in this chapter. Practitioner-driven innovations at the grassroots level of the Sri Lankan education system have not been published as action research reports, and this is a limitation.

Finally, in conclusion, I would like to quote Gunawardena (2009), who pioneered a policy document for general education in Sri Lanka:

Action research is a useful means of sensitizing teachers to classroom learning [and] teaching issues and encouraging them to reflect and experiment on their teaching strategies, but this has not been emphasized or given the due recognition (Gunawardena, 2009, p. 158).

Hence, in the future, the role of the teacher has to be strengthened based on action research and reflection. The grass roots level innovations based on action

research will be a strong base for policy decisions at the center. To strengthen the research-based policy formulation process in Sri Lanka, findings based on academic research as well as action research should be used. As a basis for this process, further strengthening of the action research culture at the central government, university, and school levels is necessary and can be accomplished by way of increased collaborations within Sri Lanka.

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The Status of Action Research in the People's Republic of China: A Review of Recent Literature

Lin Yuan

The status of action research in the People's Republic of China (PRC) was the subject of a review by Ian Hughes and myself nearly ten years ago (Hughes & Yuan, 2005). Based on a review of literature in English and Chinese published prior to 2004, we found relatively few reports of action research in China. Although more than 100 articles in Chinese were located, this literature was not extensively reviewed due to insufficient time and resources for translation. We did conclude, however, that participative approaches had been used in rural and community health in China for more than 30 years, although these activities usually lacked explicit reflective learning. Much of Chinese education follows an authoritarian Confucian tradition, and this worked against application of the self-reflective stance most often associated with action research to the education sector. Recently, however, action research has begun to receive official recognition in China as the education system orients itself toward creativity based on reflective thinking (Somekh & Zeichner, 2009; Zhong, 2006). There is also evidence that action research is contributing to organizational and professional development in Chinese public administration, thereby enhancing rural health. Although China has established several centers of action research education in collaboration with Western partners, it is highly likely that distinctive Chinese forms of action research will develop in the years to come. The challenge for the international community of action researchers is to build open communication with their Chinese counterparts to assist this development.

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Some nine years after the publication of our (2005) monograph, and following the sad death of Dr. Hughes, I accepted the invitation to bring this work up to date for this Handbook. Dr. Hughes had been my academic advisor during the time the earlier manuscript was completed, and I consider it an honor to now build on the work completed in the earlier review. A library search on action research in the PRC since 2004 located nearly 40 academic journal articles in English and 2,350 academic journal articles in Chinese. The English reports mainly focused on action research in international collaborative projects in health promotion while the Chinese reports were predominantly focused on education. A few reports discussed action research in the management of state-owned or private industries, organizational development, and promotion of participatory democracy. One article provided a broad overview of action research in China (Zhou & Liu, 2011). In addition, action research has begun to receive official recognition in China's primary, secondary, and university education sector as a significant reorientation is taking place to promote creativity and reflective thinking. This chapter addresses these developments, along with themes for possible future developments of action research in China.

19.1 ACTION RESEARCH IN HEALTH PROMOTION

Participatory Action Research (PAR) along with other research methods was successfully employed in an ethnobotanical survey of medicinal plants at periodic markets in Honghe Prefecture of Yunnan Province. Because of this research, information on the market-traded medicinal plants now has been well-documented. The information obtained from this survey has helped health professionals to check the plant species that are commonly adopted by local people for curing various diseases (Lee, Xiao, & Pei, 2008). Action research also was used to explore strategies for occupational rehabilitation and community reintegration of migrant workers with work injuries in Guangdong Province (Lo, Luo, Lu, & Mai, 2008). In recent years, action research has been most often deployed in collaborative international health promotion programs in China.

I turn now to the interesting sphere of health care action research in particular. The 10/66 Dementia Research Group (Prince et al., 2004) provides one model for the use of action research in developing countries. A collaboration between academics, clinicians, and the international nongovernmental organization, Alzheimer's Disease International, involves 26 centers worldwide, including one in China. In 2005, The University of Ottawa School of Nursing, in collaboration with the Yunnan Provincial Public Health Bureau, used participatory approaches to design a comprehensive referral system to improve the health of rural women and children. The participants—government officials, health workers, local leaders, and village women—were encouraged to engage in discussion and reflection (Edwards & Roelofs, 2005). In 2006, under the guidance of the HAI-Asia Training Center on Aging, a series of projects for

rural older people successfully adopted PAR to guide health promotion for disadvantaged elders in China (Liu, Gao, & Pusari, 2006).

Ali, Olden, and Xu (2008) proposed that the PRC apply successful community-based participatory research approaches developed in the USA to address serious environmental health problems, with a recognition that the approach may need to be modified to reflect Chinese contexts. This approach allows community members, organizational representatives, and researchers to participate equally in all phases of the research process. Further, in a 2008 project, a collaborative action research approach was used in a sexual and reproductive health promotion and HIV prevention program for Chinese adolescents at a public middle school in a rural area of Anhui Province (Hong, Fongkaew, Senaratana, & Tonmukayakul, 2010). The project was funded by the China Medical Board, USA, and the Graduate School at Chiang Mai University, Thailand. In 2010, with financial support from the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the Carnegie Trust, action research was used to investigate the practicality of a midwife-led normal birthing unit in Hangzhou, China (Mander, Cheung, Wang, Fu, & Zhu, 2010). Compared with the applications of PAR in health promotion that Dr. Hughes and I discussed in our previous literature review, a wider range of health fields have been involved in international action research collaboration in recent years. Compared to the application of action research in organizational development and industrial management, foreign action researchers worked much more directly in health promotion projects in China, and several articles mentioned the challenges they faced in processing the action research projects on health promotion in either rural areas or urban ones. Besides its adoption in health promotion in China, action research is also being widely adopted in all areas of the education sector in China, and I turn now to a summary of the educational action research in the following section.

19.2 EDUCATIONAL ACTION RESEARCH

Although China began to explore the practical and theoretical implications of educational action research in the late 1970s (Zhou, 2012), the process was more widely introduced to China from other countries in the early 1990s (Wu, 1995, 1996, 1998). This introduction has been tied to curriculum reform in basic education in China. “English teachers have been encouraged by curriculum reform to use a task-based instructional approach in teaching [and] they may undertake action research or reflective teaching projects on the use of learning tasks to formulate their pedagogical decisions” (Gao, Liao, & Li, 2014, p. 61).

An increasing number of educational action research projects are being reported in the area of English language studies, though these have faced challenges due to the dominance in China of teacher-centered learning, whereby students accept and record what teachers tell them (Jing, 2005). At Ningxia Teachers University, Guyuan, there is now an Action Research Center that employs collaborative enquiry and action research in curriculum development

(Li & Laidlaw, 2006). It was due to the UK action researcher Moira Laidlaw's years of insistent efforts to spread the seeds of educational action research at the Ningxia Teachers University, combined with the support of local leaders, that this Center was established in December 2003. The Action Research Center is proudly located in Ningxia, one of the underdeveloped provinces in the northwest region of China. It is China's first experimental center for educational action research in foreign languages teaching. In a recent development (2013 and 2014), cooperative learning techniques were used in an intensive English reading class in a Chinese college. This had some positive effects on the students' passive learning habits but was not entirely successful. Some students still required teacher supervision of their learning (Fu, 2013, 2014). In addition, there is evidence that some teachers misunderstood the aim of the research and mistrusted the university researchers. Others had insufficient time or library resources to conduct action research, or lacked theoretical or methodological knowledge, and therefore experienced stress during the process (Zhou, 2012).

Educational action research has also been applied in a number of teaching subjects other than English. For example, in 2008, Schön's reciprocal-reflection was adopted in social work education for postgraduate students in Beijing to support students in transitioning from an applied model approach to a collaborative approach based on action research principles (Sung-Chan & Yuen-Tsang, 2008a). In 2012, action research was also successfully adopted in group-based legal education programs for adolescent parents (Ge & Feng, 2012). Action research has been applied in many other areas in education in China as well: in 2006, action research was adopted in a curriculum renewal process in the psychology of professional education (Bao, 2006); in 2007, action research was used in curriculum development of career planning for university students (Xu, 2007); and in 2009, action research was applied to improving the scientific creativities of postgraduate students (Ren, Gao, & Zhang, 2009); and, in a collaborative action research project between university researchers and school teachers, the teachers explored how to conduct research in their classrooms and the researchers gained a better understanding of classroom practice to develop more effective approaches to support teacher change (Wang & Mu, 2013). Action research has also surfaced somewhat in teacher education (Shen & Wang, 2010), in nursing education (Wang & Tang, 2012), and in sports education in private schools (Jiang, 2013).

In other university-level action research activity, action-learning outcomes of a global action-learning program through Students in Free Enterprise were documented and compared for undergraduate students in China, Singapore, South Korea, New Zealand, and Australia. The aim of this program was to train future business leaders to obtain the skills required to be successful in both local and global organizations. Through this program, students achieved more than what they could gain from traditional academic settings. However, cultural differences significantly affected the results of this program in these five countries. The authors underlined the importance of cultural adaptations and concluded

that “action-learning effects could be improved through country/culture-specific fine-tuning” (Mueller, Liang, Hanjun, & Thornton, 2006; Mueller, Wyatt, Klandt, & Tan, 2006). In a second recent (2014) project, PAR became the main methodology for a parenting program called Parenting Young Children in a Digital World (Fowler, Wu, & Lam, 2014). This program was designed and driven by third-year nursing students in Hong Kong. The study explored participating students’ participation in the PAR project as an innovative clinical practice opportunity. This PAR project provided the nursing students with a structured and valuable learning experience (Fowler et al., 2014).

In summary, in PRC, educational action research started from English language teaching and learning. The majority of journal articles were focused on this topic for many years. In time, educational action research became widely adopted in primary and secondary education. In recent years, it is such a delight to notice that more and more journal articles are reporting the results of educational action research in Chinese universities. However, neither action research, nor PAR, nor living theories have become an integral or central part of an academic education practice in Chinese universities to date. In the following section, I will describe how action research has been applied in organizational development and industrial management in the PRC.

19.3 ACTION RESEARCH IN ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND INDUSTRIAL MANAGEMENT

Action research has been employed in the management in both state-owned and private industries in China, although there are a limited number of articles on how action research is used in organizational development and industrial management compared to those on action research in the education field. It has been suggested that action research may be particularly suitable for organizational development in China in order to help Chinese organizations cope with transformational change and by being well matched to the characteristics of Chinese business culture such as a “long-term focus, pragmatism, collectivism, moderate masculinity, face, [and a] lack of comfort with face-to-face criticism” (Yolles, Iles, & Guo, 2006, p. 147).

One prime example occurred from 2001 to 2005, when an innovative action research method was successfully adopted in the development of an activity-based costing system in partnership with a large Chinese manufacturing company (Liu & Pan, 2007). The action researchers understood the “top-down” hierarchical command and communication structure in Chinese organizations. They were thus able to smoothly establish the partnership and achieved their initial objective.

In another example, workplace action learning and action research was used in a Hong Kong food company owned by several families with the goal of changing the behavior of traditional bakers (Elsey & Tse, 2007). This research successfully employed workplace learning as the key driver to let the managers and workers of this company manage the practical change agenda and the

actual outcomes of this project were to improve the survival ability of this moon-cakes baking company under the increasingly competitive business environment. In a third illustrative example, a collaborative action research case study in Beijing targeted unemployed women who had previously worked in state-owned enterprises. They were accustomed to relying on the government to resolve many problems, but the project required them to assume active roles in dealing with their unemployment. The women were gradually able to find their own voices through various stages of the action research process (Sung-Chan & Yuen-Tsang, 2008b).

Action research was also employed in the development of a Chinese family enterprise from a “Mom and Pop” shop to a competitive Chinese domestic business (Wall & Preston, 2010). A more recent publication (Elam & Brands, 2013) discussed the challenges faced by participatory action researchers from the USA who worked with mainland Chinese researchers to improve and consolidate a company’s knowledge of planned change and organizational development. This group of non-Chinese-speaking American action research experts experienced underdeveloped partnership difficulties and felt the partner’s lack of availability became a serious limitation in their ability to work through the action research cycle. They identified the importance to establishing trust, establishing clear goals, and understanding Chinese culture as essential to achieving a truly participatory environment.

The application of action research in organizational development and industrial management appears to have faced difficult challenges: To set up trusting relationships and build an understanding of Chinese organizational culture seems very important for successful implementation of an action research project in this field. In the following section, I examine how action research plays a role in the promotion of participatory democracy in China.

19.4 ACTION RESEARCH IN THE PROMOTION OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

Action research has begun to play an important role in social development in China. According to Sung-Chan, Yuen-Tsang, Yadama, and Sze (2008), action researchers have acted as change agents to encourage participatory negotiation between local government officials and marginalized populations. In early 2000, two action researchers in Hong Kong received an invitation from the All-China Federation of Women to consult with them about developing effective strategies in dealing with the unemployment problem of middle-aged women workers in a local Beijing neighborhood. Before participating in the action research project, these women had developed a deep mistrust toward the government and, feeling powerless, saw nothing that they could do to improve their lives. However, through taking part in this project, they embraced the spirit of collaboration and became positive and proactive in solving their unemployment problems. On the side of local officials, this collaborative action research approach caused the officials to share some cultural

authority and power with the unemployed women and thereby developed a recognition that they had a duty to help out these marginalized women.

Interdisciplinary PAR was used to incorporate the voices of new female immigrants to Hong Kong in urban planning and environmental design (Kwok & Ku, 2008). Because of the disadvantaged socioeconomic situation of some of the new female immigrants from mainland China, it is rare to hear their voices about their living space. However, with the involvement of these immigrants in this interdisciplinary PAR program—including participation in workshops, observations, and interviews—the physical living environment and the everyday rhythms of their lives were shared and better understood by policy-makers in Hong Kong.

As a final example, an action research case study in Guangxi Province showed that it is possible to inform and empower marginalized female agricultural workers through a collaborative process (Song & Vernooy, 2010). These women and their knowledge were strongly recognized, protected, and strengthened in this process, and the project demonstrated how agricultural workers, researchers, and policy-makers can find ways to work together on an equal basis.

19.5 SUMMARY

There have been tremendous changes in the status of action research in China from 2005 to 2015. From the standpoint of the amount of published papers in Chinese-language, interest in action research is obviously increasing. As indicated in the previous literature review (Hughes & Yuan, 2005), there were less than 100 articles on action research published each year between 2001 and 2004. However, the situation changed significantly from 2005 to 2015: From 2005 to 2008, there were approximately 200 articles on action research published each year. However, between 2009 and 2015, the number of published action research articles increased to about 300 each year. Eighty percent of these academic journal articles are on action research applications in education. The overall direction of action research in China at this time shows an emphasis on: (i) “partnering approaches” in which Western ideas are being introduced and used as a part of action research projects; and, to a lesser extent, (ii) “indigenous” approaches in which Chinese modifications of traditional action research perspectives from the West are being modified in the context of Chinese culture and politics.

The present review points to some key questions and considerations regarding the development of action research in China for the coming decade. First, China is looking more and more to Western action research experts to develop action research. However, these Western non-Chinese-speaking action researchers face many unexpected challenges while they carry on their PAR projects in China. They will need to realize that establishing trusting relationships, developing partnerships, making clear agreements, and understanding Chinese organizational culture and traditional culture are critical to the preparation and engagement in action research in China. One obvious and key strategy is to ensure that there are Chinese-speaking action researchers on

the action research team. Second, Chinese students have developed a habit of listening to the teachers' lecture with little questioning. Participatory educational action research on Chinese university campuses may help to provide students with greater opportunities to engage in critical thinking and collaborative group study. This could lead to greater self-study, self-drive, self-searching, self-control, and teamwork for the students. Teachers can then become facilitators who act as both participants and educators, and ultimately lead to a sharing of power. This process can break the traditional Confucian theory of politely obeying without question. Third, applications of organizational action research will face more challenges particularly in the area of public policy. Because there are no separate public sector mechanisms for implementing, supervising, monitoring, and evaluating policy as there are in liberal democracies such as those that prevail in most The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, participatory practices can act as a regulatory tool to enforce transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness of regulation. While China is experiencing the development of organizations outside the state—nongovernmental organizations—that indicate the emergence of civil society and avenues for real community participation, these still have room to develop and mature (Yuan & Schofield, 2012).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided an overview of recent action research activity in China and has outlined its contributions to Chinese education, health promotion, organizational development, and administration in both state-owned and private industries. It provides a useful resource for scholars to better understand the similarities and differences in Western and Eastern ways of knowing and doing. For example, the underdeveloped partnership situation in mainland China can become a barrier for Western action researchers to engage in cooperative action research projects with Chinese industries or organizations. In addition, students in China are used to simply recording what the lecturers teach in the classrooms with limited questioning and critical thinking. It will be a big challenge to change the Confucian ways of how to obtain knowledge. These students may be very silent and need an action research “talking stick” to drive them to participate in discussions and reflection. They may not dare to raise critical issues and inquiries in class because the norm of being polite and modest in front of their teachers is an ingrained part of Confucian traditional theories. Furthermore, in organizations and/or institutes, Chinese are most often used to “top-down” command management styles and may fear speaking truthfully because they fear their leaders. These are the types of culturally bound and deeply ingrained ways of being that Western action researchers will find most challenging. Perhaps the answer lies in Chinese-led and Chinese-created styles of action research that support action researchers in making changes that are culturally sensitive and relevant.

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Using Action Research for Educational Reform in the Nation of Mongolia: A Catalyst for Democratic Transformation

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This chapter examines the emergence of action research within the context of educational reform in Mongolia. The authors first situate the sociocultural context of the nation of Mongolia as an emerging democratic country with an intense motivation for maintaining its ancient culture, while at the same time becoming a part of global educational initiatives. The chapter continues with a description of the emergence of action research in Mongolia's only public teacher training university as an integral part of the commitment to this apparent dichotomy.

20.1 MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE: THE CURRENT NATION OF MONGOLIA

Long a province of China, Mongolia won its independence in 1921 with Soviet backing. As a result, a socialist government was installed with close political and economic ties to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). After the dissolution of the USSR in 1989, Mongolia underwent its own demo-

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cratic revolution in 1990, leading to a multi-party system, a new constitution, and a transition from a centralized to a market economy. Since the 1990s, Mongolia has continued to reject a socialist system, focusing on a national mission to build a “human society with an economy market [sic]” (Jadambaa, Narantsetseg, Batdelger, Baigalmaa, & Altangoo, 2014, p. 3) and a democratic civil society in which “educational reform is required” (p. 3).

20.1.1 *The Educational Landscape from a Cultural-Historical Perspective*

Historically and culturally, Mongolians have focused on preserving a nomadic lifestyle. Therefore, in the past, education was primarily provided through home schooling that reflected the practical needs of a nomadic family environment and served as a basis for the transference of culturally based traditional knowledge. Prior to the introduction of socialism in the 1920s, formal education took place only in monasteries and was considered the exclusive domain of government officials (Krueger, 1961; Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2004). However, under socialism that nomadic philosophy became influenced by Marxism and Leninism, which led to the main educational goal of indoctrinating members of society to become followers of a Marxist-Leninist philosophy (Bat-Erdene, 2007). As a result, public schools, including universities, were built and managed with this goal in mind. This socialist focus was upheld until 1990, when political perspectives changed radically.

Current educational reform in Mongolia is intended to return to a culturally grounded “action-based learning” (Jadambaa et al., 2014, p. 5) and is expressed in the Mongolian proverb *Ajil hij khun boldog ar darj huleg boldog* (a person develops within the process of action, just as a young horse becomes stronger as he overcomes the mountain) (*Mongol ardiin zuir vgs*, 2008).

20.1.2 *The Educational Landscape from a Sociopolitical Perspective*

After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989, a new political structure in Mongolia was established with the passage of the 1992 Mongolian constitution, which was designed to guide the country’s transition to a democratic government and a market-based economy (Weidman & Bat-Erdene, 2002). This transformation was strongly reflected in the reform of the educational system beginning in the 1990s.

During the first decade of this political change, educational reform involved imitating other democratic nations, in a manner described as “policy borrowing” (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004, p. 4). Since then, the reform of Mongolian education has continued with an aim of changing from a highly specialized and compartmentalized system to a more flexible system, with a focus on making education at all levels efficient and effective through a process of decentralization.

From a political perspective, during the first decade of educational reform (1990–2000) within this region of Asia, educational policymakers used remarkably similar education reform rhetoric, focused on initiatives in extension of

the curriculum, including the introduction of new subjects (e.g., English and Computer Literacy), student-centered learning, electives in upper secondary schools, introduction of standards and/or outcomes-based education, decentralization of educational finance and governance, reorganization (or rationalization) of schools, privatization of higher education, standardization of student assessment, liberalization of textbook publishing, and establishment of information systems (Silova & Steiner-Khamsi, 2008).

Although such a reform package provided many readymade goals for policymakers and nongovernmental organizations working in the region, the components of the suggested reforms appeared to have been organized and presented primarily in the context of the wishes of outside financial supporters. That is, the educational reforms seemed not to have emerged from initiatives within the Mongolian educational community such as institutions of higher education (HEIs). Thus, within this first decade of reform, the development of self-determination, organization, and planning by the Mongolian HEIs did not appear to be a primary consideration.

20.2 ACTION RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN MONGOLIA: OVERVIEW

As noted by Jadambaa et al. (2014), contemporary educational reform in Mongolia has consisted of three phases of development: (a) 1990–2000—period of “confusing and unconscious imitation of others” (p. 8); (b) 2000–2010—period of “understanding the wrong way of developing” (p. 10) and beginning to seek creative reform actions; and (c) 2010–Present—creative period beginning with upgrading based on “authentic” (p. 11) research practices, including culturally grounded action research.

In particular, this chapter focuses on the emergence of action research at Mongolian National University of Education (MNUE) within Jadamba et al.’s (2014) third phase (the current creative period of upgrading based on authentic research practices) of educational reform. The discussion begins with a brief overview of recent primary, secondary, and teacher education reform.

20.2.1 *Recent Reform in Primary and Secondary Education*

The educational laws of Mongolia continue to be based on the nation’s new 1992 Constitution and reinforce the concept that primary and secondary education is free and compulsory and has shifted in curriculum ideology from socialism to a more democratic and humanistic approach. The most significant reform took effect in 2003, extending the length of compulsory schooling from 10 years to 11 years beginning in 2004 and to 12 years beginning in 2008. The first public school cohort to complete the 12-year system will graduate in 2020.

The current national Education Master Plan of Mongolia (2006–2015) has three main goals: (a) reduce disparities in access to quality education, (b) improve the enabling environment for the provision of quality education, and (c) improve education policymaking and management capacity (Government

of Mongolia, 2006). This restructuring, which applies to both public and private institutions, has brought the Mongolian educational system into alignment with that of many of its Asian neighbors and with a general global standard of number of years for public schooling. According to a UNESCO assessment, the new system focuses “on shifting from academic-oriented instruction to a life-oriented one, and the overall curriculum aims to develop student competencies in learning and living in the global world” (UNESCO, 2011, p. 10).

20.2.2 *Recent Reform in Higher Education*

In higher education, the Soviet-based system has been replaced by a structure that is similar to the US system: four-year bachelor degree, followed by master’s and doctorate degrees. Higher education in Mongolia remained under strict supervision by the national government until the late 1980s, but since then has gradually been adopting more democratic structures. For example, academic faculty are now selected by the administration within each institution of higher education. In addition, academic freedom and institutional autonomy have increased significantly over the past decade and are now protected by law. An example is reflected in the current freedom to express opinions within academic work.

Prior to 1993, education at all levels was fully subsidized by the government and offered free of charge. However, in 1990, HEIs started to charge tuition. Nevertheless, while most students are now required to pay tuition fees, the government continues to provide financial assistance to students from low-income families and those who demonstrate outstanding academic ability. In addition, if accredited, public institutions receive state funding for facility maintenance.

Engel, Prizzon, and Amgaabazar (2014) view Mongolia’s current progress in education as showing “how a country can adapt to changing social and economic demands, economic shocks, demographic transition, rapid urbanization and environmental stress” (p. 1). That is, as Mongolia shifts from a nomadic, herding economy to an industrial one, the higher education sector is adjusting, including more access for rural students and greater teacher incentives to teach in more remote areas. According to Engel et al. (2014), almost three in five Mongolian youths now enroll in a university, “a rate comparable to the average for high-income countries. There was a sixfold increase in university students in Mongolia between 1993 and 2010” (p. 1).

20.2.3 *Recent Teacher Education Reform in Mongolia*

To date, most large-scale educational reform initiatives in the region have relied on traditional teacher-centered pedagogy that emphasizes passive rather than active learning. In Mongolia, however, there has been a genuine effort to chart a new path, and action research has been an important part of this effort. Action research emerged in the higher education sector in Mongolia in 2010, within the third phase of reform, that is, the “creative period” (Jadambaa

et al., 2014, p. 10). MNUE chose action research to study the development of the professional skills of teachers and teacher educators. In these efforts, an important consideration was the inclusion of the culturally based theory of action research introduced by Jadambaa (2010) in Mongolian schools in the 1990s—specifically, the “non-Western” framework (p. 2) of using the natural environment that represented the Mongolian nomadic life style as the source of meaning for a person’s action. Jadambaa’s (2010) theory was grounded in the belief that action, its results and outcomes, framework, and context contribute to the development of a one-world, holistic approach of “nature-society-culture-time-space” (p. 5).

Dialogue among the authors of the present chapter and other faculty members yielded five major themes underlying MNUE’s decision to engage with action research as a main format for professional development of teachers in Mongolia: (a) emerging global prominence of action research in teacher education, professional development, and educational reform; (b) continuing evidence in the literature of the development of relevant conceptual frameworks based on both non-Western and Western forms of action research; (c) relevance of action research to international conferences addressing educational reform and interest in participating in these conferences to learn and share; (d) analysis of critiques of the global action research movement applicable to Mongolian education; and (e) surfacing recognition of the transformative potency of action research to bring about change within aspects of teacher education in a university culture. These themes have informed the work of the authors and other interested faculty members as we have collaborated to establish action research as a central component in the larger reform of the Mongolian educational system.

The section that follows discusses specific projects involving the creation, implementation, and sustainability of a university-based action research community in Mongolia. Those involved approached the design and creation of these projects based on a question the group formulated early in our collaboration: “How can action research provide support for education reform in Mongolia through a process of building a sustainable network for active reflection that models and transmits innovative approaches for teacher education?” Specifically, our design discussions focused on (a) building an action research community in the country’s only university that trains teachers and (b) using collaborative action research projects to support educator involvement with educational reform as “agents of change” rather than as “objects of change.”

20.3 THE MNUE MODEL: ACTION RESEARCH, TEACHER PREPARATION, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The overarching theme of the emerging environment of educational reform and action research projects in Mongolia has been the articulation of what teachers should know and be able to do. The critical questions guiding the development of a MNUE model for action research-based educational reform are as follows: (a) How will the results of action research inquiry in preservice and inser-

vice teacher development be used for curriculum reform in Mongolia's only public teacher training university—MNUE? (b) how will the action research findings be applied nationally to support improved student learning? and (c) how can the results leverage stronger learning opportunities in teacher preparation coursework and professional development within a more integrated set of knowledge, skills, and commitment standards? These questions are being pursued with two key principles uppermost in the minds of those providing leadership in the development of this model; namely (a) engagement within a participatory context and, as mentioned earlier and (b) educator involvement in educational reform as “agents of change” rather than as “objects of change.”

The developing theoretical framework of the initiative recognizes that learning and motivation are socially and culturally situated and that educational reform within emerging democratic nations such as Mongolia must be inclusive, imbedded in, and owned by the culture itself (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009; Heyneman, 1993; Innes, 2007; Tessema, 2007). In this context, a democratic, dialogic approach has been adopted as a central component of projects in the initiative. Within MNUE, this has involved, from the beginning of the initiative, supporting participating academics in strengthening their capacities to think critically and become problem solvers in their own right. For many Mongolian academics with experience in the previous Soviet-dominated educational system, the transition can be quite challenging. The intention of this approach has been to shift the emphasis from the outside-expert perspectives of previous phases of the nation's educational reform to a more culturally sustained interactive model and to engage Mongolian HEI faculty in problem solving, experimentation, and discovery, thereby enabling them to become active participants in reform activities.

20.3.1 *Using Action Research in Teacher Education Reform at MNUE*

The involved teacher educators at MNUE believe that the use of action research to reflect on, articulate, and build democratic communities of inquiry has the ability to strengthen expectations and application of best educational practices based on the sociocultural perspectives of Mongolia. According to McNiff (2013), “Action research takes its place as a real-life dialogical practice within real-life socio-political contexts” (p. 182). Within the specific projects described later, this notion of dialogical practice within genuine contexts is brought to light.

Preservice action research Teacher educators have argued that a reflective orientation to teaching should stress investigations of the reasons for instructional actions in the classroom and for school policy overall (Liston & Zeichner, 1990). Such a focus, in turn, encourages prospective teachers to examine the aims and values of distinct educational traditions (e.g., cultural, conservative, progressive traditions), be cognizant of their own implicit social and cultural

beliefs, understand the role of schools as societal institutions, and understand the surrounding demographic communities. Action research, some teacher educators argue (e.g., Carboni, Wynn, & McGuire, 2002; Chant, Heafner, & Bennet, 2004; Subramaniam, 2010), is one way to encourage preservice students to reflect on their mission and emerging educational practice. Yet, other evidence (Darling-Hammond, 2010) suggests that a great deal of what prospective teachers learn during the clinical portions of their training is not indicative of the realities of the classroom and, in fact, often conflicts with the intentions of preservice teacher education—to prepare future teachers for the actuality of the classroom experience.

A variety of strategies have been found to promote reflective teaching by student teachers such as self-assessment, journaling, observation discussions, and ongoing supportive dialogue between students and their university teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2012). Yet, evidence suggests that the introduction of reflective practice, particularly when paired with engagement in action research, is sometimes met with resistance by student teachers, including their “lack of understanding about what action research is and its purpose; a discomfort with the emphasis of process over product and the associated investment of time and ability to multi-task; and willingness to embrace the process of action research as part of learning to teach” (Bryant & Bates, 2010, p. 1). At MNUE, our analysis of these factors lent support to the idea that incorporating action research in teacher education within an overarching, reform-driven educational community represented the beginning of a journey that requires a long-term commitment.

The intention of the MNUE initiative is to guide the nation’s teachers toward a highly reflective professional orientation that begins in their preservice preparation. The goal is for preservice teachers to understand the importance of the empowerment inherent in reflecting on their own practice. A variety of opportunities for developing reflective practice have been made available in undergraduate teacher education to support this direction. To date, activities have included an elective action research club, action research coursework for both undergraduate and graduate students, coursework for inservice professional development seminars, and faculty action research projects. Overall, these projects serve two purposes: (a) involvement of preservice teachers in research projects as a tool for improving reflective practice and classroom decision making, and (b) encouragement for using action research as a tool for professional development and assessment with practicing teachers and administrators.

Preservice action research club The elective club encourages preservice students in teacher education to identify topics and design action research projects in relationship to educational topics they would like to explore. The goals of these projects are to come up with solutions to real-life educational problems using action research methodology. Sample study topics to date have included (a) reasons for dropouts from countryside schooling, (b) interventions for students with disabilities, and (c) the effect of overcrowded classrooms on learning.

Club members' experiences are serving as a basis for strengthening the design of MNUE's action research coursework and as a model for action research clubs in other departments of the university. Led by an MNUE faculty member and supported in consultation with the non-Mongolian scholar helping to facilitate the larger action research initiative, the dialogical approach within the club has served as a way to open space for critical and creative discussions regarding the problems teachers face in Mongolian schools and the possibilities for finding creative solutions. Further, plans are underway for longitudinal investigations by interested teacher education faculty, who will follow preservice students into professional teaching practice to examine the impact of their participation in preservice action research on their inservice practice, including classroom decision making, and educational problem solving (Photograph 20.1).

Pilot coursework for undergraduate students In 2011, as part of the beginning of the MNUE action research initiative, a required course in action research for fourth-year education students in the School of Preschool Education was piloted by the first author, who was serving at that time as a visiting scholar from the USA. The purpose of the pilot course was to introduce action research as a sustainable method of investigating the realities of the early childhood classroom for students preparing to graduate.

Participating students ($N=108$) were divided into groups of six and asked to design and implement an action research project as a part of their student-teaching semester, including identifying and tackling classroom problems and



Photograph 20.1 The Action Research Club at MNUE

analyzing the role of the teacher in those contexts. Specific issues identified in conjunction with the coursework included the challenges of collaboration between teachers and parents, working with children with disabilities, teacher-versus child-centered classrooms, and challenges of overcrowded classrooms (see Table 20.1). At the end of the semester, the groups presented their completed projects to their classmates and invited faculty members.

Inservice action research development The inservice action research agenda associated with the larger initiative is in the beginning stages of development. Those active in action research at MNUE are aware that encouraging practitioners to take responsibility for their professional development, with the support of action research, has the potential to create a cultural change within the teaching profession in Mongolia. Piloting an action research approach to inservice professional development was offered at MNUE by the first author and an MNUE faculty member with the administrative support of another co-author in Fall 2014 to educational administrators ($N=35$) from both Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia's capital, and a number of rural communities. Group action research projects were created by these administrators and presented to invited MNUE university faculty and administrators. Projects addressed topics that reflected the national educational reform challenges, including overcrowded classrooms, opening of free programs for two-year-olds, and using new national standards (see Table 20.2).

Graduate coursework in action research Development of graduate-level coursework in action research continues at MNUE supported by the university president, Dr. Davaasuren Munkhjargal. A graduate-level course was co-taught by the first author and one of the co-authors, who is a leading member of

Table 20.1 Action Research Undergraduate Themes

Parental Impact on Child Development
Assessment of Developmentally Based Activities for Children in Kindergarten
Support for the Education of Five-Year-Old Children Who Do Not Have Access to School
Active Collaboration of Teachers and Parents
Reasons for Children's Consistent Tardiness
Best Practice Methods for Handwashing for Children
Working With Children with Disabilities
Teacher-Child Communication During Classroom Activities
Who Is the Preschool Teacher? How Parents and Society Assess Them
Opportunities for Classroom Teachers to Attend Training and Seminars to Acquire Knowledge
Children's Choices for Toys
Teacher Choice of Play-Based versus Lesson-Based Teaching
Four-Year-Old Children's Use of New Vocabulary in Conversations and Activities
Equity of Communication by Teachers for All Children in a Classroom
Difficulties Faced by Teachers Because of Over-Enrollment of Children in Preschool Classrooms
Teacher and Parent Encouragement and Discouragement of Children
Kindergarten Teacher Quality Communication Attributes

Table 20.2 Topics of inservice action research groups

Opportunities for Professional Development of Kindergarten Teachers in Their Work Place (With Special Attention to Rural Areas)
Curriculum Content for Two-Year-Olds in a Group Setting
Support for Professional Development of Teachers in Overcrowded Classrooms
Support for Teachers to Create a Standardized List of Required School Documents
Response to the Issue of Lack of Teacher Manuals, Special Literature, Professional Seminars

the university research team. In the course, master's-level students had the opportunity to work individually or in small groups to (a) identify a problem in Mongolian education or in their own professional practice, (b) develop an action research plan for their investigation, (c) gather and analyze data, (d) report results, and (e) reflect on implications and make suggestions for future professional practice, Mongolian educational reform, and understanding of contemporary Mongolian culture (see Table 20.3). The course was limited to 35 students, with a waiting list for future semesters.

Action research faculty learning community As a particularly robust part of MNUE's initiative, faculty of the university have applied action research processes to their own professional development. This part of the larger initiative involves faculty collaborating to create and implement a shared vision for the use of action research and learning better ways to enhance participatory learning and provide opportunities for developing a sustained research community (McTaggart, 1997). The study question guiding this part of the initiative continues to evolve but can be stated in its current iteration as, "How can action research contribute to higher education faculty professional development, scholarship, networking and innovation?" The guiding definition used to ground the work being done in this area has been adapted from the *Handbook of Action Research*:

A participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview ... [and bringing] together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and communities. (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 1)

The intention here is to create opportunities for MNUE faculty to become knowledgeable and conversant about the theory and practice of action research and to connect faculty members with the global action research community's conversations and gatherings as a way to enrich the developing dialogue among Mongolian action researchers.

International professional teacher education university community working team
An International Professional Teacher Education University Community Working Team, which includes the authors and interested faculty members,

Table 20.3 Action research themes at the master's level

Difficulties and Obstacles Faced by seventh Graders When Using Public Transportation for School Commutes
Exploration of Outcomes and Curriculum of ninth-Grade Chinese Language Classes
Improvement of Communication Skills for Secondary School Teachers
Decreasing the Learning Lag in Mongolian Language Classes
Improving Learning of Primary Students
Discovering Reasons for Students' Learning Lag in Mathematics
Examining the Amount of TV Watching Time by Six-Year-Olds
Positives and Negatives of Students' Use of Cell Phones
How to Give Students a Deeper Understanding of Technology
Teacher's Role in Support of Student Development
Reasons for Students' Learning Lag in Biology Classes
Supportive Methods for Teaching English in the fifth-Grade Classroom
Improvement of Ethics for Teachers
Understanding Documentation Requirements for Teachers
Attitudes of Students in Mongolian Language Classes

continues to guide the development of action research at MNUE and meets on a regular basis to discuss the needs of the professional development learning community, including research topics generated by university faculty, student interests, organization of action research investigations, adaptations of findings for classroom pedagogy, and development of a teacher education action research program that can continue to contribute to education reform in Mongolia while also creating a presence in the international educational research and action research communities.

To date, the focus on learning and shared leadership by the MNUE Working Team has led to (a) planning and presentation of publishable papers on teacher education action research projects implemented by Mongolian teacher education university faculty and students at national and international conferences and in national educational journals; (b) implementation of international discussions through action research network forums; (c) collaborative conference presentations and publications with international colleagues; and (d) a beginning draft of a handbook on action research focused on the Mongolian sociocultural perspective for action research with Dr. Jadambaa as lead editor. The leadership of Dr. Jadambaa is particularly important since his work in action research continues to focus on a non-Western perspective of action research recognized by the MNUE Working Team as necessary for the future of action research in Mongolia. Specifically, the members of the university working team continue to be committed to incorporating Jadambaa's concepts of the culturally grounded use of the natural environment representing "the Mongolian nomadic life style as the source of meaning for a person's action" (Jadambaa et al., 2014, p. 5) and his "one world, holistic, nature-society-culture-time-space approach" (p. 6) in current and future projects.

Several individual and collaborative faculty projects are underway. To assist in the process of developing publishable papers, the Working Team has generated

Table 20.4 Identified themes in the working team

Importance of Continuing to Develop and Refine the MNUE Model
Value of Faculty Taking More Responsibility for Projects, and the International Working Team
Continuing in an Advisory Role to the Individual Projects
Maintaining a Spirit of Participatory Learning, Including Documentation of Faculty Teaching, Student Active Learning, Classroom Pedagogical Practices, and Shared Leadership Based on Standardized Observational Notes
Continuing to Explore Strengthening Quality of Learner-Centered, Constructivist Action Research Projects
Supporting Faculty-Developed Methodology for Teacher Self-Assessment and Activity
Evaluation Based on a Mixture of Non-Numeric and Numeric Documents, Including Rubrics

ongoing discussions and informal analyses of the process and results of MNUE faculty action research involvements. To date, a number of themes related to successful implementation and sustainability of the action research process within the Mongolian higher education community have been identified (see Table 20.4).

Members of the Working Team, including authors of the present chapter and other professors at MNUE are continuing to analyze data and develop manuscripts for submission to educational research and action research journals.

20.4 PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND REFLECTIONS ON THE INITIATIVE

As stated previously, the initiative described here has been organized in response to an overarching question that has critical relevance to the context of educational reform in Mongolia: “How can action research provide support for education reform in Mongolia through a process of building a sustainable network for active reflection that models and transmits innovative approaches for teacher education?” The preliminary findings of the initiative at MNUE provide insight into the use of a university-based action research initiative as a way of engaging in national education reform. The chapter has addressed this question in relationship to the establishment of an action research community in the country’s only public university that trains teachers and the initiation of a variety of action research projects aligned with broader educational reforms and focused on the training of inservice and preservice educators and the faculty who support them.

The preliminary findings for the initiative are based on conversations, feedback, questions, and dialogues involving faculty and students, in particular the faculty participating in the Working Team. We identify three preliminary findings at this time:

1. Using university-initiated action research in conjunction with large-scale education reform provides a variety of opportunities for faculty and student involvement, including: individual support for teacher education faculty willing to incorporate action research into their courses and prac-

tice in general; encouragement of faculty and student scholarship associated with both action research and education reform; and innovations in strengthening classroom pedagogy. In an even larger context, the MNUE higher education faculty have come to view the participatory focus of action research as an essential element for ensuring that an educated citizenry in Mongolia is ready to accept the responsibilities of democratic educational leadership. Based on this view, the faculty has been motivated to continue to guide their students to an understanding of the theory and practice of participatory action research.

2. Using action research for reform builds and sustains a network for active learning. Creating a collaborative model provides a community focus for educational reform within the university that can serve as a model for the education reform taking place nationally. Specifically, the principles of social presence (Tu, 2002), motivation (Ardichvili, Page, & Wentling, 2002), and collaboration (Sveiby & Simons, 2002) have defined the building of a network at MNUE and have impacted the professional development of individual faculty members and student involvement in developing the network. Further, these principles continue to serve as the cornerstones for the work of the International Professional Community Working Team in both planning and implementation.
3. Using action research for reform models and transmits innovative approaches for teacher education. The collaborative approach to networking with the global action research community has created a dynamic opportunity for interaction with other scholarly groups interested in teacher education reform using action research processes, particularly in contexts where there is limited access to research support and knowledge of methodologies and where teacher educator scholarship and classroom pedagogy are being explored. We posit that Mongolia's higher education system can benefit from continued support for systematic collaborative learning processes that focus on enhancement of critical knowledge and skills and from continued determination to connect the work in Mongolia to international perspectives of building professional development communities grounded in collaborative action research and participatory action research.

20.4.1 Continuing the Journey: Action Research as a Collective Responsibility

The action research learning community at MNUE has adopted a dialogic model, with the continuation of projects by faculty and students leading to ongoing dialogue about the uses of action research, learner-centered problem solving, and classroom-based decision making. A sampling of comments by MNUE teacher educators is suggestive of the dynamics associated with this community:

- “A dynamic power of teachers’ and administrators’ professional development.”
- “The main way for continuous development within education reform.”

- “The most effective and efficient basic tool for educational development and reform management based on Mongolian culture within an authentic process.”
- “An enabler and creator of new concepts and trends for education in our nation.”

Action research inherently tends to reflect a sociocultural framework specific to the nation and to facilitate developing a democratic and dialogic process. This focus, in turn, serves as the foundation for a workable education reform model and ultimately for the advancement of Mongolia’s educational system.

Despite its great promises and potential, initiating and maintaining a dialogic process is not without its challenges. Two major challenges in the MNUE initiative have included (a) opening and sustaining the communicative space and (b) continuing the focus on the specific sociocultural context. According to Kemmis (2001),

The first step in action research turns out to be central: *the formation of a communicative space* which is embodied in networks of actual persons. ... A communicative space is constituted as issues or problems are opened up for discussion, and when participants experience their interaction as fostering the democratic expression of diverse views. ... [and as permitting] people to achieve mutual understanding and consensus about what to do. (p. 100; original italics)

Beyond this first step, the process of sustaining the communicative space for both action research and educational reform at MNUE reflects issues of group development discussed by Wicks and Reason (2009). They suggested that group development progresses through phases of inclusion, control, and intimacy. According to them, the challenge is to be continually aware that no group “moves perfectly through the three phases: unfinished business always remains from earlier phases which may trip up the process at later stages. Indeed, intimations of later stages are nearly always present right from the beginning” (p. 254).

At MNUE, the International Working Team continually works at updating its membership as individual participants change and the team takes time to inform new members of previous work. Maintaining a socioculturally grounded perspective of action research for educational reform, while liberating, also presents practical challenges; that is, action research is always poised between an intent to address and solve practical issues and a commitment to support educators in learning how to think more democratically and critically. This dichotomy can raise tensions for the practice of action research between the need for action and time for motivated inquiry (Johansson & Lindhult, 2008).

Critical-reflective ownership is essential in the action research process (McKernan & McKernan, 2013). With regard to MNUE, ownership of the implementation and sustainability of action research is being addressed within the following areas: (a) development of the international working team model (e.g., Crossley & Holmes, 2001; Somekh & Zeichner, 2009); (b) decentraliza-

tion of responsibility (e.g., Friedman & Rogers, 2009; Stringer, 2013); (c) community building with a focus on participatory learning and shared leadership (e.g., Bryman, 2004; MacBeath & Dempster, 2008); (d) learner-centered, constructivist action research projects (e.g., Lincoln, 2001; Zuber-Skerritt, 1994); and (e) group-determined methods for self-assessment and activity evaluation (e.g., Carr and Kemmis, 2003; Fetterman, Rodríguez-Campos, Wandersman, & O’Sullivan, 2014; Schulz, Israel, & Lantz, 2003). The overall ownership of the development of the model described in this chapter is emerging in the context of two concepts: responsible agency and necessary continuum.

Responsible agency According to McTaggart (1997), “Authentic participation in research means sharing in the way research is conceptualized, practiced, and brought to bear on the life-world. It means ownership: responsible agency in the production of knowledge and the improvement of practice” (p. 6). As discussed earlier, MNUE has committed its scholarship advancement, administrative involvement, and faculty professional development to the inclusion of action research in its ongoing reform activities. At present, there is a strong sense of responsible agency among those participating in the development of the model, and this sense is continuing to inform us at each step in the process.

Continuum According to Batliwala and Patel (1997), participatory action research forms part of a continuum of activities that people undertake to make change over a period of time. Since the introduction of action research at MNUE, the university has recognized that building and sustaining an action research agenda requires an ongoing commitment. The initial projects were collective and began within a small-group dynamic. Gradually, as interest has grown, the action research participation has expanded. The MNUE action research groups continue to be committed to educating each other about the relationships between context, action, consequence, and data collection and analysis. This has resulted not only in learning but also in the production of new knowledge, which is being put to use in the service of the broader educational reforms in Mongolia.

20.5 PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Participants’ descriptions of their action research experiences make it clear that the reform movement in Mongolia is creating an educational climate that is distinctly different from what existed two decades ago when this democratic nation was founded. MNUE is committed to scholarship within the cultural context of the nation, pursuing an agenda that includes enhancing the status of teaching and the complementary nature of teaching and research by using a participatory pedagogic research methodology. Although the initiative has been underway for several years, we are still at a very preliminary stage in terms of findings and dissemination of results. Given the complex dynamics associated with Mongolia’s transition to a democratic state and the ups and

downs associated with phases of educational reform involving imitation, misdirection, and ultimately creativity (Jadambaa et al., 2014), the progress to date is impressive. We can look forward as we continue our journey to developing within the process of action, like the young horse becoming stronger while overcoming the mountain.

With others around the world (e.g., Hollingsworth, 2005), MNUE's commitment to action research embraces the ongoing development of conceptual frameworks and action research theories, interest in the dissemination of action research, contributions to the development of sound critiques of the action research movement, and respect for the transformative potential of action research on aspects of teacher education within a university culture. Each of these trends can serve as the basis for future research and connections to both national and global investigations in action research. In order to gain a better understanding of the lasting effects on teacher education reform at MNUE, collaborative and participatory longitudinal studies will examine all aspects of the action research initiative now underway. In particular, it will be important to examine the impact of all areas of the initiative and their interrelationships—from design planning to implementation and assessment.

The spirit of Mongolia and the commitment to action research for its academic professionals as part of the country's educational reform processes is reflected within the traditional oral history of this old nation in words ascribed to Genghis Khan:

I wear the same clothing and eat the same food as the cowherds and horseherders. We make the same sacrifices and we share our riches. I look upon the nation as a new-born child. I care for it as my own.

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Educational Action Research in South Korea: Finding New Meanings in Practitioner-Based Research

Mina Kim and So Jung Kim

21.1 OVERVIEW

This chapter reviews the development of educational action research in South Korea. In particular, it explores how the term ‘action research’ has been interpreted and implemented in the field of Korean education since the 1950s. The history of teacher action research in South Korea reflects a battle over the translation of the terms in relation to changes in the roles of practitioners and the emergence of a new type of inquiry methodology in the context of Korean culture and a changing educational system. For almost seven decades, this inquiry method has challenged the traditional Korean concept of educational ‘research,’ which preferred an objective approach, as opposed to the more subjective methods associated with action research. An added element in the complexity of the history of action research in Korea is that since its inception, action research has been used as a tool for promotion and advancement of teachers, structured and managed by the Ministry of Education. However, scholars and practitioners alike realized that action research should be used as a bottom-up approach for practitioners to strengthen their practice. Further, they thought that one of the important roles of teachers should be becoming practitioner-researchers. Looking into the history of action research, as the term has evolved since the 1950s, so has the practice.

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21.1.1 *Introduction of Action Research*

In Korea, action research was first identified in the late 1950s as an effective research inquiry method to improve teaching and address classroom issues (Beak, 1961; Kim, 1958; Park, 1968). However, the majority of South Korean scholars interested in action research did not intend for teachers to initiate and lead classroom-based research by taking an active role as participant and researcher. This research practice reflects how scholars understood ‘research’ at the time. That is, although the word ‘action research’ was used in Korean language, it was not the action research as understood in recent years.

Action research during the 1950s and 1960s was closely related to a positivist research orientation, highlighting the importance of fixed hypotheses. To Korean scholars, Kurt Lewin’s early work was not a suitable fit with educational inquiry at that time. Lewin’s focus was on social problems and helping minority groups seek ‘independence, equality, and cooperation’ through an iterative process (Lewin, 1946, as cited in Adelman, 1993, p.7) and not on issues of ‘educational’ practice. Lewin emphasized voluntary participation of all participants through a systematic inquiry involving reflective thought, discussion, decision-making, and action through participation in a collective research method (Adelman, 1993; Foshay, 1994; Tripp, 2005). During this phase, action research in the context of Korean education was a linear (step-by-step) problem-solving process, which helped practitioners solve problems or make changes in classrooms (Lee, 2013).

The tensions between the understandings of suitable educational research in South Korea then and the interpretations of Lewin’s work were evident in Korean translations of the term ‘action research’. Scholars in the 1950s and 1960s introduced the concept of action research in their journals by calling it ‘*hyun-jang-yeon-gu*’, which is literally translated as ‘research conducted in a field’. Those scholars highlighted ‘field’ or ‘place’ as this would make a clear distinction between action research and other types of educational research, which was usually conducted in laboratories or controlled environments.

Furthermore, from the inception of action research in South Korea, widespread use of any research approach would not have been possible without governmental involvement. The Ministry of Education in the 1950s viewed action research as a means of professional growth and development for teachers, and this view by government meant that any type of education-related projects based on action research would be tied to promotion in the public school system. This also meant that the government was encouraging teachers to engage in classroom research, although most Korean scholars did not include teachers in their educational research.

In the early 1950s, a form of ‘teacher field-research competition’ was developed and coordinated by the Ministry of Education (Lee, 2013). Public school teachers participated in various competitions such as teaching competitions, field-research contests, and teaching demonstrations in order to meet the requirements of teacher evaluations and assessments, as well as various promo-

tions each year (Jin, 1987; Lee, 2013). This is noteworthy as the development of action research in Korea was strongly tied to a top-down system from its inception, unlike the teacher-as-researcher movement in the UK and the North American teacher research movement, which were often initiated and led by academics and teachers working in collaboration (Zeichner, 2001).

In summary, action research in South Korea evolved and developed in its own way due to the contextualization of a new educational research approach within the Korean educational field. The contextualization of action research involved issues of epistemology (i.e. what counts as knowledge production), language (i.e. translation of the term from English to Korean), and politics (i.e. who sets policy in education and how is policy carried out?).

21.1.2 *Translating Action Research in Korean: Definitions and Practice of Action Research*

As discussed above, Korean action research from the 1950s until the 1990s focused heavily on a narrow view of scientific methods, a result of the strong influence of positivist scientific research methods used among Korean educational scholars. This focus was contradicted by the emphasis on *teacher as object and subject*, as stated in many English-language definitions of action research (e.g. Manfra, 2009; Maksimovic, 2010). During this period in Korea, many educational researchers called action research '*hyun-jang-yeon-gu*' (field research). This term reflected the use of empirical research methods, starting with formulating research questions and hypotheses, determining experimental groups and control groups, implementing different or new curriculum or teaching strategies, and comparing pre- and post results of the implementations to measure the effectiveness of new teaching methods. This was typically understood as action research method in the early phase of action research in Korea.

However, in the 1990s some educational scholars (Lee, 2002; Lee et al., 2005) began questioning the dominance of positivist research inquiry in educational research and embraced a variety of qualitative research methods as alternatives. This group of scholars created a new Korean term for action research, '*sil-haeng-yeon-gu*' (execution research) in the late 1990s. Although both terms represented a core concept of action research as they implied field-based research, they are actually quite different in the context of Korean language. The term, *hyun-jang-yeon-gu* (현장연구) places much emphasis on 'field', which is translated as a place where issues and problems occur. On the other hand, *sil-haeng-yeon-gu* (실행연구) implies 'actual implementation' and emphasizes 'action' (*sil-haeng*). This emphasis also highlights the role of participants' active engagement as well as the implementation (i.e. the action) itself.

Other Korean terms have also been introduced in the context of action research in Korea: *silcheonjeock* research (실천적 연구, practical research), *silcheon* research (실천연구, practice research), *hyunjang* research method (현장연구 방법, field study method), *hyunjang gae-seon* research (현장 개선 연

ㄱ, field improvement research), and *sil-haeng* research (실행연구, executing action research). These terms have been discussed in the literature (Beak, 1961; Choi, 1998; Jung, 1998; Kim, 1958; Park, 1968) and were considered as possible replacements for the original term, *hyun-jang-yeon-gu* (field research), due to the latter not adequately conveying various interpretations and meanings of action research according to younger scholars with new perspectives.

The changes in terms represented active teacher participation, emphasis on improved educational practice, diverse inquiry methods, the cyclical process, as well as the teacher inquiry process (Lee, 2013). The commonly used term '*hyunjang*' (field) research was used mainly as a short term for a teacher research competition sponsored by the Ministry of Education, which was then considered not an appropriate choice, while many practitioners 'cautiously' began using the term '*hyunjang gaeseon*' (field improvement) research, apparently focusing on '*gaeseon*', which means improvement, change, or reform in their teaching practices. Ironically, this reluctance was strongly tied to what it meant for teachers to be conducting action research in the Korean educational context. As there was much emphasis on the teacher research competition for promotional purposes, *hyunjang gaeseon* for educational improvement sounded somehow threatening to teachers. If they were committed to changing their practice, the 'changing practice' might have meant, in teachers' minds, that they were deficient in their current practice and could not be adequate candidates for promotion (Lee, 2001; Park, 1994).

Likewise, '*silcheon*' (practice) research stressed the function of social agency in action research, which was also connected to the concerns mentioned above (i.e. teachers are not practicing what they are supposed to practice). This tendency seemed to be related to the belief that changes in educational policy and practice cannot come from practitioners, but should be 'given' to them by the authorities. These are the reasons why the term, *sil-haeng-yeon-gu* (execution research), was selected as the term for the new generation of action research. Currently, most action researchers are using two terms in the field to designate practitioner research: *Hyun-jang-yeon-gu* (field research) and *Sil-haeng-yeon-gu* (execution research) (Lee, 2002, 2007, 2010; Lee et al., 2005).

The differences in the translated terms clearly represent how much effort recent Korean scholars have made in modifying the early conceptualization of action research (*hyun-jang-yeon-gu*). Initially, some scholars discussed action research in very traditional academic terms due to the heavy influence of positivist scientific research methods, until scholars like Young-sook Lee presented a new rationale for the use of action research. A new term was discussed at the semiannual conference of the Korean Society for the Study of Anthropology of Education in 2002 (Lee, 2013) and with the agreement of other scholars, Young-sook Lee defined *Sil-haeng-yeon-gu* (execution research) as practitioners' research in which action plans are implemented to improve one's teaching practice and to solve classroom issues (Lee, 2013). This new term originated from young scholars' experiences as doctoral students. For example, Qu-hyuk

Lee struggled to select a topic for his doctoral dissertation in the mid-1990s, and he questioned why he had to examine ‘other teachers’ practice to understand and improve his own teaching practice (Lee, 2013). As a middle school social studies teacher, he had difficulties teaching topics such as world history and geology, and he preferred to study his own teaching practice to see how he could improve teaching in those subject areas. That was the moment he realized the importance of action and implementation in action research and began to seek a better translation into Korean (Lee, 2013).

Researchers today are still using these two terms, *Hyun-jang-yeon-gu* (field research) and *Sil-haeng-yeon-gu* (execution research), interchangeably in action research papers published in Korean scholarly journals (Ahn & Seo, 2013; Lee, 2010; Seo & Kim, 2012). No clear distinction in the usages of these two terms exists in South Korean academic circles, and discussions of how action research should be interpreted and understood in order to properly highlight the role of ‘teacher’ are ongoing.

21.2 IMPACT OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION ON RESEARCH AND TEACHER PROMOTION

In this section, we return to how action research emerged and was implemented in South Korea during the 1950s and explore in more depth the controversial discussions among educational scholars about action research and the steps leading up to the new phase of action research beginning in the 1990s.

The Ministry of Culture and Education in South Korea enacted and promulgated ‘the Research School Regulations’ in 1951 in order to reform the education system that had been designed and imposed by the Japanese government during the 35-year period of Japanese colonization (1910–1945) (Lee, 2013). Action-oriented research was included as a part of the reforms. The first action research (*Hyun-jang-yeon-gu* [field research]) was conducted with the support of the Korean government, at Seoul Namsan Elementary School in 1955 by Hwang eun-yeong, a professor at Ehwa Women’s University (Kim, 1965). With government support, action research (*Hyun-jang-yeon-gu* [field research]) spread quickly, and the findings were disseminated by numerous scholars (Kim, 1972). The belief was that teachers must become engaged in research in order to improve their teaching practice, which in turn could enhance professionalism in the field. This belief allowed action research to become embedded in the South Korean public school system.

Kim (1972) claimed that action research went through four distinct developmental periods in South Korea from the 1950s to the 1970s: (1) 1945 to the early period of the Korean War: initiation of research in education; (2) 1950s: establishment of research direction; (3) 1960s: transition in research methods; and (4) After 1960s: *Hyun-jang-yeon-gu* (field research) methods.

Other scholars (Jin, 1987, 1996; Kim, 1988) renamed Kim’s (1972) first stage from ‘initiation of research in education’ to ‘introduction of new educa-

tion' and included another stage to these classifications for the period after the 1980s as 'Fifth Stage: Generalization of *Hyun-jang-yeon-gu*'. Yet, these scholars agreed that Korean action research developed based on the strong support and involvement of the Korean government from early on (Lee, 2013).

Support from the Korean government was extended to practitioners by designating research schools nationwide for the purpose of promoting research activities of teachers (Kim, 1965). In October 1952, the Korean Federation of Teachers' Associations (KFTA) hosted the first action research (*Hyun-jang-yeon-gu* [field research]) competition. Founded in 1947, KFTA is the largest and most conservative educational organization in South Korea with over 170,000 members. Under the theme 'Curriculum Reform', 826 teachers participated in the first teacher field-based research competition. Since then, the '*Hyun-jang-yeon-gu*' (field research) conference has been held annually (2014 being the 58th conference) and is now a major educational event for teachers. The Ministry of Education officially recognizes teachers and government officials in the field of education who participate in the research competition. This conference naturally became a mandatory step for teachers who wanted to promote themselves to any administrative positions in the public school system. Moreover, the Ministry of Education utilizes this competition for teacher evaluation by incorporating competition results into a teacher evaluation point system. In recent years, there have been as many as 10,000 participants (grades pre-K-12) in this competition every year (KFTA, 2014), possibly a result of government regulation and management of teacher participations in field-based action research.

Government involvement in the field research has become more systematic since the first action research competition. The Ministry of Culture and Education developed the Guidance Committee in 1958, in which committee members from various universities (typically scholars and researchers) discussed research trends and provided suggestions for specific action research procedures (Beak, 1961; Kim, 1965; Park, 1968). Several Western scholars (e.g. Borg, 1963; Bucker & Rittenman, 1949; Corey, 1953; Hodgkinson, 1957; Taba & Noel, 1957) influenced the committee regarding definitions and critiques of action research (Lee, 2013), and committee members agreed that specific research methods, involving developing hypotheses and conducting experiments, would be appropriate for teachers to employ in their action research (Lee, 2013). Such suggestions for appropriate educational research methodology were strongly recommended and shaped the format of Korean action research (*Hyun-jang-yeon-gu*) in the early era. The use of traditional research methodology was taken for granted and became predominant in major action research projects during that period. While some scholars reclassified forms of action research (*Hyun-jang-yeon-gu* [field research]), there were no variations in the form and content of action research studies conducted in the context of the guidance committee's work. According to Kim (1965), three different formats of *hyun-jang-yeon-gu* (field research) were used:

1. Diagnostic field research: (a) identify a problem, (b) analyze a problem, (c) develop a hypothesis, (d) conduct an experimental testing, and (d) revisit the hypothesis to conclude a result.
2. Experiential field research: (a) identify a problem, (b) discuss a possible action plan, (c) develop a hypothesis, (d) collect data, (e) analyze data to conclude, and (f) share results with others.
3. Experimental field research: (a) identify a problem, (b) develop a hypothesis, (c) set up an experimental group and control group, (d) control variables, (e) test, (f) collect data, and (g) retest the hypothesis.

All three forms of action research emphasized a positivist approach to research. This clearly shows that the early action research advocates in South Korea predominantly believed that educational research should follow strict positivistic scientific procedures to address educational issues. In other words, the sharing of teaching experience among colleagues would not be considered a form of research, as such sharing does not provide validity and reliability in the context of what was examined.

21.3 TOWARD A NEW PARADIGM IN EDUCATIONAL ACTION RESEARCH

There is little to no support for teacher researcher in our school system. We don't even accept the concept of the teacher as researcher in our field of education. We just have to appreciate that teacher researchers' projects are not interrupted or stopped by any school regulations. I think we do have to raise our voices to go against the many regulations and controls over teachers' research participations. I do believe this would be a critical part of education for all of us. (Jongsoon Choi, 2001, as cited in Lee, 2002).

We believe this quote indicates the problems Korean educators faced as they implemented *Hyun-jang-yeon-gu* (field research) when traditional research methodology was utilized early in educational research history. Although South Korean action research emerged in the early development of the modern South Korean educational system and was practiced actively under the regulation of the Ministry of Education, the discrepancy between action research theory as understood by the Ministry and its practice in school settings was massive; teachers' voices and perspectives simply were disregarded in this early conceptualization of action research. Lee (2002) claimed that there is no *hyun-jang* (field) within *Hyun-jang research* (field-based) in Korea.

Many teachers believed that despite governmental support for *Hyun-jang-yeon-gu* (field research), including the issuing of awards through research competitions, it was usually researchers in higher education who actually conducted the research, with practitioners implementing research findings completed by researchers. Recently, scholars have begun to reconsider this conventional

belief and insist that teachers play a significant role in educational research. Concurrently, more scholars in education gradually incorporated qualitative research methodologies, which were introduced to South Korean academia in the 1980s with important implications for action research. Among rigorous qualitative researchers in the field of education, Lee (2001, 2002) criticized the *hyun-jang-yeon-gu* (field research) practice prevalent in action research, noting that the majority of *hyun-jang-yeon-gu* was aimed at gathering quantitative data through field-based research. They both agreed that using one inquiry method to conduct action research was not appropriate. Furthermore, given the predetermined methodology used in conjunction with the earlier view of action research, the topics of action research projects in the field often did not reflect real classroom issues or teachers' concerns. Most *hyun-jang-yeon-gu* (field research) also lacked clear descriptions of the research context (classroom or school). Finally, *hyun-jang-yeon-gu* (field research) shared in action research competitions did not address the research process clearly, and teachers reported only success stories or positive effects of specific instructional approaches.

Moreover, scholars have begun to criticize the strong connection between action research competitions and the teacher promotion system. Due to this institutional system, few South Korean teachers currently view action research as an opportunity to revisit their teaching approaches and classroom managements through a lens of critical and rigorous research. Rather, most teachers regard action research as a way to earn 'points' in the promotion system (Lee, 2013). In the year 2000, there was considerable published criticism of the current action research competitions and their link to the promotion system (Lee, 2013). In Kim's (2000) survey study, 63% of 380 elementary school teachers answered that they would engage in action research since it is beneficial for promotion and wages, while only 34.8% agreed that participation in action research is linked to professional growth. Similar results were also found in Ryu's (2007) study: 58.7% of the survey participants of 417 elementary school teachers conducted action research to earn promotion points and 60.3% of these teachers admitted that they would not continue any action research after their promotion. Moreover, only 39.7% of the survey participants reported interest in being continuously involved in any type of action research after earning points for promotion.

These critiques eventually led to serious discussions by educators on reevaluating the meaning of action research in the education field, which then led to the new translated term, *Sil-haeng-yeon-gu* (execution research). The new term represented not only a different translation for action but also a shift to a new paradigm as this term clearly embraced the various qualitative research methodologies that were beginning to surface in field research. Advocates for *sil-haeng-yeon-gu* (execution research) drew from the action research work of Elliott (1991), Noffke (2009), Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), and Reason and Bradbury (2001), with these works influencing the shaping of a new paradigm of action research in South Korea (Lee, 2002, 2013). *Sil-haeng-yeon-gu*

(execution research) carried the meaning of *research and practice* simultaneously and emphasized the *participation* of teachers in research.

Lee (2013) listed four distinct characteristics of *sil-haeng-yeon-gu* (execution research) in comparison to *hyun-jang-yeon-gu* (field research) as described below. First, *sil-haeng-yeon-gu* (execution research) supports the ‘*cycle of teacher inquiry*’ in classroom research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). *Sil-haeng-yeon-gu* (execution research) encourages teacher researchers to continue the inquiry process even after the completion of an action research project. Second, teachers should assume the role of researcher in *sil-haeng-yeon-gu* (execution research). *Hyun-jang-yeon-gu* (field research) often viewed a teacher researcher as the third person in its descriptions, which meant that despite their participation, teachers had secondary roles in projects or were simply helping to collect data. However, *sil-haeng-yeon-gu* (execution research) promotes the use of first person, *I*, in research reports. This way, practitioners gain a deeper understanding of other practitioners’ narratives of educational concerns, as they reflect on their classroom situations in search of appropriate solutions for their issues. Teachers’ reflections are highly emphasized in *sil-haeng-yeon-gu* (execution research). The teacher reflection part was completely missing in the previous *hyun-jang-yeon-gu* (field research), while *sil-haeng-yeon-gu* (execution research) focuses more on the process of the study as well as the individual’s self-awareness, which are revealed in research findings. Finally, participation and collaboration are two major components in conducting *sil-haeng-yeon-gu* (execution research), meaning that active participation of the teacher in the research is required. The new understanding of action research brings more opportunities for teachers to collaborate on research and share findings with others. Sharing means presenting their research findings to a group of educators while rethinking their research process and gaining different perspectives.

An increasing number of action research studies using the new term, *sil-haeng-yeon-gu* (execution research) have been seen in South Korean academic circles since 2000. Clear examples of this development can be observed in the field of early childhood education in South Korea.

21.3.1 Early Childhood Education

Unlike the elementary and secondary education systems, Korean preschool education (birth through five years) relies primarily on private institutions, and participation in the action research competition is not required for teacher promotion. Thus, the emergence of action research in the preschool sector was not as affected by the early phase of *hyun-jang-yeon-gu* (field research). According to Lee (2013), there are more *sil-haeng-yeon-gu* (execution research) studies in early childhood education than *hyun-jang-yeon-gu* in the titles of field-based research published since the 2000s. In regard to the themes of *sil-haeng-yeon-gu* in early childhood education, the majority of studies have focused on improving teaching by providing evidence of effectiveness of teaching strategies (Bae & Lee, 2012; Kim & Jo, 2007; Park & Ohm, 2009; Seo & Kim, 2012; Yang,

2009). Another common research topic has been the impact of reflection on teaching practices. This type of research, while the research conclusions were about teaching improvements, highlighted the participants' reflections on the experience associated with action research and what it meant to their teaching practices (Ahn & Seo, 2013; Lee, 2010; Kim & Park, 2011). The common themes for *sil-haeng-yeon-gu* in early childhood education regarded improving classroom teaching, increasing interaction between teachers and children, and revising current curricula.

21.3.2 *Some Limitations in Korean Action Research*

Little Korean action research has investigated questions and issues on institutional change or social change. This suggests that at present, action research in South Korea, including the current *sil-haeng-yeon-gu* (execution research), neither extend beyond classroom issues, nor pertain to larger social issues (Zeichner, 2001). The majority of action researchers continues to believe that action research is beneficial and effective only in improving teaching practice and does not extend further to other educational and social issues. This is an area that warrants further discussion among action researchers.

It is crucial to note that educators have considered action research from a primarily narrow perspective of classroom teaching and not as a comprehensive inquiry approach. University faculty and administrators have conducted little action research. Many published journal articles on action research coauthored by university faculty exist today, but when reviewing the role of researchers in these studies, university faculty did not have much of a role except to support or cowrite the research (Lee, 2013). Yet, the global action research literatures encourage school personnel, such as administrators, counselors, and teachers, as well as students to play roles in educational and social changes (Pine, 2009). Certainly the literature of participatory research, 'a collaborative approach to research that equitably involves all participants in the research process and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings' (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003, p. 4), points in this direction. In Korean education, although action research has been considered essential increasingly to the extent that educators have deemed that projects should engage all students in classrooms and schools and that action for change should be included in the inquiry process, *sil-haeng-yeon-gu* (execution research) has not yet embraced the notion that action research can influence social conditions or relate educational issues with other sectors of society.

21.4 ALTERNATIVES: TEACHER-INITIATED ORGANIZATION TO SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Because public school teachers in South Korea are still required to participate in action research competition for promotion points, some teachers have turned to teacher-initiated teacher associations as a way to increase proactive

engagements to improve their teaching practice and solve classroom issues. These associations are grassroots organizations where teachers have formed small group meetings in different regions with those who share similar interests and concerns on teaching and classroom issues in particular subject areas (e.g. history, Korean language, and science). The two most active grassroots teacher associations are the Association of Korean History Teachers (AKHT) and the Association of Korean Language Teachers (AKLT), which were founded, respectively, in 1988 and 1996. AKHT has about 2,000 members who share lessons, curricula, and action research results in small regional group meetings as well as online (http://okht.njoyschool.net/club/service/cl_main.asp?gid=10000052). It has developed its own research center where teachers actively engage with cooperative action research on various topics. AKLT (<http://www.naramal.or.kr/cms/default.aspx>) for Korean language teachers is very similar in terms of organization and management of the association, mostly following the format of the AKHT. Both organizations have emerged from local and regional small group meetings and are currently the most influential teacher-initiated organizations in the country.

These two organizations have been quite active, publishing books, teaching materials, and educational resources. These resources are usually the products of small group meetings and their research centers' study outcomes. Oftentimes, teachers use these books and materials in their classrooms (Lee, 2013). With the interest of selling their published products, they organize and coordinate workshops for professional development, inviting educational scholars for collaborative research projects and consulting with other educators about investing in small group meetings to expand their work to areas where groups are yet to be formed. Some scholars (Lee, 2002; Lee, et al., 2005) have claimed that these teacher-initiated, grassroots organizations and their activities cover the lack of proactive teacher participation in the current practice of *hyun-jang-yeon-gu* (field research) despite most of their activities not being in the form of action research. The members of these teacher associations do not aim particularly to publish their works in formal educational journals; they often share their creative work related to action research on their websites.

Many educational scholars have suggested that educators pay more attention to the works of these associations because there is a need to initiate self-reflective teaching practices and professional growth (Lee, 2007, 2011; Lee, Shim, Kim, & Lee, 2012). Other scholars strongly suggest that it is crucial to provide substantial support for these self-initiated teacher associations. They have further indicated a need for a systematic partnership between these association and teacher education programs in higher education, as the latter play a significant role for pre-service and in-service education in sustaining the quality of teaching and strengthening teacher professionalism (Lee, 2002, 2013).

21.5 CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, we described how educational action research in South Korea has developed over six decades. Little research has been published in Western academic journals about the development of teacher action research in South Korea. Similar to China and Singapore, action research was introduced and implemented in South Korea over a relatively long period of time. In fact, the development of action research in South Korea has taken place over an even longer period than seen in China or Singapore (Hughes & Yuan, 2005; Peidong & Laidlaw, 2006; Salleh, 2006). Hopefully, this chapter will help scholars and practitioners gain some insight into how action research emerged and has been practiced in the Korean educational, cultural, and social contexts, and better understand the issues being faced by Korean educators supporting the further development of action research.

Educational action research in South Korea initially evolved in a top-down manner as was found in a similar context of action research development in Singapore (Salleh, 2006). The institutionalized support system for teachers involved in action research in South Korea has created difficulties and dilemmas similar to those associated with action research within imposed and centralized education systems in general (Salleh, 2006). This situation motivated the development of teacher-initiated organizations in South Korea as these aimed to support teachers in facilitating their own development and growth as confident teachers who are knowledgeable in the content of the subjects they teach. Mainly these voluntary association websites became a place for teachers to share their curriculum ideas, materials, and resources on specific subject areas (e.g. Korean history and Korean language) as well as gathering their voices on educational issues and government policies or decisions. Yet, to date the teacher-initiated organizations have not shown strong support for teachers becoming engaged in any reflective practice inquiries like action research, which allow individual teachers to have a ‘moment’ and place to review and revisit one’s teachings. Kang and So (2011) claimed the same issue in Korean action research trends since 2000; the majority of current action research is aimed not at the process of a teacher’s growth, but on the effectiveness of teaching outcomes (i.e. learners’ achievements).

Ongoing arguments about different translated terms for action research perhaps reflect those challenges. By revisiting the terms periodically, great efforts have been taken to embrace diverse research perspectives, and to include more teachers in the inquiry research process. However, criticism of the lack of practitioners’ voices and reflections in action research in Korea has continued to grow (Lee, 2002, 2013; Lee et al., 2005). With increasing awareness of the importance of self-reflective and collaborative practices among educators and scholars alike, it is our hope that there will be more opportunities for practitioners as well as scholars to become exposed to and actively engage in action research. These opportunities and advancements will benefit the overall professional growth of educators as well as classroom quality in South Korea.

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Transforming Educational Practice Through Action Research: Three Australian Examples

Janette Bobis and Robyn Ewing

22.1 IN SEARCH OF “UNWELCOME NEWS”

Curricular change comes about in classrooms when teachers engage in inquiry into the nature of their practice, the origins of their understandings, the meaning-making structures they use to construct their professional knowledge and to reconstruct what they know in the light of new understandings and changed perspectives. (Beattie, 1997, p. 8)

The distinctiveness of Australian educational action research has been closely monitored by its advocates (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009; Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014; McTaggart, 1997). A unique feature of its development has been the many professional learning articulations that have relied on school- and university-based partnerships funded by federal and state governments or institutions with some other vested interest in education (Groundwater-Smith & Ewing, 2009). It is this characteristic that led some of its leading advocates to question the adequacy of many programs characterized as action research (Kemmis, 2006). While arguing the capability of action research to tell *unwelcome news*, Kemmis et al. (2014) lament that much educational action research no longer possesses the *critical edge* originally envisioned (e.g., Carr & Kemmis, 1986, 2005).

To examine this regret, we first briefly articulate the core features of action research. We particularly focus on those features that distinguish it from other practitioner research approaches. We also establish the parameters for our subsequent critique of some articulations of action research in Australia.

Described by Kemmis as a “practice-changing practice” (2009, p. 467), action research is not only about generating new knowledge and understanding as in action learning (Revans, 1983): it is charged with transforming profes-

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sional practices that can change the conditions in which those practices occur. Many kinds of action research have emerged over the past decades, mostly due to the varied contexts and aspects that are selected for investigation. This variation has resulted in the recognition of a “family” of action research approaches (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Reason & Bradbury, 2008). Hence, while there is no single definition or approach to conducting action research, there is general agreement about its core features. Educational action research most often involves:

- a concern to improve practices for the benefit of individuals and their communities;
- a continuous and ongoing cyclic process of planning, action, and reflection in a particular context (although sometimes these cycles or phases can be blurred);
- an authentic partnership among practitioners, who actively participate in the research process; and
- practitioners with a desire to be engaged in the research process and see the value/practical purpose of the research.

What distinguishes quality educational action research from other approaches to practitioner research is adopting a critical stance: a desire to challenge and transform schooling to make it more “profoundly educational” than its current form (Kemmis, 2006, p. 461). According to Kemmis (2006), schooling can be defined as the institutionalized processes and practices that intend to train individuals for life in current society without questioning the efficacy and morality of such practices. A teacher might modify her practices, for example, to minimize noise emanating from her classroom because her principal equates too much classroom noise with lack of productive learning. In contrast, “education” is viewed as liberation from the constraints of unjust and unchallenged institutionalized practices of schools and is charged with the task of simultaneously developing individuals and communities for a greater social good. For example, profound educational changes are likely to emanate from a teacher’s decision to question the worth and equity of a long-standing practice to *ability stream* students for learning.

Quality educational action research thus not only involves changing individual teacher’s practices and their immediate outcomes for schooling but also has far-reaching consequences for the very social, political, and educational foundations upon which the practices are built (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, 2005). To do this, it is expected that critical action researchers will be willing to reveal unwelcome news about schooling and so question and disrupt the fruitless institutionalized processes and practices of schools that are used to produce generations of teachers and students who unquestioningly conform to the thinking and practices of their predecessors or to government policy agendas. Programs of research intent on improvements to solely trivial matters of schooling are inadequate, perhaps even a waste of research practitioner time, when there are more pressing concerns that have implications for wider edu

cational re-form (Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009; Huang, 2010; Kemmis, 2006).

In our view, curriculum and educational *re-form* occurs when schools and other educational institutions benefit from changes in educational practices, materials, or organizations that result in increased justice and equity and authentic outcomes for students. Such re-form is valuable on a micro level: a small group of teachers' or an individual teacher's change in beliefs and pedagogical approach can improve experiences and student outcomes at a school. From the outset, it also needs to be acknowledged that change of any real consequence is not a linear event, it is a dynamic process, interactive and ongoing and needs to be initiated at the local level as well as from the top levels of educational administration at the same time (Ewing, 2011, 2014). The iterative nature of the action research process is a highly appropriate tool for ongoing re-form. In many instances, however, if such re-form is to have a larger impact, it will involve a sense of loss and may often cause conflict and confusion for some practitioners: the unwelcome news identified by Kemmis.

How then, do we determine if action research is concerned with issues that are profoundly educational *and* involve real *re-form*? To help address this and other concerns, we consider a series of questions proposed by Kemmis (2006, p. 461) in providing several snapshots of action research:

- What sorts of problems have the investigations addressed?
- What aspects or dimensions of practices, understandings, and situations did they problematize?
- In what way did they make these things problematic?
- Did they problematize things subjectively, from the perspective of particular practitioners or professions, or did they problematize them intersubjectively, opening a communicative space for conversation between co-participants in practices and settings?
- Did they address technical problems about improving schooling or critical questions about education? Or were they about both?

These questions provide us with the parameters within which we are able to examine some historical examples of action research in Australia before concentrating on some more recent examples in our current Australian education context.

22.2 LOOKING BACK TO SEE FORWARD: SOME AUSTRALIAN ACTION RESEARCH MILESTONES

Our aim in this section is to provide a brief description of some major education research projects that have played a critical role in the history of educational inquiry in Australia and that have centered on action research methodologies (notably Groundwater-Smith, 1998; Sachs, 1997). We briefly explore the objectives and outcomes of these milestones in the Australian action research landscape before introducing three contemporary action research examples.

The Project for Enhancing Effective Learning (PEEL) was one of the first Australian examples of professional learning initiatives utilizing a collaborative action research approach. It began in Victoria with a partnership of secondary teachers and academics who were concerned that so much student learning was passive and unreflective. Established in 1985 and growing out of the works of Carr and Kemmis (1986), Grundy and Kemmis (1981), and Kemmis and McTaggart (1981), it is still in action today. PEEL projects research classroom approaches that will stimulate and support active, autonomous student learning and those that will build students' metacognitive skills. PEEL teachers meet on a regular basis, in their own time, to share and analyze experiences, ideas, and new practices. Although unfunded, these collaborative processes and structures have enabled the production of books, the journal *PEEL SEEDS*, conferences, professional learning courses, and a large database of teaching practice available as an online subscription. The website (www.peelweb.org) provides more details and a range of news, information, and resources.

Innovative Links was a large-scale government-funded project beginning in 1994 and focusing on the professional practice and curriculum concerns of school communities with the support of a tertiary mentor (Sachs, 1997). Using an action research/teacher concerns model, the tertiary mentor worked in partnership with the teachers from the school community. For example, the partnership that began at Curl Curl North Primary School as an Innovative Links Project in 1995 to address teachers' concerns about the implementation of the new English syllabus lasted 15 years and addressed a range of curriculum questions (Ewing, 2002; Aubusson, Ewing, & Hoban, 2009).

The Australian National Schools Network (ANSN) (<http://www.ansn.edu.au>) is an organization that focuses on school re-form and improvement using action research methodologies. From its inception in 1991, it brought together teachers, schools, university faculties, business members, and teacher unions with government and non-government employers to re-think learning and pedagogy and the way schools are organized. Originally funded by the Commonwealth Government, the ANSN continues and is now entirely funded by its members.

Pedagogy, Education, and Praxis is a cross-institutional, national research collaborative team that was established in 2005. It led to a new *Action Research and Practice Theory Program* of research spanning 2011–2015 (Kemmis & Smith, 2008). The program aims to establish cross-national action research teams that explore particular issues in action research that fall under one of three themes: creating communicative spaces, partnerships and recognition, or responding critically to changing historical conditions (e.g., Kemmis & Mutton, 2012). Many of its Australian-based projects rely on funding from government research sources.

Each of these projects played (or continue to play) a critical role not only in exemplifying the nature of educational action research but also in shaping educational inquiry in Australia. While the issues addressed in each project varied, they all based their aims on the underlying principle that to transform

practice so as to improve the quality of outcomes, the unwelcome or uncomfortable truths must become the basis for re-conceptualizing future practices (Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015).

22.3 CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN EDUCATIONAL ACTION RESEARCH IN ACTION

In this section, we provide a succinct examination of three contemporary action research initiatives based on early childhood and primary school contexts in Australia. Each example was selected because one of the authors had, or still have, a close connection with the project. We also consider the projects represent the nature and scope of different action research initiatives that typically occur in Australian education contexts: in preservice teacher education programs; unfunded school-level teacher-driven projects; small-grant projects funded by a professional organization; and larger government-funded research projects. Our aim here is to not merely re-iterate descriptions of research findings reported in other public reports but to examine their objectives and outcomes in relation to the reflective questions presented in the previous section and to evaluate the claim that much action research has lost its critical edge and, hence, its ability to transform practice (Kemmis, 2006). Prior to addressing these questions, we provide some background information for each action research project to allow the context to be understood. We also highlight some of each project's findings, differentiating between those that deal with purely technical schooling issues and those concerned with real educational re-form.

22.3.1 *Preservice Early Childhood Teacher Action Research Project*

Background During the final semester of a Master of Teaching in Early Childhood (birth to five), the University of Sydney preservice teachers undertake an action research project. They must identify an issue that, when studied and acted upon, will be beneficial to their own professional practice and may also benefit the context in which they are working. Findings of all action research projects are then presented at a post-internship conference. The project examined here was conducted by Ling Wu (Wu, 2014), with 49 three-five-year-old preschoolers from various cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

What Sort of Problem Did the Investigation Address? During her internship, Ling became concerned that some of the preschoolers did not appear to be engaging in dramatic play very often. She also noted that some did not use the cubby house at all. Ling's review of relevant literature had convinced her of the importance of dramatic play in developing children's sense of identity and engagement in learning and communication skills. She designed her project to investigate whether changing the physical spaces for play by introducing

different themes might encourage more dramatic play. The site chosen for her intervention was the preschool's cubby house, and the intervention involved changing the physical setups over two cycles: from an unstructured context to a post office setup and then to a library. With the agreement and participation of the Director and the team teachers, the early career researcher, Ling, was both the facilitator of the project and the main observer.

What Aspects or Dimensions of Practices, Understandings, and Situations Did Ling Problematize? Often, preschool teachers and caregivers and parents assume it is best to leave children to their own devices when playing. In other contexts, young children are given little time to play. Ling's research was exploring whether at times there needed to be more scaffolding of play situations. Her research aimed to gauge both participation in cubby house play and document the kind of play behaviors that occurred. Observations recorded how and when children changed the environment, how they identified and used the materials provided, and whether they engaged in dramatic play.

Research questions included:

- How frequently were children participating in non-dramatic and dramatic plays both inside and in the cubby house?
- What kind of play behavior did the children engage in?
- Was there any relationship between physical setups and children's engagement in dramatic play?

In What Way Did Ling Make These Issues Problematic? Initially, Ling gathered baseline data to gain an understanding of the pattern of children's participation, emerging learning, and interest during cubby house play from 10 a.m. to 12 noon each morning. Two physical setups, a post office followed by a library, were then planned and introduced sequentially based on the children's interest. The second theme was specifically chosen in response to the children's ideas, particularly those children who had previously shown little or no interest in dramatic play. Props that were largely symbolic were added gradually in response to the children's questions and emerging interest in these themes.

Did Ling Problematize Things Subjectively, or Did She Problematize Them Intersubjectively, Opening a Communicative Space Between Co-participants? Ling opened up intersubjective communicative spaces by specifically listening to the children's voices and responding by consciously creating a new physical setup that met their expressed interests.

Did Ling Address Technical Problems About Improving Schooling or Critical Questions About Education? Or Were They About Both? This research specifically addressed the importance of providing places and spaces that encouraged increased engagement in dramatic play. The teacher-researcher involved the children in the process by listening carefully to their talk to gauge their inter-

ests and responding in the next iteration of the research process thus honoring the children's voices.

Results and Unwelcome News There was an overall increase in cubby house participation and duration over the ten weeks of the study. A larger number of children in the group were engaged in this activity, including some who had not participated at all during the week that the baseline data were collected. The study also found a rising trend in overall play (from 20.3% in the baseline week compared with 79.7%) in the final week of data collection, and the percentage of dramatic play doubled. Interestingly, as prop provision increased so did the thematic dramatic play. *Athematic* dramatic play was mostly initiated by the children. They spontaneously created their own themes and expanded their own play. During the second cycle, there was also a marked increase in collaborative dramatic play. The research underlined the importance of listening to every child's voice and emerging interests. The increasing child-initiated themed and athematic play also highlighted the children's imagination and creativity.

The findings impacted powerfully on the preschool teachers in the center as well as the parents. They began to recognize the importance of changing and structuring physical setups both inside and outside in the cubby house. The early career teacher found the research process critical in underlining the need to listen to the children's voices as well as the need to design and vary physical play contexts.

22.3.2 *Action Research Funded by a Professional Association*

Background Over 15 years (1995–2010), Curl Curl North Public School, a rapidly growing primary school situated on Sydney's northern beaches participated in a series of action research and action learning projects designed to engage children more productively in deep literacy processes through the use of educational drama. This example focuses on one project funded by a research grant from the Australian Literacy Educators Association in 2009 (Warhurst et al., 2010) and led by one of the school's Assistant Principals, Janelle Warhurst.

What Sort of Problem Did the Investigation Address? The action research project aimed to address students' comprehension issues. Teachers were keen to explore their teaching of comprehension and find strategies that would *improve students' critical literacy outcomes through teaching imaginatively*. The seven teachers involved worked on each grade across the primary school (Kindergarten to Year Six) and determined to use contemporary children's literature with a repertoire of pedagogical practices (Louden et al., 2005) that embedded a range of arts processes and experiences and aligned with the New South Wales Department of Education and Training (2003) model of pedagogy.

What Aspects or Dimensions of Practices Understandings, and Situations Did They Problematize? Designed to challenge some traditional beliefs about the teaching of Literacy and English, the intervention aimed to enhance the participating teachers' knowledge and practice about student engagement and engagement-supportive teaching practices. The research questions included:

- How do we help students to respond meaningfully to what they read?
- Why is it important that we as teachers of primary children listen to and process the responses of our students to what they are reading?
- How do teachers know which books are authentic and worthwhile texts for close study in the classroom?
- How can we use quality arts processes to more effectively encourage students' deep understanding?

Teachers believed much traditional literacy teaching was stifling children's creativity and acknowledged Gleeson's (2007, p. 4) assertion that reading should "open the mind, to enlarge the experience, to broaden the horizon of the reader." They wanted to find ways to encourage their students to take time for exploration, experimentation, and play and viewed arts processes and experiences as tools for literacy learning.

In What Way Did They Make These Things Problematic? Several teachers supported by an academic partner analyzed student engagement and achievement data collected from surveys, standardized tests, and teacher-designed activities. The information was used to stimulate discussion about the school context and existing literacy practices and policies. In each of the case-study classrooms, a small group of students was profiled at various stages over the year-long duration of the project. This led to discussion about ineffective teaching of comprehension. Teachers felt traditional comprehension questions and activities often encouraged only surface acceptance of meaning and did not require students to explore an author's assumptions and the perspectives presented. Teachers wanted their students to have the confidence to be able to view texts from a variety of different viewpoints and to be able to interpret various layers of meaning. This change in teacher understanding led to a change in their literacy pedagogy.

Did they problematize things subjectively, or did they problematize them inter-subjectively, opening a communicative space between co-participants? As stated by a participating teacher, "I believe we set out to challenge ourselves, try something new and think about our practice. I believe we also set out to motivate, inspire and support each other." Teachers used questions adapted from *Booktalk* (Chambers, 1991, pp. 170–173) to provide a scaffold for deeper student responses. Workshops involved group discussions, professional learning activities, and collaborative planning. They thus opened communicative

space for professional dialogue as well as more communicative opportunities with students. In time, some parents also engaged in the conversation because they had noticed changes in their children's approach to literacy learning.

The changes in learning outcomes for students in the classes of the teachers involved in this project included increased motivation and engagement, richer vocabulary, heightened use of metaphors in writing, and awareness of the relationship between imagery and meaning. Participant teachers asserted that their students were more confident and engaged in their approach to learning and more willingness and capacity to listen to and value the contribution of others. Substantive communication was evident in all classrooms as well as deeper understanding of narrative including characters, themes, and structure. Teachers of classes K-6 mentioned the development of creativity and imagination throughout the project. Improvement of descriptive, narrative, and response writing in classes was documented and substantiated. Teachers compared their professional learning process as a group to theater practice (Miller & Saxton, 2004, p. 3). There have been elements of community, empathy, and shared meaning.

Did They Address Technical Problems About Improving Schooling or Critical Questions About Education? Or Were They About Both? The project addressed critical questions about education: an expanded understanding of literacy pedagogy. Teachers believed they had witnessed improved student engagement, increased motivation and creativity in learning through the project, and that these findings demonstrated that creative arts activities could take literacy beyond talking, listening, reading, and writing and into critical literacy including observation, analysis, interpretation, and "making sense of their (students') world" (Lee & Fradd, 1998, as cited in Miller & Saxton, 2004, p. 2). One teacher wrote:

I have gone from using simple comprehension worksheets with disconnected texts of varying quality, to using carefully selected, quality texts and stimulating understanding through drama, art, writing, basic movie making, questioning and a multitude of other strategies.

Results and Unwelcome News The intervention disrupted the established beliefs and literacy practices of individual teachers and led to interest from other staff members. Sharing of the activities and student outcomes resulted in changes to some school-level practices. The teacher team believed it was imperative that they helped others understand this expanded understanding of literacy, that it must encompass students' cultural comprehension and self-expression and foster innovation and creativity. The project teachers presented their findings at a national conference, and their work was published in a journal for primary teachers.

22.3.3 *Large-Scale Government-Funded Action Research Project*

Background St Clarence Primary School took part in a large Australian Research Council-funded project (2007–2010) (e.g., Bobis, Way, Anderson, & Martin, 2016) designed to monitor the mathematics achievement and engagement of 4,383 Year Five to Eight students in an Australian capital city school district. Grade level mean scores showed that Year Five and Six students from St. Clarence obtained above average mathematics achievement scores, but scored lower than average in terms of engagement. Students were considered *at risk* of becoming disengaged from mathematics. The school principal and upper primary teachers chose to work with mathematics educators as part of an action research process designed to improve student engagement in mathematics.

What Sort of Problem Did the Investigation Address? The teachers noted that many of their Year Five and Six students, including those considered to be their most capable mathematicians, demonstrated little interest in the subject and often actively avoided doing mathematics.

What Aspects or Dimensions of Practices, Understandings and Situations Did They Problematize? The small team of teachers and their principal were grouped with mathematics educators to explore and question beliefs and knowledge about student engagement with a collective goal of developing engagement-supportive teaching practices. Research questions included:

- What are the causes of disengagement in mathematics of Year Five and Six students?
- To what extent and in what ways can we change our pedagogy to positively impact on student engagement in mathematics?

In What Way Did They Make These Things Problematic? Six teachers worked with three mathematics educators to analyze student engagement and achievement data collected from surveys, national achievement tests, and other teacher-designed activities. The information was used to stimulate discussion about the school context, existing practices and policies such as the use of streaming students for mathematics instruction, and to highlight areas of student need.

Did They Problematize Things Subjectively or Did They Problematize Them Intersubjectively, Opening a Communicative Space Between Co-participants? To initiate dialogue and collaboration, workshops facilitated by mathematics educators involved group discussions, collaborative activities, and argumentation. For example, to challenge teachers' beliefs regarding achievement and engagement in mathematics, teachers worked collaboratively to arrange a set of cards labeled with various student characteristics (e.g., boy/girl; slow/fast worker, etc.) according to whether they described a student who was typically "good" or "bad" at mathematics and whether they would be engaged or not engaged

in mathematics. Teachers justified the placement of labels and could challenge decisions made by other teachers. The discourse that ensued caused teachers to individually and collectively reflect on their beliefs and practices surrounding student achievement and engagement in mathematics. During one such session, a year-five teacher reflected on her own and the school's practices of streaming students: "Maybe I don't challenge them enough to allow them to show me what they can do. Is this an implication of us streaming? Are we creating a top and bottom by arranging the children in two different classes?"

Commercially available classroom video was used to further elicit and challenge teacher thinking about engaging pedagogy. The mathematics educators then facilitated discussions requiring teachers to give feedback on their own practices for engaging students in mathematics and to identify personal goals for exploration in the classroom and improvement of their teaching practices.

Did They Address Technical Problems About Improving Schooling or Critical Questions About Education? Or Were They About Both? In order to address the problems related to student engagement, teachers selected, trialed, and evaluated the impact of a range of new teaching tools and strategies. Some of these changes solely addressed issues of "schooling," such as student attentiveness during mathematics lessons. For instance, to increase student involvement in lessons, teachers introduced mini-whiteboards in an attempt to encourage *all* students to think and record their responses to class-level questions. While the desired technical outcome of increasing student participation in answering questions was achieved, the teachers observed that their level of questioning rarely challenged students' thinking beyond what had previously been the case. Other changes to practice required a whole new educational mind-set about what constituted "effective" mathematics education. Teachers who trialed team-teaching and peer-teaching techniques became critical of streaming practices in the school and reflected on their own levels of confidence in mathematics content and pedagogy to enact some of the instructional goals they had jointly agreed upon. A teacher who incorporated a series of reflective prompts to encourage student autonomy during problem solving re-conceptualized her approach to teaching mathematics from one dominated by work sheets and solitary quiet work to one involving argumentation, communication, higher-order thinking, and collaborative problem solving.

Results and Unwelcome News The intervention disrupted the established beliefs and practices of individual teachers and some school-level practices. The long-standing school practice of ability streaming students for mathematics instruction was now considered partly responsible for widening the gap between high- and low-achieving students. Teachers found that students placed in lower-performing classes were not provided with the challenges needed to develop their mathematical thinking: expectations for such students had also been kept low. As a result, streaming of students was stopped, and teachers experimented with other practices to cater to children's strengths and

needs, including teachers moving students to different rooms to allow team-teaching of mathematics across and between grades as a second cycle of their action research work. Further actions included: Less mathematically confident teachers partnered with teachers possessing a greater degree of mathematical expertise; Teachers visited classrooms of a neighboring school with a reputation for implementing practices that were supportive of student engagement in mathematics; Teachers trialed, evaluated, and adapted new practices with the advice of teachers from the neighboring school and a system-level mathematics consultant who provided classroom support. Hence, the communicative spaces were broadened to include teacher voices from other local school communities and the wider education system.

22.4 REAL RE-FORM OR ISSUES OF SCHOOLING? REFLECTION ON THE THREE CASES

Given our responses to each of the reflective questions posed, this section briefly considers the extent to which the above examples of classroom-based action research achieved or have the potential to achieve, real educational re-form. In so doing, we highlight commonalities in the three examples and explore interesting nuances among them. Of particular interest to us, however, is whether a seemingly trivial schooling issue can give rise to a more profound educational one.

As is characteristic of action research, each project started with a desire to improve “what is happening *here*” (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). Ling Wu, a relative newcomer to the preschool, noticed the infrequent occurrence of certain types of play—an aspect considered critical to young children’s overall development. While teachers at Curl Curl North aimed to improve student outcomes in terms of their literacy skills, those at St. Clarence identified student engagement in mathematics as a concern. In each case, school authorities could have quickly and easily instituted changes to teacher practices and school routines to address the perceived issues, perhaps drawing upon familiar practices used in a previous education context or one espoused in curriculum documents. Instead, steps toward resolution were slowed as current circumstances were problematized through action research processes involving consultations with students and parents, problematic discourse among teachers and, in the case of Curl Curl North and St. Clarence, with academic partners from universities and participants from the wider educational community.

Due to the diverse reasons for their very conceptions, each of the projects had a unique time frame in which they were conducted. However, the duration of an action research project is, by itself, no indicator of its ability to reveal profound educational issues or to make a real difference that will benefit students (Johnson, 2012). Dictated by the length of her internship, Ling Wu’s research was conducted over a period of just six weeks. Despite this, the time frame was sufficient for structural changes to positively impact the frequency as well as

the nature of preschool children's play. So notable was the transformation in the play of the children that it impacted the pedagogical beliefs and practices of other teachers in the preschool—a consequence beyond that initially conceived by Ling Wu. Operating in a similar time frame, the action research project at St. Clarence unveiled a complex set of issues relating to individual teachers' beliefs and pedagogy and to whole school practices surrounding mathematics instruction. Unlike Ling Wu's situation, the academic partners and government funding supporting the St. Clarence project provided concentrations of time, expertise, and physical resources that enabled the participants to delve into issues more deeply and quickly than would otherwise be possible.

According to Ado (2013), it is an educator's involvement in the cyclic action research process that ultimately results in their systematic examination and reflection upon their own practices. This time-consuming process is justified on the premise that the resultant changes to teachers' practices will benefit their students (Hine, 2013). In each of the cases presented, the iterative process of action research began by addressing seemingly localized issues with the intention of benefiting students. Such a process led the way to more significant issues being revealed—the often unwelcome news of education. For instance, investigations into poor student engagement in mathematics at St. Clarence highlighted the inequity and unproductiveness of streaming students for instruction based on their prior achievement. It is often not until we start to scratch the surface of seemingly trivial issues of schooling that more profound educational issues are revealed. Only then can these issues begin to be addressed. Such is the power of action research to truly *re-form* practices.

22.5 COMPELLING ISSUES CONFRONTING THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF EDUCATIONAL ACTION RESEARCH

While the previous examples and discussion may give the impression that these projects worked well and required little effort on the part of participants, in reality, there are many challenges for action researchers with progress often messy and uneven. Drawing upon the presented examples and other relevant literature, we now highlight a number of issues that challenge the future of educational action research in Australia.

22.5.1 *An Increasing Compliance Mentality*

There is a need for practitioner and researcher resilience given that Australian education is one of a number of western education systems characterized by increasing politicization and over-emphasis on technical accountability and control. Groundwater-Smith and Mockler (2009) suggest that the rhetoric of inquiry into practice may be used by governments, systems, and managers as a tool for ensuring compliance instead of as a way of transforming practice through renewal of professional learning. While non-compliance of seemingly

technical issues of schooling can result in penalties, action research can provide us with alternatives—although they may not always be the most convenient

22.5.2 *Time Limitations*

Related to the first issue, is the time-consuming nature of action research in an environment with increasing pressures of accountability and ever-expanding responsibilities of teachers. Without external support, the process of action research can be difficult. At St. Clarence and Curl Curl North, external funding provided teachers with time needed to meet, reflect, and communicate with each other and with academics in the respective fields of mathematics and literacy.

22.5.3 *Issues of Capacity*

Participant researchers need the capacity to conduct action research. This includes the ability to ask difficult questions about professional practice, tolerate ambiguities in findings, and to re-frame the project after careful reflection. Funded projects are often supported by academic partners who have the knowledge and skills needed to conduct research, but many unfunded school-initiated projects can falter when participants lack the necessary research skills. As part of her initial teacher education, Ling Wu was trained in the action research process. More importantly, she was supported in her research endeavors by encouraging colleagues and a university mentor.

22.5.4 *Cyclical Nature of Action Research*

The dynamic and iterative nature of action research is in itself a challenge. The initial research aims and questions may change as the practice of action research changes the context with each iteration. This was the case at St. Clarence, where issues of student engagement in mathematics changed to issues surrounding school practices about streaming students according to prior achievement. Hence, the issue at the start of a project may evolve as new understandings are revealed and changes implemented—the messy nature of this evolution can be an overwhelming challenge for many would-be action researchers. Given the complexity of schools and increasing expectations and priorities they question about when to stop the iterative process of an action research cycle is also a challenge. As Groundwater-Smith and Irwin (2011) remind us, action research is not for the fainthearted.

22.5.5 *Sustaining Innovations*

Unproductiveness can “creep” back (Kemmis et al., 2014). What is initially innovative can become obsolete or stale as circumstances change. There is a need for continual disruption of the status quo, the taken-for-granted. As a

dynamic, ever-evolving process, action research can help prevent unproductive or unjust practices creeping back.

22.6 CONCLUSION

As demonstrated in our analysis of three examples, an action research methodology can empower practitioner researchers to facilitate changes that are educationally significant in their personal contexts and contribute to wider educational re-form. We have also argued that, through the process of action research, seemingly technical issues of schooling can reveal more critical issues—unwelcome news—and enable more penetrating re-form.

We believe it is essential that educational practices be regularly disrupted; it is an important part of being a reflective practitioner and activist professional (Sachs, 1997). To this end, we need “disrupters”—those who will remind us to critically examine the taken for granted aspects of schooling to avoid complacency or the ongoing implementation of those practices and policies that are unjust. The practices that are disrupted, examined, and re-formed today will need to be regularly scrutinized in the future as contexts change and we learn more about how students learn.

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Action Research Networks in Local and Global Contexts

Introduction to Action Research Networks in Local and Global Contexts

Margaret M. Riel

ORGANIZATIONAL

Work is largely dependent on a mix of the formal and informal relationships that make up a community. Here, we benefit from insights of social networking to highlight formal and informal structures of organizational efforts. A variety of social network structures currently operating in the global action research community is illustrated in the chapters of this section of the Handbook. The authors of these chapters examine the role of networks, both local and global, in extending the reach and interconnections of action research activity. Our goal is to deepen understanding of the histories and current practices of the networks of the global action research community, while provoking new ideas about how to leverage social network structures and infrastructures further.

Although most often local in nature, action research moves well beyond localized contexts of action and reflection because action researchers share their knowledge, innovative practices, and evolving theories leading to a complex knowledge network over time. What makes this possible in today's world is the wide range of communication and transportation technologies: Communication technology externalizes knowledge and transportation moves either the community to a place of sharing or the knowledge directly to the members of the community. The knowledge that action researchers create is shared in meetings, conferences, study days, informal discussions, and more formally in journals and handbooks like this one. This third section of the

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Handbook focuses on networks, both local and global, and their role in extending the reach and interconnections of action research activity.

Networks provide structure to group exchanges, and social network analysis explores the ties and relationships that regulate the flow of knowledge and expertise throughout the structure (Daly, 2010; Penuel & Riel, 2007). This section of the Handbook conveys the history of partnerships and communities that support the sharing of action research knowledge and expertise. It begins with an example of local school–university–community partnerships and how such partnerships support the growth of action research (Thomas, Chap. 23). It closes with the 40-year history of the Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN), a group that has paved the way for many younger organizations (Balogh, McAteer, & Handley, Chap. 25). In between these accounts are compelling examples of action research networking.

Network analysis can help us to understand (1) how expertise, information, practices, and resources flow from person to person within structural groups and subgroups and (2) how the interactive structure supports or inhibits change (Daly, 2010; Penuel & Riel, 2007; Penuel, Riel, Krause, & Frank, 2009). Action research networking technology creates systems of virtual roads that enable this social capital—resources and expertise embedded in social relations—to move efficiently throughout the community. Trust and respect fuel the transport. While the formal and informal infrastructures of these networks regulate the flow of resources and expertise, lasting change is always the work of communities of people who value and use these resources (Mohrman, Tenkasi, & Mohrman, 2003). Change rarely follows rational predictable paths from expert to novice practitioners, but rather winds through practitioners depending on their position in informal and formal networks. Social network analysis enables us to visualize the strength of ties and flows of information that effect change (Daly, 2010, 2012; Daly & Finnigan, 2010; Penuel et al., 2009).

Thomas (Chap. 23) provides a powerful example of these social ties when she describes how she draws on past students to mentor current students. In this case, the trust and respect she has fostered with past students makes it possible for new students to benefit. Thomas also describes how partnerships in her personal learning network have resulted in a stronger university program and a transformational experience of continual learning.

Whitehead (Chap. 24) advocates for a specific form of action research that is values-driven and results in evolving “living theories” of learning and teaching. Using this approach, Whitehead has established a Practitioner-Researcher Discussion Forum: a place where action researchers can share problems of practice, or evolving ideas, and receive feedback from a community that cares deeply about this approach to action research. In this second example of networking, knowledge and practice travel by way of technology (electronic gatherings) rather than interpersonal exchanges in face-to-face settings. The role of these exchanges and partnerships is to push us beyond our own myopia in order to deepen our understanding of how ideas of colleagues in different places, while similar, are also different in ways that educate us.

The remaining chapters in this section detail the histories, goals, projects, and visions of change of six major international networks. The temporal development and activity of these networks are outlined in Fig. P.1.

Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) The leadership of CARN is provided by seven volunteers in the UK, and the formal structures for sharing knowledge and expertise include bulletins, a peer-reviewed journal, and conferences. CARN began in 1976 with support from a research grant with the goal of radically changing educational research by placing teachers’ own investigations of classroom practices at the center of educational research. In 2003, when university funding was no longer available, CARN shifted to a membership-supported organization. Shortly after this, they instituted Study Days, a structure for informal knowledge sharing. As the authors of Chap. 25 explain, Study Days provided regional groups with opportunities to visit action research sites where “the flows of knowledge” could be examined and enriched.

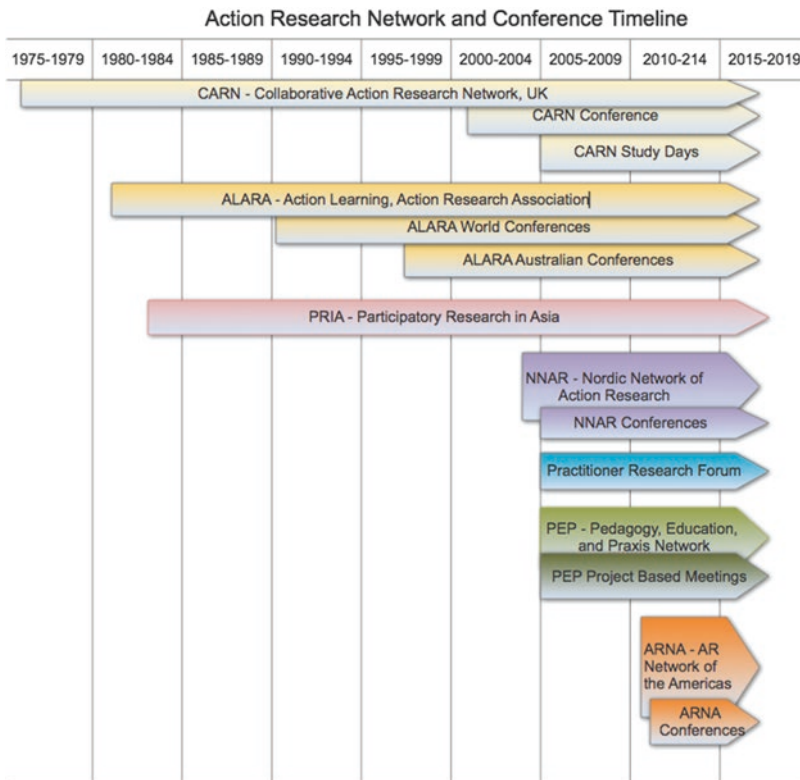


Fig. P.1 Action Research Networking Timeline (Note that the university–school–community partnerships in the Thomas Chapter are not shown in the chart but represents the many local efforts of action research networking that have occurred throughout time.)

Action Learning and Action Research Association (ALARA) Based in Australia, ALARA is an incorporated “voluntary association” with a worldwide membership. Formed in the 1980s, the ALARA network combined streams of interest among professionals working in higher education and organization learning and development. The interests and corresponding involvements included action learning, action research, and process management. The group, initiated by an organizing committee, has developed a matrix structure of meetings, conferences, and other professional development activities that intersect with World Congresses convened every few years. Coupling regional meetings with international meetings encourages shifts and renewals in the flow of resources.

Participatory Action Research in Asia (PRIA) PRIA began as an informal gathering of people at The First International Conference on Participatory Research in 1980 (Tandon, Chap. 27). Forming as a community in 1982, PRIA supports action research for strengthening civil society with democratic participation, self-government, and empowerment of local communities. The intensive linking at multiple levels (local, regional, national, and global) is evident in PRIA’s work in the slums of India (see Rai, Chap. 15). PRIA organizes, hosts, or participates in approximately 50 networking events a year.

Nordic Network for Action Research (NNAR) NNAR was formed in 2004 by researchers and practitioners in Sweden, Norway, and Finland to support action research and professional development in the Nordic region. With the decentralization of educational development starting in the 1990s, university researchers have been working with teachers as equal partners in programs of professional development through collaborative action research. Rönnerman and Salo describe the development of *study circles*, *research circles*, and yearly *dialogue conferences* as settings for exploring practical, methodological, and theoretical issues. The cross-cutting structures of smaller units of study are supporting the Nordic tradition of *bildung*, a cultural expectation for continual learning and improvement.

Pedagogy, Education, and Praxis (PEP) Established in 2006, PEP has been described as a cross-institutional, collaborative research program. PEP was formed when researchers from Australia, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Finland, the UK, Columbia, and the Caribbean gathered at the CARN 2005 conference to investigate the national and international nature, traditions and condition of pedagogy, education and educational praxis. The “matrixed” exchange in this network, and related conferences, provide a vehicle for ideas to cross national boundaries to explore differences in language, interpretation, and practice.

Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) ARNA was created beginning in 2012 following group discussions at the Ninth Annual Action Research Conference convened in San Diego, California, by the Center for Student Support Systems at the University of San Diego. A group of five committed

action researchers constituted themselves as “network initiators” and by the spring of 2013 the group convened its first conference in San Francisco. The ARNA network’s leadership consists of a Coordinating Group and an Executive Committee. This formal structure provides a different way to combine groups and subgroups into a complex matrix. Most active ARNA members participate in more than one group, and most members come together at the network’s yearly conference.

The networked organizations included in this section of the Handbook not only provide venues for sharing action research but they have helped to create conditions that empower people to construct their own knowledge. In this sense, the chapters in this section provide glimpses into how global action research communities can support knowledge democratization. The chapters also bring into focus the potential for a revised world-matrix of action research. Zuber-Skerritt and Passfield (Chap. 26) close their chapter by proposing thus:

We suggest either reciprocal membership or joint membership of a new international network-of-networks that organizes joint World Congresses every two or three years, while retaining separate regional conferences of each association (p. 436).

In a similar vein, ARNA has proposed that its 5th Annual Conference in 2017, to be held in Cartagena, Colombia, be convened as a World Gathering (Rowell and Santos, 2015) to honor the 40th anniversary of the First World Symposium of Action Research held in Cartagena in 1977 (Fals Borda, 1998, 2006) and the 20th anniversary of the Eighth World Congress of Action Research (sponsored by ALARA in 1997). The conference is being organized as an important intersection of many parallel global networking efforts.

Increasingly, action researchers are finding that sharing knowledge globally can support local collaboration and action. Perhaps the popular organizing saying, “Think Globally; Act Locally” is undergoing a transformation to “Think and Act Locally and Globally.” Simultaneously, strong local groups increase the prospects of action research to contribute to an alternative globalization for the twenty-first century (Santos, 2014).

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Networking at the Grassroots Level: Action Research Partnerships in Education

Suzy Thomas

23.1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Action research is often a collaborative process, involving one or more groups of people who are interested in understanding some aspect of themselves or their work more fully, with the specific goal of improving their practice (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, & Maguire, 2003; Creswell, 2008; Gillies, 1993; Mertler, 2012; Mills, 2000; Rowell, 2005, 2006; Sagor, 1992). Action research has also been called a grassroots effort, as opposed to a “top-down” or more traditionally “expert-driven” approach to research (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003; Gillies, 1993; Mertler, 2012; Mills, 2000; Pine, 1981; Rowell, 2005, 2006; Sagor, 1992). One underlying premise is that people in their own setting have a wealth of knowledge and can engage in valuable investigations without the need for outside experts who may not understand the context or issues of the community as well. It is an inherently democratic method of research, and one that relies on local connections and internal expertise, while at the same time being grounded in theory and rigorous in data collection and analysis procedures (Brydon-Miller et al., 2003; Huber & Savage, 2009; Rowell, 2005, 2006). While action research can be carried out within one site on its own, collaborative partnerships present additional benefits worthy of consideration.

A grassroots approach to partnerships involves seeking out collaborative relationships within one’s own community, in order to undertake action research partnerships that will serve the needs of that community and/or contribute to one’s own professional development. Partnerships offer valuable resources for action research within educational and community settings and provide useful pre-service training experiences for graduate students and other begin-

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ning professionals wishing to learn skills in action research. Partnerships also open up opportunities for engaging in effective, long-term, meaningful action research projects that promote tangible change.

This chapter considers the evolution of action research projects and partnerships over a ten-year period, ranging from local efforts in schools to events and developments—both sustained and fleeting—at state, national, and international levels. Although the focus of the action research projects described in this chapter is on educational settings, benefits of partnerships extend to community-based action research as well. The chapter integrates some of the key principles and guiding theories in action research and contextualizes that theoretical foundation within the context of partnerships that support the successful completion of action research projects. The partnership model is suggested as a powerful avenue for developing a lively research agenda that can encompass a wide range of projects. Concrete tools for building sustainable partnerships are presented, along with some of the potential benefits and challenges of working in partnership with others. The chapter concludes with an opportunity for reflection and application of the concepts presented to your own current context and goals regarding action research, through the use of an original model to assist in identifying individual strengths for cultivating research partnerships.

23.2 SCHOOL-UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS AS GRASSROOTS NETWORKING

The school-university partnership has been recognized in the literature as a mutually beneficial agreement between a local college or university and one or more local K-12 schools (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Camizzi, Clark, Yacco, & Goodman, 2009; Clark & Horton-Parker, 2002; Emery & Thomas, 2008; Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2010; Fall & VanZandt, 1997; Hooper & Brandt Britnell, 2012; Palladino, 2005; Thomas & Edgecomb, 2008). The benefits to the college or university include establishing ongoing connections within the community, which define the institution as a provider of valuable services and promote a tangible method for faculty to stay current in their field and to make relevant connections between theory and practice. When I was in graduate school, most of my professors had not set foot in a K-12 school for over 20 years; while they were apt at teaching theory, they were in many ways disconnected from the day-to-day realities of working in schools. I have been committed to maintaining currency in my specialization of school counseling, and the partnerships I have developed through action research activities have played a major role in upholding that commitment.

In addition to the benefits reaped by the college or university and its faculty members, there are numerous advantages for the K-12 schools that participate in partnerships. Local schools enjoy the many resources offered by a higher education institution, such as access to technology for data collection and analysis, the free services of graduate students, and the knowledge and perspectives

of faculty members who have been studying issues in their specializations. The K-12 students in partnership schools benefit from becoming familiar with the work done by graduate students, which may have a positive influence on their career development; and they also tend to enjoy participating in research studies where they can offer their opinions and perspectives.

In the context of my work as a professor in a graduate counseling department that prepares students to work as school counselors (among other specializations within the counseling profession), I have been overseeing action research projects in K-12 schools for over ten years. The graduate students at Saint Mary's College of California (SMC) are also supervised by practicing school counselors who wish to study themselves and relevant issues in their own environment. Cultivating partnerships with what has eventually become an extensive list of sites began with the most basic principles of grassroots networking—reaching out to obvious potential contacts, who were the alumni of the counseling department. The recommendation to begin networking with those closest to you is echoed in the literature as well (Palladino, 2005).

The relationships forged during pre-service training resulted in openness to continued involvement by alumni in the field, who wished to give back to their program by serving as supervisors. Many of these supervisors were also members of an alumni peer consultation group, which I have facilitated for the past 13 years. The alumni group is a forum for professional development and the sharing of best practices. Peer consultation has been recognized as a valuable way to remain connected to changes in both theory and practice and to engage in networking activities within one's field (Thomas, 2005; Thomas, Hetherington, Lesicko, & DeKruyf, 2009). The networking that began through alumni contacts has expanded to include additional supervisors that span over a dozen local school districts throughout Northern California.

23.2.1 *Action Research in School Counseling*

Over the past 15–20 years, professionals in the field of school counseling in the USA have been called upon to respond to a pervasive and persistent demand for data-driven interventions. This call is part of a larger educational agenda focused on evidence-based practice and accountability (Camizzi et al., 2009; Dixon, Tucker, & Clark, 2010; Galassi, Griffin, & Akos, 2008; Kaffenberger, 2012; Kaffenberger & Davis, 2009; Luck & Webb, 2009; Palladino, 2005; Whiston, 1996). The best outcome of the accountability movement for school counselors has been increased professionalism—which is vital in a field where there are questions about role definitions and even the value of having school counselors at all (Bemak, 2000; Coll & Freeman, 1997; Erford, 2007; Lieberman, 2004; Murray, 1995). At its worst, the pressure to use data has resulted in frantic and ill-informed attempts to engage in projects in order to produce charts and statistics for principals and school boards—which many of us have dubbed “random acts of data”—as opposed to thoughtful and rigorous research intended to increase professional services and contribute to the improvement of the discipline (Rowell, 2006).

Action research has been recommended as a way for counselor preparation programs to address the call for evidence-based practice (Gillies, 1993; Huber & Savage, 2009; Palladino, 2005; Ponte, 1995; Rowell, 2005, 2006; Whiston, 1996). Working within collaborative models is also endorsed (American School Counselor Association, 2010; Palladino, 2005), though there has been little specific guidance as to how to do this within the school counseling specialization (Bryan & Henry, 2012). In addition, factors such as resistance among school counselors to using research and a lack of training in research methods have been frequently noted in the literature (Bemak, 2000; Camizzi et al., 2009; Dixon et al., 2010; Kaffenberger, 2012; Kaffenberger & Davis, 2009; Whiston, 1996).

In my own work as a faculty member who has studied issues in school counseling for many years, I have found that action research offers an effective response to the mandate for data-driven practice and one that is congruent with my values regarding grassroots change, social justice, and democratic principles. Action research challenges “traditional” views of scientific research and is often more appropriate in educational settings, where the research participants are often already “sorted” into groups (e.g., students in classrooms).

Action Research in the Preparation of SMC School Counselors In their action research practicum, SMC school counseling graduate students learn about the theory and literature connected to action research in the process of developing and carrying out a project in their sites. There have been several key parameters or guiding principles for the action research component of the professional preparation program at SMC outlined further:

1. *Systematic and rigorous approach.* The projects are approached in a systematic way, employing both qualitative and/or quantitative methodologies as appropriate for each specific research question and emphasizing the principles of critical inquiry, reflective practice, and the value of the partnership model. Students learn about institutional review board approval, survey design, and the development of interview protocols; they read articles about action research methods and receive instruction in data collection and analysis; and they gain experience writing about and presenting their own research in professional settings.
2. *Iterative process.* There is an emphasis on the iterative process of action research and the cycles of planning, action, data collection, and reflection (Mertler, 2012; Mills, 2000; Riel, 2007). Although this is difficult to achieve in one brief semester, the students are introduced to the concept in order to promote the value of lifelong learning and ongoing research in their eventual lives as school counselors.
3. *Theory-praxis.* The primary emphasis is on the theory-practice connection, with the overarching goal of improvement in practice. There is little point to gathering data if it does not result in a change in the services and interventions provided at the school site (Rowell, 2005, 2006; Whiston,

1996). Students are taught how to apply action research to real problems in real settings, which also benefits the practicing school counselor supervisors in their day-to-day work. The local impact of the students' research is of use to them in their pre-service development, as well as to the constituents of the school site.

4. *Connection to larger contexts.* Action research has been recommended in the literature as a valuable tool for school counselors to acquire while in graduate school (Huber & Savage, 2009; Palladino, 2005; Ponte, 1995; Rowell, 2005, 2006; Thomas & Edgecomb, 2008). Every action research study involves a review of relevant literature. Students also learn about the historical and current context in the field of school counseling. Finally, their projects must address one or more of the National Standards as defined by the American School Counselor Association (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2004), the national governing body for the profession. The National Standards position the work of the school counselor within the domains of academic, career, and personal/social counseling. Research topics connect in some way to one or more of these domains, so that the students gain an understanding of the role of the school counselor from a national perspective.

Examples of Studies A common focus of the research carried out in the practicum setting has been “perception” studies and the resulting changes in practice based on increased understanding of these perceptions. Examples include parent and/or teacher perceptions of the role of the school counselor, studies that are aimed at increasing awareness of what the school counselor’s job entails. This type of study has been common in the field of school counseling for decades because of persistent misconceptions about the role (Bemak, 2000; Coll & Freeman, 1997; Erford, 2007; Lieberman, 2004; Murray, 1995).

Students also choose their topics based on the ASCA National Standards, as mentioned earlier. Academic topics include study skills, positive behavior support, and academic stress and pressure. Career-related topics are reflected in studies that examine graduation preparedness or perceptions of post-secondary options. Personal/social research studies span topics such as belonging, bullying, and perceptions of safety among lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning students. Some of the topics—such as adjustment or the transition from one school level to the next—encompass all three of the ASCA domains. In addition, students engage in short-term curriculum evaluation research in order to provide school counselors with feedback about their programs and interventions. These have included character education, behavioral checklists and similar interventions, peer counseling, and restorative justice programs.

Evolution of the Practicum in Action Research Over the years, the school counseling practicum has grown in a number of ways. For example, action research projects have been replicated in more than one site or repeated several years in a

row, in order to begin to gain more longitudinal data. The grassroots networking that led to a rich and varied list of school-based partners for the practicum experience extended to the teacher preparation programs within the college and to the state organization for school counselors (California Association of School Counselors, or CASC). As a result, graduate students in school counseling regularly share their research projects in poster sessions at the annual teacher colloquium and the CASC Conference. In this way, their work reaches a wider audience and has the potential to influence educators and researchers alike.

In recent years, more explicit connections to the social justice dimensions of action research have been made through the use of course assignments that involve reading about the connections between action research and social justice and applying the readings to site-based research experiences. Brady-Amoon, Makhija, Dixit, and Dator (2012) note that the field of counseling has long supported a social justice perspective and urge counselor training programs to integrate social justice principles into the curriculum. Dixon and colleagues (2010) and Ratts, DeKruyf, and Chen-Hayes (2007) specifically recommend a focus on social justice with regard to the training of school counselors. A social justice perspective provides an additional theoretical and practical backdrop for the practicum experience, in that action research is often aimed at addressing systemic inequities and promoting social change through grassroots, collaborative endeavors (Brady-Amoon et al., 2012; Brydon-Miller et al., 2003; Ratts, 2011; Sandretto, 2008; Shosh, 2013).

Challenges of the Practicum Course There are some challenges associated with the approach outlined in this chapter. Some of these are specific to the limitations of working in a liberal arts college, as compared to a research university. There are fewer opportunities for funding and support for research in a small college setting, for example. Much of the work I have done beyond teaching the course has been on my own time. In addition, the fact that our course takes place over one semester, as opposed to a full year or more, means that the projects are short-term and the students do not have the chance to undertake a truly iterative process of research with cycles. As mentioned earlier, the cohort in a given year may undertake projects that follow-up on projects from the previous year, and that is our main avenue for replicating research and revisiting results and themes over time.

Finally, job turnover in the field of school counseling is a major issue in California, where budget cuts in education occur frequently and affect counselors and other support service professionals. Our list of supervisors changes from year to year and requires regular outreach to find new sites and prepare new supervisors. Some of the partnerships that developed between the college and the local K-12 school sites have lasted for over ten years, while others have come and gone due to job turnover, a mismatch in values, or lack of support in the setting for research.

23.3 GRASSROOTS NETWORKING TO ACHIEVE PROFESSIONAL RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

In addition to supervising graduate student research projects and partnering with local schools, I have also been involved in building professional and community partnerships related to action research through grassroots networking in a number of other ways. Some of these projects and partnerships have been sustained over time, while other endeavors were either unsuccessful or led to new developments and projects. The practicum course itself emerged through a professional partnership between SMC and the University of San Diego (USD), specifically between myself and the lead editor of this book, Dr. Lonnie Rowell, my colleague of 15 years. I developed the school counseling practicum based on a model that Lonnie designed at USD and adapted it to fit the needs of our program. Regular consultation between Lonnie and myself over the years led to numerous publications and conference presentations about action research in school counseling at state, national, and international levels.

In addition, we co-chaired two state summits in 2005 and 2007 on action research that extended beyond school counselors to include teachers, administrators, and leaders within state government. These summits reflected the core tenets of action research and grassroots organizing, in that we emphasized the value of local experience and collaboration. Rather than focus the events around keynote speakers as the “experts” in the field, we relied on the vast knowledge base that existed among the participants and planned a number of specific activities in order to cull perspectives and recommendations for moving forward. These included plenary, brainstorming, and breakout sessions, as well as workshops to teach the basics of conducting action research in school settings and to highlight examples of research studies in the field of school counseling.

In response to a state bill that made additional funding available for school counselors throughout California in 2006, USD and SMC graduate students partnered to develop and disseminate a survey evaluating school counselor services in participating middle and secondary schools. The goal was to achieve a statewide evaluation of the impact of the bill, with schools from both Northern and Southern California. At the end of the study, a SMC colleague and I conducted a meta-analysis of the data from eight schools and presented the results at Summit II in 2007. We revised the surveys and continued implementation in 2008. Lonnie and I, along with CASC Executive Director Loretta Whitson, collaborated to produce a professional publication and a national presentation on the effects of AB1802 at the Conference of the American Educational Research Association in 2009.

I also sought a partnership with the state counseling organization, CASC. As the Research Committee Chair since 2008, I have led a team of school counselors who review action research proposals from all over the state. Accepted proposals are presented as posters in a special session during the annual conference and provide opportunities for graduate students, practitioners, and counselor

educators to share their research in a larger forum. In addition to being a service commitment on my part, this partnership has helped to me to stay aware of the research priorities across the state.

Additional projects have included Internet partnerships such as the California School Counseling Action Research Collaborative (CALARC), a joint effort of CASC, USD, and SMC. The purpose of CALARC was to review proposals for action research projects and to provide mentoring for beginning researchers. This project, while well-intentioned, proved to be too challenging for us to continue, and only lasted for a little over one year. The California School Counseling Research Interest Network (CSCRIN) initially included CASC, USD, SMC, and the University of Redlands. This network was designed to serve as a central hub for posting research projects, in order to promote collaboration and feedback. As with CALARC, the CSCRIN project was not sustained over time, although there has been recent interest in reviving it through the participation of one of the California State University School Counseling Programs. Although the primary obstacle in terms of these projects was a lack of time for the participating faculty members, my own reflection on these two initiatives is twofold: first, I have learned that not every project will result in a lasting partnership or a concrete product; and second, that it is important to take risks and to keep moving in new directions.

The most recent partnership in which I participated represents, in many ways, the culmination of the last ten years in terms of my association with and commitment to action research. I was actively involved in launching the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) through my participation as an Organizing Committee Member and Conference Co-Coordinator for the inaugural conference in 2013 and through my continued involvement as a member of the Program Selection Committee and a presenter in 2014. ARNA brings action research to an international and multilingual level, with members from all over the world and conference sessions and website materials in English and Spanish. My role in the inaugural conference involved all aspects of event planning and coordination of services to ensure a successful conference, including partnering with the other participating organizations at this initial level of development, obtaining sponsorship from my College for the event, training bilingual graduate students and volunteer coordinators to serve as volunteers during the event, and engaging in local networking in order to secure a location and catering services for the conference. Beyond active conference participation, I have continued my involvement in ARNA as a consultant in its School Counseling Collaborative Interest Group. This web-based group is still determining its direction, but its strengths include that it is participant-driven (i.e., by practicing school counselors) and aimed at promoting collaboration among school counselors from diverse regions through sharing and reflecting on action research projects.

23.3.1 *Challenges and Benefits of Research Partnerships*

There are numerous challenges and benefits of conducting action research in educational settings, and specifically for school counselors in California (Palladino, 2005). The challenges are echoed in the literature as early as Pine (1981) and include:

1. *Time*: Most of us wish we had more time for the projects we most enjoy. School counselors in California are especially burdened with high caseloads (with a current average of 945 students to 1 counselor, the highest in the country), a demanding work schedule, and regular threats to job security due to budget cuts. Time is probably the number one obstacle to engaging in regular research projects and partnerships with others (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Camizzi et al., 2009; Epstein & Van Voorhis, 2010).
2. *Knowledge and skills*: Many school counselors were trained prior to the mandate for data-driven practice, and they may not have the knowledge or skills necessary to carry out successful action research projects. While they may wish for evidence of the effectiveness of their interventions, they may not know how to begin (Bryan & Henry, 2012; Dixon et al., 2010; Kaffenberger, 2012; Kaffenberger & Davis, 2009; Whiston, 1996).
3. *Access to resources*: Some school districts may not be located near a college or university with a school counselor preparation program, and, therefore, may not have access to the many resources and benefits afforded by the school-university partnership model.
4. *Sustainability*: Connected to the overarching topic of time, the sustainability of a partnership can be an obstacle. Personality conflicts, changing priorities, trust issues, and turnover in organizations can contribute to limited life for specific projects and partnerships (Galassi et al., 2008; Hooper & Brandt Britnell, 2012; Palladino, 2005).

On the other hand, the benefits of partnerships are numerous. Chief among them for me have been the rewards of participating in work that promotes clear connections between theory and practice, along with the personal and professional transformation that occurs with regular involvement in relevant projects. The partnership approach to action research encourages a life of reflective practice, which is one of my primary values. I have been able to expand my research trajectory over time through the cultivation of long-term partnerships. Partnerships help to reduce professional isolation and prevent burnout, to create a research community with shared interests, to promote the values of critical thinking and the pursuit of knowledge, and to contribute toward lifelong learning and leadership development. The grassroots approach to partnerships in education has meant nurturing mutually beneficial relationships, beginning at the local level and enduring the tests of time.

23.4 REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After ten years of work in this field, there have been many lessons learned and many challenges that remain. The limitations of conducting research within a liberal arts college (as opposed to a research university), the time constraints involved in a one-semester course, and the barriers common to school counselors and educators are among these challenges. On the other hand, the incredible opportunities that have emerged for me over the last ten years have resulted in what can be seen as an evolution from local to international engagement. With time and persistence, I have been able to broaden my work and to learn which types of projects and groups of people most suit my personality, interests, and abilities.

The pursuit of meaningful partnerships and grassroots networking activities with the goal of engaging in action research that is relevant to your professional goals is therefore both challenging and exciting. Here are several recommendations as you take your next steps:

1. *Start with the people you know.* Who are those closest to you in your professional life? What are their talents and strengths? Finding like-minded people, *and* people with gifts that are different than yours, is an essential component of developing partnerships. This type of effort is the very essence of grassroots networking.
2. *Think big! Start small!* Explore local resources first and begin with something close to home—but also open yourself to bigger possibilities! For example, technology can make the world feel smaller, so use the Internet to expand your professional partnership options.
3. *Choose something that matters to you.* What are the key issues that concern you in your professional setting at this point? What is something you would like to understand more deeply in your setting?
4. *Set both short-term and long-term goals.* What would you like to accomplish this year? In five years? Ten years? What is one goal you can set for yourself in terms of action research and one step you can take today toward that goal?
5. *Know yourself.* What do you find most challenging when working on a project? What is most interesting or exciting to you? Identifying your style and approach to collaborative partnerships is key to success in this area. This is the subject of the application presented next.

23.5 APPLICATION: WHAT IS YOUR “PROJECT TYPE”?

Collaborative partnerships offer numerous potential benefits, but they are also difficult to establish and maintain over time. This is not easy work! As the literature indicates, there is little in the way of formal guidance as to how to network and build partnerships, and this is especially true in the field of school counseling (Bryan & Henry, 2012). So, how does one network effectively in

order to develop partnerships? How do you decide which types of partnerships are beneficial and which projects to pursue?

After years of involvement in various types of partnerships, I have come to the conclusion that is essential to understand and recognize your strengths and limitations when it comes to working with others. Based on observations from teaching, research, and professional development activities, I have designed a typology to assist you in identifying your primary style of relating to others specifically when working on a project and to choose potential collaborators who might complement, balance, or enhance your personality. The six types below include both strengths and potential pitfalls, which may depend on the individual’s level of self-awareness and overall development. I have worked with and taught each of these types, and each one has its unique offerings to any given project.

23.5.1 Six Project Types

Consider the strengths and pitfalls of each project type. Rate yourself on each type using the following scale. Notice whether your self-evaluation differs from how you imagine others might describe you (Figs. 23.1, 23.2, 23.3, 23.4, 23.5, and 23.6).

Although it stems from Jungian concepts of integration, individuation, and balance (e.g., Jung, 1964) and career counseling typologies such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (e.g., Briggs Meyers, 1998) and the Holland Hexagon (e.g., Holland 1997), the suggested model has not been empirically tested and is intended as a form of both playful and intentional reflection specifically

THE VISIONARY	
Suggested strengths of this type:	Potential pitfalls:
The visionary sees the “big picture,” and is often most interested in the “newest” ideas; the visionary is also excellent at delegating tasks, likes to develop ideas on a large scale, and enjoys being inspired.	At one extreme, the visionary never stays with anything for too long, and may become bored easily; this individual may also do more delegating than working.

This is how I see myself:

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

This is how other people might describe me:

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

Fig. 23.1 Six project types: The visionary

THE TEAM PLAYER	
Suggested strengths of this type:	Potential pitfalls:
The team player promotes harmony within a group, and knows how to help others to become more involved; this individual shares and cooperates well and is eager to take on a specific task if it helps to advance the larger project.	The danger with this type is that the team player may not be able to take a stance or stand on anything or assume a leadership role when needed; passivity can be a pitfall for the team player.

This is how I see myself:

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

This is how other people might describe me:

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

Fig. 23.2 Six project types: The team player

THE WORKER BEE	
Suggested strengths of this type:	Potential pitfalls:
The worker bee is excellent at follow-through and details; this individual has lots of energy, and is always willing to take on more; productivity is an outstanding strength.	The primary pitfall with this type is that the worker bee sometimes works too hard and takes on so much that burnout is a danger; this individual may not be able to sustain momentum in the long run.

This is how I see myself:

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

This is how other people might describe me:

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

Fig. 23.3 Six project types: The worker bee

THE TURTLE	
Suggested strengths of this type:	Potential pitfalls:
The biggest strength of the turtle is persistence; the turtle can stay with one project over a long period of time, and needs time and space to become inspired.	The turtle can be resistant to trying new things; this individual may hide from or avoid new opportunities, and doesn't like to have to make decisions quickly.

This is how I see myself:

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

This is how other people might describe me:

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

Fig. 23.4 Six project types: The turtle

THE NETWORKER	
Suggested strengths of this type:	Potential pitfalls:
The networker is great at meeting and greeting people, and asking for what s/he wants in a way that people are likely to say “yes;” the networker can be the one who secures support or resources for a project, for example.	The primary danger here is that the networker can be fake or phony—a “schmooser”; this individual may be “more talk than action” and not willing to do the actual work of a project.

This is how I see myself:

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

This is how other people might describe me:

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

Fig. 23.5 Six project types: The networker

THE ACTIVIST	
Suggested strengths of this type:	Potential pitfalls:
The activist focuses mostly on the values underlying each project and the potential for change, on either a small or large scale; the activist is idealistic and believes that a project is worthwhile if there is an overarching goal of social improvement.	The activist's ideals can get in the way of reality; this individual may become too frustrated with slow change (or no change) in some situations, which can lead to disillusionment.

This is how I see myself:

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

This is how other people might describe me:

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly agree	agree	not sure	disagree	strongly disagree

Fig. 23.6 Six project types: The activist

related to partnerships in action research. I encourage you to read more about these concepts in the works of Jung, Briggs Meyers, and Holland, as cited earlier.

There is no single “best” or “worst” type in this model, and many people may find that they have a “top two” or even a “top three” based on the descriptions offered here. Your own type(s) may change over time as you develop skills, or you may be able to see how you might have rated yourself differently in years past as well. Knowing yourself, and knowing which type or types appeal most to you and which feel less familiar to you, offers more opportunities for partnering effectively with others. Finally, it can be useful to reflect on potentially good and bad pairings—for example, a partnership in which everyone is the same type might mean trouble getting anything done, finding a vision for the project, or securing support and resources. This typology and the reflective questions and recommendations are intended to guide you as you take the next step toward the goal of building meaningful partnerships for action research projects. Self-awareness will also assist you in determining which of the various approaches to grassroots networking described in this chapter will most fit your specific needs and objectives, ranging from exploring resources and potential partnerships within your own community (that ultimately will improve your community) to branching out and accessing regional or even global networks in order to both benefit from and contribute to important action research endeavors in a larger context.

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Practice and Theory in Action Research: Living-Theories as Frameworks for Action

Jack Whitehead

This chapter analyzes the role of theory in action research from the perspective that practitioner-researchers are knowledge-creators with the capacity to generate valid explanations of their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others, and in the learning of the social formations that influence ideas and practice. It is divided into three parts. Part one focuses on approaches to theory and practice that have implications for the way in which action research is used to improve practice and to generate knowledge. Part two describes the living-theories framework for action that is relationally dynamic and draws insights from the most advanced social theories. Evidence is provided to illustrate how living-educational-theories have faced and transcended criticisms related to objectivity, validity, rigor, and generalizability. Part three revisits the formation of a living-educational-theory in the 1980s (Whitehead, 1985, 1989) to trace its influence in the many local, national, and international contexts. The website, <http://www.actionresearch.net>, the journal, *Educational Journal of Living Theories*, and discussion forum provide opportunities for participation within the living-theory research community. Living-theories and living-educational-theories are used synonymously.

24.1 PART ONE: THEORY AND PRACTICE IN ACTION RESEARCH

24.1.1 *Theory in Action Research*

Action researchers can create their own unique explanations of their influence as they explore the implications of asking, researching, and answering their question, ‘How do I improve what I am doing?’ At the heart of inquiries that are

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educational are values in learning that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. This is what distinguishes educational action research from action research. Action research, as a method, can be used for any purpose, including ones that negate the values of humanity. By holding ourselves to account for living-educational values as fully as possible, we, educational action researchers, are committed to sharing our accounts in public forums that can evaluate our claims to be living as fully as possible, the values and understandings that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. There are many approaches to action research. What distinguishes a living-theory approach to action research from other forms of action research is the focus on the life-affirming and life-enhancing values of the researcher as explanatory principles and standards of judgment for evaluating the validity of the contribution to educational knowledge.

As practitioner-researchers, we can produce our unique living-theories that include our evaluations of our past, to make sense of our present with intentions to create a future that is not yet realized. In the process of producing a unique living-theory, the practitioner-researcher evolves their living-theory-methodology (Whitehead, 2008) that is grounded in what Dadds and Hart (2001) refer to as ‘methodological inventiveness’.

24.1.2 *The Importance of Methodological Inventiveness*

Perhaps the most important new insight for both of us has been awareness that, for some practitioner researchers, creating their own unique way through their research may be as important as their self-chosen research focus. We had understood for many years that substantive choice was fundamental to the motivation and effectiveness of practitioner research (Dadds, 1995); that what practitioners chose to research was important to their sense of engagement and purpose. But we had understood far less well that how practitioners chose to research, and their sense of control over this, could be equally important to their motivation, their sense of identity within the research and their research outcomes. (Dadds & Hart, 2001, p. 166)

In producing our living-theory and living-theory-methodology we can draw on a unique constellation of values and insights from a wide range of theorists including those engaged in action research and those who have integrated ideas from action research and other approaches, such as critical theory.

For example, the ideas of Jürgen Habermas have been influential in the development of a critical theory school of action research (Carr & Kemmis, 1985). Critical theorists influenced by Habermas point to the importance of raising awareness of the political, economic, and cultural influences in what an individual or group can do. In inquiries of the kind, ‘How do I improve what I am doing?’ it is wise to engage with the most advanced social theories of day, to understand the influences of political, economic, and cultural relationships in both constraining and opening opportunities for improving practice. An action researcher influenced by Habermas (2002) claim that the private autonomy of

equally entitled citizens can be secured only insofar as citizens actively exercise their civic autonomy, could provide evidence of their embodied expression of social justice by clarifying the meaning of this value as it emerged in their practice of exercising their civic autonomy:

The dispute between the two received paradigms—whether the autonomy of legal persons is better secured through individual liberties for private competition or through publicly guaranteed entitlements for clients of welfare bureaucracies—is superseded by a proceduralist concept of law. According to this conception, the democratic process must secure private and public autonomy at the same time: the individual rights that are meant to guarantee to women the autonomy to pursue their lives in the private sphere cannot even be adequately formulated unless the affected persons themselves first articulate and justify in public debate those aspects that are relevant to equal or unequal treatment in typical cases. The private autonomy of equally entitled citizens can only be secured only insofar as citizens actively exercise their civic autonomy. (p. 264)

Individual practitioner-researchers can also create their unique constellation of insights from a wide range of theorists in other fields. For instance, some have shown how they have been influenced by theologians such as Thomas Merton (Cunningham, 1999). Others have shown how they have been influenced by Mitroff and Kilman's methodological approaches to the social sciences (Whitehead, 1999); by psychological theories of learning (Huxtable, 2012); by theories of drama (Naidoo, 2005; Rawal, 2006); by theories of nursing (Adler-Collins, 2007); by environmental theories (Tattersall, 2011); by theories of entrepreneurship (Crotty, 2012); by economic theories (Kaplan, 2013; Van Tuyl, 2009); by theories of creativity (Spiro, 2008); by theories of citizenship (Potts, 2012); and by theories of public health (Wolvaardt, 2013)

Each of these living-theory practitioner-researchers has shown how their living-theories constitute a relationally dynamic framework for action.

24.1.3 *Practice in Action Research*

I focus on two distinct meanings of practice. For much of my research program I understood practice in terms of what I was doing. Hence I saw my question, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' as a practical question. Through my studies of cultural-historical perspectives I came to understand that a practice can also be seen as arising in response to general demands of societal need and that a practice can be conceptualized as a historically developed and conditioned tradition of action for addressing societal formed needs (Chaiklin, 2011):

Human practices are manifest in institutionally structured traditions of action, which are organised in relation to the production of collectively needed products. (p. 227)

A practice is reflected in a historically developed tradition of action that grows up around producing products that satisfy a generalised need (in relation to

reproduction for conditions of life). The term generalised is meant to emphasise that a need is found among many persons, as opposed to a single individual. (pp. 233–234)

Action Research has developed as a way to introduce change to practice and help refine understandings that create and connect to theory. There are many excellent histories of action research (Altrichter, Kemmis, McTaggart, & Zuber-Skerritt, 1990) that trace the evolution and transformation of approaches to action research from the early work of Lewin and Collier in the 1940s to the national and international networks of practitioner-researchers in the Collaborative Action Research Network, The Action Research Network of the Americas, Action Research Africa Network, and the Action Learning Action Research Association.

24.2 PART TWO—LIVING-EDUCATIONAL-THEORIES AS FRAMEWORKS FOR ACTION

I use a living-educational-theory to distinguish the explanations generated by individuals to explain their educational influences, from the explanations derived from propositional and dialectical theories to explain the actions of individuals. I was moved to make this distinction because of a limited stance in the approach to educational theory that claimed that it was constituted by the disciplines of education such as the philosophy, psychology, sociology, and history of education. In rejecting this approach to educational theory, I don't want to be misunderstood as rejecting useful insights from the disciplines in explaining the educational influences of individuals. While the insights have value, I reject the approach that suggests that such theories should replace the principles of understanding—personal theories—developed by practitioners over years of experience to explain their influence because they are viewed as simply 'pragmatic maxims'. Consider this statement:

In many characterisations of educational theory, my own included, principles justified in this way have until recently been regarded as at best pragmatic maxims that had a first crude and superficial justification in practice that in any rationally developed theory would be **replaced** (my emphasis) by principles with more fundamental, theoretical justification. That now seems to me to be a mistake. Rationally defensible practical principles, I suggest, must of their nature stand up to such practical tests and without that are necessarily inadequate. (Hirst, 1983, p. 18)

It was this replacement that I objected to. I put forward the idea of a living-educational-theory as an individual explanation of educational influence to ensure that these practical principles—knowledge from practice—were not lost and replaced by principles from the disciplines of education.

Living-theories, like life itself, are relationally dynamic and continuously evolving in a non-linear and non-dialectical process. This does not mean that

linear or propositional and dialectical theories are useless in the generation of a living-theory. It means that a living process can integrate insights from propositional and dialectical theories into a living-theory that provides a continuously evolving framework for action.

At the heart of these unique frameworks, in each living-theory, are the relationally dynamic and energy-flowing values that are used by an individual to give their life its meanings and purpose. I am thinking of ontological values that distinguish an individual's way of being and making sense of the world. These are the values that an individual uses in judgments about what constitutes an improvement in practice. They also form the living standards of judgment an individual uses to evaluate the validity of their claims to be contributing to educational knowledge.

The relationally dynamic framework of each unique living-theory emerges in the course of practice in an enquiry of the form, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' It is important to stress the relationally dynamic nature of such frameworks to avoid thinking of a framework as a static structure that is imposed on an inquiry. The relationally dynamic nature of living-theories, as frameworks for action, can perhaps best be understood in the movement within and between the five action reflection cycles in the *Advanced Bluffers Guide for Action Researchers* (Whitehead, 1995). Each action reflection cycle is focused on improving practice with a continuously evolving deepening and extension of insights, from propositional and dialectical theories, in both improving practice and in generating knowledge.

Throughout my working life in education, I have been concerned with enhancing the professional knowledge base of education with the living-theories of practitioners. Because of the role of universities in accrediting knowledge, I have focused on the accreditation of the living-theories of practitioner-researchers for their masters and PhD and EdD degrees. This accreditation has meant facing questions and overcoming criticisms from researchers schooled in the disciplines of education in terms of the objectivity, validity, rigor, and generalizability of the living-theories.

24.2.1 *Objectivity*

A common critique of action research is that it is merely anecdotal and subjective. This criticism often comes from those who have been schooled to think within the tradition of positivist science. I include myself with those influenced by this tradition of research and scholarship with my first degree in the physical sciences followed by a year of research in electrochemistry. The idea of objectivity in this tradition included a view of the value-free researcher, impossible to realize in practice. I continue to value the concern to reduce bias in this tradition of inquiry. The idea of objectivity was closely related in this tradition to the use of controlled experimental designs. Through the use of these experiments, the causal effect of individual variables could be examined. A theory in the empirical sciences was held to be a set of determinate relationships between

a set of variables in terms of which a fairly extensive set of empirically verifiable regularities could be explained.

For me, one of the great strengths of a living-theory approach to action research is that it is focused on an individual's commitment to improve their practice and to share an account of the learning process that is involved in the inquiry into improving practice. While the grounding of a living-theory is in the individual's subjectivity and narrative, this is not to say that the explanations of influence lack objectivity. As Karl Popper has said, the words 'objective' and 'subjective' are philosophical terms heavily burdened with a heritage of contradictory usages and of inclusive and interminable discussions. Here is a way of thinking, drawn from Popper's ideas, about a relationship between objectivity and subjectivity that can help to strengthen, with the following ideas on validity, the objectivity of an individual's explanation of their influence.

Popper's use of the terms 'objective' and 'subjective' is not unlike Kant's who uses the word 'objective' to indicate that scientific knowledge should be *justifiable*, independently of anybody's whim: 'If something is valid', he writes, 'for anybody in possession of his reason, then its grounds are objective and sufficient' (Popper, 1975, p. 44). However, Popper holds that scientific theories are never fully justifiable or verifiable, but that they are nevertheless testable. He therefore says that the objectivity of scientific statements lies in the fact that they can be inter-subjectively tested. Popper has generalized the idea of inter-subjective *testing* in his idea of inter-subjective *criticism*, or, as he says, into the idea of mutual rational control by critical discussion (Popper, 1975).

I have used this idea of the mutual rational control by critical discussion with the following four questions, derived from the work of Habermas (1976) on communication and the evolution of society. These are used in groups of between 3 and 8 people in the ways described below for enhancing the objectivity and validity of the explanations of action researchers.

24.2.2 *Validity*

In enhancing the validity of living-theories, I recommend the use of a validation group of some 3–8 peers. I also recommend the use of the four questions below. These are derived from Habermas' (1976) ideas on what he calls the universal validity claims we make of each other as we reach an understanding with each other. For Habermas reaching an understanding with another involves uttering something understandably, giving (the hearer) something to understand, making himself thereby understandable, and coming to an understanding with another person.

For Habermas, the speaker must choose a comprehensible expression so that speaker and hearer can understand one another. The speaker must have the intention of communicating a true proposition (or a propositional content, the existential presuppositions of which are satisfied) so that the hearer can share the knowledge of the speaker. The speaker must want to express his intentions truthfully so that the hearer can believe the utterance of the speaker

(can trust him). Finally, the speaker must choose an utterance that is right so that the hearer can accept the utterance and speaker and hearer can agree with one another in the utterance with respect to a recognized normative background (Habermas, 1976).

An action researcher could use the following questions I derived using Habermas' ideas to enhance the validity of their explanations of their educational influence. The first question is directly derived from Habermas' idea of comprehensibility:

1. How can I enhance the comprehensibility of my explanation?

The second question is derived from the intention of communicating a true proposition and is focused on the evidence used by a living-theory researcher to generate a valid explanation of influence:

2. How can I strengthen the evidence I offer to justify the assertions I make?

The third question is derived from Habermas' idea of trust and is focused on the authenticity of the action research in living as fully as possible the values that give meaning and purpose to his life:

3. How can I improve the authenticity of my explanation in showing over time and interaction that I am truly committed to living as fully as possible the values I claim to hold?

The fourth question is derived from Habermas' idea of generating an agreement with respect to a recognized normative background. All action research takes place in social contexts that are subjected to the sociohistorical and sociocultural influences that constitute the normative background. The fourth question focuses on the explicit awareness of the action researcher of these influences:

4. How can I deepen and extend my understandings of the sociohistorical and sociocultural influences in my practice and my explanation of my influence?

24.2.3 *Rigor*

To enhance the rigor of an action research inquiry, I advocate the use of the six principles described by Richard Winter (1989) as reflexive critique, dialectical critique, collaborative resource, risk, plural structure, and theory practice transformation.

24.2.4 *Principle No. 1: Reflexive Critique*

Winter (1989) explains the first principle that of reflexivity as making judgments from various personal experiences rather than on representative samples of universally agreed categories. In Winters' focus on rigor rather than validity, the result of a reflexive critique takes the form of a dialogue between writers and readers about possible interpretations of experience. In the above sec-

tion on validity, the concern is with justifying a claim to know. In Winter's approach to rigor, the focus is on transforming claims to know into questions that can move an inquiry forward. My analysis of years of enacting educational reflexivity in supervising research into creating living-educational-theories are described in a recent paper available online (Whitehead, 2014).

24.2.5 *Principle No. 2: Dialectic Critique*

This principle is based on the idea of 'dialectics' as a general theory of the nature of reality and of the process of understanding reality. I owe much of my understanding of dialectics to the work of Ilyenkov (1977) who emphasized the importance of contradiction as the nucleus of dialectics. In Winter's approach to dialectic critique, the overall context of relations is seen as a unity in the face of their apparent separateness. Within the unit the researcher looks for the internal contradictions that provide the reasons to explain changes and transformations. In the generation of living-theories, the existence of 'I' as a living contradiction in inquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' emphasizes the importance of dialectic critique. A detailed and rigorous analysis of my use of dialectic critique has been explored in Whitehead (1982).

24.2.6 *Principle No. 3: Collaborative Resource*

The principle of collaborative resource promotes the inclusion of understandings from a range of different sources, while deconstructing these contributions in the reconstruction of new categories and interpretations. This process of deconstruction and reconstruction is unlike positivistic research where the researcher claims to be detached from those he or she is observing. The process enables a movement from a personal and subjective starting point toward meanings that have been interpersonally negotiated.

Take, for example, the use of the idea of 'empathetic resonance' in my own living-educational-theory. I first encountered the idea of empathetic resonance in the writings of Sardello (2008). For Sardello, empathetic resonance is the resonance of the individual soul coming into resonance with the soul of the world (p. 13) and carries a religious meaning. I am using *empathetic resonance*, as a humanistic educator with no theistic commitments, to communicate a feeling of the immediate presence of the other in communicating the living values that the other experiences as giving meaning and purpose to their life. Using digital video of my collaborative practices with others, I have interpersonally negotiated meanings of 'being loved into learning' from the shared communication of these meanings with the experience of empathetic resonance in viewing digital video. You can access details of the way in which this was done with Elizabeth Campbell, Jacqueline Delong, Cathy Griffin, and J. Whitehead (2013). Such inquiries are not without risk.

24.2.7 *Principle No. 4: Risk*

Some action researchers are willing to risk the implications of seeking to live their values as fully as possible within their social context. We accept the risk of researching our contribution to the change process. We do this to learn as much as possible in the process of trying to improve our educational influences in our own learning, in the learning of others, and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work.

I documented and analyzed the risks I encountered and responded to *The Growth of Educational Knowledge: Creating Your Own Living Educational Theories* (Whitehead, 1993).

The risks are documented and analyzed in terms of the living contradictions:

- (i) I am a university academic. I am not an academic.
- (ii) I am a creative academic. I am not a creative academic.
- (iii) I can question the judgments of examiners. I cannot question.
- (iv) My writings are consistent with my duties as a University Academic. My writings are not consistent with my duties.

The analyses point to the importance of prudence in assessing risks, especially when there is a threat to one's employment in engaging with the power relations within the workplace, which may have a vested interest in suppressing publications that are critical of the organization.

24.2.8 *Principle No. 5: Plural Structure*

My master's degree dissertation on a *Preliminary Investigation of the Process Through Which Adolescents Acquire Scientific Understanding* (Whitehead, 1972) was presented as a conventional research report of the time as a linear, chronology of events, in the single voice of myself as the author, with a focus on causal relationships between dependent and independent variables in a controlled experimental design. I offered and organized the evidence to justify my assertions.

I agree with Winter (1989) that the process of action research seeks differences, contradictions, possibilities, and questions, as ways of opening up new avenues for action. I agree that an action research report should be presented in terms of the multiplicity of viewpoints that make up the situation. Because of the multiplicity of viewpoints, Winter considers the appropriate format for an action report to be a 'plural structure'. This consists of various accounts and various critiques of those accounts. Because of Winter's concern with rigor rather than validity, he says that such accounts should end not with conclusions that are intended to be convincing but with questions and possibilities that are intended to be 'relevant' in various ways for different readers.

You can see my first action research report that is presented with such a plural structure (Whitehead, 1976).

24.2.9 *Principle No. 6: Theory, Practice, and Transformation*

I agree with Winter that theory and practice are not two distinct entities, but two different and yet interdependent and complementary phases of the change process. Each living-educational-theory is grounded in practice with inquiries of the kind, ‘How do I improve what I am doing?’ Such theories are transformed by transformations of practice. Theory and practice are not in mutual opposition but each is necessary to the other in the continuous evolution of both practice and theory.

Peggy Kok (1991) has given a very clear analysis of the use of Winter’s six principles for enhancing the rigor of an action research account.

Many action researchers have faced, as I have, questions about the objectivity, validity, rigor, and generalizability of their explanations of influence.

24.2.10 *Generalizability*

Instead of thinking of a living-educational-theory in terms of a set of propositional relationships between linguistic concepts, I have proposed a view of educational theory as a dynamic and living form whose content changes with the developing public conversations of those involved in its creation:

The theory is constituted by the practitioners’ public descriptions and explanations of their own practice. The theory is located not solely within these accounts but in the relationship between the accounts and the practice. It is this relationship that constitutes the descriptions and explanations as a living form of theory. In being generated from the practices of individuals it has the capacity to relate directly to those practices. To the extent that the values underpinning the practices, the dialogues of question and answer and the systematic form of action/reflection cycle, are shared assumptions within this research community, then we are constructing an educational theory with some potential for generalizability. The ‘general’ in a living theory still refers to ‘all’ but instead of being represented in a linguistic concept, ‘all’ refers to the shared form of life between the individuals constituting the theory. Now history shows us that new ideas have often met with skepticism, rejection or hostility from those who are working within the dominant paradigm. Researchers who are trying to make original and acknowledged contributions to their subject, education, might expect powerful opposition to their ideas. (Whitehead, 1989, pp. 47–48)

In resisting such opposition, it is necessary to engage in the politics of educational knowledge (Whitehead, 2009; Whitehead & Lomax, 1987).

24.3 PART 3: SPREADING THE INFLUENCE OF LIVING-THEORY RESEARCH

The growth of my educational knowledge since my initial teacher education program in 1966–1967 has included the influences of my first degree in physical sciences with their positivist and propositional epistemologies in which con-

traditions are excluded from theory. Since 1980, the growth has included the influence of a dialectical epistemology within which contradiction is taken to be the nucleus. The growth has included the influence of a living epistemology with its living and inclusion logic that can hold insights from theories that are structured by propositional and dialectical understandings (Whitehead & Rayner, 2009).

In 1995, I produced a guide to help my students understand action research (Whitehead, 1995), which is organized into five action reflection cycles with each cycle focused on **improving practice** but with deepening and extending insights, from current social theories, into the generation of living-educational-theories for cultural renewal.

24.3.1 *Living-Educational-Theories and Living-Theory Research*

Working with the above sense of generalizability, I conclude by focusing on the spreading influence of living-educational-theories and living-theory research. This includes evidence from the living-theory section from action research (<http://www.actionresearch.net>) and the Educational Journal of Living Theories (<http://ejolts.net>). These websites make publically available masters and doctoral living-theories and publications from Europe (Croatia, the UK, Ireland, and Norway), the USA, Canada, South Africa, Australia, China, and Japan. Each living-theory is presented as an explanation of the individual's educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others, and in the learning of the social formations that influence the practice and writings.

I am now exploring how such educational influences can be extended in a global social movement that includes the commitment of individuals to live their ontological and relational values as fully as possible. These values are both explanatory principles and living standards of judgment (Laidlaw, 1996). We can use values as explanatory principle to which we can hold each other and ourselves to account. We can also use values as living standards of judgment for evaluating the validity of our contributions to educational knowledge. The interactive component to building the community is a Listserv called practitioner research, which provides the connections among the community (<http://tinyurl.com/6z4e8wk>). The kind of discussion that takes place in the discussion forum is described below.

I am experiencing the spreading global influence of living-educational-theories and living-theory research through educational conversations that appear to me to have the characteristics of Ubuntu ways of being. In this way of being there is the recognition of 'I am because we are' (Whitehead, 2011). If you access this Inaugural Mandela Day lecture you will be able to play a video clip of Nelson Mandela talking about the influence of an Ubuntu way of being in his own life. Charles (2007) gained academic legitimacy for Ubuntu as a living standard of judgment in his doctoral thesis on 'How can I bring Ubuntu as a living standard of judgment into the Academy? Moving beyond decolonization through societal reidentification and guiltless recognition'. Phillips (2011)

followed this with his doctoral thesis on ‘My Emergent African Great Story’. Both Charles and Phillips acknowledge their Afro-Caribbean heritage in their understanding of Ubuntu.

In spreading the global influence of living-theory research I have also advocated the integration of Inoue’s (2012, 2015) insights into the integration of East Asian epistemology into Western ways of knowing (Whitehead, 2015a). This global influence can be seen in Dent’s (2015) thesis from Malaysia on ‘A reflexive study of the continuous practice improvement of a global professional’. The importance of engaging with a sense of oneself as a global professional, in spreading the influence of living-theory research, can also be seen in the writings of Coombs, Potts & Whitehead (2014), who have explored living-global-citizenship as both an explanatory principle and living standard of judgment in terms of international educational development and learning through sustainable partnerships.

At the heart of the ideas of being a global professional, with the value of living-global-citizenship, are particular qualities of relationship that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. Such relationships can be experienced with reflections on data on the ‘living-posters’ from the Town Hall Meeting at the 2015 Conference of the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) (Whitehead, 2015b). It is difficult, if not impossible, to communicate the embodied expressions of these values through printed text alone. Hence my emphasis on the importance of visual narratives, using digital video technology for communicating these meanings. The use of multi-screen Skype conversations as shown in the above reflections on data, from the ARNA 2015 Town Hall Meeting, with participants from Canada, the USA, the Republic of Ireland, the UK, South Africa, and India, is a recent innovation in spreading the global influence of living-theory research and the unique contributions of individuals in their living-educational-theories.

Social media can also be useful for spreading the influence of action research and living-theory research. For example, Margaret Riel (2015) made use of social media to make available a free online action research program, which includes learning activities with a video and resources to support them. The sharing of these resources on the practitioner-researcher discussion forum generated a good discussion around the issue of one’s identity as an action researcher including the sharing of video (Kaplan, 2015).

Through these journal and community spaces, action researchers can share their thoughts, ideas, and writings with others who are committed to living as fully as possible the values that carry hope for the flourishing of humanity. Each living-educational-theory shows how insights can be used from traditional, propositional, and dialectical theories without denying the rationality of each others’ world view. In the ways described above, I believe that we are contributing, as action and living-theory researchers and global citizens, to improving international educational development and learning through our sustainable partnerships as we support each other in our inquiries of ‘How do I improve what I am doing?’

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Maintaining a Network of Critical Connections over Time and Space: The Case of CARN, the Collaborative Action Research Network

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As an open network for action research, Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) supports action research not only in ways that are formally facilitated by its Co-ordinating Group and members but also in a multiplicity of other less formal ways via its members and associates. This chapter provides reflections by members of its current Co-ordinating Group on CARN's history, value system, and processes since its foundation in 1976. Our perspective is particular, dealing with issues we consider currently most urgent, coming from our position as co-ordinators and long-standing CARN members. It is also informed by the broader membership's views, canvassed during recent and ongoing conversations through our *CARN on the MOVE!* project (Collaborative Action Research Network [CARN], 2014a, 2015a).

Formally, on behalf of its members, the Co-ordinating Group of seven volunteers maintains a calendar of events embracing an annual international conference taking place alternate years in the UK and elsewhere in Europe, regular Study Days and other events across the world. It also supports structures within the network through an email list and through regional CARN networks in the

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Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, and Greece; among Spanish, German, and (most recently) Portuguese speakers and through a Sponsoring Partnership scheme whereby institutions or partnerships purchase ten CARN subscriptions over a three-year period to support local action research.

Publishing action research accounts has been central; initially through the non-peer-reviewed *CARN Bulletin* (usually connected with CARN conferences and events), which in 1993 evolved into the international peer-reviewed journal *Educational Action Research* (EAR). In 2006, the non-peer-reviewed Bulletin was re-instated, in order to recognize the value of sharing work-in-progress and to enable conference presenters to publish. Meanwhile, the considerable body of scholarship in the form of books and texts by CARN members, often collaboratively, is too substantial to list.

Since CARN's inception, it has been UK-based, but its reach is global, its annual conference typically welcoming representatives from six continents until recent global "austerity" provoked cutbacks in long-distance travel. Its outline statement positions itself as a network that "aims to encourage and support action research projects (personal, local, national, and international); accessible accounts of action research projects, and contributions to the theory and methodology of action research" (CARN, 2015b). Its identity as an open network is reflected in its practice of welcoming action researchers who are not members into its events, including decision making at the annual conference Steering Group meetings. Asserting such an identity is, however, not straightforward in a world where governance is increasingly associated with formal structures and procedures. Most scholarly associations operate through articles and rules of association, for example with elected officers, but CARN has deliberately avoided such formality, and this has been both fruitful and problematic.

Since the mid-1970s, the term "network" has acquired vernacular currency and signifies layers of meanings that ramify in many directions. During that period, several technological innovations together created the conditions for the most radical changes in human society and for new relations between capital and labor to emerge. Technological conditions driving the information revolution took place over a matter of years rather than centuries (such as for the agricultural revolution) or decades (for the industrial revolution). The notion of networks is fundamental to understanding the changes we are living in and through (Ball, 2007; Castells, 1996; Kadushin, 2012; Rainie & Wellman, 2012; Taylor, 2014). Consideration of our evolving network, where even within the relatively confined notion of school networks, led Church (as cited in Black-Hawkins, 2008, p. 58) to comment that "confusions and complexities emerge throughout much of the literature." Church concludes that questions of "what, or who, is the network?" need constantly to be present.

CARN began as a social network, though not in the sense that this is now understood. "Social network" signified the desire among its associates to connect in ways that were not necessarily formally organized, connections being maintained through a common interest in exploring teaching and learning practices in schools. Co-ordinated within a UK University, with no formal

membership conditions (i.e. no system of fees and entitlements), connections were maintained through face-to-face events, phone calls, and paper-based media. The insights from contemporary sociological analysis of social networks allow us to observe that the early network exhibited multiplex characteristics, with multiple relations and flows between network members (Kadushin, 2012, p. 37). Thus, for example, certain groups of action researchers formed and animated the network in different ways: Elliott's reflections reveal his own relationships and flows with Austrian and Spanish colleagues in the 1970s, traces of which remain today in the German-speaking and Spanish-speaking CARN networks, and continuing relationships with Australian colleagues (Elliott, 2003, p. 178).

25.1 HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL DEVELOPMENT

To understand its contemporary position and role, we wish to explore CARN's historical and philosophical development. Its early development in the UK is embedded in, and, perhaps, best articulated through the development and introduction of action research into educational processes. While a number of centers of action research emerged within a few years, it was the work in the early years of the Humanities Curriculum Project (HCP) and the Ford Teaching Project (Ford T) that directly led to CARN's formation.

The years prior to CARN's launch signaled major curriculum development and school change in the UK. Significant events included localized curriculum development projects (such as HCP and the 1972 Raising of School Leaving Age in England and Wales from 15 to 16). The HCP was designed to help humanities teachers address issues of student disengagement, which were about to become exacerbated by the school population expansion. Stenhouse, leading the HCP, was convinced that curriculum development without teacher development was unlikely to lead to sustained change in practice (Stenhouse, 1975). He subscribed to Peters' view (Peters, 1964) that any well-articulated curriculum should take account of and provide for the *meshing* of the foundational disciplines of educational theory, namely: philosophy, psychology, sociology, and history. Further, these should be seen to "mesh in with each other *in relation to educational policy and practice*" (our emphasis) (Peters, p. 140). Reviewing recent curriculum change, Stenhouse found no such "mesh" (Stenhouse, 1975, unpaginated foreword, para. 3): the relationship with practice remained poorly articulated, and only through close study of the curriculum *and teaching* could the desired *mesh* be achieved. Suggesting that gaps between aspiration and practice could only be closed by adopting a "research and development approach to one's own teaching" (Stenhouse, p. 3), he laid the foundations for an approach to teacher research with both a theoretical and practical conceptualization, incorporated in and expressed through the intention to improve.

For many teachers, Stenhouse's thinking represented a significant paradigm shift in re-positioning the teacher as someone who enabled mediation, rather

than delivery, of a curriculum which became conceptualized as processes, rather than subject knowledge and content. The need for teachers to experiment in practice in order to develop well-justified pedagogical practices also marked a significant shift in the positioning of the classroom teacher. Thus, the HCP itself was seen by many as the first real teacher research project undertaken in schools. Teachers were encouraged to use inquiry and discussion-based practices in order to develop “a set of principles to guide teachers in translating educational aims into concrete pedagogical practices,” or “praxeology” in Elliott’s terms (Elliott, 1993, p. 15).

HCP research was conceptualized in two ways: that carried out by the teachers/practitioners themselves, as insiders in the process, *first-order inquiry*, and that undertaken by the (outsider) university research team, *second-order inquiry*. Though many considered Stenhouse’s idea of teachers undertaking research into their own practice somewhat radical, he also argued for support and guidance by professional researchers who would also choose research focus (Stenhouse, 1975). In practice, these researchers were university lecturers in education, but Stenhouse insisted that “first, teachers must be intimately involved in the research process; and second, researchers must justify themselves to practitioners, not practitioners to researchers” (Stenhouse, 1985, p. 19).

While this represented a significant departure from the “outsider” researcher concept, it still, in practice, implied academic hierarchy and control. Elliott talks of challenges for the central team in facilitating rather than manipulating teacher reflections (1993, p. 27); yet it was through this that the concept emerged of teachers choosing their own research focus and generating their own explanatory and action hypotheses. Drawing on Lewin and Corey, Stenhouse believed that action research, initially used as a form of “research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action” (Lewin, 1946, p. 35), was an appropriate and powerful way to explore and articulate relationships between the curriculum and teaching.

Elliott articulated Stenhouse’s work to further emphasize the classroom teacher’s role over the research focus and its undertaking. His work on Ford T offered an enquiry learning approach into science teaching with both teachers and pupils considered learners. Thanks to a small grant from the Ford Foundation to support action research into this discovery learning approach, Elliott, with Clem Adelman and a number of international colleagues, launched the Classroom Action Research Network (CARN) in 1976. This move signaled an intent “to radically reconstruct educational research by making teachers’ investigations of classroom practice its central component” (Somekh, 2010, p. 109). The network’s purpose was to provide a forum for testing ideas about teaching between peers, deliberately departing from “power-coercive” approaches to academic research in education. The location of CARN in the University of East Anglia Center for Applied Research in Education, subsequently part of the University’s School of Education, helped

bring action research to the attention of teacher educators. The impact of this was far reaching. Within a decade, UK universities were incorporating action research and reflective practice into both initial teacher education programs and master's degrees.

This early history is important since it demonstrates the process through which CARN came into being and also reveals the underlying values it espoused then and now. Early publications reveal a network where action research could be both educative and educational, underpinned by an epistemology where the theory-practice relationship was re-conceptualized as democratic rather than hierarchical. Teachers engaged in collaborative action research with both colleagues and pupils (Stenhouse, 1980). The cyclical and reciprocal interactions between research and findings, between action and theory, and between researcher and co-researcher(s) were understood not only as bringing about democracy but also as being “*an embodiment of democratic principles in research*” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 164).

Winter (1987) articulated reflection as the critical process that allows both action and research their authenticity in re-theorizing action or practice as research and research as practice or action.

the theoretical necessity of a reflexive conception of research's relation to action, so that their relationship may be theorised in ways which preserves the authenticity of both, i.e. which preserves research's capacity for achieving a critical distance from action, AND preserves action's intelligibility, as a creative, rather than a causally determined response to interpretive meaning. (p. 22)

Thus, teachers (and other practitioners) became generators of knowledge and constructors of its mediation in practice.

25.1.1 *CARN's Extension into New Settings*

CARN's articulation of action research within the academy attracted the attention of other professions, and network members were approached in the late 1980s by health and other professional practitioners to support their action research. Inevitably, the word “Classroom” in the network name became a subject of debate. Somekh (2010) documents the difficulties that replacing “Classroom” with “Collaborative” caused for many members, Elliott included, who were concerned about moving from CARN's educational value-base. But it was agreed that this re-naming was necessary to signal the inclusiveness of CARN, with Somekh arguing for the centrality of learning in action research: “the action researcher is always engaged in an ‘educative process’ thus being simultaneously ‘learner and teacher,’ co-constructing knowledge with other participants” (p. 104).

This change supported multiple growth points in action research in the 1980s among health- and social care practitioners. In nursing, action research was emerging as a means to facilitate change in nursing practices (Greenwood,

1984; Titchen & Binnie, 1993; Webb, 1989). Nursing was professionalizing; it sought its own distinctive knowledge base and empiricist research approaches to implementing change had met with limited success. The concerns of nursing practice were argued within EAR as being similar to those of teaching and education (Meyer, 1993). In the UK, the nurse tutor career path required higher qualifications in education, and nurses encountered action research through these learning experiences. New hospital ward-based clinical teacher roles opened the hospital setting as a site of inquiry into practice (Titchen & Binnie, 1993). Donald Schön's ideas on reflective practice were influential (Schön, 1983), as were the ideas of new paradigm inquiry (Reason, 1988). Where these ideas took root, they offered a new approach to issues of practice, theory, and learning that became the principal pre-occupations of the first UK nursing PhD studies, offering a practice epistemology based on reflection-in-action rather than technical rationality (Meyer, 1993).

Action research was also emerging in UK health settings where social care predominated and from which the technico-rational gaze of medical research was averted. Not only were service users stigmatized or marginalized in such services but also the services themselves had lower professional status than more medicalized disciplines with their greater technical and practical enactment of biomedical scientific knowledge. Action research studies were reported in mental health (Towell & Harries, 1979), learning disability (Munn-Giddings, 1993), and in the care of older people (Hart & Bond, 1995; Smith & Cantley, 1985). At this time in the UK, the process of closing down long-stay institutions was beginning, with their occupants re-settled into "the community." Where action research was undertaken to enable and inform this process, the aim of giving service users a greater voice was an important and challenging element, and the literature on action research in community development within the UK, and development policy beyond it, informed the thinking and methods used (Hart & Bond, 1995, p. 124; Munn-Giddings, 1993). Echoing this client focus, action research in hospital settings was used to introduce person-centered or "primary" nursing (Titchen & Binnie, 1993). Crossing all these fields was an undercurrent of reference to feminist research, with its particular challenge to positivism through the re-positioning of relationships between researchers and *the researched* to encompass the idea that empathy between persons could enter the frame and be openly discussed, instead of being removed from it (see, e.g. Oakley, 1981).

The collaboration between CARN members and health- and social care practitioners in the UK resulted in a conference at Keele University UK in 2001. This became a biennial event, with CARN involvement, and an important forum for an emerging movement of practice development among nurses, and eventually the International Practice Development Collaborative (IPDC), which now has its own journal (International Practice Development Collaborative [IPDC], 2015). The participation of IPDC members in CARN Conferences and CARN members in IPDC Enhancing Practice Conferences provided a communicative space for sharing practice and mutual learning

about participatory practice, in hosting conferences. The constraints on such practice are considerable, especially over timetabling. One important practice shared between both conferences is for the program to include daily “host” or “home” groups, for the same people, thus providing a welcoming forum for new participants and a thread for pursuing discussion—which have sometimes focused on particular issues—enabling “layers” of understanding to be explored. The flow of learning has been two-way, the host group practice having originated with CARN. In the other direction, CARN has drawn on IPDC practice where enabling creative approaches toward research had flourished better. Despite CARN encouragement otherwise, conventional didactic practice had become surprisingly prevalent at CARN conferences, so, inspired by IPDC, CARN held a workshop which generated guidelines for enabling presenters to work more interactively and creatively (CARN, 2011).

25.1.2 *Being a Network*

The question of “what, or who, is the network” challenges us to consider what the term signifies for CARN. Kelly (1995) offers a starting point regarding the concept of networks generally: that “the only [type of] organization capable of non-prejudiced growth, or unguided learning is a network. All other topologies limit what can happen ... the network is the least structured organization that can be said to have any structure at all” (Kelly, p. 25). As previously argued, the minimal social and informational structure of CARN must be understood as part of the less visible structures that are performed within and around it.

The history of CARN shows how the academy has gradually disengaged from resourcing its activities, reflecting the ascendancy of marketization and values of commercial “success” over values of scholarship in higher education (Ball, 2007; Brown with Carasso, 2013; McGettigan, 2012). Having originated as an extension of a major research project, CARN retained support from its initial academic base, and even when this became no longer feasible, support was still forthcoming from UK higher education institutions. This support, usually linked to research funds, was minimal but valuable, consisting of provision, often without charge, of venues for meeting and certain travel expenses. But support for the co-ordinating function became less forthcoming and in 2002–2003, this contributed to a financial crisis that threatened the network’s viability. A way forward was needed that would secure its finances. After extensive debate of a proposal to spread the co-ordination and initiate schemes to sustain its finances, a new Co-ordinating Group of six was established as a partnership between Manchester Metropolitan University and St Martin’s College Cumbria, with the secretariat at Manchester. Somekh describes the new arrangements as ones which “arose from a contradiction between a voluntaristic, inclusive ethic and what seemed at the time, a surrender to oppressive market forces,” adding that while they constituted “a move towards more structure and financial accountability, [they] have proved to be creative and empowering” (Somekh, 2010, p. 115).

The ability of a network to survive when it relies for its income entirely on low (and thus inclusive) membership fees is evidence of a certain resilience. The re-configuring of its co-ordination took place via discussion among members over email and a steering group meeting. These discussions showed the network remained highly valued, and its co-ordination function was re-distributed. There were no formal appointment procedures for these new arrangements as a constituted organization would have required, although they were loosely formalized within the two universities as being led in each by two prominent action researchers, Marion Dadds and Bridget Somekh. Yet the decision was made in as democratic a way as such issues can be. The minimal structure of a network appeared to be effective in keeping it active. It remains debatable whether a stronger structure with formal positions and procedures for recruitment would have succeeded in finding the people needed to undertake the network's co-ordination.

Central to these new arrangements were the Sponsoring Partnership scheme, which offered CARN's supporters a means to secure its finances, and Study Days that enabled regular CARN meetings (Balogh, 2006). The Co-ordinating Group also raised the membership fees, included an entitlement to receive the journal *EAR*, and undertook to ensure the annual conference would at least break even financially. Governance structures remained light and relatively open, though slightly more elaborated through a partial division of roles whereby Co-ordinating Group members took specific responsibilities for the increased range of CARN activities. In the absence of formalized structures and procedures for the responsible oversight of CARN activities, the network's statement of its values (CARN, 2015b) remains the only publicly accepted reference point for guidance when potentially contentious decisions have arisen. The significance of this statement has thus been far greater than is generally the case for entities like mission statements which are rarely embedded into institutional practice.

Resources to support the Coordinating Group's work in its early years were provided by the partner institutions. Little of such support remains available today from any higher education institution, not only just in the UK but also in many other countries. Practitioners outside higher education have never been well supported to engage in network activities. The naming of one-day CARN events as Study Days was specifically chosen to enable health-care practitioners to obtain support for professional development, and such perspectives enlivened the Study Day program (Balogh, 2006). But across its disciplines, the profile of CARN membership has shifted toward stronger connections to higher education, with practitioners tending to be postgraduate students.

CARN's cultural practices continue to aspire to a collaborative ethos; it welcomes "contributions from a wide range of philosophical perspectives which offer the ability to unsettle discourses that divide theory from practice, and to elaborate their interlinkage" (Balogh & Springett, 2014). The following analysis of the Study Day scheme is an example of such practices, and shows

how CARN has facilitated local action research, where recent cycles of policy change across the world have significantly increased the challenge faced by practitioners in their own work places and practice.

25.2 STUDY DAYS AS SITES FOR NETWORK DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES

Study Days can be held by any practitioners and/or academics who share the beliefs and values of action research as a practitioner or user-led activity that seeks to improve practice and is concerned with developing the critical dimensions of reflection and reflexivity. The incidence and history of Study Days have been documented by Balogh (2006) and Rowell, Inoue, and Getz (2014). Over the past 12 years, the balance between UK and non-UK Study Days has changed. Initially, UK Study days averaged three per year, recently settling annually at one or two. Those held outside the UK have increased from one annually to three or four per year, reflecting continuing support worldwide for action research. Venues have included the Antipodes, Sri Lanka, South Africa, USA, Canada, and in Europe: Holland, Norway, Denmark, Spain, Austria, Finland, Greece, Ireland, and Scotland.

Any member can request support for a Study Day. It follows that, given the diversity of situations and places, they have taken various forms as organizers have responded to local conditions and interests. CARN contributes toward costs on the basis that local institutions might provide a physical space cheaply, though the communicative space is not intended to be “institutional.” In the UK, but increasingly elsewhere, both space and time in academic institutions have become highly regularized as both practitioners and academics are micromanaged into increasing rounds of educational and social policy change, accompanied by reduced budgets. Culturally, the values that had supported action research and CARN have been eroded, to make way for those with a significant neo-liberal flavor. Focus has shifted to “value for money” and an accountability system that focuses on technical efficiency and effectiveness in these terms, coined “economy of performance” (Stronach, Corbin, McNamara, Stark, & Warne, 2002). Action research has not been immune to this: Kemmis (2006, p. 459) argues “some action research today lacks a critical edge.” Both he and Carr noted the rise of technical as opposed to critical approaches to action research together with the use of action research by “Western governments and school systems to control Schooling” (Somekh & Zeichner, 2009, p. 5). These shifts in focus impeded the telling of “unwelcome truths” (Kemmis, 2006, p. 459), with an associated shift toward “domesticating” those involved into prevailing policy conventions.

Conferences are a site for annual exchanges; Study Days promote more frequent, local forums where the *flows of knowledge* can be examined and enriched by local activity. While “The CARN Community has developed what Wenger (1998, p. 73) calls ‘a shared repertoire of actions, stories, discourses and con-

cepts” (Somekh, 2010, p. 115), there are also differences and diversity which need to be acknowledged, celebrated, and critiqued. Those who come together do not always agree and have varying beliefs and expectations about their practices and what counts as valuable research. However, such differences do not necessarily need to be smoothed out, but recognized—something more easily managed when understandings and beliefs about the value of the tasks being undertaken in specific contexts are shared, and where exchanges are respectful (Rowell et al., 2014). Rowell and colleagues re-call the lived experience of a Study Day with the evocative metaphor of “motion sickness,” as they sought to manage the many anticipated and unanticipated moments in bringing together practitioners from diverse settings to develop a critical dialogue.

Study Days are thus sites for setting challenges as well as developing trust. As Somekh and Zeichner (2009) suggest, “By sharing knowledge and experiences of action research—not just between East and West, but between action researchers in many countries and cultures—it is possible to contribute to the ‘world of flows’ knowledge and learning from multiple local sites” (p. 18), including ideas for locally based reform, and contribute to Appadurai’s notion of *globalization from below* (Appadurai, 2013). The most recent Study Days have extended significantly beyond the confines of local meetings by sharing videotaped extracts from their local deliberations online (CARN, 2015c). These initiatives have arisen not only from Study Day organizers but also in response to requests from CARN members elsewhere in the world wanting to connect to local knowledge generation. Such virtual links offer new potential for the network’s activities to proliferate globally from below.

25.3 CARN ON THE MOVE!

The effects on network activities and on the *lifeworld* experiences (Kemmis, 2010) of the CARN Co-ordinating Group members themselves, of economic “austerity” and the rapid development of computer-mediated communication (CMC)—both global phenomena—prompted the Group in 2013 to initiate an action research project termed *CARN on the MOVE!* to consult with its members and other action researchers about how to respond to these challenges (CARN, 2014a, 2015a). It aimed to “uncover, recover and discover new directions, connections and intersections that will promote Action Research in and across a growing range of communities of practice both in the UK and internationally” (CARN, 2014b), using a process that it was hoped would *animate* the network (Boud & Miller, 1997; Dewar & Sharp, 2013, p. 7).

We did this in two phases. Initially, the Lead Co-ordinator (Balogh) engaged in several in-depth conversations with any CARN member who wished to respond to a Briefing Paper setting out the Co-ordinating Group’s concerns (CARN, 2014b), at the same time taking any actions on suggestions that could be implemented immediately; and reported on these and the conversations to the membership and the CARN Co-ordinating Group (CARN, 2014a). In the second phase, ideas and proposals arising from the first phase were further

discussed by telephone in meetings of a specially constituted Virtual Spaces Group; through an online survey; within the CARN Co-ordinating Group; and at the CARN 2014 Conference. This project attracted involvement from many parts of the world, from long-standing and new members, and a wide disciplinary base. It successfully animated at least some parts and nodes of the network and confirmed that members were experiencing similar difficulties worldwide from austerity policies. We acted on most of the ideas proposed to us, including regularizing our support for regional groups, deepening and extending our links with other international action research networks, extending the use of languages other than English within CARN Forums, and devising methods to support special and sectional interests. Some are still in process at the time of writing, including the crucial issue of developing CARN's virtual presence and facilities for Internet-based discussions. The project also energized the Co-ordinating Group to support action research in new directions, recruiting new members, and provoking fresh thinking about how to continue to function as a network in the new environment. An important feature of the comments made about the way people value CARN concerned its "openness" in the widest sense, for example:

- "being open, honest, and critical in a positive, appreciative, encouraging way"
- "maintain the open feeling—it is very welcoming"
- "CARN gives the opportunity to participate freely and democratically in an open environment." (CARN, 2015a)

Such statements indicate the richness of how our aspiration to "openness" is understood and pose particular challenges for CARN's practice in virtual spaces, understanding as we do that the production of knowledge is itself a social act. Thus, as action researchers, we are profoundly interested in the way that encounters are socially situated, and the openness of the network is intended to reflect this interest as a legitimate and necessary object of inquiry. From its inception, action research has privileged the value of personal encounter, particularly within groups, and the group has been a fundamental vehicle for simultaneously exploring issues, engendering learning, and creating social conditions for agency (Coghlan & Brannick, 2003; Hart & Bond, 1995; Lewin, 1946; Marrow, 1969; Somekh, 2006). But face-to-face groups are now only one kind of possible social situation for people to meet, and while new possibilities emerge from what Bakardjieva describes as a new kind of "immobile socialization" (Bakardjieva, 2007), the conditions for agency among virtual communities are different.

Since the practice of action research is its chief problematic, as are questions of values, ethics, and virtues (Elliott, 2015; McNiff, 2015)—in the same way, that our "daily life is enmeshed in moral lines of discrimination" (Goffman, 1959, p. 242)—it seems to us that the particular ways that online social encounters may constrain or liberate need to be explored, as do the prevailing ethics, values, and power relations of virtual spaces. If we examine these ethics, we can see how they have changed during the development and growth

of the Internet and the worldwide web. From their beginnings as networks of “utopian, communal and libertarian undercurrents” (Castells, 1996, p. 357), they now reflect and even amplify the inequalities of the offline world.

In the last few years, email platforms have become dominated by Microsoft, Google, Yahoo!, and a handful of other huge telecommunications providers, which along with other Internet companies like Amazon, YouTube, Facebook, and eBay now broker to advertisers information that they mine from every individual act of online usage. Moreover, the online gateways through which these data are obtained cannot be avoided, so that it is almost impossible for Internet users to find spaces where they are not at the same time laborers and consumers on behalf of a massive advertising industry (Taylor, 2014).

Furthermore, it has become an industry that operates according to an intrusive ethical code not tolerated previously in broadcast media, at least in the USA and UK. No regulation via sponsorship laws or for public broadcasting requirements exist online as they do for UK and US broadcast media (Taylor, 2014). Of particular interest to academics is the way that bibliographic search engines display, and therefore privilege, texts that are both recent and frequently cited, rendering the foundational work in all disciplines less visible than the current and the popular (Evans, 2008).

We therefore need to understand cyberspace as offering further opportunity to develop “participatory practice in a non-participatory world” (Ledwith & Springett, 2010). The new context we find—of austerity, a more global membership seeking different kinds of engagement, the opportunities and demands of CMC, and the effects of these on our relationships with other action researchers around the world—represent for us not just a new background but a new multiplex of networks and lifeworlds within which we need to explore, understand, and develop our practice; we are already not separate from them. Our repertoire of skills for respectful engagement, which some identify as a new paradigm of inquiry (Heron, 2010) provide affordances for realizing new kinds of encounter, and what we have to offer in these changed times may even open new ways of working to others beyond our practicum. However, CARN members and supporters still affirm the importance of face-to-face encounter (CARN, 2015a) and see CMC as offering extensions to this, not displacement. The central questions for an emerging order for our network revolve around ethically framed enquiry about what kinds of public/virtual space we wish to develop or otherwise engage in and how.

25.4 CONCLUSION

We have tried to describe some of the problems encountered in maintaining CARN’s identity and modus operandi as an open network over its 40-year history. Our perspective has derived from our role in coordinating the network in recent years, further informed by the views of members through our CARN on the MOVE! consultation. Reflecting on its history, prior to our involvement in coordinating the network has become an important means of helping us col-

laboratively to understand and thus develop our practice. Similarly, trying to appreciate what it means to be an academic network in the digital age, under conditions of globalized connections also provides new insights.

The new kinds of public space provided by online connections impose a new hegemony with new and sometimes confusing values, and Somekh's tension between a "voluntarist inclusive ethic and oppressive market forces" (Somekh, 2010, p. 115) remains. The combination of austerity policies with increasing reliance on CMC is closing down many of the inter-personal encounters via reflective spaces that are so essential to processes of collectively thoughtful action. The networked individualism of the online world has been liberating in some respects, and has enabled new types of encounter and connection, but its appeal has also masked the hegemony of dominant Internet businesses, which not only reproduce but also amplify offline inequalities. Critiques such as Taylor's (2014) provide us with the beginnings of a critical perspective on how, as consumers, Internet users are laboring in the interests of advertising giants to provide, via consent processes which are non-negotiable, data to enable them to re-cast us in the eyes of vendors. If, as Ball (2007) contends, privatization of public life is also changing "who we are and what we do, what it means to be a teacher and a learner ... [and] encouraging competitive individualism and instrumentality" (p. 188), we have traveled far from the early days of CARN where a project critiquing objectives-based curricula could be supported by a major American business-linked interest such as the Ford Foundation. We may also have traveled from CARN's identity claim as an "open network"—easily sustained when it had limited capacity for publicizing its activities and relying on the enthusiasm of scholars for recruiting interest. The nature of online "public" space now available needs to be understood in terms of the values that are already supported by its infrastructure and which will influence the way that the network maintains its "openness."

We are beginning to explore the many potential interactions between online and offline lives for the purposes of exploring action research. The globalization from below of CARN's expanding Study Day program indicates the enduring thirst for human encounters, while the demand for online links to these shows an enthusiasm for developing new kinds of dialogue via *both* CMC and live conversation. Such matters must also play a key role in our developing relationships with other action research networks internationally. If reflecting upon, and analyzing our history and practice offers the best chance of dealing with such issues, then perhaps we and our colleagues around the world will be adequately equipped to do so.

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Action Learning and Action Research Association (ALARA): History, Culture, and Sustainability

Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt and Ron Passfield

26.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we consider an international network association born in Australia when the paradigm of action learning (AL) and action research (AR) was in its infancy. Interested academics and practitioners in education, higher education, and other social sciences, such as the health and agricultural sciences, as well as business, government, and communities, lacked infrastructure and moral support and were often under duress from proponents of the mainstream positivist paradigm. We two authors had ourselves suffered severe personal and career disadvantages and so joined like-minded interest and support groups. Since then, our goal has been to bring together AL and AR, which had hitherto developed separately, by drawing together people from different sectors to explore AL and AR processes and gradually achieve increasingly higher levels of consciousness, capabilities, and confidence. Therefore, the aims that gradually emerged from AL and AR and consolidated in the new Association (Action Learning and Action Research Association [ALARA]) are to:

- Provide an umbrella for the many varieties of AL and AR;
- Bring together people from a diverse range of professional disciplines and practices for social change;

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- Support practitioners addressing the challenges of the twenty-first century through ALAR;
- Be relevant to theorists, experienced practitioners, and novices;
- Network ALAR scholars and practitioners from local to global levels;
- Complement, cooperate, and collaborate with allied networks and organizations; and
- Practice participatory governance for effective management of ALARA.

ALARA is a voluntary association incorporated in the State of Queensland, Australia, and under Queensland's Associations Incorporation Act 1981. Its members are worldwide. Publications include the *ALAR Journal* (bi-annually), a monograph series, proceedings of congresses and conferences, and a fortnightly electronic newsletter. The ALARA Website (www.alarassociation.org) publishes useful information including lists of and links to local and international networks "around the world" and the ten principles of AL and AR developed by ALARA members, with an invitation to online dialogues.

In this chapter, we first briefly summarize ALARA history based on our experience and previous publications on ALARA. Secondly, we present a study of members' experiences of ALARA congresses and conferences, identifying key characteristics of ALARA culture and sustainability. In our conclusions and reflections, we consider future possibilities—for re-naming and consolidating ALARA and for its contribution to an international network-of-networks to strengthen both our global movement and joint World Congresses through the collaborative spirit we share.

26.2 HISTORY OF ALARA

As Yoland Wadsworth (2014) records:

The congresses were founded by Australia-based Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt and Ron Passfield, working in the higher education, managerial and organizational learning fields in Brisbane in the 1980s and 1990s. They also co-founded the auspice organization, the Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management Association (ALARPM), named the Action Learning and Action Research Association (ALARA) from 2008. (p. 826)

A precursor to the inaugural ALARPM World Congress in Brisbane in 1990 was the *First International Symposium on Action Research for Higher Education, Government, and Industry*, in Brisbane in 1989, funded by a research grant from Griffith University (Australia). Invited participants included renowned action researchers in higher education from the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, and Austria, who reached agreement on the essence of action research (days 1 and 2) before discussing applications with executives from industry and government (days 3 and 4). At the end of this symposium, participants asked for re-running this event on an international scale, which was the incentive for the authors and eight of their colleagues from various sectors to organize a World Congress the following year. The Congress grew out of

three main foundations: *AL* (taught in the International Management Centre, Pacific Region), *AR* (conducted mainly in education and higher education), and *Process Management* (PM, a group of professionals from industry, government, and higher education interested in methods and processes of introducing, developing, and facilitating experiential learning in organizations). Members of the organizing committee came from all three network groups. After the PM group became defunct, we argued that PM was anyway a natural process in AL and AR and could therefore be deleted to create the new name ALARA. Yet the *purpose* and corporate objective of ALARA as enshrined in its Constitution still explicitly acknowledges process management:

To promote by all available means the scientific study, practice, research and teaching of Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management, and to bring together those of whatever professional discipline who are concerned with AL, AR and PM. (Retrieved from www.alarassociation.org)

Key values of ALARA are *democracy, participation, collaboration, reflection*, and many related explicit and implicit values depending on their context of use, as we discuss below under “Culture of ALARA.” ALARA aims to link theorists, practitioners, and novice action learners and action researchers from many areas of practice at international, national, and local levels. This convergence of people from education, and ever more academic fields, from community development, organizations, business and management, and health and welfare in developing and developed countries, has been a major feature of ALARA as an internationally oriented organization from its outset. Here, we briefly outline the ALARA World Congresses, annual Australasian conferences and local meetings, and related literature on these events.

26.2.1 *World Congresses of ALARA*

Table 26.1 presents a summary of nine Congresses from 1990 to 2015 identifying themes, convenors, keynotes, and venues (Wadsworth, 2014). Three ALARPM Congresses (4th in 1997, 5th in 2000, and 6th in 2003) were held in conjunction with World Congresses of the older international Participatory Action Research (PAR) Network (8th in 1997, 9th in 2000, and 10th in 2003).

26.2.2 *Annual Australasian Conferences of ALARA*

Table 26.2 is an overview of themes and venues of ALARA conferences held every year since 1995 (except in 2000 and 2010 when the Congress was held in Australia), sometimes twice or three times in one year.

26.2.3 *Local Meetings of ALARA*

Regular and irregular meetings are also organized in each state, depending on the motivation, enthusiasm, and commitment of individuals and/or small

Table 26.1 ALARA World Congresses

WC	Year	Theme	Convener(s)	Keynote(s)	Venue
1	1990	Action Learning for Improved Performance	Orrrun Zuber-Skerritt	Reg Revans, John Elliott, Sheila Harri-Augstein, and Laurie Thomas	Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia
2	1992	Transforming Tomorrow Today	Patricia Weeks	Peter Checkland, Bob Dick and Tim Dalmau, Orlando Fals Borda, Brian Hall, Robin McTaggart, Yoland Wadsworth	University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia
3	1994	Accounting for Ourselves	Moiria Laidlaw	Orlando Fals Borda, Pam Lomax, and Jack Whitehead	University of Bath, United Kingdom
4	1997	Convergence in Knowledge, Space and Time	Orlando Fals Borda	Paulo Freire ^a , Immanuel Wallerstein, Manfred Max-Neef, Agnes Heller, Marja Lisa Swantz, Rajesh Tandon, Robert Chambers, Robert L. Flood, Robin McTaggart, Ted Jackson, Rodolfo Stavenhagen, Anibal Quijano, Peter Reason, Budd Hall, Anisur Rahman, Eduardo Geleano	Convention Centre, Cartagena, Colombia
5	2000	Reconciliation and Renewal Through Collaborative Learning, Research, and Action	Diana Seekers	John Gaventa, Evelyn Scott, Susan Weil, Patricia Maguire, Bob Macadam, Susan Goff, Yvonna Lincoln, Martin von Hildebrand, Vijay Kanhere, Susan Noffke, Robert Flood, Mandawuy Yunupingu, Anisur Rahman, Victoria Marsick, Isaac Prilleltensky, Robert Chambers, Deborah Lange	University of Ballarat, Australia
6	2003	Learning Partners in Action	Pieter du Toit	Orrrun Zuber-Skerritt and Thomas Kalliath, Peter Reason, Cheryl de la Rey, Susan Weil and Danny Burns, Ineke Buskens, Richard Bawden, Tim Dalmau	University of Pretoria, South Africa
7	2006	Standards and Ethics in Participatory Research	Ben Boog	Ben Valkenburg, Yoland Wadsworth, Judi Marshall, Michiel Schoemaker, Øyvind Pålshaugen, Sandra Schrujfer, Naomi Scheman, Julia Preece	University of Groningen, The Netherlands
8	2010	Appreciating Our Pasts, Comprehending Our Presents, Prefiguring Our Futures	Jacques Boulet	Alan Rayner, Budd Hall, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Yoland Wadsworth	Bayview Eden Hotel, Melbourne, Australia
9	2015	Collaborative and Sustainable Learning for a Fairer World: Rhetoric or Reality?	Lesley Wood	Eileen Piggot-Irvine (MC), Richard Tear, Danny Burns	St George's Hotel, Pretoria, South Africa

^aPaulo Freire was to be lead keynote but died two months before the World Congress.

groups who value sharing ideas in seminars and special interest groups. For example, the Brisbane Group has met bi-monthly or monthly, sometimes as a “philosophy café,” “cabaret,” or “conversations,” usually led by one person, but with substantial participant interaction. A recent video showcases the process of a typical ALARA conversation (ALARA Brisbane Group, 2015). In the following section, we overview works in the literature on ALARPM/ALARA that portray their authors’ experiences and reflections on events that we consider milestones in the history of ALARPM/ALARA.

26.2.4 *Literature on ALARPM/ALARA*

Key contributions of the first Symposium and the first World Congress were published as books (Zuber-Skerritt, 1991a, b) and action-learning luminary Reg Revans was interviewed on video (1991a). Proceedings of Congresses 1, 2, and 3 were published in-house (Bruce & Russell, 1992; Colins & Chippendale, 1991a, b; Laidlaw, Lomax, & Whitehead, 1994, respectively). Passfield (1998) reflected on Congress 4/8. Fals Borda (1997) reflected on PAR in Colombia, before compiling and analysing the keynote presentations of Congress 4/8 with a message from Paulo Freire¹ (written in February 1997 and published posthumously in 1998) that still rings true in 2016:

Above all we must fight against the power of the dominant neoliberal ideology that keeps on offending and attacking the human nature while reproducing itself socially and historically, threatening dreams, utopias, and hopes. (p. xvi)

Fals Borda (2001) also reflected and reported on the 5th ALARPM/9th PAR Congress in Ballarat in 2000. Comparing it with the previous Congress, he concluded that while convergence between disciplines continued, there were also some advances, which he discussed under four headings: globalization and popular ideology; Indian and Aboriginal cultures; social values and reconciliation; and participative university education. Wadsworth (2001) reflectively evaluated the same Congress, concluding with “learnings for the future.” A special issue of the *ALAR Journal* (6(2), 2001) consisted of brief reflection papers by 17 (of 20) South African women academics who attended the 2000 Congress as part of an AusAID-funded leadership development program led by Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt. Their full-length papers were published as chapters in a book edited by Speedy (2003). The women also applied successfully to organize the next Congress, 6/10, in Pretoria under the leadership of Pieter du Toit (2004) who published his reflections on this Congress in the *ALAR Journal* (9(1), 2004). In the same issue, Wadsworth (2004) reflected on her experiences and concluded with learnings for the next congress; McMorland and Kalliath (2004) wrote about learning together through networking; and three other papers were included from the 2003 Australasian Conference of ALARPM on the Gold Coast, Australia. Publications growing out of local meetings of the Brisbane Group include Hill (2001) on educational cabaret and Hill (2002, 2005) on storytelling as (action) inquiry.

Table 26.2 ALARA Australasian conferences

<i>Year</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Venue/place</i>
1995	Moving On	Brisbane
1995	Y Not Ask?	Sydney
1995	Best Practice: An Action Learning Approach	Adelaide
1996	Energy Switch	Brisbane
1996	Continuous Improvement Through Action Learning	Adelaide
1996	Developing the Learning Organization Through ALAR	Singapore
1997	Action for a Better World	Brisbane
1998	Contemporary Models of Action Learning and Action Research	Sydney
1998	Solutions Outside the Square	Brisbane
1999	Principles of Action Learning and Action Research	Sydney
1999	Translations of Action Learning and Action Research	Sydney
1999	Success in a Complex and Uncertain World	Brisbane
2001	Different Journeys	Brisbane
2002	Confronting the Gaps	Brisbane
2002	Research-In-Action Symposium	Melbourne
2003	Surfing the Winds of Change	Gold Coast
2004	Action in the Top End—The Power of Story	Darwin
2005	Telling Our Stories	Sydney
2006	Invigorating the Politics of Participation	Brisbane
2007	Moving Forward Together: Enhancing the Wellbeing of People and Communities through ALAR	Tauondi College, Adelaide
2008	The Whole Person: Sustainable Futures in Living, Learning, and Working	Canberra Institute of Technology
2009	Living Differently: Action Researching Our Way through the Ecological and Economic Meltdown	Borderlands Cooperative, Melbourne
2011	Action and Change: Creative Responses to New Challenges	Brisbane
2012	Achieving Sustainable Outcomes through Dialogue and Engagement—The Best from ALAR	University of Technology, Sydney
2013	Creating a Better World	Brisbane
2014	Starting from Here: Self Determination as Functional Reform	Silver Wattle, Bungendore, NSW

Other useful publications on ALARPM include the book by Pinchen and Passfield (1995) and the special issue of the international journal *The Learning Organization* (2002, 9 (3&4)) edited by Zuber-Skerritt, with contributions on the concepts of AL (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002), AR (Altrichter, Kemmis, McTaggart, & Zuber-Skerritt 2002), and PM (Bawden & Zuber-Skerritt, 2002) and on related topics in higher education (Passfield, 2002) and thesis writing using action research (Dick, 2002; Zuber-Skerritt & Perry, 2002). Wadsworth (2002) as president of ALARPM identified what was then currently important to the future of the international field of action research and its numerous variants and commented on some key sites of activity in the USA, UK, and Europe. Pam Swepson (2003) traced the history of ALARPM “from Brisbane (Australia) to the world through inclusion and networks” in inter-

views with five “elders” who were involved in ALARPM from the very beginning: Bob Dick, Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt, Ron Passfield, Anne-Marie Carroll, and Yoland Wadsworth. Her article discussed their answers to two questions:

1. Think back over your association with ALARPM. What for you were the turning points, events, or people that made a difference to the development of ALARPM?
2. Think about what ALARPM is now as a result of its history. What would you like to see it bury with honour and what would you like to see it carry forward in the future?

Zuber-Skerritt (2009) included three chapters on the history of ALARA through interviews with her by (1) Mary Farquhar on ALAR as a field and network; (2) Jim Murphy on personal life and work experiences that showed the debates and barriers faced by a pioneer in the phenomenological paradigm of collaborative, PAR, and how these difficulties affected his work and career decisions; and (3) Thomas Kalliath on developing networks and values. Yoland Wadsworth detailed history and analysed key aspects of the content of all World Congresses of ALARA since their inception for the inaugural 2014 *Sage Encyclopaedia of Action Research*. Finally, we mention two books resulting from action research conferences. Santos and Todhunter (2007) include contributions in Spanish and in English from the international symposium on action research in honour of Orlando Fals Borda in Bogota in 2006, with chapters in English by keynote speakers Christine O’Hanlon, John Elliott, Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt, Shirley Grundy, Robin McTaggart, and Stephen Kemmis (in absentia). The second book edited by Zuber-Skerritt (2012) grew out of the 2010 Melbourne Congress of ALARA, with contributions by Bob Dick, Richard Bawden, Jack Whitehead, Eileen Piggot-Irvine, Robin McTaggart, Shankar Sankaran, Ernie Stringer, Judith Kearney, and Ron Passfield. In Zuber-Skerritt and Passfield (2016), we summarized the history and culture of ALARA as a precursor to the present chapter.

The ALARA website also links to Bob Dick’s extensive archive of resources (www.aral.com.au/resources), including AREOL (www.aral.com.au/areol), a course on Action Research and Evaluation OnLine that we consider the best in the world and that has been offered and accepted by many people in many countries every semester since 1995. Our past PhD students have testified that if one fully engages in all activities of this course and completes the assignments, one would have a first draft of a thesis.

26.2.5 Reflections from Members of ALARA

From here, we present a case study of ALARA members’ reflections on their experiences and ideas about the Association. Our qualitative survey, conducted in May 2015 via email with 12 participants,² asked three open-ended questions:

1. *What have you appreciated most in ALARA World Congresses and other events?*

2. *Why do you think ALARA has survived for 25 years?*
3. *How do you envisage the future of action research and ALARA?*

In analysing these data we draw from our experiences, reflections, and observations over 25 years as members of ALARPM/ALARA who were involved in designing, conducting, and presenting multiple World Congresses, conferences, seminars, and formal and informal conversations with ALARA members and presenters. We also use these data to supplement and validate our own recollections. We present our discussion under two main headings: culture and sustainability.

26.3 ALARA CULTURE

In attempting to understand ALARA culture from diverse data sources, we have drawn on what Ott (1989) offers as a hierarchical delineation of culture’s components—artefacts, patterns of behaviour, beliefs and values, and assumptions—as illustrated in Table 26.3. We acknowledge the complexity of “culture” and thus the multitude of ways to try to understand it; we use this classification as a way to help construe the data we have collected, which inevitably has its own emphases and orientations.

26.3.1 ALARA Artefacts

Artefacts represent the visible dimension of culture. In many organizations, artefacts can be observed through members’ clothing and language and characteristics of meeting place such as its physical surrounds and charts/paintings

Table 26.3 The culture of ALARA

Artefacts	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learning conversations 2. National and international conferences/seminars 3. World Congresses 4. Publications 5. Website
Patterns of behaviour (norms)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Generosity in sharing 2. People treated as equals 3. Workshops and presentations having a participative component 4. Openness to experience and to others’ perspectives 5. Integrating theory and practice 6. Focus on improving practice 7. Consciously creating a sense of community 8. Sharing experiences for mutual growth and learning
Beliefs and Values	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Inclusiveness 2. Honesty and integrity 3. Commitment to creating a better world
Assumptions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. AL and AR can create a better world 2. Dialogue and practical application facilitate learning and development

on the wall. ALARA does not have a central physical location, so its artefacts are expressed more clearly through practices and processes (learning conversations), events (World Congresses, national and international conferences/seminars), publications (journal, monographs, proceedings, and articles), logos, and websites. The visible dimension of events, publications, and the website has been addressed in the first section above. Learning conversations are designed to facilitate reflective practice and elicit shared experiences, critical comment, and individual and collective learning.

26.3.2 *Patterns of Behaviour (norms) of ALARA*

Patterns of behaviour (also called “norms” in discussions of culture) can be observed in participants in ALARA events. Norms are often unwritten, evolving over time and becoming reinforced by rituals and individual and collective experiences. Norms are often below conscious awareness and are described as “unwritten rules”—you find out about them explicitly only when you inadvertently break them. Below, we identify some of the prevailing norms of ALARA and illustrate them from comments made by the participants in our research (P1–P12).

26.3.2.1 *Generosity in Sharing*

Generosity in sharing resources, knowledge, and skills is one of the hallmarks of ALARA events. Members’ willingness to share and give time to others has been observed widely. Participant 2 (P2), for example, stated: “I absolutely love the camaraderie and the generosity fellow participants show with their time and their knowledge.” The ready access to experts in specialized areas that normally would not be available is highly valued. As P9 commented, “I have appreciated the kind of access to experienced practitioners and their practice knowledge that has been generously shared to novices and early practitioners at World Congresses and other events.”

At World Congress 1, a visiting overseas presenter unwittingly broke this generosity norm. The presenter had received payment for his presentation and travel costs yet disappeared after his one-hour presentation. Reg Revans, in contrast, refused payment for his presentation, travel, and miscellaneous expenses and not only provided a video interview (Revans, 1991a) and a totally engaging keynote address (Revans, 1991b) but also offered two impromptu workshops, actively participated in the Congress, and shared a meal with participants on two occasions. Revans epitomized ALARA’s fundamental norm of generosity in sharing. ALARA “Learning Conversations” also give expression to this norm by providing the opportunity for people to share their experience and resources with other participants and to be open to alternative views and perspectives offered in a supportive way through conversation.

26.3.2.2 *Treating People as Equals*

A behaviour evident at ALARA events is participants’ willingness to treat each other—people new to the field, “gurus,” everyone—alike. The absence

of status flows from both the generosity norm and members' shared epistemology that, whatever our standpoint, we are all *knowing subjects* or have *local knowledge*. Newcomers to ALARA events are quickly "taken under the wing"—introduced to others and encouraged to contribute from their unique experience. Conference participants have been heard observing that they could not differentiate between "gurus" and everyone else. P2 commented about the informality of ALARA events:

I enjoy the low key, human scale of experiences I have at these conferences. Unlike large conferences I have attended, ALARA conferences are careful with both content and process, are big enough to be challenged but small enough to be a 'seen' member.

P6 similarly appreciated the low-key approach that at the same time provided focused, relevant activity: "Based on my experiences, what I most value is a precious and rare balance between informality and relevance."

26.3.2.3 *Need for a Participative Component in Workshops and Presentations*

Emphasis on participation is an established norm of ALARA events. Presenters/facilitators are expected to engage participants so that all, including the presenters/facilitators, may experience genuine sharing and can question and learn. Participation is integral to both AL and AR, and this reinforces the congruent norms of ALARA events and underlying culture. P1 most appreciated about ALARA "collaboration with other action researchers to reflect, confirm, and extend approaches used in this methodological space." P5 felt that ALARA conferences presented "an opportunity to network in a way that is unlike any other conference that I had attended in the past." P2 appreciated "the opportunity to talk with people I really admire," while P6 highlighted how people who attend ALARA activities value "genuine participation." P7 appreciated "listening to and engaging with the presentations of other participants in the World Congresses."

26.3.2.4 *Openness to Experience and To Others' Perspectives*

ALARA events and activities are designed to extend people's understanding, skills, and networks. P8 appreciated the opportunity to collaborate with a truly diverse range of people: "I am a compulsive collaborator and really enjoy networking with a wide range of people from diverse cultural and disciplinary backgrounds." ALARA's ability to bring together different processes and perspectives of action learners and action researchers contributes to its capacity to sustain practitioners. P6 observed, "ALARA has been willing to treat different varieties of action research and action learning as part of the same family. This was true from the beginning and has been an increasing theme elsewhere too." This norm is especially evident in the *Learning Conversations* conducted by

ALARA on a regular basis in Brisbane and ALARA's requirement that every Congress includes all of the main "strands, streams, and variants."

26.3.2.5 *Integrating Theory and Practice*

The nexus between theory and practice has often been described as "praxis." At ALARA events, presentations about theory isolated from its *generation from* practice or its *application to* practice are not encouraged. This might be considered a form of pragmatism. However, theoretical knowledge is not devalued. Rather, it is respected where it can contribute to improved practice. Lewin (1951) wrote, "There is nothing more practical than a good theory" (p. 169). The work of Bob Dick, a founding member and contributor across ALARPM/ALARA's 25 years, epitomizes linkage of theory and practice. His doctorate by explication, *Making process accessible: Robust processes for learning, change, and action research* (2005), highlights his contribution to theory and practice and his commitment to making relatively difficult theoretical concepts accessible to practitioners as "robust processes." P6 appreciated linking of theory and practice as a key element of ALARA activities: "Most sessions at most conferences (and other activities) have been involving, inclusive, and useful in a practical way. I have particularly appreciated the many sessions that have successfully combined principles and practice."

A feature of ALARA national conferences is their encouragement of participants to bring along an issue or emerging challenge to workshop progressively while participating in conference activities.

26.3.2.6 *Focus on Improving Practice*

ALARA's focus on improving practice is underpinned by the process of reflective practice that is integral to AL and AR. P8 articulated this norm with insight and commitment: "I believe that as a network we are constantly striving to improve practice and to support those who are seeking to improve theirs." P7 appreciated the opportunity that ALARA events provide "to meet face-to-face with colleagues from around the world who are committed to researching their own practice and to making this public." For P3, ALARA "continues to be practical and contemporary, reaching into all professions, adapting to the aims of political and social justice movements, and addressing the complex needs of postmodern society."

26.3.2.7 *Consciously Creating a Sense of Community*

Designing ALARA events entails conscious effort to build in processes that help to develop a sense of community. Invariably, ALARA conferences begin with some form of engagement process designed to enable people to introduce themselves to others and to make connections that can serve to build a sense of belonging. This is considered especially important for people who are new to AL and AR or to the ALARA network. P4 expressed the visceral benefits of this conscious effort to create community at ALARA events: "I always come

away feeling deeply connected and very satisfied with the learning that has happened. I have made lifelong friends at these events in a way that I have never experienced beyond ALARA.”

26.3.2.8 *Sharing Experiences for Mutual Growth and Learning*

ALARA events do not become preoccupied with problems of the world. They focus on what individuals are doing singularly or collectively to change what is unsatisfactory, deficient, or destructive of the human spirit. Participants share their experiences of searching for solutions in any arenas—for example, business, government, education, health, and community—and across issues as diverse as discrimination in all its forms, workplace motivation, on-farm research, mindfulness, leadership, and depression. Even the community forming processes at the start of national conferences and World Congresses draw on an eclectic range of traditions and processes so that participants not only experience connection but also are introduced to new processes and applications. P5 deeply appreciates ALARA’s focus on learning and development, which led to a successful academic career: “I have been encouraged by the ongoing contribution that action learning and action research has made to my personal development—the learning with and from others has been a key factor in turning around my academic career.”

P3 valued the opportunity of:

meeting stunning practitioners such as Revans, Dick and Zuber-Skerritt as well as many others who inspired me with their andragogical skills and solution-focused thinking. ... I learnt that action research is a philosophy as well as a methodology and when teaching this to postgraduate teachers and health professionals at [my university] and examining their research projects I saw how reflective practice when applied to the very real experiences in the classrooms and clinical settings brought positive changes for the better that other research methods couldn’t produce.

26.3.3 *Beliefs and Values of ALARA*

26.3.3.1 *Inclusiveness*

Inclusiveness has been a foundation value since ALARA’s inception and has found expression in the norms of ALARA events such as sharing generously; treating all as equals; being open to experience and to others’ perspectives; and consciously creating a sense of community.

Orlando Fals Borda (1998) expressed this value of inclusiveness when discussing the motivations for the combined World Congress 4/8 that focused on the theme of *Participatory Convergence in Knowledge, Space, and Time*:

During this period [since the Bath World Congress in 1994] the idea of participation associated with social, economic and political research, had spread through the five continents. Many related schools emerged, at least 32 according to a preliminary count. Therefore, the need was felt to consider in what ways these

schools differed or converged in theory as well as practice, and to examine what they had been doing. (p. xii)

World Congress 4/8 epitomized this inclusiveness by bringing together in Cartagena, Colombia, 1,850 people from 61 countries. The event was energetically multinational, multilingual (simultaneous English and Spanish), multidisciplinary (hard and soft sciences), and multigenerational (the young, the elders, and those in-between).

26.3.3.2 *Honesty and Integrity*

Reg Revans who travelled to World Congress 1 in Brisbane via Hong Kong was appalled to learn (from newspapers) that the head of the Hong Kong Stock Exchange was jailed for fraud. His response was to conduct an impromptu workshop under a tree at the Congress venue to discuss the key role of honesty and integrity in AL. P8 singled out this value of honesty and integrity: “I have also seen striking accounts of honesty in practice—including about when things don’t go well—from people whether at senior organization levels in ALARA or at grassroots.” P3 valued the opportunity ALARA provided to bring them into contact with people who provided them with “real collaborative and cross-professional work on projects that had research integrity, open and transparent processes, and life changes for the participants.” The value of honesty and integrity is expressed through a number of ALARA norms, especially sharing experiences for mutual growth and learning.

26.3.3.3 *Commitment to Creating a Better World*

This commitment to creating a better world is particularly evident in ALARA’s statement of purpose and vision:

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

ALARA’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 (www.alarassociation.org).

P6 expressed appreciation of this value succinctly:

I appreciate the attitude that people bring to ALARA activities. ... They [these people] seem to have a commitment to making the world a better place. I experience this at few other conferences. I find it affirming to mix with such people, especially as much of the world elsewhere is abandoning collaboration and values of equity.

Commitment to creating a better world particularly underpins two norms of ALARA events: (1) integration of theory and practice; and (2) focus on improving practice.

26.3.4 *ALARA Assumptions*

Schein (2010) claimed, “the essence of culture lies in the pattern of basic assumptions” (p. 32). Twenty years earlier, he had argued that “deeply held assumptions often start out historically as values but, as they stand the test of time, gradually come to be taken for granted and then take on the character of assumptions” (Schein, 1990, p. 112). He further contended that these assumptions could be accessed only by in-depth experience and research:

Through more intensive observations, through more focused questions, and through involving motivated members of the group in intensive self-analysis, one can seek out and decipher the taken-for-granted, underlying, and usually unconscious *assumptions* that determine perceptions, thought processes, feelings, and behaviour. Once one understands some of these assumptions, it becomes much easier to decipher meanings implicit in various behavioural and artifactual phenomena one observes. (p. 112)

Through our recent research and involvement in ALARA since its inception, we have attempted to elicit the underlying ALARA assumptions that are now taken for granted. Here, we are helped by reflections of the long-serving, motivated members of ALARA who participated in our survey.

26.3.4.1 *Action Learning and Action Research Can Create a Better World*

A fundamental assumption expressed in the ALARA purpose and vision quoted earlier is that AL and AR, with their collaborative ethos, can be used to create a better world. P6 expressed this assumption in clearest terms:

Each of the future possibilities threatens to increase the turbulence that people, and the world face. A change methodology that engages people directly in improvement driven by genuine understanding is relevant to each of them. The action research (or action learning) cycle of trial and error informed by understanding is the best way I know to cope with ambiguity and unpredictability.

P4, an ALARA member for 25 years, expressed confidence in the transformative power of action research:

AR is increasingly lauded as a strong developmental research approach in North America. It is rising because of its values and transformation orientation. It is one of the few research approaches that will be able to sustain our increasingly turbulent world.

Contributing authors with Zuber-Skerritt (2012) provided evidence of the power of AL and AR to achieve sustainable development in business, government, and community. These authors’ persistence in using ALAR for more than 20 years bears testament to their belief in the power of these approaches to create positive, sustainable change.

26.3.4.2 *Dialogue and Practical Application Facilitate Learning and Development*

An underlying assumption developed over time through ALARA's values and norms is that diversity enriches conversation and aids professional development and learning, which in turn are cemented through application in different contexts. Conversations with people who have cultural backgrounds or perspectives and processes different from our own immediately throw into sharp relief our own assumptions. These assumptions can be enabling or constraining and can be changed in the light of new evidence and experience. ALARA's focus on practical application provides participants with opportunities to learn new ways of acting in the world to achieve better outcomes. For P4, with long-standing involvement in and commitment to ALARA: "There is a culture of openness, collaboration, creativity, fostering development, appreciation of diversity that is the hallmark of every [ALARA] event I have participated in."

26.4 SUSTAINABILITY

Kurt Lewin's (1951) Force Field Analysis approach is useful for considering ALARA's sustainability. If we take sustainability of ALARA as our goal, we can identify what forces are helping achievement of this goal and what forces are hindering it.

26.4.1 *Forces that Help to Sustain ALARA*

First and paramount is the strength of ALARA culture, which has developed over the Association's 25 years. Schein (1990) observed of this aspect of organizational life:

The strength and degree of internal consistency of a culture are, therefore, a function of the stability of the group, the length of time the group has existed, the intensity of the group's experiences of learning, the mechanisms by which the learning has taken place ... and the strength and clarity of the assumptions held by the founders and leaders of the group. (p. 111)

Associated with the strength of this culture is the continuous involvement of ALARA's founding members and leaders. P2, commenting on why ALARA continues to exist, identified as the main reason "the core ALARA group in Brisbane who persist and lead" and "key elders and life members" who are the "stayers that hold the ship afloat." This view was reinforced by P9:

ALARA has survived for 25 years because of the unstinting commitment of key practitioners for significant periods of time; sometimes with intense effort; sometimes with necessary withdrawal to recoup energies, but ready to fill a breach with more service.

P2 rightly takes this further by acknowledging the contribution of successors and their significant role in the longevity of ALARA: “There are also key people more recently involved, that have put a lot of time into the organization voluntarily, e.g., Colin Bradley [current President].” Apart from key people like Yoland Wadsworth, Susan Goff, Ernie Stringer, and Colin Bradley who served as ALARA President over the years, others have volunteered their time, skills, and resources to perform roles on the Management Committee and Conference Planning Committee over nearly three decades. Without the continual commitment and involvement of these people, ALARA would not have the capacity for sustainability or for significant strategic innovations such as the increasing participation of Indigenous engagement in action research through ALARA’s conferences and journal and the increasing engagement of regional institutions as our partners.

P4 identified another key factor in ALARA’s sustainability: congruence with its espoused values, which engenders loyalty:

The organization lives/breathes the values of AR. It continues to grow and develop as the members have equally grown and diversified. I think it is the connectivity with members that is created that creates loyalty. It is the ONLY organization I have belonged to for nearly 25 years. Most organizations come and go, disconnect, etc. ALARA has not.

26.4.2 *Forces that Impact Negatively on the Sustainability of ALARA*

A recent drop in ALARA’s membership numbers is placing an increasing burden on financial resources, since the organization operates on paid membership renewed with every World Congress. Without the critical mass of resources—people and finances—the organization becomes overstretched when trying to conduct offshore ALARA World Congresses in collaboration with overseas entities. Conducting congresses overseas therefore can increase the risk that ALARA members may lose control over vital processes and necessary revenue. These circumstances impact upon both the cultural experience of these events and the growth and retention of ALARA members. A further obstacle is that the founding leaders/elders have retired or are approaching retirement. There is also the exhaustion experienced by existing office holders who need support from new people to carry on the workload.

The name, “ALARA,” itself has some unexpected new limitations in a global world of meanings. According to Wikipedia, ALARA is an acronym for “As Low As Reasonably Achievable.” And there are at least three other organizations called ALARA. One was founded in 1975 by a small group of Australian women interested in amateur radio. The Australian Ladies Amateur Radio Association (www.alara.org.au) celebrated its 40th birthday in 2015. The second, a Queensland-based organization called ALARA Qld Limited—Access,

Lifestyle support, Accommodation support, Respite Care, and Activities (www.alaraqld.org.au)—supports people with disability. The third is the **Afro-Latin American Research Association (ALARA)**, a dynamic organization of scholars working in the field of African–American Studies, with an annual journal, *P ublication of the A fro- L atin A merican R esearch A ssociation* (PALARA). In our reflections for the future of ALARA, we therefore suggest a name change, to avoid confusion and to signal a regeneration of ALARA to sustain the Association in line with its core values.

26.5 CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

We conclude by briefly summarizing our discussion of the history, culture, and sustainability of ALARA. Here, we try to capture ALARA’s significance and identify its limitations. We also reflect on its future.

26.5.1 *Summary of Discussion*

From our own experiences and results of the survey in our case study, it is clear that ALARA—like fellow AR organizations worldwide—has continued to exist through the unstinting efforts of many people. These people uphold and protect ALARA values and ALARA norms and contribute to the Association in multiple ways. They value the richness ALARA brings to their own lives and practice and the support ALARA provides as they work actively to contribute to a better world. Challenges from declining membership and from inadequate resources place a large burden on office holders and suggest that “cutting the cloth to fit the suit” is an appropriate strategy as ALARA moves into the future.

26.5.2 *ALARA’s Significance*

Our research and discussion highlight the impact of ALARA and its earlier incarnation ALARPM over almost 30 years in a wide range of arenas including business, government, education, health, environment, and community. Multiple publications, congresses, meetings, and so forth continue to extend ALARA’s reach, providing support, learning, reflection, and validation for many practitioners who often operate in environments that are far from supportive of their endeavours to create a better world.

26.5.3 *Study Limitations*

The interpretations, understandings, and perspectives we have discussed here—concerning ALARA history, culture, sustainability, and our survey data on these—are our own. As such, they are shaped and limited by our observations over the 25 years of ALARA’s existence and the positions and roles we have played in that time. We acknowledge that we have lived and breathed ALARA from its inception, and we continue to contribute to this day.

26.5.4 *Reflections for the Future*

Our reflections encompass three aspects: a name change, consolidation of the Australasian network, and closer collaboration with other AL and AR networks worldwide.

26.5.4.1 *Name Change to PALAR*

We recommend a name change from Action Learning and Action Research Association ALARA to Participatory Action Learning and Action Research PALAR Association (but not to PALARA because of the name of the journal mentioned earlier). This is mainly to underscore the importance of participation so central to the original focus of the Process Management Group and that continues to be an essential principle in AL and AR. The change would also recognize our close relationship with the PAR Network over many years. Unfortunately, this network has been defunct for several years now, although the work continues in other ways. The concept of PALAR as a philosophy, methodology, theory of learning, and as a facilitation process has been developed and refined over many years in various areas of education, higher education, business, management and organization development, and in health and community engagement. The name of the *ALAR Journal* could be retained, or also be renamed as the PALAR Journal. Decisions about the changes we recommend must of course be made by the ALARA membership at an Annual General Meeting.

26.5.4.2 *Consolidation of the Australasian Network*

Over-stretching when resources are limited raises the danger of losing your foothold in your own terrain. Some participants in our research raised this issue in the context of discussing the sustainability of ALARA. There was strong support for the idea of strengthening our home base (Australasia) while collaborating with other overseas networks working for similar goals. As P11 stated, “ALARA is Australasian and so needs to strengthen itself here.” We believe this home-ground strength will continue to provide a firm base for collaborating with and contributing to other networks.

26.5.4.3 *Collaboration with Other Network Organizations*

In closing, we strongly recommend closer collaboration with other major network organizations around the world, such as Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN), Action Research Network of the Americas, and Pedagogy and Educational Praxis Network, each of which has its own international conferences, sometimes simultaneously (e.g., in 2015: ALARA 4–7 November in South Africa and CARN 6–8 November in Portugal). At present, some of us are members of two or more network organizations, which can be a costly arrangement. We suggest either reciprocal membership or joint membership of a new international network-of-networks that organizes joint World Congresses every two or three years, while retaining separate regional conferences of each association, such as the ALARA Australasian conferences, the CARN confer-

ences, and Study Days, and local meetings. This arrangement would be more effective, efficient, collaborative, and affordable than the present situation.

We look forward to an exciting future as our growing field responds in these ways to the many global and local challenges already upon us and continuing to emerge.

NOTES

1. Paulo Freire was to be the lead keynote but died two months before the World Congress.
2. We thank the participants in our ALARA survey for their collaboration and valuable feedback.

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Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA)

Rajesh Tandon

27.1 CHANGING CIVIL SOCIETY

Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) engages in a process of change to simultaneously empower citizens, in particular the poor and marginalized, while sensitizing government agencies and shaping policy. Empowered citizens, through information and mobilization, become aware of their rights and responsibilities. Government agencies responsible for providing basic services (of health, water, sanitation, education, etc.) are sensitized and their human and institutional capacities developed to meet the needs of the people effectively. Networks and coalitions of empowered citizens are facilitated to work together to influence governance at all levels. Increasingly, private agencies are involved in supplying basic services to communities. PRIA has begun engaging with them as well to sensitize them to the voice and needs of marginalized communities.

27.2 HISTORY OF PRIA

PRIA was established in 1982 by Dr Rajesh Tandon, an electronics engineer from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur, and a management graduate from the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta, with a PhD in Organizational Science from Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, USA. The vision that propels the organization is of a world based on the values of equity, justice, freedom, peace, and solidarity. The organization's mission is to build capacities of citizens, communities, and institutions to enable vibrant, gender-equal societies.

PRIA's work is focused on empowerment of the excluded through capacity building, knowledge building, and policy advocacy. Over three decades, PRIA

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Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), New Delhi, India

has promoted “participation as empowerment,” capacity building of community organizations, and people’s participation in governance. Initiatives are undertaken in the overall perspective of *making democracy work for all* in the political system; democratic culture in families, communities, and society; and participatory democracy with active citizenship.

Democracy for all is realized when every citizen is informed and engaged; when development is inclusive; and resource use and access is equitable. PRIA supports realization of such possibilities for all Indians, especially the poor, the marginalized, “Scheduled Castes,”¹ and “Scheduled Tribes.” Among these communities, PRIA programmes pay special attention to women. In recent years, attention has been paid to increased participation of the youth, to help fulfil the potential of India’s demographic dividend.

Through building **knowledge**, raising **voice**, and making **democracy** work, PRIA realizes its vision—of a world based on values of equity, justice, freedom, peace, and solidarity.

27.2.1 *Knowledge Is Power*

Commenting on his transition from a science background to the non-profit sector, founder Tandon points at hereditary and circumstantial factors shaping one’s destiny. Working with villagers on educational training interventions at the beginning of his professional career, Rajesh Tandon encountered illiterate villagers who seemed to know a lot more about their rural reality than formal researchers. He began questioning the relevance and legitimacy of the dominant knowledge system created on an objective, scientific system. People’s knowledge of local realities contains the seeds of transformation, he realized, and this knowledge brings with it the possibility of local communities putting pressure from below to access government services and programmes. Knowledge for change became Tandon’s professional pursuit, and he established PRIA in 1982 to further this pursuit.

The work of positing an alternative view of knowledge, research, and enquiry and an institutional framework to appropriate that task was rejected by the academic enterprise within India and the region. Tandon’s work was labelled as unscientific and the phraseology of participatory research, popular knowledge, and empowerment was seen as contradictory. Some would call it furthering political ideology; others would look at it merely as a development tool. His desire to link adult learning and community knowledge with increased participation of the marginalized and excluded for social change was challenged. But he never lost faith. Today, bottom-up knowledge, learning, and participation as tools of empowerment and for social transformation are common vocabulary among grassroots groups, practitioners, academic institutions, government agencies, and international donor organizations.

27.2.2 *Trajectory of PRIA'S Work*

The history of PRIA's work is one of continuity and change across three decades. There are some recognizable hallmark phases, though work through different phases cannot be compartmentalized. National and international political, economic, and sectoral developments from one phase have influenced and shaped decisions that have determined the course of subsequent phases.

Phase 1: Systematizing Local Knowledge for Empowerment (From 1981 to 1986) At the time of PRIA's conception and birth, the planetary arrangement of national and global forces was very specific. At the national level, the new Congress government (led by Indira Gandhi) had come back to power, after a failed experiment of Janata Party government. The "total revolution" movement led by Jai Prakash Narain in the early 1970s had mobilized students and youth on an unprecedented scale. Many such youth groups of the *Chhatra Yuva Sangharsh Vahini* (Student Youth Struggle Brigade) became disillusioned with formal party politics and set up voluntary action groups around this period.

At the international level, recognition for people's participation had just about begun following the World Food Conference of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations in Rome, which pronounced the criticality of organizations of the rural poor; and the World Health Organization's Alma Ata Conference, which defined community participation as a building block of primary health care. Nicaragua's Literacy Crusade had galvanized adult educators in support of liberation struggles. The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE) anchored the regional networks of participatory research, and the First International Conference on Participatory Research was held in Ljubljana, Yugoslavia, in 1980.²

PRIA grew out of engagement in the International Participatory Research Network. As the node for the Asian Regional Network of Participatory Research, PRIA was active in building knowledge and capacity for participatory research in a variety of settings. PRIA applied concepts and practice from the international network to its work in India and also began to actively influence the network and activities of the ICAE in the international arena.

The principal activities in the first phase were promotion of participation, use of participatory research methodology, and documenting, valuing, and disseminating indigenous local knowledge. The participatory research activities by PRIA helped to promote indigenous knowledge of forest dwellers and tribal members around deforestation; local knowledge of families displaced due to land alienation and dams; and experiential knowledge of workers on issues of occupational health and safety. The cornerstone of the programme on gender inclusion was a mini-MBA course for rural home-based women workers and activists and a literacy and livelihood programme—both built around the lived-in knowledge of rural poor women.

PRIA’s work with participation and empowerment facilitated exchange of ideas and experiences to train workers of field-based groups in creating and using that knowledge to strengthen their work.

Phase 2: Building Competencies as Change Agents (From 1986 to 1991) PRIA had begun emphasizing capacity as learning for empowerment and learning to value our experiences and knowledge. The principal activity in the second phase was to use participatory research and adult education in development practice to promote participation. The focus on learning as empowerment emerged in practice as participatory training methodology in Training for Trainers’ workshops with grassroots activists and change agents. Training of Trainers’ programmes became vehicles for self-development of change agents in the development sector. This helped facilitate critical self-reflection and to build their competencies as change agents (Fig. 27.1).

In 1986, a “code of conduct” for the voluntary sector in India had resulted in major galvanization around the country. Mobilization against this externally imposed code of conduct on voluntary organizations created, for the first time, the identity of “the sector.” PRIA began to recognize the relevance of forging a sectoral identity of the voluntary sector as a whole in India, and gained visibility as a spokesperson for the sector, focusing on relations between government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and creating an enabling policy and legislative environment.

PRIA remained active internationally as an important actor in adult education and participatory research. It provided leadership to the Participatory Research Network in developing and writing about the theory and practice. PRIA staff increasingly took on leadership roles in adult education operating regionally, such as Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education, and internationally, such as ICAE.

Phase 3: Institutional Strengthening of Civil Society (From 1991 to 1997) During the 1990s, PRIA focused on innovation in developing and applying methods

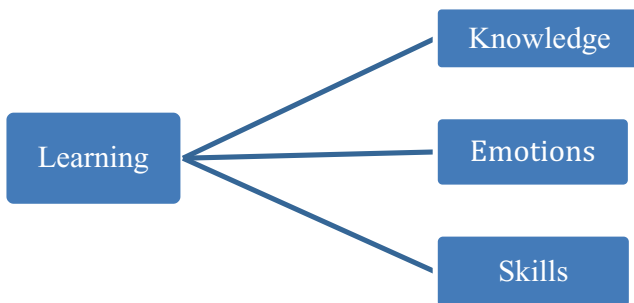


Fig. 27.1 PRIA model for learning

and tools for institutional strengthening of voluntary organizations. Systematic opportunity for learning skills was provided through the training of field workers of grassroots organizations to build internal capability, in particular through the MIND (Management in Development) Fellowships. Learning in workshops was supported with handholding support in the field. This helped catalyse civil society initiatives in underdeveloped regions of India.

It was during this time that PRIA began analysing how “civil society” is formed. Learnings from such research were used to facilitate and build new networks and platforms of civil society to promote an identity for the sector. Sectoral advocacy on promoting participation and empowerment was enabled through systematization of local experiences and monitoring global institutions.

The role and relevance of support organizations as part of the movement of NGOs was demonstrated and articulated. The contribution of support and intermediary and bridging institutions in promotion and capacitation of voluntary organizations was established. Regional Support Organizations (RSOs) were catalysed, ensuring close relevance to the needs of partner organizations. These organizations shared the same inspiration, philosophy, and perspectives of PRIA. This network of collaborating RSOs continues to work together to strengthen and complement each other. PRIA also acted as the Asian Regional Support Organization for civil society organizations across Asia.

Internationally, PRIA facilitated local, national, and global civil society coalitions and platforms for knowledge sharing and asserting collective and autonomous identity. PRIA coordinated the engagement of southern grassroots voice in monitoring The World Bank’s Participation Policy (Tandon, 1996a, b, 1999b)³ and enabled and supported a global coalition of multiple stakeholders to articulate capacity building of Southern NGOs. As a member of the NGO Working Group, PRIA helped organize and implement the policy to foster participation in World Bank projects and the first outside evaluation of those projects.

Phase 4: Accountable Local Governance (From 1997 to 2001) The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts were a turning point in Indian democracy not only because they introduced institutions of local self-governance in the country but also because they instituted a provision for reservation of seats for traditionally marginalized communities (Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes) and women. Globally, local governments were being institutionalized in nearly 80 countries. PRIA’s experience with strengthening civil society organizations reinforced the need for people-centred and people-managed development. Decentralized local self-governance provided a constitutionally mandated context for local control over community resources and its sustainable and equitable use for socio-economic development. It is in this background that PRIA began its work in strengthening local self-governance institutions (*Panchayati Raj* Institutions and Urban Local Bodies). Engagements with the newly constituted Panchayati Raj Institutions included building capacities on micro-plan-

ning and advocating for decentralized planning among government officials at state, district, and sub-district levels.

Nationally, PRIA focused on strengthening leadership capacity at the grassroots, particularly of women. PRIA's leadership trainings for elected women representatives focus on providing information on laws and rules; self-development; mentoring, guidance, and handholding; and establishing social networks for support.⁴

Mobilizing *gram sabhas* (village meetings) for collective participation was started. The flagship programme designed to promote citizen engagement with processes of local self-government was the Pre-Election Voters Awareness Campaign (PEVAC). PRIA first undertook a PEVAC in a few *gram panchayats* of Mandi and Chamba districts of Himachal Pradesh in 1995. Since then, PRIA has conducted (along with partners) PEVACs in 11 states across India (Dasgupta, 2010).

Systematic effort to engage with academic institutions and departments of social sciences and social work took place in this phase along with catalysing local partnerships with grassroots civil society organizations. Academics and students were trained in participatory research and participatory development for generating knowledge from the experiences of the marginalized.

Going beyond a programmatic focus on women's empowerment, PRIA institutionalized its interventions on gender mainstreaming. Gender audits of civil society organizations and government institutions were initiated. PRIA was one of the first civil society organizations in India to set up an Internal Complaints Committee to prevent sexual harassment at the workplace (in accordance with the guidelines provided by the Supreme Court of India).

PRIA continued to promote the development of international institutions and policies to support the civil society sector. Activities related to building civil society knowledge and identity were undertaken in both Indian and international arenas. With colleagues from the World Bank Working Group, PRIA helped organize the initial meetings of what became the International Forum on Capacity Building, a forum which advised a wide range of donor and civil society organizations on the nature of useful capacity building activities. PRIA spearheaded studies on the challenges of civil society in the new millennium (Tandon, 2000), the non-profit sector in India (Tandon, 1998), and civil society and governance (Tandon, 1999a). As a founding member of CIVICUS World Alliance for Citizen Participation, PRIA helped to define the conceptual and institutional base for what has become the largest transnational network of civil society organizations.

Phase 5: Governance from Below (From 2002 to 2008) As India was "shining" a couple of years into the new millennium, the central government announced the policy to stop bilateral aid. Voters brought in the United Progressive Alliance at the central government, and the Ministry of Panchayati Raj was created. A series of progressive legislations were enacted—Right to Information, Employment Guarantee, Forest Rights. The National Policy on Voluntary Sector

was announced. The Second Administrative Reforms Commission was set up to make recommendations on improving governance and administration in India.

PRIA's focus on governance issues grew out of the work done with strengthening *panchayats* in the previous phase. The slogan "Governance Where People Matter" was initially created for PRIA's 20th anniversary celebrations. Along with empowering citizens to demand their rights, PRIA adopted the approach of reforming governance from below. PRIA was associated with the founding of FIM-Forum for Democratic Governance, which helped build convergence of local and international initiatives to advocate for increased transparency and accountability of global governance institutions like the UN, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and World Trade Organization.

PRIA worked to create multi-sectoral coalitions and platforms for shared learning and building a common agenda. PEVAC, *Panchayati Raj Jagrukta Abhiyan*, and continued *gram sabha* mobilization focused on voters' awareness, capacity building of elected representatives, and working with State Election Commissions, State Finance Commissions, and other provincial actors. By convening engagements between the voices from below and the powerful from above, agencies responsible for delivery of public services were brought in direct dialogue with the citizens who receive them. This promoted accountable governance, which is key to meeting the aspirations and needs of citizens.

Studies on citizenship and governance enlarged the scope for civic mobilization and engagement in a global perspective. PRIA was an active member in the Citizenship, Participation, and Accountability Development Research Consortium organized by the Institute for Development Studies. This network brought together researchers from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the UK to study citizenship in more than 20 countries over a ten-year span. PRIA also led the Commonwealth Foundation programme on Citizens and Governance.

Phase 6: Multi-sectoral Engagements for Deepening Democracy (From 2008 to 2013) The "war against terror" spread far and wide. Global coalitions of civil society worked together to "make poverty history." Fuel, food, and financial crises hit the world; European and North American economies faced meltdowns. Citizens protested, demanding equality and freedom in the Arab region, and "Occupy Wall Street" occurred everywhere. Indian governance institutions and elected representatives were caught in webs of corruption.

This galvanized civil society movements around the country to demand deeper accountability of all public institutions, officials, and leaders. PRIA focused on promoting accountability practices for reforming institutions through Right to Information, social audits, and other social accountability mechanisms.

With rapid urbanization in India and Asia, mobilizing the voices of the urban poor and building youth leadership became an urgent agenda for action. Gender remained a focus. Campaigns against female foeticide and violence against women were started. PRIA's efforts in gender mainstreaming and

prevention of sexual harassment at the workplace gained recognition with increased demand for its participatory training modules across civil society organizations and corporations.

As new information technology became accessible, PRIA invested in systematizing practice at the grassroots to enable distance learning for practitioners by establishing PRIA International Academy. PRIA has adopted a mixed mode of learning to systematically share its knowledge and capacities with other development actors. It has supported initiatives in India and internationally to establish mutual knowledge engagements between grassroots and institutions of post-secondary education through community-university partnerships. These efforts gained recognition when the UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education was established in 2012, with Dr Rajesh Tandon, Founder-President, PRIA and Prof. Budd Hall, Professor, School of Public Administration, University of Victoria, Canada, as Co-Chairs. It is the first time that a UNESCO Chair has its home in two complementary but distinct institutions—a northern academic institution and a southern community-based research organization.

Phase 7: Reconnecting with Roots (2013 Onwards) PRIA's work at the grassroots currently focuses on:

- Addressing violence against women in educational institutions, health centres, and public spaces
- Mobilizing the urban poor to access housing rights and water and sanitation services
- Innovative solutions for universal access to water and sanitation
- Capacity building of government officials and students of participatory research

In recent years, PRIA has supported leadership of young women and men to work together to bring about changes in attitudes of their families and in the responsiveness of government to help eliminate violence against women. The successful piloting of *Kadam Badhate Chalo*, a youth-led campaign to prevent violence against women in rural Haryana, is being scaled-up to other cities and regions of the country. Youth from urban poor communities are learning new technologies, like Global Positioning System and mobile-based surveys, to provide community feedback to municipalities on water and sanitation services (see Chap. 15, this volume, for an example of this work). PRIA is supporting the decentralized planning efforts of the Andhra Pradesh and Chhattisgarh governments by building capacities of district and panchayat officials.

It has established, in collaboration with government, and supports a Rapid Action Learning Unit in Andhra Pradesh under the flagship Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) of the Government of India.

Successful innovative solutions applied locally are scaled-up provincially and nationally. Practical knowledge generated from such innovations is shared on global platforms through coalitions and consortiums. PRIA also learns from

the practices and innovations of others. The essence of such mutual sharing and learning is based on the principles of South-South cooperation.

Distance education, through PRIA International Academy, is being strengthened as the vehicle to advance the knowledge dissemination and capacity building roles of PRIA. PRIA's education courses have been integrated into its different thrust areas and programmes to support professional capacity building of practitioners. Field exposure visits, use of IT and social media, and other blended approaches to learning are becoming critical elements in capacity building and knowledge dissemination.

Building capacities of young professionals in participatory methodologies is an area that PRIA is paying greater attention to. It has been 40 years since the concept of participatory research was first articulated. While PRIA's efforts in practising and refining the methodology of participatory research have promoted greater acceptance in institutions and academe, opportunities for training the next generation of practitioners, scholars, and champions of participatory research in developing countries have not been keeping pace. PRIA has re-committed itself to building linkages with academic and practitioner organizations for such training efforts. Academic and research partnerships for teaching participatory research and community engagement of higher educational institutions is a focus area, particularly through the work of the UNESCO Chair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education (Tandon, Tremblay, & Hall, 2015).

The role of private business and philanthropists in socio-economic development of countries like India has grown. PRIA has begun engaging with these new constituents to strengthen their involvement in and support of citizen participation and accountable governance.

27.3 KEY ELEMENTS OF PRIA'S INTERVENTIONS

Over the past 30 years, PRIA has evolved some effective ways of working towards its mission:

- Valuing the knowledge and contribution of communities and officials responsible for delivery of basic services by nurturing authentic relationships with them.
- Anchoring its knowledge generation role in the participatory research perspective.
- Building local human and institutional capacities.
- Sustainable changes at the local level require support from policymakers at provincial and national levels. Therefore, PRIA builds linkages and advocates with government agencies and policy makers at all levels—local, regional, national, and global.

PRIA's interventions are constructed around four pillars:

1. Information sharing and awareness generation
2. Capacity building

3. Advocacy with officials at multiple levels
4. Co-creation and dissemination of knowledge

These pillars of PRIA's work are built on the bedrock of:

- Participatory research
- Inclusion of the poor and marginalized, in particular of women and, more recently, youth
- Participatory training methods for capacity building of individuals, communities, and institutions

PRIA has pioneered the concept of *participatory research* in bringing about social change among the marginalized in India. PRIA's projects always incorporate participatory research; many stages of a project integrate participatory research principles and methodologies in implementation. In PRIA's way of working, there is a very close link between knowledge, learning, and mobilization. The essential premise of participatory research is recognition and utilization of people's knowledge for purposes of transforming the relations of power between marginalized communities and those in positions of power and authority. Given this perspective, PRIA's knowledge production activities are carried out in "engaged" stances—where learning about the dynamics of a social-political system (be it a community, an organization, programme, or region) is closely linked to bringing about changes in that system to achieve desirable goals (equity, justice, freedom, peace, and solidarity). Participatory research methodologies are thus used to both learn about realities and also transform the same towards agreed desirable goals.

The inclusion of the poor and marginalized is vital to the participatory perspective of PRIA. There exists a "culture of silence" in societies where the powerful exercise authority without engaging with the poor and marginalized. By empowering those who have for centuries not had a voice, PRIA breaks this culture of silence.

Over three decades, PRIA has built human and institutional capacities of NGOs and community-based organizations, citizen leaders, elected representatives, and government officials in India and internationally. Strengthening individual and institutional capacities is a continuous and ongoing process, which builds on the needs and knowledge of the individuals and organizations involved. PRIA follows participatory training methodology in all its *capacity building* programmes. The approach focuses on motivational learning through experience and practice, combined with clarity on generic concepts. This problem-solving approach helps learners translate the concepts into the reality of their lives and find practical solutions for the problems they face (Fig. 27.2).

To extend the reach of its capacity building initiative, PRIA International Academy was established in 2005. The Academy currently offers 27 short-term and long-term courses on human and social development. The programmes are designed for development professionals and those interested in contributing to human and social development. The educational courses offered in Open

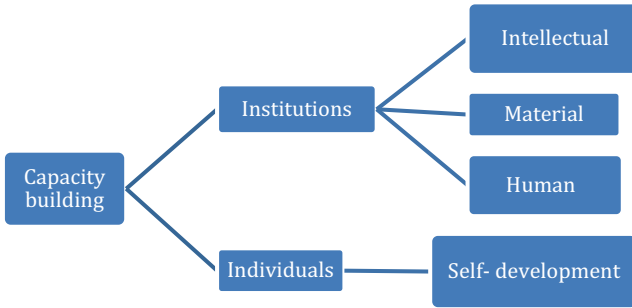


Fig. 27.2 Capacity building

Distance Learning mode are a perfect blend of cutting-edge theory, practical and field-based insights from PRIA’s years of practitioner experience, and global academic perspectives. Many courses are available in translation in local languages (of India and other developing countries).

27.4 THEORY OF CHANGE

PRIA’s theory of change—of *demand* by citizens and *supply* of citizens’ needs by government and private agencies—is applied in all areas of socio-economic development, such as maternal health, literacy, skills and non-formal education, conservation of and access to water, hygiene practices and sanitation in households, housing for the urban poor, and preventing violence against women.

27.4.1 Partnerships and Linkages

In all of PRIA’s interventions to reduce the governance deficit and make democracy work for all, partners play a critical role in generating locally viable sustainable impacts. Citizens and their communities are key partners in PRIA’s work. Their experiences and local knowledge are critical in developing pilot programmes, scaling-up interventions, generating research, and reinforcing advocacy efforts. PRIA also builds authentic relationships with civil society organizations, local governance institutions, government, policymakers, think tanks, donors, philanthropists, corporates, media, students, and higher education institutions. Linkages are established at all levels—local, national, regional, and global. By convening multi-stakeholder dialogues at all such levels, PRIA advances the voices and concerns of society to government agencies.

27.5 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

PRIA’s strategic efforts over the past two to three years to meet a changing reality is through systematic investments in internal governance, building capacities of internal leadership and strengthening practices for systemati-

zation of knowledge. NGOs face several economic and political constraints within the country in taking forward their commitment to deepen democracy. Senior staff are learning constituency-building and networking competencies and negotiation skills with new actors, especially private business and philanthropists, to sustain the organization's mission. New professionals are being trained through practical internships and *in situ* training under mentorship of seniors to build and deepen their perspectives on the methodologies and processes deployed by PRIA. A contemporary aspect of exclusion is access to technology, which can further marginalize the poor and excluded communities. PRIA has begun incorporating technological solutions to the issues of participation, accountability, and governance into its interventions. The organization also confronts the challenges of communicating to an increasingly interconnected world. PRIA's knowledge service has multi-faceted elements, which have evolved over its 33 years of history. In order to re-vitalize different components of its knowledge services, the organization has embarked on creating a Knowledge Resource Centre and is investing in enhancing its web and social media presence.

NOTES

1. Editors Note: The **Scheduled Castes**^[2] (**SCs**) and **Scheduled Tribes (STs)** are official designations given to various groups of historically disadvantaged people in India. The terms are recognized in the Constitution of India, and the various groups are designated in one or other of the categories. The SCs and STs comprise about 16.6% and 8.6%, respectively, of India's population (according to the 2011 Census). The *Constitution (SCs) Order, 1950* lists 1,108 castes across 29 states in its First Schedule,^[6] and the *Constitution (STs) Order, 1950* lists 744 tribes across 22 states in its First Schedule. Retrieved September 11, 2015 from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011_Census_of_India
2. Editors' note: As discussed in other chapters in the Handbook (e.g., Chaps. 26, 30, and 47), the first formal global gathering for action research took place three years earlier in Cartagena, Colombia. This event was called the first World Symposium of Action Research and was organized by Orlando Fals Borda and others. We hope that a comprehensive history of the emergence of networks of action research and participatory action research, particularly in the crucial period 1966–1980 and looking closely at the momentum clearly evident from India, Australia, Africa, and Latin America, will be written soon.
3. Editors' Note: See Chap. 5, this volume, for a fuller discussion of the importance of this monitoring in general and in relation to the World Bank's participation policy in the 1990s.
4. Editors' Note: Dr. Martha Farrell, a central figure in PRIA leadership and the wife of Rajesh Tandon, was killed in a terrorist attack in Kabul, Afghanistan, in May 2015. Dr. Farrell was in Kabul to provide training in gender equality and women's empowerment. As soon as word was received, the editors and the full leadership of ARNA expressed our heartfelt condolences to Dr. Tandon and the entire PRIA family.

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Action Research Within the Tradition of Nordic Countries

Karin Rönnerman and Petri Salo

28.1 INTRODUCTION

The promise and challenge of action research is embedded in the double-edged concept itself: “action” referring to striving for improvement and change and “research” suggesting certain kinds of principles and practices for enhancing and enabling change. As Somekh and Zeichner (2009, p. 5) note, the collision of terms emanates discursive power. In our interpretation, action research is first and foremost to be understood as a “both-and” concept, combining political aspirations with methodological ambitions. In this chapter, we dig deeper into this discursive collision and the potentials of the both-and character. We search for inspiration and understanding in the history of our educational traditions in order to reflect on the concepts and practices in use today. Within the field of education, we look at Nordic ways of conducting action research as a historical, political, and cultural amalgamation of Continental (German) pedagogy, the ideals and aims of the French revolution, and the methods of Anglo-American popular education.

As a result of the struggle fought across social movements in the early twentieth century, educational ideals encompassing generality, comprehensiveness, and inclusiveness were realized in all Nordic countries from the 1960s to the 1990s. Learning practices embrace the personal, the political, and the professional dimensions (Noffke, 1997) of growing as a human being, becoming an active citizen, and developing as an engaged worker. The overall approach to education is a holistic one. It aims to relate the personal to the political, and

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the political to the professional, and thereby to handle the complexities and interconnectedness of the assumptions, purposes, and practices also characteristic of the vast field of action research (Laginder, Nordvall, & Crowther, 2012; Rinne, Heikkinen, & Salo, 2007).

Action research as an explicit concept and identifiable practice was not much used in Nordic countries until the 1960s. It first appeared in conjunction with research and development in social work and working life science and development. Norwegian action research pioneers Max Elden and Morten Levin (1991) developed the Scandinavian model of Participatory Action Research, and Bjørn Gustavsen (1985) emphasized the importance of dialogue in increasing democracy, equality, and social justice in working life, in the midst of an industrial transition. In Sweden, research circles were developed in the late 1970s (Nilsson, 1990). These built on collaboration between unions and universities to democratize knowledge production and to bridge theoretical understanding with practical challenges in the labour market and working life organizations. Action research in education appeared in the 1990s when responsibility for professional development was turned over to individual schools and local municipal authorities. Action research was established in the context of local school development (Johnson, 2006) as a bottom-up practice, to enable practitioners to widen their scope for professional action (Berg, 2007, p. 594). Teachers were to act as reflective practitioners, and school development was to become research-based (Rönnerman, 1996). Such ambitions called for the collaboration and partnerships, between universities and schools, researchers and teachers, constituting the essence of action research.

Nordic action research is characterized by its strong emphasis on collaboration. In the field of education, this collaborative aspect is emphasized in two complementary manners (Rönnerman & Salo, 2012). Firstly, researchers, teachers, and other educationalists work in groups. This reflects the tradition of collaborative knowledge production within study circles. Secondly, researchers are usually connected to educational settings as facilitators. The drive is towards dissolving the dichotomy between theory and practice, and thereby the division of knowledge forms characteristic of academia and school. Different practices, and the views of knowledge embedded therein, challenge each other in order to reveal the very character of the practice that is to be researched. Our definition of educational action research reads as follows:

A reciprocal challenging of professional knowledge and experiences, rooted in everyday practices within schools, in collaborative arenas populated by researchers and practitioners, and in the interchange of knowledge of different kinds. (Rönnerman, Salo, & Furu, 2008b, p. 277)

A historical introduction lays the groundwork for discussion of the central concepts and ideals in the Nordic tradition of action research. We present the historical and theoretical underpinnings of folk enlightenment, which are still strongly alive (e.g. Burman, 2014; Siljander, Kivinen, & Sutinen, 2012) but

in need of revitalization in the present times of neo-liberal policies (Hardy, Rönnerman, & Salo, 2015). After this follows a section describing the forms and arenas for collaborative meetings in action research, and, finally, we discuss action research in terms of professional learning and development, with teachers/principals and researchers acting as equal partners in site-based educational development. This chapter is anchored in the collaborative intellectual work and action research conducted within a Nordic Network in Action Research (NNAR) (2015), established in 2004 among researchers from Sweden, Norway, and Finland with the aim to study, develop, promote, and nurture action research.

28.2 FOLK ENLIGHTENMENT: A NORDIC PROGRAMME OF HUMAN GROWTH

The self-image of folk enlightenment contextualizes human growth and learning within a trinity of *people*, *democracy*, and *nation*, assuming that “democratic spirit can be a fundamental feature of a certain” group of people, an identifiable folk (Dahlstedt & Nordvall, 2011, p. 248). The concept of “folk” has been used to refer to a community brought and kept together by a sense of a common cause, which may be social, cultural, or political (Korsgaard, 2002). In the late nineteenth century, folk enlightenment could refer to the education of a certain social group, for example, farmers, immigrants, or women, or a group having a certain position in society such as the underprivileged or the marginalized. In the framework of ongoing construction of national unity and identity, folk enlightenment was to awaken and strengthen a sense of shared culture, language, history, traditions, and mentality. “Folk” was also interpreted and used as a political concept. The aim of folk enlightenment was to empower people to bring about change and democracy and to support the development and functioning of a civil society.

From a general point of view, folk enlightenment strove to anchor the complex processes of individual human growth to the cultural, social, and political development of a community, characterized by a common cause and identity. In everyday life, human growth is to be furthered in a collective manner, by experiential knowledge expressed, discussed, interpreted, and refined through interaction and dialogue between equals (Korsgaard, 2000). Collective human growth, in addition to its impact on everyday lives, is also embedded in various public spheres and professional forums for collective and collaborative meaning-making and dialogical knowledge construction.

Even if the use of concepts vary between the Nordic countries (the term “folk enlightenment” is used in Norway and Denmark, “*folkbildning*” in Sweden and “folk civilization” in Finland), all national traditions relate to the concept and ideal of *bildung* (human development, in Swedish *bildning*), as was formed in late eighteenth century within German pedagogy. According to this historical conception, human beings grow and become more humane by a practical coping and interaction within the world. Human formation was

no longer understood as being determined by nature or religion, but rather it was realized in the practices human beings were involved in, as an interplay between self-formation and the world. *Bildung* is characterized by openness, endlessness, and independence. Accordingly, it is not possible to determine any definite aims for human development. Becoming more human is about striving for freedom from cultural, social, and political determinations and constraints (Masschelein & Ricken, 2003, p. 140).

As an ambitious and comprehensive but highly ambiguous conceptualization, *bildung* has been open to various (historical) interpretations. It still carries an elitist connotation of referring to classic “liberal education,” by which capable individuals realize a “timeless” cultivated personality and identity (Løvlie & Standish, 2002). But in the context of the Nordic countries, when used and mobilized in the societal and political upheaval of the late nineteenth century, it was understood in its social configuration, dependent on being able to combine individuality and sociality. Thereby *bildung*, especially in our Nordic countries’ point of view, is still to be understood as “social transformation through the formation of individuals” (Masschelein & Ricken, 2003, p. 140). As Horlacher (2004, p. 410) notes, despite the fact that *bildung* carries a “remarkable ambivalence of ambiguity versus splendour,” as an educational ideal, it still enjoys great popularity among both German and Nordic school theorists and educational policymakers. “*Bildung* has high demands and expectations; *Bildung* contains a promise of salvation, and *Bildung* cannot be reduced to mechanics, and certainly not to economics. *Bildung* is the haven for ‘Good’ and ‘Whole.’” (p. 410)

Bildung is also characterized by the same *both-andness* that we ascribe to action research. According to Gustavsson (1996), *bildung* refers simultaneously to a free, endless, lifelong process of becoming more human, and to societally formed aims such as active citizenship or skilful leadership. Within the teaching profession, this dynamic is elucidated by emphasizing the difference between the never-ending process of becoming (more) of a teacher and the state of being a skilful teacher. *Bildung* relates both to integration and specialization. It represents an ambition to gain knowledge and insights, not merely for external professional development but for inner human growth. As an integrative process, *bildung* challenges the specialization and division characteristic of both science (theory) and professional knowledge (practice). It also represents a belief in the equality of all human beings. *Bildung* stands for enhancing solidarity and integration in work life organizations and labour markets characterized by division and fragmentation.

From a hermeneutic perspective, *Bildung* aims to bridge the known with the unknown. Teachers’ engagement in action research opens up confrontations with unfamiliar practices, brings them closer to reflecting about themselves as professionals, and empowers them to construct and make use of alternative interpretations. Respectful and tolerant interaction and dialogue, characteristic to folk enlightenment practices, make particular interpretations available for further interpretations, opening them up to more universal inter-

pretations (Gustavsson, 2014, p. 200). From a societal point of view, *Bildung* represents an ideal of autonomous and critical citizens capable of self-reflection and self-determination. In the Nordic countries, the idea of educated citizens capable of furthering the interests of collectives has been used to define the manner in which education ought to relate to the development of society. The act and process of being a social human being is related to the development of the capabilities and skills needed in society and the workplace. In this context, *bildung* can be defined as:

the historical development processes of both individuals and societies in which people systematically strive towards developing themselves and their socio-cultural environment into something ‘more humane,’ ‘more enhanced’ and ‘more developed.’ (Siljander, 2007, p. 71)

Consequently, *bildung* coincides with action research, when understood as furthering democratic practices and nurturing social justice. Action research as “a methodology grounded in the values and culture of its participant-researchers” (Somekh & Zeichner, 2009, p. 6), and in its sensitivity to local agency, reflects a genuine confidence in human beings. It stands for rightful professionals, able to act in a morally committed manner and being oriented both by the traditions of the profession and by the social-political and material-economic conditions characteristic of the society at hand (Kemmis & Smith, 2008, p. 4).

28.3 ARENAS AND FORUMS FOR COLLABORATIVE KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

In the following, we will exemplify how the complex ideals of *bildung* are put into practice in the Nordic countries. In our view, action research within education has to do with professional learning and development in and through collaborative knowledge production in study and research circles or dialogue conferences.

28.3.1 *Study Circles*

The Swedish National Encyclopaedia gives this definition of study circles.

Study circle—a group of people who meet regularly and devote themselves to studies or cultural activities. ... Distinctive for these [study circles] was learning from the free conversation that compensated for the traditional taught lesson (NE, 1995, p. 365, authors’ translation)

This practice is familiar in education and action research. The study circle was an important alternative to traditional school-based learning for people in Sweden and other Nordic countries at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Citizens met in small groups at the workplace to read and discuss literature. Alongside industrialism, people needed education to become part of society as democratic citizens. Folk enlightenment, and subsequently adult education, was foregrounded by values such as democracy, dialogue, and sharing knowledge. It was Oscar Olsson in Sweden who shaped the idea of learning in groups as a way of protecting the participants' knowledge and experiences and who initiated the study circle at the beginning of the twentieth century (Larsson & Nordvall, 2010). At the centre, he put "the book"—to be read, discussed, and related to the participants' own experiences. Ellen Key (author of *The Century of the Child*, 2013) supported the idea of study circles as a way of enhancing *bildung*, growing as human beings. She emphasized the dialogue and that education begins with the human being whose issues can be scrutinized and further explored—a view also recognized in action research.

Study circles were of great importance in building a social democracy through interactive projects. A study circle can be viewed as a way to achieve individual learning alongside democratic processes for collective knowledge construction and enhancing social changes—features which also describe critical action research (Rönnerman & Salo, 2012). Through both action research and study circles, practitioners develop deeper understandings of practices and the conditions under which practice takes place (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 164). The study circle has since become an important approach to non-formal adult education.

In action research, meeting in small groups to reflect, discuss, and share knowledge, facilitated by a researcher, is a common ingredient. Our long-lasting ambition has been not only to ground action research in the tradition of Nordic folk enlightenment but also to study how it was developed through *work life* science in Norway and Sweden before it became part of the education system in the late 1990s. In the Nordic countries, the development of action research was strongly influenced by the Anglo-Saxon tradition. Forums for sharing and constructing knowledge among practitioners in small groups are also characteristic of Engeström's activity theory (2004) as developed and understood in Finland.

In Englund's (2000, p. 6) view, study circles function as "deliberative conversations," allowing space for different views and arguments and emphasizing tolerance, respect, and the need to listen to others. This approach can also be connected to Gustavsen (2001), who in the 1970s established action research in the field of work life science focusing on developing small companies in which the democratic dialogue was essential.

Action research projects were established on a large scale and in collaboration between researchers in Sweden and Norway by focusing on the participants' contribution of knowledge. Different methods for this were developed from the 1970s and onwards, such as the research circle and the dialogue conference. Both can be traced back to the study circle as an arena established within the folk enlightenment in the Nordic countries with the purpose of sharing knowledge collaboratively—not as scientific knowledge imposed from the

outside but rather as a development from the inside. Looking back, hundred years ago, the challenge was to educate people to become democratic citizens. This is highly relevant in times such as ours. We will continue to explore how this challenge is part of educational action research, with its purpose of educating new generations and at the same time nurturing the teaching profession to become professional activists in collaboration with researchers (Rönnerman, Furu, & Salo, 2008).

28.3.2 *Research Circles*

The research circle is a well-recognized concept that has been developed in education since the 1990s as a way of creating partnerships between researchers and practitioners and between academia and schools in terms of site-based educational development. A research circle includes a researcher as an equal part of the knowledge building process. Holmer (1993, p. 150) emphasizes research circles as sites in which participants *gain* knowledge, *develop* knowledge, and *participate in the social production* of knowledge. In education, particularly in pre-schools, Rönnerman and Olin (2014) add another aspect to research circles: learning *to lead* the production of knowledge. This was done after the two researchers invited two groups of teachers to take part in a research circle that corresponded with the Swedish Education Act of 2011 (SFS, 2010: 800), which emphasizes that education in both pre-school and school should be built on a scientific base and on proven experience. The groups consisted of ten teachers plus a researcher with the main focus to establish a meeting between the scientific field, with relevant research and theory, and participants' own experience of acting as facilitators for colleagues. Each meeting lasted four hours and was structured in the same way but with different jointly decided topics all referring to the specific task of being a peer-facilitator for quality work in pre-schools. Each topic started with a discussion about being a leader followed by how to analyse data and develop professional learning communities and, finally, how to create necessary conditions for learning as a leader. Each meeting consisted of discussions of research literature and shared presentations of the teachers' work in their practice, both connected to the chosen topic. Research circles are understood as collective sites in which it is essential to understand practice in such a way as to be able to work to improve with colleagues.

Building on the tradition of study circles as used in folk enlightenment, research circles were established at Lund University in Sweden in the 1970s when the labour unions became interested in collaborative knowledge production with universities during the major crisis of shipbuilding and car industries (Holmer, 1993). A research circle builds on reciprocity, and the first circles started as courses for union leaders as part of organizing and developing knowledge exchange between researchers and unions (Nilsson, 1990). Since then, research circles have been used in various ways, mainly within work life sciences and social work, with the purpose of collaboration between parties in

a democratic way, where different perspectives or understandings of a specific issue are in focus.

In educational contexts, research circles were not introduced until the beginning of this century (Holmstrand & Härnsten, 2003) and have since been used in various ways for participatory research. An illustrative example is presented by Enö (2005), who describes the daily experience of the use of research circles to create a space for reflective dialogue within the teaching profession. Her thesis is based on twenty-seven monthly evening meetings with eleven early childhood teachers. Her study shows how the project revealed not only a clear potential for change and emancipation but also the importance of hope and meaning-making. In a thesis by Wingård (1998), the research circle is used as a way of understanding the specific situation of being a female principal. Eight principals met the researcher one evening a month for two years, discussing and analysing issues relating to their experiences of being principals. In this instance, the findings included valuable indications that, rather than focusing on school development, the principals tended to prioritize administrative tasks and personal relations issues. In both these examples, the researcher met the participants during evenings, and the research circles developed into important arenas for collaborative discussions with a focus on questions relevant to the participants' daily work.

A research circle is not a uniform concept, but can somewhat generally be described as a meeting in which participants conduct a co-operative search for, and development of, knowledge. As such, a research circle always originates in a problem which has been jointly decided upon and which is intended to be scrutinized from all sides. The intention is not to solve the problem but to analyse it and thereby to widen participants' knowledge of it.

Although ways of dealing with the identified problems differ between situations, Holmstrand and Härnsten (2003, p. 21) point out that, in all research circles, the participants' knowledge and experiences, the researchers' knowledge about the identified problem, and the researchers' competence as researchers (systematic knowledge) are all of importance when handling the problem. In some circumstances, the actions within a research circle are followed up and documented and become public (Rönnerman, Salo, et al., 2008, pp. 26–29). This has been done systematically in the long-lasting partnerships between the city of Malmö and Malmö University College, where research circles have been used since 2006 for collaboration between groups of teachers and researchers for school development (Malmö Stad, 2012). Such collaborations not only emphasize the format of regular meetings over a period of time (at least 1.5 years) to enable knowledge building and network building but also challenge the model to be developed further.

In the Nordic countries, the most common approach to educational action research involves a model in which teachers meet regularly in groups, emphasizing a democratic dialogue around the inquiry to be investigated and facilitated by a researcher (Rönnerman, Furu, et al., 2008). Today, research circles gather participants in small groups, focusing on a specific joint issue and

scrutinizing it carefully, with the purpose of developing a better understanding of the problem, in order to develop readiness for action-in-practice.

28.3.3 *Dialogue Conferences*

Dialogue conferences were developed in the 1970s within work life science. They were based on workers' increased influence on working conditions and intended to be a way of working towards a better working life. One focus was on the significance of small groups acting for democracy. Another was on working groups and their dynamic influences on organizations. Today, dialogue conferences are used in education as a democratic way to discuss and share different views on a specific issue. Gustavsen (2001) refers to democratic dialogue as the most important feature in working towards change in organizations. He is against implementing theory-driven approaches as they place strong restrictions on the participation of the actors. Instead, he suggests a *mediating* discourse, which links discourse on theory and discourse on practice. He argues for linking theory and practice by putting the dialogue in the foreground. By emphasizing the dialogue, the procedures for *how to deal* with an issue become more important than the content itself. For this to happen, Gustavsen defines a number of criteria for democratic dialogues (pp. 18–19):

- Participants have the same status, are to help each other to be active in the dialogue and to understand the topics at hand, use their work experiences as a point of departure, and understand them as relevant for the dialogue.
- Dialogue is based on a principle of two-way communication, aims at integrating a growing degree of disagreement, and should continuously generate decisions that provide a platform for joint action.
- The arguments brought forward in the dialogue must be represented by a participant, are to be scrutinized and handled deliberatively, and can be rejected only after a collective investigation.

These are criteria which at first seem obvious, but experiences of facilitating groups of teachers reveal that they are hard to fulfil. Gustavsen emphasizes therefore the need for structures for building relationships as the criteria suggests. To establish democratic discussions and communication between all parties (Gustavsen, 2001; Kalleberg, 1993), the dialogue conference has to be organized in a specific way, with participants divided into different groups over a day. All voices have to be part of a democratic discussion about organizational change and development. In Gustavsen's research (Gustavsen, 1985, 2001; Gustavsen & Engelstad, 1986), involving about 1,000 small businesses, the dialogue conference was essential in letting employees meet both in homogeneous (same staff category) and heterogeneous (mixed staff categories) groups. In this approach, relationship building was at the fore. All voices, from the caretaker to the director, were included in a democratization of the workplace. At the same time, the researchers, as partners, could study the foundations for changing working life.

In Norway, dialogue conferences have lately been used in education as a way of dealing with reforms in schools. A typical dialogue conference in education (Lund, 2008) is organized for all staff (principal, teachers, assistants, etc.) from one or several schools during one day around a chosen theme (e.g. collegial learning or assessment for learning). The day is divided into four sections: (a) theoretical input on the actual theme, from an invited researcher, (b) discussions in professional groups (e.g. all teachers, principals, middle leaders) about their experiences relating to the lecture, (c) discussions in mixed groups, sharing knowledge and experiences around the topic, and (d) presenting a practical example from a professional teacher team. The basic idea is that all participants in a school can contribute to a given topic. Furu and Lund (2014) report on dialogue conferences relating to how to change teaching by including teachers in dialogues about formative assessment. The dialogue conference is also used in some parts of Sweden, for example, when 150 teachers, development leaders, and principals met to focus on how to continue with action research within schools. In a final discussion, participants were placed with peers from their own workplace and given tasks for further work in their school based on what they had heard during the day. Dialogue conferences have also been used in an action research master's programme to share experiences between teachers from schools in Sweden and in Norway. This form of working has been picked up by practitioners to organize district discussions. Furthermore, the network itself organizes the annual two-days conferences as a dialogue conferences where researchers, teachers, and leaders meet to share both research and experiences.

28.4 ACTION RESEARCH AS COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IN EDUCATION

The understanding and use of action research, with its roots in a tradition of folk enlightenment (*bildning*) and in the practices of study and research circles and dialogue conferences, has been elaborated collaboratively and collectively for a decade by the NNAR. The NNAR was formed in 2004 by researchers and practitioners in Sweden, Norway, and Finland (NNAR, 2015) and has since been engaged in action research and professional development within education. An important ingredient in this collaboration has been the ambition to form a common orientation towards the multiplicity and complexity of action research traditions and practices. Doing this has developed a deeper understanding of our own educational tradition and, especially, the manner in which action research is conceptualized and practiced.

We have found that collaborations and partnerships between researchers and teachers are far from rare. The institutional distance between universities and schools, especially since the realization of social democracy processes in the 1960s, has been reduced. Folk universities (within Swedish adult education) and folk high schools (in all Nordic countries) have, since their establishment,

in the late 1900s, fought and stood for accessibility and participation in higher education. The development of research circles began as a way of enhancing collaboration on a basis of equality and with the purpose of enabling professional learning and development for both practitioners and researchers. Since the decentralization of educational development from the beginning of the 1990s, universities in the Nordic countries have had a central role in professional development within education, involving teachers and researchers as equal partners. In many cases, this has been achieved using a model of collaborative action research.

In a book published by the NNAR in 2008 (Rönnerman, Furu, et al., 2008a), a number of cases, focusing on action research in terms of partnerships between universities and schools, are presented. Many of the professional development projects reported had been going on for ten years or more. Our own learning and professional development within the network is recognized in a book edited by Rönnerman and Salo (2014). In it, we elaborate action research in terms of organization theory, and especially translation theory, with the aim of bringing organization theory closer to practice,—in our case, anchoring professional development in schools (Lund & Furu, 2014). Members of our network (Eilertsen & Jakhelln, 2014) elaborate a Norwegian conceptualization of pedagogy, called the *practical knowledge regime*, with the aim of promoting the notion of teachers' autonomy and development as an integral part of their professional practice. Development of this practical knowledge regime by Norwegian educational researchers Lars Løvlie and Erland Dale provided

a shift from pedagogy, as a scientific, epistemic and fragmented endeavour, to practice and praxis as the point of departure for pedagogical and educational knowledge building. This also implied a shift from a definition of teachers as obedient consumers of academically generated knowledge, to autonomous learning professionals integrating science-based results, experience-based knowledge and normative considerations into their everyday practice. (Eilertsen & Jakhelln, 2014, p. 27)

To a certain extent, understanding of the aims and function of education in Nordic countries has been pragmatic, both from an individual and a societal point of view. This also applies to educational action research. It is historically and socially based on a humanistic conception and construction of the potentials of human beings and a strong political consciousness of and a striving for maintaining a well-functioning civil society. The inclusiveness and generality of the democratic state ideology, combined with this pragmatic orientation towards the challenges at hand, results in a weakness. As action researchers in Nordic countries, acting within a particular national ideology and history, we do not seem to (or have to?) explicitly address the differences in the status, roles, and aims of practitioners (teachers) and researchers in the same manner as action researchers do in other historical and political contexts (Kemmis, 2014). This does not mean that we overlook the politics of practice

or the politics of action research (Stevenson, 2014). Our comprehension of the roles and status of practitioners/teachers versus researchers, and the politics of professional development through action research, is embedded in a historically formed trust in the potential for human edification regardless of race, gender, or social class. This may be somewhat naive, but it is not uninformed. It coincides with our interpretation of the (originally German) concept and ideal of *bildung* (human formation). For us, *bildung* stands for a confidence in, recognition of, and reliance on human beings to be able to realize their potentials collaboratively, in an orderly and sustainable manner, within and in relation to a culture, history, and tradition. In times of globalized competition and uncertainty, triggered by neo-liberalism, standardization, and accountability, we aim to understand and mobilize *bildung* as a counter-ideology (Horlacher, 2012). The same applies to our understanding of collaborative action research. It builds on and aims for human flourishing in participatory and democratic practices. It is anchored in practical issues, and it celebrates knowledge-in-action (Reason & Bradbury, 2006, pp. 1–2).

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Pedagogy Education Praxis Network (PEP): International Research Program

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At a time in history in which aspirations for transforming the conditions for education are being pressured by a “performative audit culture” (Comber & Nixon, 2011, p. 168), educators across the globe have become increasingly locked into regimes of standardization, managerialism, accountability, and performativity. The *Pedagogy, Education, and Praxis* (PEP) network is a grassroots organization that emerged in response to these contemporary conditions.

The PEP network is composed of an international community of scholars who regularly meet in a range of forums to engage in dialogues and research aiming to study the conditions that enable and constrain the conduct and development of educational practice. These dialogues have extended for more than a decade (2005–2016), allowing PEP researchers to engage with one another across intellectual, educational, cultural, and social traditions; and as a collective, challenge the bureaucratization and de-professionalization of education eroding the moral, social, and political commitments that inform educational practice in the countries involved. Our work is motivated by a resolve to improve practice through local action research initiatives and transnational collaborations as “resources for action and hope” (Smith, Edwards-Groves, & Brennan Kemmis, 2010, p. 7) that contribute to local site-based education development in our own countries and work contexts.

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The chapter describes the background to the PEP network, its research program, and its theory of practice (including the theories of practice architectures and ecologies of practices), utilized by many PEP researchers as analytical and linguistic resources for researching practice in our own national contexts, conditions, and institutional arrangements for education.

29.1 THE PEP NETWORK: A PLATFORM FOR TRANSFORMATION

The PEP network is a cross-institutional, collaborative research program. It brings together researchers from Australia, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Finland, the UK, Columbia, and the Caribbean, investigating the nature, traditions, and conditions of pedagogy, education, and educational praxis and how they may be understood and developed in different national contexts and in various educational settings. At the outset, in 2005, an international group of researchers met informally following the International Practitioner Research/Action Research (*PRAR*) and Collaborative Action Research Network (*CARN*) joint conference (*PRAR/CARN 2005*) to discuss ideas, concerns, and positions about different intellectual traditions and their understandings of the concepts of “action research,” “pedagogy,” “education,” and “praxis” in contemporary education. Over the duration of the conference, it was quickly established that these different traditions are differently understood by those from different educational contexts. This observation provoked the formation of the PEP network to more systematically and strategically explore and extend conversations about the themes of PEP, especially as they come to bear on the conduct and conditions for action research aimed at strengthening educational practice and praxis in our times.

Historically, the broad aim of the group was to encourage open dialogues between different traditions of theory, research, and practice in education. Discussions and debates about the differences between intellectual traditions became prominent in the face of concerns that some European traditions of pedagogy were being challenged and, perhaps, even supplanted by Anglo-American perspectives in educational research and educational policy. The founding coordinating group for the network, with agreement of colleagues from their own countries and institutions, articulated the foundation stones that would form the basis for a collaborative network of scholars; that is, be committed to:

- Reviving and re-constructing the classical concept of “praxis” in ways that make it applicable to a critical analysis of the present condition and future development of educational practice, and
- Conducting research that would expose impediments to, and promote the development of, praxis in different educational settings and in relation to a variety of educational issues as they emerged in a variety of national contexts.

Since then, the PEP collaboration has continued to develop and evolve. From its inception, the program of research has encouraged a reflexive dialogue between the European traditions of *Bildung* and *Pedagogik* and the Anglo-Saxon tradition of “Educational Philosophy and Theory.” As members encountered one another’s different intellectual, educational, social, cultural, and research traditions through their dialogues, they were challenged to comprehend and appreciate differences in language, interpretation, and practice.

Working within and across these different traditions has created new intersubjective spaces in which members reach comprehensibility and shared understandings about each other’s meanings and values; and also about how personal understandings of the notions of “education,” “pedagogy,” and “praxis” have been shaped by local and national traditions of thought and practice. Grasping some sense of each others’ historically formed, locally mediated meanings and traditions of thought and practice has informed, reformed, and transformed the work of the researchers in PEP. It has included work in participatory action research projects with teachers in a variety of settings encompassing early childhood education and care, primary and secondary schooling, vocational education and training, adult and community education, and higher education.

Through their cross-national collaborations, PEP researchers have explored how educational work is enabled and constrained in those settings by the different kinds of *cultural-discursive*, *material-economic*, and *social-political* arrangements that pre-figure educational practice and praxis in the sites being studied.

Through its central focus on action research and practice, PEP researchers involve themselves in work with three kinds of aims:

1. *Theoretical aims* concerning the exploration and critical development of key concepts and associated understandings, from different educational and research traditions, of pedagogy, education, praxis, and practice;
2. *Practical aims* concerning the quality and transformation of educational praxis in such settings as schools, teacher education, educational administration, community education and transformation, and other contexts; and
3. *Strategic aims* of:
 - (a) Encouraging dialogue between different traditions of theory and practice in education;
 - (b) Encouraging reflexivity in this dialogue to help the development of understandings about the origins and formation of our own understandings, pre-suppositions, and traditions;
 - (c) Encouraging the development of critical *praxis* in pedagogy, aiming to foster the development of new kinds of transformative education and upbringing appropriate for the changed times and circumstances of late modernity; and
 - (d) Building collaboration and networks with other scholars interested in these problems and issues.

29.2 THE PEP NETWORK

From 2006, researchers from the institutions participating in the international collaboration have met each year (in different locations) to manage the research program, to plan and conduct and report on collaborative research projects (usually in transnational co-operations), and to encourage the cross-fertilization of ideas (Pedagogy Education Praxis [PEP], 2015). The annual meetings are usually held to precede an international research conference.

In each participating country, one national co-ordinator facilitates communication between the international network and local intra-national collaborations or nodes based on research groups in particular settings. These groups organize a range of local and supportive research and development activities.

In each country, members participate in activities such as reading groups, study circles, research circles, dialogue conferences, action research symposia, and practice theory seminars. These provide the arrangements that offer participants localized opportunities for powerful, continuing professional education that feeds a dynamic research program across the PEP network. These local activities form important regular and ongoing opportunities for network members to extend their own scholarship and to contribute to, invest in, and advance the PEP research agenda. They also help researchers from each node stay in touch with the activities of the international network as a whole by hearing regular reports of local members' participation in different cross-national research, development, and publication initiatives of the international network.

29.3 THE PEP RESEARCH PROGRAM

In an attempt to re-vitalize and re-moralize contemporary discussions about PEP, the research activity of PEP members has involved both theoretical and empirical studies organized around an agenda driven by five general research questions:

1. *What is educational praxis?* In our efforts to answer this question, we aim to articulate a coherent theoretical account of “educational praxis” and an account of what might count as “the development of educational praxis.”
2. *How, in different national contexts, is good professional practice/praxis being understood, experienced, and practiced by educators?* We explore differences in the ways educational praxis is understood by educators in different national contexts, and at various stages of the teaching career, from initial teacher education through to the continuing professional development of experienced teachers.
3. *How, in different national contexts, is good professional education (i.e. educational praxis development) being understood, experienced, and practiced by educators?* We investigate how teachers' capacity for educational praxis does (or does not) develop through initial and continuing professional education.
4. *How, in different national contexts, are the changing cultural, social, political, and material conditions for praxis and praxis development affecting*

the educational practices of educators? We explore how the changing conditions for pedagogy and education are differently forming and transforming praxis and praxis development in our different national and local contexts.

5. *What research approaches facilitate praxis and praxis development in different international contexts?* We examine existing approaches to “practice-based” and “praxis-related” research (e.g. educational action research) and develop a more adequate understanding both of the forms of research that can promote the development of praxis, and of the conditions under which this kind of “praxis research” might be conducted (and by whom), in different educational settings.

29.3.1 *The Research Program 2008–2011*

From 2008 to 2011, the main strategic priority for PEP was to integrate an interconnected series of empirical projects on the theme of “*Praxis Development throughout the Teacher’s Career.*” This was achieved through the conduct of three cross-national empirical projects:

1. “*Leading and learning: Developing ecologies of educational practices*” investigated the interdependencies between practices of student learning, teaching, professional learning, leading, and researching in schools and the school systems that support them.
2. “*Education for all as praxis*” investigated exclusion and inclusion as social practices (rather than as states) that impinge on social justice and democratic education in schools.
3. “*The practicum and praxis*” investigated the role of, and alternative models for, professional experience (the practicum) in initial teacher education programs.

During this period, PEP researchers developed or extended conceptual and theoretical resources relevant to understanding educational praxis— notions including site ontologies, practices and practice architectures, ecologies of practices, the Education Complex of practices (student learning, teaching, professional learning, leading, and researching), traveling practices, site-based education development, and generative leadership. We produced a series of books and special issues exploring national and cross-national perspectives on education in national settings: for example, Kemmis and Smith (2008), Ax and Ponte (2008), Rönnerman, Furu, and Salo (2008), Mattsson, Sandström, and Johansson (2008), and Smith et al. (2010).

29.3.2 *The Research Program 2012–2015*

In 2012, members re-formed their program of cross-national collaborations to focus on “*Action Research and Site-Based Education Development.*” The notion of *site-based education development* is a key priority for action research that seeks to understand the development of education in forms that are appropri-

ately and effectively responsive to the very different local needs and opportunities, and the changing historical circumstances, of different kinds of students, schools, and communities in different localities in the participating countries.

Conducting research at local sites in our countries and regions, in collaboration with colleagues elsewhere, we aimed to extend understandings of “action research” and “site-based education development” as enablers of social justice and equity (in addition to our continuing explorations of “pedagogy,” “education,” and “praxis” and the other key concepts in our five research questions).

Educational Action Research The work of the program extends the *tradition* of educational action research, drawing on developments in how “participation,” “practice,” and “research” can be understood as site-based education development. This work advances a view of participation not just in the “action” being researched but participation in a “public sphere” of people committed critically to exploring the “action” through communicative action. Communicative action aims at reaching intersubjective agreements about the ideas and language different people in the group use; mutual understanding of one another’s positions and perspectives; and unforced consensus about what to do (Habermas, 1984, 1987; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005; Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014). The program also advances the view that the “action” being investigated in action research is better understood as “practice,” using the resources of practice theory (and, specifically, the resources of the theory of practice architectures referred to earlier and described in more depth below). Finally, it progresses the view that “research” in “action research” ought not to be understood as developing generalized or universal knowledge about phenomena in the world but as understanding cases—like the case of one’s own situation, rather than one’s own situation as a manifestation of a general phenomenon.

A different strand of our work on educational action research was an extended investigation of the historical roots of educational action research in Nordic contexts (collected in Salo & Rönnerman, 2013). These studies showed how educational action research arose in relation to the Nordic practices of study circles and research circles, which had wide acceptance in adult and community education and industrial transformation, from the late nineteenth century and through the twentieth.

Bildung The notion of *Bildung* has influenced the work of the PEP network. It has sometimes been rendered in English simply as “education” (e.g., Dewey, 1933), and, more recently, as “cultivation” (e.g., by Rorty, 1996). The European tradition keeps alive significant notions central to an idea of what an *education* is (as distinct from what “schooling” is).

The German tradition of *Bildung* was crucial to the nineteenth- and twentieth-century traditions of *folk enlightenment* in the Nordic countries. Salo and Rönnerman argue that it is highly relevant in understanding the formation of “study circles” (Salo & Rönnerman, 2013) in the late nineteenth and twen-

tieth centuries, and Lund and Moksnes-Furu (2014) argue that it is similarly important in understanding Nordic “dialogue conferences” in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In continental European traditions, *Bildung* concerns knowing yourself and knowing how you are connected to the world in order to find new meaning in new contexts (Rönnerman, Salo, & Furu, 2008; Salo & Rönnerman, 2013; see also Ax & Ponte, 2010). It is the path between the known and the unknown and then back to the known again (Rönnerman et al., 2008, p. 259). While such a path is traveled as an individual, it is also, and always, traveled with others in a lifelong process of learning and becoming. Human beings are always social beings who learn from and with each other. Siljander (2007) captures the nature of *Bildung* as:

the historical development processes of both individuals and societies in which people systematically strive towards developing themselves and their sociocultural environment into something ‘more humane,’ ‘more enhanced,’ and ‘more developed.’ (as cited in Rönnerman et al., 2008)

The *Bildung* tradition defies a dichotomy between theory and practice. Its strength lies in the ways in which it cultivates connectedness. While Anglo-American traditions generally do not rely explicitly on the notion of *Bildung*, many of the ideas that it represents such as a commitment to equality and democracy, lifelong learning, and enhancing freedom of choice and solidarity have provided a shared resonance for the work of the PEP international network (as cited in Smith et al., 2010, p. 4).

The dialogue between the tradition of Educational Philosophy and Theory in the English-speaking world, and the tradition of Pedagogy in Europe, has been renewed in the work of the PEP network, as in other research (see e.g. Siljander, Kivelä, & Sutinen, 2012). This dialogue restores into English, a language for understanding education that was suppressed in some forms of Educational Philosophy and Theory in the English-speaking world in the last third of the twentieth century, though it was strong and sometimes present in earlier times, and particularly prominent in Dewey’s educational theorizing.

Site-Based Education Development The PEP research program has focused intensively on site-based education development in order to emphasize that the development of the practice of education always occurs in actual sites; it is not just an abstract or general process (e.g., as mandated by policy). The development of educational practices can only happen through the actions of individual educational practitioners, and the possibilities for the formation and transformation of educational practices depend, in part, on the affordances of the sites where educational practices happen. These affordances include the kinds of intersubjective spaces, and the kinds of arrangements found in or brought to those sites, to make changed educational practice possible. Drawing on insights afforded by the theories of practice architectures and ecologies of practices, new practices can only be secured in sites if appropriate niches for new practices exist or are created.

29.4 ANNUAL DOCTORAL SCHOOL

Alongside the research programs, a course for doctoral candidates has been developed and conducted as an intensive five-day doctoral course focusing on *Researching Professional Practice*. The course is formally accredited by the University of Gothenburg, and its purpose is to engage doctoral candidates (many supervised by researchers in the network) with emerging research in the field of the network, and to give them opportunities to make their own cross-national contacts with other doctoral candidates, and with internationally known researchers in the field, at an early stage of their studies. During the course, candidates engage in a range of scholarly activities (often guided, but not governed, by more experienced researchers) exploring ways of understanding and researching professional practice and according to participants to “challenge theoretical thinking,” “broaden understanding of professional practices,” “boost to confidence in using existing ideas, work,” and to “introduce a valuable new, expanded lexicon [about practice]” (PEP, 2015).

29.5 SUBSTANTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY AND PRACTICE

The cross-national projects have explored particular issues in action research and site-based education development seen through the lens of practice theory, and further investigating the practices present within the Education Complex of practices, in different national and local contexts, and at different levels from early childhood education and care, through primary and secondary school education, to vocational education, adult education, and higher education.

The PEP research programs have led to the development and refinement of new conceptual resources, like the notions of “middle leading practices,” “generative leadership,” “practice landscapes,” “practice traditions,” and “mentoring as practice.”

The PEP research program has produced a range of findings on a range of different topics. Here, we mention just a few: our developing view of practice; our developing theory of practice architectures, by which we understand practices as held in place by and enmeshed with practice architectures; our developing understanding of how practices sometimes form relationships of interdependence with other practices; our changing understandings of action research, especially in education; and our exploration of the relevance of the European tradition of *Bildung* for understanding education and its purposes in our contemporary world.

29.5.1 *The Theory of Practice Architectures*

Building on earlier work on practice theory in the PEP research program (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008), Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al. (2014), define a practice as follows:

A practice is a form of ... human activity that involves characteristic forms of understanding (sayings), modes of action (doings), and ways in which people

relate to one another and the world (relatings), that ‘hang together’ in a distinctive project. ... Practices exist on many scales, with bigger, superordinate practices (like mentoring a newly qualified teacher) being formed out of constellations of smaller, subordinate practices (like answering a question asked by a newly qualified teacher). (p. 31)

Practices do not exist entirely in the intentional action of individual human beings, however. They are shaped in their course by “extra-individual” (Kemmis, 2005) arrangements of various kinds. These arrangements, that can exist beyond the intentional actions of individuals, can (a) shape practices and be shaped by them, and (b) become enmeshed with practices so that the practices and the arrangements form what Schatzki (2012) calls “practice-arrangement bundles.”

Following Schatzki, but taking a somewhat different tack, Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al. (2014) argue that people encounter one another in *intersubjective spaces* that are always already arranged in particular ways, so they receive one another in these spaces in ways partly shaped for them by the arrangements that are already to be found there—and sometimes by new objects that are brought there. These intersubjective spaces are relational; they lie between people; and they are the essence of our lives as social beings. Such intersubjective spaces exist, first, in *language*; second, in *space-time* in the material world; and third, in *social relationships*. Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al. (2014) discuss these intersubjective spaces as populated by three distinctive kinds of *arrangements* that always already exist in some form (and can be transformed) in any social situation:

1. *Cultural-discursive* arrangements (in the dimension of *semantic space*) that enable and constrain how we can express ourselves in the social medium of *language*—for example, a shared language like English or Swedish or shared specialist discourses like knowledge of a discipline such as physics or a profession such as education;
2. *Material-economic* arrangements (in the dimension of *physical space-time*) that enable and constrain how we can do things in the medium of *work* and *activity*—for example, a billiard table, a room, a home, a workplace, a town, or a local region; and
3. *Social-political* arrangements (in the dimension of *social space*) that enable and constrain how we can connect and contest with one another in the social medium of *power* and *solidarity*—for example, the relationships between people in a family, a sports team, a work organization or a political entity like a municipality or nation, or between people and other living and non-living things in an ecosystem or in a digitally mediated social network.

These three kinds of arrangements *hang together* (Schatzki, 2002; Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al. 2014) in places, practices, human lives, and practice landscapes and practice traditions of various kinds. Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al. (2014) argue that, when they occur in practices, arrangements of any one of these three kinds ordinarily hangs together with related arrangements in the other two.

Practices unfold in particular ways when they are realized—or come into being—in particular places and times because they unfold among the particular arrays of others and objects that are to be found there. Schatzki (2002) says that the ways practices unfold are *pre-figured* by the arrays of others and objects among which they unfold, but their unfolding is not pre-determined by these arrays. As each practice unfolds, it opens up what Schatzki (2010) called the “time-space of human activity”; and, as such, human activity can be reproduced and transformed in subsequent enactments of the practice, varying in relation to changing arrays of others and objects in new situations.

The development of the theory of practice architectures aims to allow researchers to characterize how practices are enabled and constrained by particular *practice architectures*—the particular cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements that make particular practices possible and that pre-figure (but do not pre-determine) them in their course as they unfold in particular places and times. The theory of practice architectures thus understands particular practices as *enmeshed* with particular practice architectures. To understand particular kinds of practices, the theory asserts, we must understand how they are enmeshed with the particular kinds of arrangements (cultural-discursive, material-economic, social-political) that make them possible and that hold them in their course as they are enacted by different participants in the practice in different times and places. For PEP researchers and others, the theory of practice architectures offers an analytical resource to view and understand the practices being studied; in particular, it gives light to the language, the activities and resources, and the relationships involved.

Figure 29.1 depicts some of the main elements of the theory of practice architectures, also locating it within a wider educational theory which views

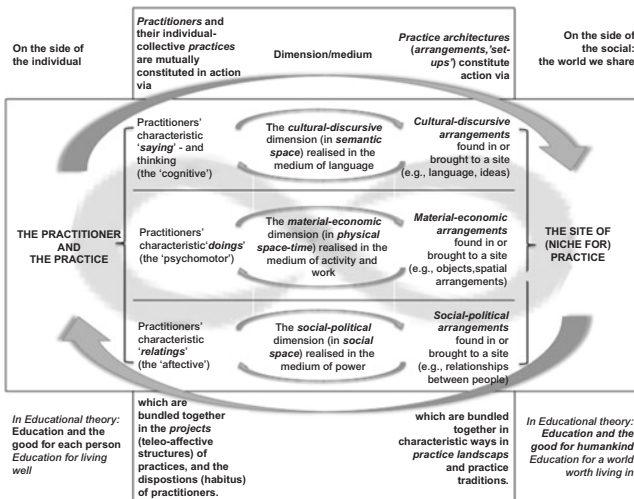


Fig. 29.1 Diagrammatic representation of the theory of practice architectures

education as having a double purpose, being aimed at both the good for each person and the good for humankind.

The theory of practice architectures has been used in PEP's program of *action research and site-based education development* to investigate and describe a variety of kinds of educational practices. Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al. (2014) used it to analyze interconnected practices of student learning, teaching, professional learning, leading, and researching in four schools in two school districts in Australia. PEP researchers have also used the theory to understand educational leadership as a practice of *leading*, including Grootenboer, Edwards-Groves, and Rönnerman (2014), Salo, Nylund, and Stjernström (2014), and Wilkinson and Kemmis (2014). Others have used the theory to understand *professional learning*, including Edwards-Groves and Rönnerman (2013), Hardy and Rönnerman (2011), Hardy, Rönnerman, Moksnes-Furu, Salo, and Forsman (2010), Salo and Rönnerman (2013), and Wilkinson, Forsman, and Langat (2013). These publications, far from a complete list, give some flavor of the international collaborative research of PEP that has advanced, explored, and extended the theory of practice architectures.

29.5.2 *The Theory of Ecologies of Practices*

As part of the theory of practice architectures, PEP researchers have developed the theory of “ecologies of practices” (Kemmis, Edwards-Groves, Wilkinson, & Hardy 2012) to illustrate empirically observable relationships of reciprocity, complementarity, and mutual support that sometimes (not always, and contingently) exist *in practice* (not just in principle, and not just in the abstract) between particular species of the five different kinds of educational practices in the *Education Complex* in particular sites. Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al. (2014) describe the Education Complex of practices as five different kinds of educational practices that have evolved in relation to one another since the emergence of mass universal education in much of the world in the nineteenth century: student learning, teaching, professional learning, leading, and researching. These educational practices exist in interdependent relationships with one another, each forming, re-forming, and transforming the other (in time and over time, in sites and across sites) (represented in Fig. 29.2).

All of the practices in the Education Complex are therefore *practice-changing practices*: each can function as a practice architecture that substantively enables and constrains one or more of the others. When they interact, the particular contents of the sayings, the doings, and relatings of any one of these five practices can become resources for the others. In such ways, sites come to contain particular kinds of cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements that enable and constrain the possibilities for practice in particular sites (particular pre-schools, schools, vocational education and training, or teacher education institutions). The arrangements thus “deposited” at particular sites consequentially form *niches* that enable and constrain the possibilities for practice at the site and that support or do not support particular kinds of practices.

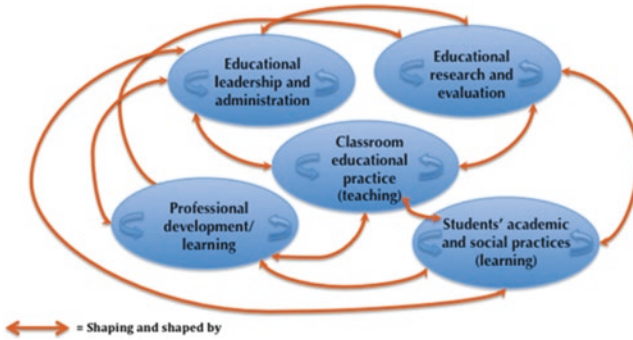


Fig. 29.2 Interdependence between practices in an ecology of practices

The theory of ecologies of practices provides a framework for understanding how education is locally constituted in site-specific ways. Thus, different practices sometimes form relationships of dynamic interdependence with one another in ecologies of practices (not always harmoniously and not always in relation to all of the others).

Taken with the theory of practice architectures, the theory of ecologies of practices has also allowed us to explore how practices “travel” from one site to another—what we call “traveling practices.” Kemmis et al. (2012) see practices as like living things that depend for their existence on the availability of appropriate environmental *niches*, which can sustain them. A niche so understood provides the means of life, the conditions of possibility for an organism, or, in the case of a practice, the cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements that make it possible. That is to say, the niche provides the forms of knowledge and language necessary for the practice to occur, as well as the necessary the modes of activity and work, and ways of relating to others and other objects in the world. For PEP researchers, the theory of practice architectures allows us to investigate the interconnectivities between practices as they travel to other sites, in other contexts, in other times; that is, how they are ecologically related. It also enables us to examine what practice architectures are necessary to form the niches necessary for practices to survive when they move from one setting to another, often sustaining themselves in transformed shapes in new settings because the new practice architectures differ from those present in the earlier setting.

29.6 CONCLUSION

The collaborations forged through the international PEP research community have collectively nourished essential ingredients that have moved us forward over a long period to new and deeper understandings of education and educational change, theory, and practices. Such collaborative international research does not just happen simply because groups of people come together around a shared

idea or research topic; their focus must deliberately, thoughtfully, and actively value and be responsive to the diversity that exists between the intellectual traditions. As we have found, there is a need to develop mutually comprehensible co-operative goals for working with one another; there is a need to engage in self-reflection and reflexivity; a necessity to participate in collaborative dialogues and take time to build relational trust (Bagshaw, Lepp, & Zorn, 2007). Building on that insight, PEP has enabled network members to question, challenge, and transform ourselves and others from different intellectual, educational, cultural, and social traditions. It is sustained and sustainable and re-generating.

By working together on topics of mutual interest and concern about education, PEP members have created international research partnerships that nourish new forms of intersubjectivity generated on the principles of collaboration, co-operation, agency, solidarity, and recognition. PEP's dialogues have, over time, provided scope to transform our professional lives by bringing about new possibilities for research that aim to make small moves toward the re-professionalization of education; we do this by addressing the issues and challenges in the contemporary educational milieu imposed by managerialism, accountability, and bureaucratization.

Most importantly, through the activities of PEP, members have established a shared *communicative space* by embracing researchers and research from different international contexts, which together have generated *communicative actions* in and for education. Our commitment to educational praxis underpinned by social equity and justice, inclusivity, and morally right conduct has enabled intersubjective agreement on the ideas and language we use when we meet, research and write together, mutual understanding of each other's positions and points of view, and unforced consensus about what to do in light of the circumstances we encounter in our research and in our professional lives. In particular, we pride our work as being part of a social and educational movement, fostering the kinds of action research and site-based education development that we believe are necessary to reclaim education in an era of schooling. For PEP, this provides impetus to re-vitalize and re-moralize contemporary discussions about PEP.

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The Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA): Constructing a New Network of North-South Convergence

*Joseph M. Shosh, Lonnie L. Rowell, Margaret M. Riel,
and Catherine D. Bruce*

30.1 EXPLORING THE NEED FOR AN ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK IN THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

The Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) was conceived through conversations initiated at the ninth and tenth San Diego Action Research Conference held at the University of San Diego, beginning in 2004. In 2012, a small group of educators at that year's conference, titled "Emergent Models in Action Research: Technologies, Networks and Interdisciplinary Collaborations," began to ask if it was time to become more grounded in the larger dynamics of a growing momentum in action research throughout the Americas and around the world.

In a conference session called "The United Nations of Action Research," a panel of action researchers from eight countries shared brief reports on action

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research in their respective communities. Canada's Catherine Bruce talked about the exciting possibilities for action research in education through university team partnerships, noting the importance of inquiries in education that teach us much more about student thinking than providing a path to higher scores on performance assessments. Mexico's Yara Amparo Lopez concurred, citing the value to migrant students in Baja California of the action research efforts of master's degree candidates and sharing her dream of university professors and teachers learning together through action research. Joseph Shosh lamented US educational policy where America's "race to the top" initiative and Bill and Melinda Gates' financial resources encouraged a technically rational approach to problem-solving that did nothing to end what Jonathan Kozol called apartheid schooling or what *Rethinking Schools* had recently dubbed the "school to prison pipeline."

There was a growing sense among those attending the conference that a new network was needed which would be active in a variety of social domains, not just education, and would represent—across the Americas—action research's bold intention of combining knowledge production, knowledge mobilization, and action for social change. Lonnie Rowell, conference chair, convened a breakfast meeting to discuss such a possibility in more detail. Participants included Joseph Shosh, Margaret Riel, Catherine Bruce, and Jean McNiff, who discussed the power of action research as it had played out at the conference, particularly in the action research efforts of graduate students from Moravian College, Pepperdine University, and the University of San Diego, as well as the presentation of youth-led participatory action research by "Heal the Streets" from Oakland.

Those at the breakfast meeting concurred with Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (2009) assessment of the vitality of action research.

Despite all of the forces working against it, teacher research and the larger practitioner inquiry movement continue to flourish in the United States and many parts of the world. Across myriad contexts, practitioner research initiatives are proliferating ... and pushing back against constraining policies and mandated practices. (p. 6)

McNiff shared additional information about thriving pockets of action research in England and Scotland, stressing the democratizing power of action research that eliminates the epistemological and social divide between researcher and researched. Riel noted that while many of us were actively involved in the Action Research Special Interest Group (SIG) of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), it was a constant struggle to create a venue that both welcomed and valued the contributions of practitioners.

As the conversation unfolded, it became clear that those of us assembled in San Diego were the very people who would need to take new action to support practitioners in continuing to generate new knowledge that makes a difference in people's lives. We had also been empowered by our visit to three San Diego area schools (and sites of action research) as part of a Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN)-cosponsored Study Day and pondered whether we might create together a CARN affiliate to unite the Western Hemisphere.

I did want to follow up quickly on a very important part of this year's conference. I thought the Friday morning breakfast discussion went well, and I have been giving some thought to how best to proceed with the wonderful ideas and opportunities that were shared at that session. For starters, I would like to see us move forward in establishing the consortium that was mentioned during the conversation. Furthermore, I would like to suggest that we take the lead in putting this idea into action. I know that others will be involved, and I welcome those additions. However, the work has to begin somewhere.

I learned long ago not to take lightly the invitation to organize something. Such work carries responsibilities and often brings both excitement and heartache. So, just know that I am not asking for your involvement in a frivolous manner. We are looking at a good year's worth of effort and leadership just to get the consortium on its feet. However, I think the time is right and that we have the right team to move it forward.

My first approximation for a framing statement:

The Action Research Consortium of the Americas (ARCA) brings together universities and other educational institutions committed to the utilization of educational action research to address strengthening policies, practices, and theory development in education, from pre-school through higher education. (L. Rowell, Personal communication, June 6, 2012)

To this, Joseph Shosh quickly responded:

Now I'm back to work in my office and starting to give some more serious thought to the inspirational notion of an 'Action Research Consortium of the Americas.' As we discussed at our breakfast meeting in San Diego, some larger conference and organizational structures are necessary if we're to bring our students, faculty, and other action researchers together on a regular basis. It seems to me that we currently have our AERA and CARN affiliations, which serve their respective purposes well but which do not provide a tenable venue through which most of our graduate students can share their action research. The foundation that has been laid at USD for a larger consortial organization is most impressive indeed.

The next logical step may be the drafting of an articulation of a mission/vision/strategy statement that we might then disseminate with our Breakfast Club when the time is right. I respect the position that some of our sister colleges and universities may need and want to retain their own annual AR conferences in addition to ARCA, but I wholeheartedly believe that we need a larger organizational structure (likely with AERA and CARN affiliations) that does much more to support the development and dissemination of educational action research, especially in this hemisphere.

Am I being too optimistic to think that we could draft and revise such a statement via email over the next few weeks and then entertain the notion of next year's USD conference serving as the debut ARCA event? (J. Shosh, personal communication, June 6, 2012)

Similar exchanges happened with Margaret Riel, Catherine Bruce, and Eduardo Flores-Kastanis, who together became the “initiators” of the new ARNA. Under the direction and leadership of Rowell, Shosh drafted a statement outlining a mission, vision, and values for the new network; Riel designed a website, Bruce organized membership drives, and Flores-Kastanis worked on plans for developing the infrastructure of the organization.

Building upon Rowell’s initial vision, the ARNA unites college and university students and faculty conducting practitioner inquiry in education with fellow action researchers in public schools, private schools, community settings, and workplaces throughout the Americas. ARNA members are committed to taking action locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally to promote action research conducted with a commitment to honesty, integrity, inclusiveness, multi-vocality, engagement, and achievement within sustainable democratic societies. The mission, vision, and values were published in four languages: English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese. We wanted to live our values by supporting multiple voices in different languages, beginning with ARNA’s mission statement. Soon after the first website was up, we designed a companion site in Spanish.

Thus, we envisioned multiple layers of collaborative action where

1. Local action research efforts improve professional practice, leading to a demonstrable greater good for all participants;
2. Practitioner inquiries, where appropriate, are coordinated and celebrated across regions, extending the benefits of the inquiry to wider constituencies;
3. Action research methodologies and findings are shared within nations to form openly accessible data bases of practitioner inquiries and to inform policy decisions;
4. Action researchers from diverse points of the Americas and around the world come together both virtually and physically to share action research findings and support one another in promoting local, regional, national, and international agendas promoting practitioner inquiry;
5. These forms of collaboration are organized and extended through web-supported learning environments.

In our efforts to engage in meaningful cycles of observation, reflection, action, and public presentation, we affirmed our commitment to *honesty* in sharing what we have learned with wider audiences; *integrity* in gathering and analyzing data; *inclusiveness* so that all may benefit from action research efforts; *multi-vocality* of diverse participants and their unique perspectives; *engagement* of learners, teachers, and researchers in the process; *achievement* and/or enhanced professional role as defined and demonstrated by participants as well as by outside authorities; *sustainability* of limited and renewable human and material resources; and *democracy* as an imperfect but preferable choice to guide decision-making.

30.3 COMING TOGETHER AT SAN FRANCISCO'S HISTORIC FORT MASON CENTER

As the initiators called upon colleagues to join them, the leadership group that emerged, representing North and South America, respected the contributions of those engaged in traditional forms of social science. Yet, we wanted something different and set out to create a social and intellectual space within which new initiatives could be launched, new collegial relationships could be established, and alternative forms of knowledge production and knowledge dissemination could be practiced. Thus, ARNA was founded in the fall of 2012. By November, a 21-person Organizing Committee had been established, with five working groups:

1. Organizing Committee Coordinating Group to provide leadership of the network and coordination of the work of the groups, chaired by Lonnie Rowell and composed of the five network initiators;
2. Web and Technology Development Working Group to oversee development of the website and advise on issues related to technology, facilitated by Margaret Riel;
3. Conference Planning Committee to plan the first ARNA Conference in San Francisco, cochaired by Lonnie Rowell and Joseph Shosh;
4. Membership, Sponsors, & Marketing Working Group to develop plans for building membership, funding the first conference, and spreading the word about ARNA, facilitated by Catherine Bruce;
5. Infrastructure Development Working Group to make plans for the structural development of ARNA, including the transition from a preliminary network organizing phase to a more permanent operational structure of the network, facilitated by Eduardo Flores-Kastanis.

With the planning for the inaugural conference, ARNA instituted a conference leadership structure, whereby the annual conference is cochaired jointly by a lead chair and the person who will assume the role of lead chair for the following year's conference. Inaugural conference cochairs Lonnie Rowell and Joseph Shosh were supported by conference coordinator Suzy Thomas from St. Mary's College of California and coprogram chairs Shelley Yearly from the Ontario Ministry of Education and Geitza Rebolledo from the *Instituto Pedagógico de Caracas* in Venezuela. The theme of the inaugural conference focused on "The Invention and Reinvention of Knowledge: Action Research across the Americas." Conference organizers chose San Francisco as the initial site to make it easier for attendees of the AERA's annual conference to stay on and participate in ARNA's inaugural conference. ARNA's first public event took place in conjunction with the AERA Conference, with ARNA, along with the AERA Action Research SIG, and some local community-based organizations in the Bay Area serving as cosponsors of an AERA pre-conference program at Oakland's First Congregational Church, entitled "Decolonizing Knowledge: Toward a Critical Research Justice Praxis," featuring Michelle

Fine, Distinguished Professor of Social Psychology, Women's Studies and Urban Education at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith, dean and pro vice-chancellor Maori at the University of Waikato. More than 500 people attended the event.

Sponsored by Moravian College, Pepperdine University, Trent University, the University of Notre Dame, St. Mary's College of California, the Institute for Reflective Practice at the University of Tennessee, and the AERA Action Research SIG, the inaugural ARNA conference was held at San Francisco's historic Fort Mason Center on May 1 and 2, 2013, with presentations in both English and Spanish from throughout the Americas and around the world. Many who could not be present sent digital video greetings that were screened at the conference. ARNA commissioned Rich McPherson from Ontario's Trent University to serve as conference videographer, helping to construct a digital history of ARNA's first year and the conference for the ARNA website (<https://sites.google.com/site/arnal3conf/videos>). This includes a brief history of the formation of ARNA, the worldwide greetings, and comments recorded live at the conference from ARNA initiators Rowell, Shosh, and Riel as well as ARNA members. In their conference reflections, Thomas and Yearley (2014) add that:

A fantastic cohort of bilingual students formed the bulk of volunteer support during the event. These students offered a welcome message that was included in two languages in the ARNA conference packet, and took on various roles in shifts throughout the conference. Students were available to accompany participants to sessions as translators, to assist with the bilingual video clips in the ARNA video booth, and to facilitate several of the Spanish sessions. (p. 5)

Conference organizers invited international action researchers Jean McNiff, based in the UK, and South Africa's Lesley Wood to deliver the inaugural keynote addresses, noting that while the new network was geographically based in the Western Hemisphere, it wanted to stress a global outlook and worldwide engagement from the very beginning. McNiff began her address by asking what the ARNA means, what it stands for, and what its potentials and responsibilities may be, before pondering the personal, social, epistemological, and moral implications of the research conducted by members of the new network. Lesley Wood talked about new possibilities in "Action Research for the 21st Century: Exploring New Educational Pathways." Wood noted that, "We have to invent, or rather reinvent, what we value as legitimate knowledge, since we live in a very different world from the one that existed when academic notions of scholarly knowledge were first validated." Wood discussed how action research is what's needed in the twenty-first century to provide new educational pathways moving from exclusion to inclusion, from dependency to self-directed learning, from oppression to freedom, from loss of dignity to feelings of self-worth, and from self-centeredness to other-centeredness (Wood, 2014).

Conference attendees approved ARNA's mission, vision, and values statements, and also commented positively on having so much research presented

from practitioners as well as university-based researchers and also noted the camaraderie and passion of those in attendance. Inaugural conference registrants were pleased with efforts to enact a truly multi-vocal conference and encouraged continued improvements to bilingual sessions, with one participant noting that, “Language is crucial in building relationships between Americas and creating equal partnerships.”

On May 30, 2013, ARNA coordinators sadly received word that Eduardo Flores-Kastanis, a founding member of ARNA and one of the five network initiators, had passed away on May 29. As recently as mid-April, Eduardo had been planning on attending the inaugural ARNA Conference in San Francisco. A close colleague wrote to ARNA leadership from Chihuahua of the great legacy he has left the educational research community in Mexico, stating, “He fought hard for this arid land and installed innovative practices that have improved basic education in schools ... he will rest in peace as a great teacher and researcher and will always live in our memories.”

Flores-Kastanis completed his doctoral studies at the State University of New York—Buffalo, in 1994, where his doctoral advisor was Susan Noffke. Eduardo served as a faculty member in the Graduate School of Education of *Tecnológico de Monterrey* from 1985 to 2011, and during his last two years was Professor at *Universidad Autónoma de Chihuahua*. The ARNA Coordinating Group established The Eduardo Flores-Kastanis Conference Scholarship Fund to honor Eduardo and his contributions to practitioner research and to education in general.

30.4 DEVELOPING A TRANSITIONAL LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE AND STRATEGIC PLAN

The inaugural conference marked the end of ARNA’s formation period and the beginning of an important transition. ARNA had established itself and had shown its capabilities as an active and innovative network determined to forge a new path of solidarity and collaboration among action researchers throughout the Western Hemisphere. The transition facing ARNA after the San Francisco inaugural event involved building on that momentum to continue to develop the network. The original Coordinating Group minus our departed colleague Eduardo Flores, began to address “next steps” for the network. First among these steps was consideration of changes in the leadership structure to build capacity, address an anticipated increase in membership and a corresponding increase in participation in the network working groups. The Coordinating Group was expanded from 5 to 7 members and renamed the Transition Coordinating Group with Lonnie Rowell serving as chair; Joseph Shosh as treasurer; Shelley Yearley as ARNA secretary/Working Group liaison; Catherine Bruce as coordinator of Membership, Sponsorships, and Affiliations; Camilo Manchola as Latin American Conference liaison; Margaret Riel as coordinator of Web Development and Technology; and Miguel Angel Lopez

Montoya as ARNA in Español Working Group coordinator. The Transition Coordinating Group developed a series of initiatives focused on knowledge mobilization, multi-vocality, and community building to guide the network's growth and development as members prepared for the 2014 conference.

In terms of knowledge mobilization, ARNA reiterated its commitment to a variety of strategies for knowledge engagement to bridge gaps between research, policy, and practice in crucial social domains, specifically through the continued development of the ARNA wiki website and publication of the first *ARNA Proceedings* in conjunction with the 2014 conference.

Regarding multi-vocality, ARNA recognized that "voice" in action research is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Based on that recognition, ARNA reaffirmed its commitment to continuing to build capacity for language inclusivity; practicing solidarity in relation to diverse forms of knowledge production, including practitioner research, participatory research, youth participatory action research, and others; holding ARNA's annual conferences in diverse regions of the Americas, and eventually, in conjunction with other global organizations, outside of the Western Hemisphere; and beginning to explore in more detail the diversity of perspectives among ARNA members regarding applications of action research and participatory research in relationship to the challenging sociopolitical and geopolitical issues of our times.

In relation to community building, we believe that our network is stronger when members feel engaged and when our work is approached through collaboration and the sharing of common interests. In that regard, ARNA recognizes the importance of nurturing good working relations for all tasks and assignments; assisting all members who wish to be active with finding avenues for involvement; continuing to develop the network's capacity for community building among action researchers across the Americas, including recruiting new members to ARNA; and increasing the quality of communication among ARNA members as well as the outreach to the wider action research community.

In response to a member survey, Margaret Riel led efforts to redesign and reorganize the website (www.arnaconnect.org). With the new design, a map for tracking visitors was added and since April 25, 2013, the site has received nearly 15,000 visits from more than 120 countries around the world. But more importantly, the goal of creating a site where many people were updating content was realized with different people "mastering" different parts of the website. Google translation was added to create access to the information from dozens of languages and removing the strain of managing multiple language sites manually. One of the goals of the web designers is to archive the history of the organization by adding new pages, while preserving the previous information. Each of the conferences and related conference proceedings has connected websites. The website team is now creating a range of social media paths (YouTube video channel, Facebook Group, and Twitter site) to encourage active participation among our members.

The Transition Coordinating Group also drafted a strategic plan approved by the membership at the 2014 conference, which focused on the (i) development of the premier action research conference in the Americas; (ii) use of twenty-first century multimodal technologies internally and externally to promote action research, including expansion of multimodal technology use in conjunction with ARNA conferences, seminars, and symposia; (iii) procurement of independent 501c(3) non-profit status, separate and distinct from that which it holds under the umbrella of Moravian College; (iv) continued recruitment of new members, especially practitioners in non-university settings; (v) expansion of the *Proceedings* to form an electronic action research journal in conjunction with further development of the ARNA website; (vi) continued development of ARNA's website, with expanded features and functions that will help attract visitors and new members; (vii) continued development of the working groups structure; (viii) development of hemisphere-wide institutional sponsorships and partnerships as an integral part of the ARNA structure; (ix) strengthening and deepening of the multi-cultural contexts for networking among action researchers in the Western Hemisphere; and (x) publication of an ARNA annual report for distribution to ARNA members with discussion at the final plenary session of each annual ARNA conference.

Through representation at the eighth Global University Network for Innovation Conference in Barcelona, Spain, and inclusion as a signatory on the fourth Global Communique issued by "The Big Tent Group," ARNA joined ongoing global discussions that will impact practitioner research, action research, and community-university collaborations for decades to come. The Transition Coordinating Group also ensured ARNA participation at CARN's annual conference hosted by the University of Tromsø, Department of Education, Norway, in collaboration with The Nordic Network of Action Research.

30.5 ENACTING OUR BELIEFS IN HISTORIC MORAVIAN BETHLEHEM

ARNA's second annual conference was held on the Moravian College campus in Pennsylvania's Historic Moravian Bethlehem National Landmark District in May of 2014. Moravians fled religious persecution in Europe and made their way in 1741 to found a settlement on the banks of the Lehigh River that they named Bethlehem, and in the following year, founded the first boarding school for women in the American colonies.

Conference cochairs Joseph Shosh and Catherine Bruce noted in their welcoming remarks that reflection and understanding without action is ethically, intellectually, and socially flawed. The transformative nature of research is central to the work of action researchers, and the cochairs conjectured that research without action is ineffectual. Hence, we asked participants to consider the following questions: How, and in what circumstances, is participation in action

research beneficial and for whom? Has the research had any impact on the larger community? And how do we know? How does action research shift or transform practice, actions and ways of engaging in our complex world? (Shosh, 2014).

Attendees of ARNA's second conference engaged in dialogue in response to these questions as we explored the theme of "Enacting our Beliefs—The So-What of Action Research" in some of the same hallways and meeting rooms where George Washington, John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, the Marquis de Lafayette, and other revolutionaries met to forge new pathways and to share unconventional thinking. Shosh and Bruce (2015) provide a detailed overview of events with links to international greetings and digital video interviews conducted on Moravian's campus at <http://bit.ly/1LdISxB> and the entire 2014 *Conference Proceedings*, edited by Elena Polush, are available at <https://sites.google.com/site/arnaproceedings/home/2014-proceedings>.

All sessions held in the Lewis Wilson Foy Concert Hall were simulcast in English and Spanish under the direction of a student translation team led by Alán Ricardo Arias Castro of the Autonomous University of Baja California. Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan L. Lytle delivered the English-language keynote address entitled "Practitioner Inquiry: For what? So what? Now what?" They began by defining inquiry as stance as a theory of action, repositioning practitioners as intellectuals to transform teaching and learning for democratic purposes and social justice ends in contrast with inquiry as a problem, problem-solving method or set of steps, and articulated the importance of such a model in the current context of educational reform. They offered up powerful examples from their own work and from the work of colleagues showing the way forward through what they described as "deepening the local, linking across locals; reinventing professionalism; connecting the practitioner inquiry movement to other transformative agendas; and renegotiating research-practice-policy relationships." Following the English-language keynote address, discussion continued at a reception at the Hotel Bethlehem in honor of Cochran-Smith and Lytle. Conference cochair Catherine Bruce led a pre-dinner plenary session in the Grand Ballroom to explore questions raised by the keynote.

César Osorio Sánchez of the National Pedagogical University of Colombia delivered the Spanish-language keynote address entitled "Participatory Action Research, Senses, and Sources of Historic Memory." Aligning himself with Paulo Freire and Orlando Fals Borda, Sánchez explored the context of conflict and participatory action research in Colombia following a period of war and violence; examined the role of participatory action research in rebuilding historic memory; shared findings related to the role of participatory action research in facing a culture of silence; and identified challenges to participatory action research processes to overcome barriers and recover culture, dignity, and ways of knowing (Sánchez, 2014). His complete address is available in both its original Spanish and in English translation within the ARNA *Conference Proceedings* (<http://bit.ly/1hHGFB0>) and may be viewed on ARNA's YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/actionresearchna>).

The exploration of the impact of action research in educational contexts began in a pre-conference bus tour of three secondary schools in which Moravian College alumni, including Ali Tanous, Nathan Snyder, and Kevin Horn, continue to transform teaching and learning through their action research efforts. In this, the CARN's first Study Day tour on the East Coast of the USA and the first in what is planned as an ongoing series of CARN Study Days at the beginning of ARNA international conferences; 50 action researchers from around the world visited Bethlehem's Liberty High School, New York City's iSchool, and rural New Jersey's Warren Hills Regional High School. Shosh and McAteer (2016) offer an overview and analysis of the Study Day with a rationale for strengthened CARN and ARNA collaboration.

The Transition Coordinating Group met for the final time in Bethlehem as it handed leadership of the organization to a newly elected Coordinating Group. Lonnie Rowell became chair of the Executive Committee; Shelley Yearley took on the role of treasurer; Joseph Shosh assumed responsibility for Knowledge Mobilization, Linnea Rademaker headed up Memberships, Sponsorships, and Affiliations; and Margaret Riel remained coordinator of Web Development and Technology. Additional members elected to the Coordinating Group included Catherine Bruce, Candace Kaye, and Miguel Angel Lopez Montoya. Mary McAteer came on board as the CARN liaison to the Coordinating Group; Elena Polush was added as a liaison to the Action Research SIG of AERA; and Rachel Sherman became the first representative to the Coordinating Group from the general membership working groups.

30.6 LEARNING WITH AND FROM ONE ANOTHER IN TORONTO

For its third annual conference, ARNA headed to the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Conference co-chairs Catherine Bruce and John Peters noted that action research is most often a joint enterprise, where the research question is shared among participant-researchers. In other words, when we engage in action research, we learn with and from one another. We learn about the experiences, challenges, and contexts of others, and, in turn, we learn more deeply about ourselves. We are influenced by the research we engage in, and we influence that same research activity because we inquire into things we care about and we aim toward justice. The call for international greetings and response from action researchers worldwide may also be viewed on ARNA's YouTube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/user/actionresearchna>).

The 2015 International Conference of the ARNA asked participants to reflect on the relationships in collaborative and participatory action research, the roles we play in this work together, and our shared intentions and tensions, as well as the nexus of multi-membership that is inherent in the action research process.

The ARNA Coordinating Group met in Toronto for a one-day leadership retreat before the conference to assess progress toward meeting strategic plan goals. This was followed by the first annual Eduardo Flores Benefit Concert, which took place at the University of Toronto's Hart House Theatre. Featuring opera singer Suzanne Kompass and composer/musical director Sean O'Boyle, the concert raised funds to support the dissemination of action research through presentations at the annual ARNA Conference by practitioners from Mexico and Latin America.

Some conference highlights included the following: the 2015 CARN Study Day at the laboratory school—the Dr. Eric Jackman Institute of Child Study at the University of Toronto—where conference participants were able to observe lessons in progress and later discuss these observations with the teachers; a keynote address by Emily Ozer, professor of Community Health and Human Development at the UC-Berkeley School of Public Health, on the effects of youth-led participatory action research in urban secondary schools (Ozer & Wright, 2012); a keynote address by Bud Hall, UNESCO cochair in Community-Based Research and Social Responsibility and professor of community development at the University of Victoria's School of Public Administration, who spoke of the importance of knowledge democracy, cognitive justice, and the reemergence of a new architecture of knowledge; and a panel discussion of Canadian action researchers chaired by Kurt Clausen, Editor of the *Canadian Journal for Action Research* and professor at Nipissing University. Stephanie Demers of the *Université du Québec à Outaouais* spoke about action research as epistemological emancipation. Karleen Pendleton-Jiminez of Trent University shared her work on gender and gender transgression in students attending rural Ontario schools. Christina Guerro of the University of Toronto described challenges, possibilities, and the rethinking of student engagement in Toronto youth participatory research. Finally, Suzanne Stewart of the University of Toronto, who holds the Canada research chair in Aboriginal Homelessness and Life Transitions, examined the role of action research in the health and healing of indigenous peoples. A live Town Hall session where Canadian action researchers Cathy Griffin, Liz Campbell, and Jackie Delong invited practitioner researchers from across the globe to join conference attendees was also held. Jack Whitehead and Marie Huxtable have shared their reflections on this experience (Huxtable & Whitehead, 2015).

Also notable in Toronto was the signing of ARNA's first two official memoranda of understanding. The first, between the non-profit Social Publishers Foundation and ARNA, supports the publication of practitioner research and provides potential crowdfunding opportunities to those conducting research projects for improved social welfare. The second agreement is between ARNA and the Mongolian National University of Education, which educates 98% Mongolia's schoolteachers and is committed to ensuring that action research is a vital component of teacher education in the country. A delegation led by Davaasuren Munkhjargal, president of the university, participated in confer-

ence sessions and met with ARNA leadership to examine how the network might best support the efforts of action researchers in the capital Ulaanbaatar and throughout the country. A brief English-language video prepared by the Mongolian delegation and screened at the conference is found at: (<http://bit.ly/1Eymuu5>).

30.7 GROWING THE NETWORK & FACILITATING LOCAL ACTION WORLDWIDE

Following the Toronto conference, Joseph Shosh began a two-year term as ARNA chair, and Lonnie Rowell assumed the chairmanship of Knowledge Mobilization, with Yearley, Rademaker, and Riel continuing to lead their respective areas within the Executive Committee. Within the larger Coordinating Group, incumbents retained their respective offices with the exception of John Peters, who, as incoming conference chair, assumed the seat of outgoing conference chair Catherine Bruce; Holly Marich replaced Rachel Sherman as working group liaison; and Kurt Clausen became the new official representative of the Canadian Association of Action Research.

To enact the ARNA strategic plan, the ARNA leadership has committed to three major actions through 2017 related to membership, research support, and infrastructure.

First is a commitment to increase the active membership of ARNA to 200 members. To this end, a new membership and conference fee structure was approved to reduce the cost of membership in 2016. Students enrolled in action research courses may receive a complementary one-year ARNA membership when their professor is a paid ARNA member in good standing. New outreach is planned for establishing action research programs throughout the Western Hemisphere to encourage participation, and discussions are underway to extend ARNA member benefits to partner action research networks worldwide. A second generation of ARNA membership newsletters and informational brochures is also being planned.

Second, as ARNA actively works to increase the number of actively engaged members, it has a crucial role to play in supporting the development and dissemination of new knowledge (see Rowell & Hong, Chap. 5, this book; see Shosh, Chap. 39, this book; Elliott, 2015; Fals Borda, 1998, 2001, 2006; Flores-Kastanis, Montoya-Vargas, & Suárez, 2009). To that end, ARNA will ensure representation at action research conferences sponsored by the Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) and Action Learning and Action Research Association (ALARA) networks, while exploring new opportunities for collaboration. The ARNA 2016 Conference at the Highlander Center and University of Tennessee Knoxville, cochaired by John Peters and Doris Santos, will provide an important opportunity for ARNA members to view their contemporary action research efforts in the historical context of foundational work in adult education using participatory methods pioneered

by Myles Horton and so influential in the development of the American Civil Rights movement (Horton, 1998; Horton & Freire, 1990). The ARNA 2017 Conference in Cartagena, Colombia, will mark the 40th anniversary of the first World Symposium of Action Research and provides a crucial new opportunity to build upon the knowledge generated at the original conference and at the 20th anniversary event in 1997 (Fals Borda, 1998, 2001). Co-chairs Doris Santos and Lonnie Rowell have assembled an international advisory committee to prepare for the event, including, among others, Bud Hall, Tina Cook, Christine Grove-Edwards, Davaasuren Munkhjargal, Joanne Rapaport, Rajesh Tandon, and Michel Thiollent.

As new knowledge is created, ARNA will support the dissemination of that knowledge through a *Conference Proceedings* publication that is expanded to become a multimodal international open access journal. As we rethink pedagogy for a digital age, we must also explore and generate new knowledge in multimodal forms, with careful attention to the contexts of action research (Bach, 2007; Beetham & Sharpe, 2013; New London Group, 1996; Paulus, Lester, & Dempster, 2014). ARNA has initiated a digital storytelling team to lead our efforts in this area and to report on the process of what they have learned as a result of doing so. We must also be cognizant that practitioners do not always share their research in the same ways as traditional social science researchers (Beck, Chap. 3, this book) and therefore ARNA aims to ensure that appropriate alternate spaces are developed where practitioner voices may be heard, while moving toward the development of more systematic and theoretically grounded research findings (Elliott, 2015; Fals Borda, 2006; Flores-Kastanis et al., 2009). Through publications like the *Palgrave International Handbook of Action Research* and international physical and virtual conferences, Study Days, and symposia, action researchers from around the globe can begin to collaborate in new ways, and ARNA has a key role to play in facilitating new participatory and action research projects among emerging teams of higher education practitioners along with school, community-based, and other practitioners.

To achieve its potential, ARNA will need to continue to develop the necessary infrastructure to support its members and their research activities. Through the efforts of the host site committee chairs from the first three ARNA conferences, a conference planning guide, to be updated annually, has been developed to support the efforts of those who follow. ARNA's large repository of still images, digital video interviews, international video greetings, membership surveys, annual reports, programs, and brochures are being archived to preserve the living history of the network, while being easily and publicly accessible. As ARNA takes on important new long-term initiatives, it must continue to think about institutional sustainability and put the infrastructure into place to maintain those initiatives even after the current leaders have moved on to other assignments. ARNA's chief strength lies in the networking opportunities that members make with and for one another within its Action Research

Communities (ARC's), including Early Childhood Education, Environmental Education, Global Collaboration, Indigenous People's Knowledge, School Counseling, School Leadership, and the Pennsylvania State Working Group. Each ARC must set goals for itself, and ARNA must continue to support the growth and development of new ARCs.

As ARNA reflects upon its history to date and looks ahead to the challenges it will face as a network of North-South convergence, it is worth noting the willingness of the ARNA initiators to merge efforts promoting action research within our local communities in the interest of generating new opportunities for authentic dialogue. Importantly, our crucial links with other organizations from the onset, particularly CARN and the Action Research SIG of the AERA were instrumental to the origin, growth and development of ARNA. ARNA members are especially proud of the efforts to bridge the inherited gaps in the North-South divide, and there is still much to do to ensure multi-vocality. Fortunately, ARNA members have already seen how incredibly worthwhile this dialogue can be and, importantly, is tenaciously expanding the network and leadership structures to ensure continued innovation and experimentation with ARNA's operations. This includes growing the structure of democratic governance from initiators, to transitional leaders, to a fully elected leadership structure focused on setting and implementing strategic priorities.

ARNA is proud to represent and support the action research efforts of practitioners throughout the Americas and recognizes that there is a multiplicity of competing views in the larger theoretical and practical spheres of our time concerning which view, or views, of knowledge production and knowledge mobilization shall prevail in the arena of social policy. The builders of this new network of North-South convergence stand together with those who promote participatory approaches to addressing social problems. The expertise required by modernity and the temptation to apply technocratic solutions need to be balanced with the capacity of ordinary citizens to articulate, and try out, creative solutions to social problems. ARNA stands proudly with those who recognize that knowledge should empower, not marginalize or colonize people. Ultimately, ARNA encourages people in the Americas and throughout the world to speak up, take action, and reclaim the capacity for progressive social change.

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Challenges, Tensions, and Issues in the Expanding Conceptions of Action Research

Introduction to Challenges, Tensions, and Issues in the Expanding Conceptions of Action Research

Joseph M. Shosh

In “What Counts as Research?” curriculum developer and teacher researcher proponent Lawrence Stenhouse (1981) begins his seminal journal article “by hazarding a minimal definition: research is systematic self-critical inquiry” (p. 103). A recent *Huffington Post* blog, also titled “What Counts as Research?” by Johns Hopkins University Director of the Center for Research and Reform in Education Robert Slavin (2015), ends by noting thus:

It will take all of us working together to bring knowledge to bear on critical questions of educational policy and practice. We can respectfully disagree about strategies and methodologies, of course, but a broader interest in the findings of educational research within the policy community seems sure to be beneficial to the research community. Besides, our focus needs to be on what is best for children, not what is best for our favorite methodology. (n.p.)

Hence, as we action researchers engage in our systematic self-critical inquiries, we must not permit our disagreements about issues of methodology to distract us from posing our critical questions or from doing what is best for all who serve to benefit most from our research efforts.

Invariably, though, determining which critical questions are most in need of our attention and coming to consensus about what is indeed best for the children and adults participating in our action research, will result in a myriad of challenges, tensions, and issues that help to expand our conceptions of

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research. The authors whose work appears in this section have no shortage of challenges, tensions, and issues to share with those who read on.

Foster and Glass from the University of California's Center for Collaborative Research for an Equitable California, for example, conduct action research across the Golden State, developing "reciprocal relationships among scholars, community organizations, and policy makers to understand and respond to the complex, entangled challenges due to structural injustices confronting low-income, racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse communities" (p. 511). This important work raises for them and for us, as their readers, perhaps as many questions as it so skillfully answers. As you read their chapter, think about how they consider whose knowledge counts and how this impacts their inquiries. They skillfully examine issue of power that always surrounds competing epistemologies. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) notes in the opening of her *Decolonizing Methodologies*, "From the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write, and choose to privilege, the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism" (p. 1). Foster and Glass also consciously choose to privilege the indigenous knowledges of the partners they serve.

They also question the changing role of the university, arguing that its traditional neutrality or "objectivity" does not solve the problems they care about and does not align with their own purposeful commitment to social and institutional change for equity, questioning how their work fits within traditional notions of what university-sponsored research should be. Higher education scholar Ron Barnett (2004) has noted that researchers like Foster and Glass, "voice concerns that the university has so taken on agendas of responsiveness to the knowledge economy, accountability and efficiency that the separateness that formerly marked off the university from the wider world and gave discursive space to supply an oppositional voice is being diminished, if it has not altogether vanished" (p. 66). They also point out that the requirements of their university-based institutional review boards are out of date and inconsistent with their needs as collaborative community-based researchers, aligning them with scholars calling for substantial overhaul to the entire external review process (Stark, 2012; Schrag, 2010).

As part of the New Zealand Ministry of Education's Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI), Locke and Hawthorne became co-researchers to examine the impact of teachers conducting action research as they adopted a writing workshop approach in a school that included a Māori student population. Importantly, the action research efforts of the teachers produced a dissonance between what they discovered about themselves as the teachers of writing they were and the teachers of writing they aspired to be. For Carr and Kemmis (2005), such dissonance may indeed lead to emancipation: "critical rationality, while never complete ... [and] always reflexively open to new perspectives ... still offers a way for people to think themselves out of their ... taken-for-granted assumptions, and existing expectations about how the world is and should be ordered" (p. 354).

Even after an action research project has long since ended, there is clearly value in reflecting upon what was learned and how what we learned may impact

our future action. Urquhart and Wearing's efforts to bring about organizational change within a child welfare agency in Western Australia's New South Wales did not have the impact the authors desired, and it is the subsequent reflection that led them to new understandings. As Wicks and Reason (2009) explain, "Often, the success or failure of an inquiry venture depends on the conditions that made it possible, which lie much further back in the originating discussions: in the way the topic was broached, and on the early engagement with participants and co-researchers. 'Opening communicative space' is important because however we base our theory and practice of action research, these first steps are fateful" (p. 244).

Creating such "communicative space" is also crucial when bringing outside funders on board in support of an action research project. Moxley, Thompson, and Deacon explore how to support funding for community-based participatory action research efforts committed to core values of self-determination, autonomy, empowerment, and capacity building without having to inadvertently compromise those values when seeking and accepting that funding. They provide a most useful donor typology based upon the funder's desired level of engagement with the project and the strength of the donor's stance on knowledge development.

In their action research efforts with the non-profit Forest Management & Product Certification Service (FORCERT) of Papua New Guinea, Australians Nelson and Moxham encounter different ways of knowing, working, and being that they needed to take into account in the emergent design of their action research study. They note the challenges involved in the creation of an inclusive and collaborate space and the need to develop processes and activities that were culturally relevant, masterfully learning from their hosts. As Pip Bruce Ferguson (2013) explains, "When we are operating in cross-cultural contexts, the very least we can do is to ensure that we work alongside—and perhaps are mentored by—someone who is born into the cultures represented in those contexts" (p. 38). Moxham is also able to negotiate a multiplicity of new roles for herself, carefully avoiding taking on the role of expert that she is initially expected to adopt.

For Perry and McGarry, exploring and reflecting upon their multiple roles is central to the study of teacher professional development in a drama-in-education context with teachers from remote schools in Australia's Queensland. Both university-based researcher Rachel Perry and teaching artist Tim McGarry maintain their respective roles as researcher and artist, while taking on additional roles of confidante and facilitator. In working with teachers who are not themselves theater artists, McGarry encounters Augusto Boal's (1985) key challenge: "to change the people—'spectators,'—passive beings in the theatrical phenomenon—into subjects, into actors, transformers of the dramatic action" (p. 122). To succeed, McGarry and fellow artist colleagues allow themselves to take on the roles of learners, guides, peacekeepers, models, ambassadors, and manipulators, while Perry likens her new roles to those of theater director, scenic designer, and rehearsal process/architect. Clearly, tensions exist around which roles to assume and the contexts in which new roles may need to overlap.

As a native African born in the Democratic Republic of Congo and conducting action research in Malawi on a Fulbright scholarship, Nathalis Wamba has to reconcile multiple identities as he becomes the purveyor of the very western knowledge that had been used for centuries to dehumanize fellow Africans and justify the colonization of the continent. To reconcile these experiences as he engages in participatory action research, Wamba explores his positionality, distinguishing between “the ‘I’ which looks and the ‘I’ which is seen, including the ‘I’ that is ‘seen by me.’” (p. 616).

Wamba calls upon Paulo Freire (1988) when he asks, “How can the oppressed, as divided, unauthentic beings, participate in developing the pedagogy of their liberation? Only as they discover themselves to be ‘hosts’ of their oppressor can they contribute to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy” (p. 33). Fals Borda (2006) affirms an alternative paradigm formed

by combining praxis and ethics, academic knowledge and popular wisdom, the rational and the existential, the regular and the fractal. It breaks down the subject/object dichotomy. It is inspired in the democratic pluralist concepts of alterity and service, favouring to live with differences, and introducing perspectives of gender, popular classes and pluri-ethnicity into the projects. (p. 32)

After Wamba explores the limitations of western knowledge to education in Malawi, Margaret Riel, in the next chapter, offers up a cornucopia of ever-expanding technological tools that action researchers may use, most of which are freely available, but which themselves pose new challenges to action researchers working for professional, organizational, and scholarly change. Riel reminds readers that the choice of a technological tool is itself an epistemological decision that reveals one’s beliefs about the role of learning in teaching and researching. Matching the right tool to the task is a challenge, too, as is building the trust and respect that are necessary to use new communication tools effectively. Technology infrastructures are highly uneven both around the world and even within developed nations, and each new tool has its learning curve. Technology allows researchers to tell the stories of their research in new ways but raises multiple issues about the ethical collection and dissemination of data that may now be gathered, stored, and shared more easily than ever before on ubiquitous handheld devices, including cell phones.

In the final chapters of this section, both Shosh and Riel and Rowell explore tensions in teacher education that date back to Aristotelian notions of teaching as *techne*, or application of technical skills, versus teaching as *praxis* guided by *phronesis*, or clear values that guide action. Elliott (2015) asks if the question now arising “is whether there are contemporary examples of educational action research that, in the words of Carr, appear to be successfully resisting the assimilation of *praxis* to *techne* in sustainable ways and opening up spaces for the quest for virtue in teaching” (p. 13). Shosh attempts to provide such an example in the 175 teacher action research studies conducted by practicing teachers in Moravian College’s graduate education program, rejecting

Taylorist notions of technical efficiency in favor of a new teacher professionalism through action research. Riel and Rowell call upon John Dewey (1910) to help teachers decide whether to pursue a path of scripted teaching, improvised teaching, or generative teaching. As Campbell (2013) explains, a “view of teacher as technician trivializes the complexities of teaching. Focusing on teaching as the technical implementation of curriculum and set routines results in classroom practice that is disconnected from the needs of students” (p. 6).

As Jean McNiff (2013) notes, “I do not see action research as about problem-identification or problem-solving, but as about realizing human potential” (p. 35). The authors whose action research efforts appear in this section of the Handbook encounter a multitude of challenges, tensions, and issues but never cease to keep trying to realize the immense human potential unleashed through their individual and collective actions.

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Ethical, Epistemic, and Political Issues in Equity-Oriented Collaborative Community- Based Research

Samara S. Foster and Ronald David Glass

31.1 INTRODUCTION

University researchers are increasingly engaging in various modes of action research and collaborating with community organizations, schools, and other institutions to solve pressing social problems (Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003). Involving inequitably impacted communities as research partners in all phases of the research process, rather than merely as subjects of study, can yield both more warranted findings and also more responsive and equitable policy solutions. Yet, shifting the frame of research to one of collaboration with community members also poses complex ethical dilemmas that are specific to collaborative research (Brydon-Miller, 2008, 2009; Minkler, 2004). As “community engagement” projects proliferate and span classroom and student-level service learning activities to campus-level initiatives (e.g. Kellogg Commission on the Future of State Land-Grant Universities & National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, 2001; Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011), the need to examine the ethical dimensions of university-community collaborations is even more pressing.

Our contribution to this edited volume is informed by our work within the University of California Center for Collaborative Research for an Equitable

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California (CCREC, <http://ccrec.ucsc.edu>). This multi-campus, statewide research initiative addresses the inextricably linked problems in the economy, education, employment, food systems, environment, public health, and housing through collaborative community-based research. Our Center's projects necessitate reciprocal relationships among scholars, community organizations, and policy makers to understand and respond to the complex, entangled challenges due to structural injustices confronting low-income, racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse communities. Our research projects emanate from the lived experiences of community members and mobilize knowledge produced from this coalitional approach; our research-based community organizing can interrupt the policy knots that uphold and normalize injustices. We refer to this approach as *Equity-Oriented Collaborative Community-Based Research* (EOCCBR) and recognize its kinship with the numerous other forms of action and collaborative research referenced in multiple fields and subfields (e.g. action research, participatory action research, community-based participatory research, engaged scholarship, and activist anthropology). These modes of social scientific inquiry are better-positioned to generate relevant understandings of and responsive solutions for today's most vexing policy problems, particularly when they respect local expertise, focus on community concerns, and emphasize equity in every dimension of the collaboration. In this chapter, we raise questions about the distinct and complex ethical and epistemic quandaries that impact the integrity of EOCCBR.

We begin by addressing foundational epistemological issues around power and knowledge production. We explore questions about whose knowledge counts, and how and where it counts in the research process, from the formulation of research questions to the gathering, interpretation, and analysis of data, to the dissemination of findings. We also specifically examine research in relationship to questions concerning neutrality and advocacy, not only in connection to issues of power and knowledge, but also because our approach to community-based research is purposefully political in its commitment to promoting social and institutional change for equity. We also explore some concomitant ethical questions that such advocacy raises for university researchers in terms of their institutional obligations, as well as for community research partners in terms of their participation in public deliberation.

We then consider how foundational concerns of research ethics—informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity¹—are complicated in collaborative research contexts. EOCCBR is forced to reconceptualize the traditional foundations of research ethics to take account of the blurred distinction between researchers and research subjects. In the context of community-based collaborative research, who should be giving consent, and should there be some form of community-level consent for such research? And, if so, how can “community” be defined given the fluidity and contradictions of social positions and identities? Moreover, given that this approach to research is integrated with political processes of social and institutional change, how can the parameters of the research be delimited from these other dimensions of the work, and if these parameters cannot be clearly set, how can “participants” weigh the costs and benefits and give their consent?

Our discussion draws from the specific scholarly and community-based projects of our Center, but the core ethical questions we raise have resonance with a broad range of methodologies that engage communities, partners, and practitioners in collaborative or action research. Our analysis illuminates issues that are particularly salient to cross-cultural and transnational contexts. We suggest that understanding the depth of the ethical dimensions of collaborative research disrupts traditional practices around research ethics and research itself, and demands a more relational, responsive, and critically sensitive ethical practice of knowledge production. In fact, universities may even have an ethical obligation to support this kind of research in an effort to redress epistemic injustices (Glass & Newman, 2015).

31.2 POWER AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

There are a number of difficult issues that arise at the intersection of ethical and epistemic matters, and they are especially salient in the context of EOCCBR. Echoing the critiques of many feminist scholars (e.g. see: Alcoff, 1991; Bar On, 1993; Code, 1995; Collins, 1986, 2000; Harding, 1993, 1998; Haraway, 1988; Hartsock, 2003; Hawkesworth, 2006; Jaggar, 1989, 2000, 2014; Kirsch, 1999; Maguire, 1987; Naples, 2003; Narayan, 1989; Nelson, 1993; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012), this approach upholds that research and knowledge production are situated and value-laden, and it takes seriously the experiences of aggrieved communities in assessing the social, economic, political, and other injustices that undermine a democratic society. This approach also recognizes that scholars have ethical and epistemic responsibilities tied to the unavoidable authority claims of their research, which leads scholars to necessarily grapple with the limits and affordances of traditional Enlightenment epistemologies and ideals of disinterested objectivity and value-neutrality.

In particular, the epistemic ideals of Enlightenment epistemologies assume a “view from nowhere” (Nagel, 1986) that performs what Donna Haraway (1988) calls the “God-trick” (p. 582), an exercise of reason that seemingly escapes the constraints that social location, identity, and context impose on all human knowledge-seeking. This perspective erases connections between knowledge and power, lending support to the illusion that knowledge production is “politically innocent” (Code, 1995, p. 16). Such traditional epistemologies continue to dominate discursive and research practices in the academy, and to marginalize collaborative community-based approaches to knowledge production. For example, scholars Reardon and Tall Bear (2012) argue that science itself is imbued with the property-privileges of Whiteness and creates unwarranted hierarchies of knowledge. That is, scientific forms of knowledge get positioned as the most legitimate form of knowledge, thus positioning other forms of knowledge that emerge from structurally disadvantaged communities as less-reasoned, mere opinion, or representing “special interest groups” that cannot be trusted to be objective. These logics function to reify the persistent privileging of certain knowledge and further deem some people as unknowledgeable, even about their own circumstances and experiences.

In contrast, EOCCBR considers that knowledge is always mediated, positioned, and partial, and thus always also has both ethical and political dimensions. Moreover, it recognizes that conceptual frameworks, evidentiary criteria, interpretive schemes, and disciplinary methods are neither neutral nor innocent, and fundamentally shape the knowledge that will be produced. EOCCBR further complicates research by acknowledging ways that knowledge production is always impacted by the researchers' own social identities and location in specific, multiple, ideologically tainted, and ever-changing groups; epistemic communities; and communities of interpretation. In addition, research projects always pursue particular goals, reflect specific interests, incorporate specific assumptions and values, and are designed to speak to and with specific communities. EOCCBR makes these various contextual frames, interests, assumptions, and values explicit, and critically evaluates their effects throughout the research process, from the selection of research questions to the dissemination of findings.

EOCCBR is rooted in feminist standpoint epistemologies (Harding, 1993, 1998) and begins inquiry from and situates knowledge claims within the lives of marginalized and aggrieved people or groups. It centers the epistemic significance of social locations and political commitments, and holds that without an interrogation of this significance; dominant epistemological, social, and political standpoints remain naturalized and maintain the status quo (Glass & Newman, 2015). As Harding (1998) explains, "marginalized groups have interests in asking such questions, and dominant groups have interests in not hearing them" (p. 151), thus underscoring the political and ethical nature of what questions are pursued within research. That is, research collaborations that adopt a starting point within the lived experiences of the least advantaged, most aggrieved communities offer strong promise as critical methodological interventions that can generate knowledge that disrupts these hierarchies. This troubling of the traditional knowledge-power hierarchy and traditional knowledge production dynamic enables the research process and products to be more responsible and responsive to actual problems experienced by aggrieved communities. In this way, the knowledge produced in EOCCBR, through more thickly collaborative and ethical relationships, might also yield more warranted accounts of disputed matters in the public sphere.

Harding's notion of strong objectivity (1998) provides EOCCBR researchers with a guide for balancing internal factors (context of justification—the research community's rules for collecting and interpreting data and making arguments) and external factors (context of discovery—social and political context of the research). She contends that, too often, university-based researchers judge the objectivity of knowledge solely in terms of the internal logic of justification as per rules defined by the research community itself. In particular, she argues that this strategy is far too weak to maximize objectivity because critical questions and knowledge from people and communities have no way of being heard when the context of discovery is minimized or ignored outright (Harding, 1998). Harding thus argues that strong objectivity requires taking the "subject as well as the object of knowledge to be a necessary object

of critical, causal—scientific—social explanations. This [program] of strong reflexivity is a resource for objectivity” (1998, p. 246). That is, reflexivity and social situatedness are in fact resources for more objective research.

One way that EOCCBR attempts to disrupt the binary of researcher and subject is by situating collaborators as co-equal and co-responsible partners who engage together in the research process from start to finish (Nelson, 1993). Within EOCCBR, people who are often excluded from the design, implementation, and interpretation of social science research play a leading role. This opens possibilities for different questions to emerge; different analyses to surface; and for the social, economic, and political status quo to be challenged in favor of marginalized communities (Alcoff, 1991; Bar On, 1993). Equitable epistemic standing and engagement is critical in collaborative community-based research, but the myriad challenges that arise in trying to enact this methodology often leave community-based researchers uncertain of their position within academia, philanthropy, and public policy. These researchers intentionally position their work so as to balance their respect for a variety of forms of knowledge, their understanding of the power dynamics of legitimated knowledge, and their commitments to ethical standards of warrant for epistemic claims.

This fraught intersection of epistemic, ethical, and political issues similarly comes into focus in considerations of deliberative democracy and how publics participate in debates and decision-making (e.g. Fraser, 1990; Young, 2000), pointing toward additional concerns that have no easy answers for equity-oriented community-based researchers. For example, how can individuals and communities have opportunities to influence collective decisions (whether within the research process or more widely in the public sphere) when these decisions take place in contexts that historically and still pervasively produce and uphold social, educational, and other inequalities? How can we disrupt what forms of knowledge count as valid when dominant logics function to reassert the knowledge of the already privileged? These intersectional concerns arise throughout the everyday practices of the collaborative research processes themselves.

Other complex questions arise in relationship to the “ownership” and stewardship of the research process and knowledge that gets co-generated. Should the university researchers’ or community collaborators’ rights to publish from the research be constrained, and should community partners have “veto rights” over the representations and interpretations of the meaning and significance of the findings? How should unflattering, damaging, or controversial discoveries be handled? What should be the ethical principles and practice guidelines for resolving conflicts in these ethico-epistemic matters?

31.3 ADVOCACY AND COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH

For more than 100 years, universities have been committed to what is often portrayed as disinterested, objective research methodologies that enable the discovery of “Truth.” Universities also formally endorse a determined neutral-

ity in matters of social, economic, and political policy for the institution as a whole, as well as for its faculty and the research it conducts. Coupling the logic of disinterested research methodologies as a guarantor of truth, with the logic of institutional neutrality in the public sphere as a guarantor of legitimacy, the academy seeks to secure its autonomy from outside interests and influences and to legitimize its knowledge production as value-free.

This neutral, independent, and rigorous ethos is also meant to imbue the peer-reviewed academic publication venues that curate academic (scientific) knowledge production, while the policy arena gets contrasted as tainted by partisan views. This suspicion of incommensurability between research truths and policy positions marks a sharp divide in academic culture, with special provisions made for exceptions. Thus, for example, it does not tarnish scholars' independence or research integrity to provide testimony to legislatures or courts in the areas of their expertise or to take leaves of absence for government service. Research universities proudly position themselves as being independent of politics (and even independent of any demand that research be applied or of immediate benefit), and the necessity of independence is given as a bulwark defense for academic freedom and against any kind of outside interference in the search for "Truth."

Thus, institutional independence gets framed and justified with commitments to particular research methodologies, which warrant faculty protections. That is, the university and its faculty remain neutral in the public sphere in exchange for freedom to pursue and proclaim "Truth" through the disciplined practices of the professoriate. This social contract emerged more than a century ago after a struggle precipitated by an incident in which a Stanford University professor was fired for his analysis of labor practices in railroad construction projects associated with the Stanford family. The American Association of University Professors was organized to prevent future institutional abuses of power, and its 1915 report established professors' rights to academic freedom, arguing that research, scholarship, and teaching practices should not be subject to politically motivated scrutiny from the university, and in particular, its leadership (Bok, 1982). The university's legitimacy in the eyes of the public and its independence from political, economic, and religious powers became conjoined to these notions of academic freedom, disciplinary standards, and institutional neutrality, which worked together to provide limited protection for universities, and, in turn, its authorized scholars, from potentially chilling interference (Bok, 1982).

The modest independence of research universities, especially those that are publicly funded or have land-grant legacies, is an important foundational ethic for academic life. However, similarly substantial arguments can be made for why universities should, in some measure, be advocates for equity in the social, economic, and political domains (Anderson, 1995). This contrasting position need not be seen as a radically disruptive position if fair institutions are to insure that the well-being of the least advantaged be maximized in ways consistent with liberty for all (Rawls, 1999, 2001). Thus, some forms of equity-oriented

advocacy may be consistent with responsible action in the public sphere and may not perniciously undermine scholarly and university truth-seeking and neutrality. These considerations aside, there are also arguments to be made that, to be true to a claim of neutrality, universities must balance their tendency to enact *de facto* preferences for the most advantaged in society by also committing to research on behalf of the least advantaged and most aggrieved communities (Glass & Newman, 2015). But this kind of balancing effort falsely elides the difficulties in these ethical and epistemic intersections, while ethical research praxes keep them in the foreground.

Within the realm of individual scholars' actual pursuits, notions of what is considered advocacy can be especially complicated. EOCCBR is definitively and purposefully interested in investigating structures that normalize inequity and in elucidating alternative systems and institutions that would be more just. It is intentionally integrated with community organizations and other social formations with committed political orientations, and it aims to facilitate social and institutional change toward preferred outcomes that establish more equitable structures. When the community-engaged scholar's broader commitments and the research processes themselves are actually integral to and co-terminous with political processes, challenging ethical questions emerge in relation to the researcher's university and other institutional obligations (Newman & Glass, 2014). Similar ethically challenging questions emerge for community research partners, as they grapple with aligning the processes and outcomes of research to their constituencies and the political demands of public deliberation. Thus, the praxis of EOCCBR makes evident the ways that current deliberative theories of democracy offer insufficient guidance, thus needing to draw on more agonistic conceptions; this view supports a conceptualization of equity-oriented research as having a role in the formation of counter publics able to assert genuine, truth-based political (Mouffe, 2005).

In these and other ways, EOCCBR reframes social science research and foundational academic and democratic norms without perniciously undermining the bedrock values that warrant a preferential consideration by the general public of research claims. By employing well-established philosophic frameworks to interrogate certain traditional academic values and principles of research ethics, and by situating collaborative community-based research in the context of the formation of a just democratic society, we can provide a theoretically rigorous account of how collaborative modes of action research are well positioned not only to address pressing policy problems but also to realize the most important academic and democratic values.

31.4 FOUNDATIONS OF RESEARCH ETHICS: INFORMED CONSENT, CONFIDENTIALITY, AND ANONYMITY

Professional academic associations define standards of ethical research practice for their members and promulgate these standards in formal codes of ethics, yet they do not exercise any regulatory or supervisory powers. On the other

hand, US universities actively regulate and manage ethical research through Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) for the Protection of Human Subjects. IRBs were established in response to profound human rights violations by researchers, sometimes involving coercion and deception, sometimes involving biomedical and psychological experimentation, and sometimes involving government-sanctioned and funded projects. The torturous experimentation administered by Nazi doctors during the Holocaust, as revealed in the Nuremberg Trials, and the abuses by US Public Health Service doctors who withheld syphilis treatment for four decades from African Americans in the Tuskegee study, are often cited examples that situate the urgent need for the ethical regulation of research in which IRBs were federally mandated to address this need. Principles for the ethical conduct of research were delineated by a federal commission whose Belmont Report became codified into law in a section of legislation often referred to as the Common Rule, which today provides general guidance for IRBs to review most forms of research involving “human subjects,” regardless of its disciplinary orientation (ASH, 2009).

The Belmont Report identifies principles for ethical research, drawing from Western philosophic traditions and concepts that were understood to be particularly salient in the practice of biomedical research and experimentation. The report’s three core ethical principles were elaborated to also correspond to specific, concrete applications within research practice. For example, the concept of *respect for persons* requires researchers to secure voluntary, comprehending, and informed consent; the concept of *beneficence* requires researchers to identify and evaluate the potential risks and benefits of the proposed research for the potential research subjects; and finally, the principle of *justice* requires that the research must neither disproportionately harm nor benefit members of any particular social, racial, sexual, or ethnic group (Office for Human Research Protections [OHRP], 1993). Although the Belmont Report and Common Rule inform the regulations that each IRB must adhere to, the actual practice of the formal ethical review process leaves many substantial ethical matters unaddressed, and often focuses more on liability matters rather than matters of ethical practice. Thus, it is not surprising that a broad array of scholars, particularly those in the social sciences and humanities, have critiqued IRBs for such limitations and for the ethical distortions arising from the biomedical lineages of the review processes. These critiques also point to the inconsistency of research review boards across institutions (Stark, 2012), the inadequacy of the review process to take into account inductive research methodologies such as ethnography (Bosk & De Vries, 2004), and the potentially preemptive blockages of some research in order to reduce the risk of institutional liability (Bledsoe et al., 2007). These critiques illustrate some of the limitations of institutionalized forms of research ethics review, and they point to the need to interrogate the bedrock ethical frameworks of social science research in order to elucidate the complex ethical dilemmas of all forms of knowledge production and inquiry.

Informed consent is foundational to the institutional conception of research ethics, as it is meant to protect research subjects from maltreatment by requiring researchers to respect their autonomy and secure their active agreement to participate in the research. Informed consent practices were developed to demonstrate that study participants were capable and free to choose, competent to weigh risks and benefits for themselves, and free to ask questions about and withdraw from the research at any time (Buchanan & Brock, 1989; Thorne, 2014). Federal regulations require researchers to give the potential research subject sufficient basic information for an informed judgment to be made about their participation, and then the subject has to sign to verify their understanding and agreement to the research study. This consent transaction is intended to provide both an ethical and a legal foundation that assures IRB compliance; it provides proof that consent was given by an autonomous competent individual who was able to (1) reason consistently; (2) understand the content and implications of the research; (3) appreciate the risks, benefits, and significance of participation; and (4) make choices for her/himself, including a choice to withdraw from the research at any time (Faden & Beauchamp, 1986).

These are the conditions for exercising moral agency and establishing moral responsibility in post-Enlightenment conceptions of ethics (Malone, Yerger, McGruder, & Froelicher, 2006; Schrag, 2010), and they are the basis of IRB approaches to regulating ethical research practice. While it seems clear that informed consent is critical to ethical participation in research, it is less clear that its traditional conception is adequate for EOCCBR. Informed consent operates as a threshold concept that sets minimal conditions to insure respectful treatment of the person consenting, yet it can be challenging to specify if those conditions have been met because the criteria are context dependent (Eckenwiler, Feinholz, Ells, & Schonfeld, 2008). The significance of these issues of context dependency is illustrated by the difficulty in EOCCBR of even setting parameters on what comprises the research, which is necessary to secure informed consent (Church, Bascia, & Shrage, 2008).

That is, since the research is embedded in broader activities of collaboration, public deliberation, political processes, and social and institutional change, and since the research must respond to changing conditions and knowledge needs, how exactly can a researcher delineate in advance the full range of experiences to which a participant is consenting? Moreover, it is often not really possible to assure an opt-out choice in public and political processes that are difficult or impossible to stop once they are underway, and if this is the case, then another basic threshold guarantee in traditional research ethics gives way. These sorts of problems point to the need to reconceive consent not in transactional terms, but rather in terms that honor the ongoing relational nature of the ethical relationship established through collaborative research processes.

These challenging issues actually arise in EOCCBR only *after* an equally difficult matter can be addressed, namely, how to identify both the researcher who is to solicit consent and the subject who is to give consent. What happens

to the traditional structure of consent when the researcher and the subject of the research are one and the same? When the researchers are investigating their everyday lives or when community members are full partners with outside researchers, the blurred distinctions raise complications. The ethical quandaries become even murkier when it is a “community” that undertakes to research “itself” in order to address social, economic, and political problems that are impacting its members. How can or should a “community” be defined, and be enabled to consent? Who in a community, or even in a community organization, can authorize or consent to a research process embedded within efforts to make social and institutional changes aimed at equity? After all, communities are complex spaces in which different and perhaps conflicting perceptions of “equity” inform different research and community organizing projects; nor are aggrieved communities somehow by definition free of influence from the logics that shape and normalize dominant ideologies. Furthermore, people who are privileged by current systems that uphold inequity would unlikely consent to processes of research and change when their own particular interests and power are at stake (Mosher, 2010). These challenges of defining community and determining who should consent to EOCCBR are magnified and intensified when one considers the multitude of ways in which all participants are divided along class, race, gender, religious, language, and other powerful fault lines (Cottrell & Parpart, 2006).

These matters also bear directly on two additional central conditions to traditional protections for human subjects of research, namely the promises of confidentiality and anonymity that are often required to be made to research participants. These assurances are meant to protect the research subject as well as to more strongly warrant the quality of the research findings by providing conditions that are more likely to elicit honest input, regardless of how unpopular or critical that input may be. By reducing the capacity of other individuals or institutions to retaliate, given that the source of the data will be unknown to all except the researcher, these assurances can be particularly salient when working with aggrieved populations who may have very critical views of the institutions and social conditions within which they live. IRBs expect, and can demand, that these standard protective promises be listed on the informed consent forms, yet they may be problematic if not impossible to keep in certain types of collaborative community-based research (Schrag, 2010). If members of an aggrieved community are engaged in self-study and/or study of their own community, they likely have direct knowledge of the people and places being investigated. Moreover, the research is often produced with the intention of being disseminated directly within the community as a basis for policy and action. So how can confidentiality and anonymity be maintained? And if they cannot be assured, what are the ethical responsibilities of the researchers and research partners?

These concerns can have special urgency in the context of EOCCBR, which is designed to provide direct input to current public debates about social and institutional change. This research must compete in a discursive space that is

highly contested and often dominated by falsehoods, ideologies, and distorted information of all sorts. The ethical production of knowledge and the political mobilization of that knowledge occur within a complex and contested set of social, economic, and political power relations, and the outcome of these struggles over truth, policy, and resources have material effects on peoples' lives and life chances. Such conditions present substantial challenges that can undermine the ethical intent and the actual facts of anonymity and confidentiality. And if confidentiality and anonymity cannot be maintained and if the risks of these breaches are extremely hard to assess, what does this mean for both the ethical and the epistemic quality of the research?

These very substantial challenges to aligning EOCCBR with the standard frameworks of research ethics gloss over even deeper strata of problems in the traditional notion of informed consent. These strata reach to the very conception of the person that gets assumed within the discourse of research ethics. For example, an array of feminist philosophers have challenged the exclusions in traditional ethics of emotions and feelings, and the overemphasis on an individualistic, rational conception of the person that elides a relational understanding of both ethics and personhood (e.g. Brydon-Miller, 2008, 2009; Code, 1995; Collins, 2000; Jaggar, 1989; Naples, 2003; Sanders, 1997; Young, 2000). That is, the ethical complexities of EOCCBR insure that researchers who pursue this methodology have no choice but to dwell in "ethical gray zones" that resist complete resolution, and so call for ongoing engagement, humility, and openness (Glass, 2011).

31.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has outlined some of the interconnected, intricate, and tangled ethical, epistemic, and political dimensions of collaborative, community-based research methodologies, focusing particularly on tensions that emerge in relation to power and knowledge, research and advocacy, and the foundational principles of traditional research ethics. The relational character and EOCCBR make it distinct from standard social science research methodologies, necessitating both reconsiderations of traditional research ethics and the development of new frameworks. By valuing the epistemic significance of social location and upholding political commitments to social justice, equity-oriented research partnerships can open spaces for new understandings of social problems and their solutions. Rather than reinforcing a hierarchical relationship between "researchers" and "subjects," equity-oriented collaborators can create relationships of co-responsibility as research partners committed to shared values.

While collaboration cannot in and of itself dissolve power hierarchies, an ethical practice of research attentive to the issues we have raised opens up possibilities for different questions to emerge; different analyses to surface; and for the social, economic, and political status quo to be challenged. In addition, an equity-oriented epistemological framework amplifies the contested domain of what counts as knowledge in relation to disciplinary and institutional stan-

dards, as well as in relation to the public sphere. Further salutary effects of equity-oriented, collaborative, and participatory approaches to research are seen in the critical questions raised for the traditional research ethics conceptions of informed consent, , and anonymity, and raised for the institutional review norms established to protect researchers and research participants.

Our analysis raises a number of critical questions that equity-oriented collaborative researchers should consider in order to enter into a continuous, iterative, reflexive praxis in relation to the ethical dimensions of their work.

- What are the roles of the researchers in partnerships and contexts where the research processes are integral to and co-terminous with social and political processes of change, and how do these various roles impact the ethical dimensions of the work?
- How can researchers and community partners make transparent a research process that is dynamic and integrated with broader social and political processes? What are their ethical obligations to participants and to the larger community that is the focus of the study?
- What should a relational (rather than transactional) ethical process of consent look like? Who is able to consent for a community, and how should that be decided?
- How should researchers and community partners engage with matters of confidentiality and anonymity, and what kinds of agreements and practices can protect informants (to the extent possible), secure warranted data, and provide guidance for ethical action in the unruly public sphere?
- How should collaborative research projects address the varying ethical positions and responsibilities of university-based and community-based researchers and research partners, and provide spaces for openly examining the ethical dilemmas of the work?

While there are no set answers to these questions, and there are many others that we could have posed, they point to the important responsibility that scholars and research administrators have to engage the ethical complexity of EOCCBR. The goal in this engagement is not to produce and satisfy another checklist for the IRB, researcher, and research partner; rather it is to draw scholars and administrators into being “wide-awake” (Greene, 1978, p. 42) in their work, attentive to its pervasive ethical dimensions, whether in its human relations, epistemic judgments, or social and political bearings. When we can better learn to dwell in these spaces with a sense of openness to what we can learn, our research can more closely approximate an ethical praxis.

NOTE

1. It is important to note that medical research has been the paradigm for conceptualizing research ethics involving human subjects, both in terms of vocabularies and frameworks, and in terms of the development of federal policy. Social science research has generally followed this lead. As such, we engage with traditional

research ethics vocabularies and frameworks, such as “informed consent,” “anonymity,” and “confidentiality” in our discussion, while at the same time complicating these notions and acknowledging that, for some researchers and theorists, an adequate approach to the ethics of action research requires new vocabularies and frameworks. That said, these vocabularies and frameworks carry significant historical and institutional weight that must be understood and addressed.

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Affecting a High School Culture of Writing: Issues and Dilemmas in Participatory Action Research

Terry Locke and Shaun Hawthorne

32.1 ACTION RESEARCH IN THE AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND SETTING

Action research has been practiced in New Zealand since the 1980s, when it was undertaken in a number of contexts. Its theory and practice were influenced in part but not exclusively by Australians such as Kemmis and McTaggart, whose *Action Research Planner* (1988) was hugely influential (Alcorn, 1986). Aspects of Alcorn's article are a reminder of the passing of time, for instance, in her reference to action research as a *method* and her observation that it had yet to achieve "paradigmatic status" (1986, p. 33). However, in other ways the article is prescient in relation to a number of current issues:

- The difficulties in having teachers identify dissonances between practices and aspirations;
- How to pursue an emancipation agenda when teachers are ill-equipped to undertake ideology critique;
- Time and energy constraints in schools, where ironically, the "collaborative nature of the process ... itself may reinforce stress because it demands time for discussion, negotiation, and planning" (1986, p. 40);
- The role of the facilitator.

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Alcorn, reflecting on her involvement with first-time action researchers, envisioned the role action research might play, in relation to whole-school development, so long as “the sense of dissonance, the desire for change, the decision to investigate, take and monitor action” are taken “collectively” (1986, p. 40).

In the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, action research consolidated its place in the New Zealand educational setting, often in the context of initial teacher preparation or in educational leadership courses (see, Robertson, Trotman, & Galbraith 1997, where it is described as a “strategy”). A major impetus for its uptake in New Zealand was the Ministry of Education’s decision to establish the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) in 2002, with the aim of supporting research “that will provide information that can be used in policies and practices to bring about improvements in outcomes for learners” (MOE, 2002, as cited in Berger & Baker, 2008, p. 1). The New Zealand Council for Educational Research was appointed as program coordinator for the grant, charged with the development of guidelines for applicants, managing the selection process, and overseeing the conduct of successful applications. In its first five years, the TLRI funded around 55 projects from early childhood to post-school, many of which utilized action research frameworks.

Central to the original TLRI vision was the notion of practitioners as collaborating researchers. According to TLRI coordinators Berger and Baker, this stipulation was meant “to lessen the commonplace occurrence of research that is done *on* or *to* practitioners rather than *with* practitioners,” particularly where university-based researchers work with practitioners as “associates” (2008, pp. 3–4). In recent years, however, the earlier aspirational conception of partnership has been de-emphasized, suggesting that while practitioners may have benefitted from an associate role, the research itself was being compromised (Gilmore, 2007). Clearly, the transition from practitioner to researcher in the context of a busy school life was more difficult than first envisaged (Esposito & Smith, 2006; Locke, 2010).

The year 1984 was a watershed year in New Zealand/Aotearoa, prior to which the country was characterized by child-centered education, assured teacher professionalism, and relatively low unemployment. What revolutionized New Zealand’s sociopolitical life was an economic experiment (Kelsey, 1997) driven by an ideology of economic rationalism. As Codd describes it:

The primary purpose of economic rationalism is to bring the agencies and apparatus of the state into line with the policy prescriptions of neo-liberal (of free market) economics and contractual managerialism. Thus, the machinery of the state is removed from the unpredictable and ostensibly inefficient processes of participatory democracy and relocated, partly within the supposedly more rational and efficient administrative processes of state bureaucracy, and partly ... within the context of competitive market forces. (1997, pp. 131–132)

Over a period of a decade, financial markets were deregulated, subsidies were removed and tariffs slashed; the labor market was deregulated; state activities were corporatized; contestable funding was introduced in many areas; and

cutbacks in state expenditure and welfare payments took place. In the intense, privatizing climate, education became reconceptualized as a private rather than public good.

In the last 20 years, despite sustained critique, a national curriculum has been introduced with linear sequences of achievement objectives formulated for eight levels (Elley, 1996), a separate-standards-based qualifications system has been introduced (Hall, 2000; Locke, 2007b), and national standards in literacy and numeracy have been introduced into primary schools (Thrupp, 2013). New Zealand teachers have experienced increased state control of their work, extrinsic accountability technologies, assessment regimes determining curriculum, work intensification, a loss of voice, and creeping de-professionalization (Locke, 2001, 2004, 2007b, 2008). At the same time, a new curriculum has been introduced (Ministry of Education, 2007) that affords schools' opportunities to tailor their programs to their communities and to integrate various learning areas.

Such changes pose challenges to the status of a teacher's professional disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge (Shulman, 1986). As Bernstein (2000) argues, a *specific pedagogic discourse* (how a school subject is constructed, taught, and assessed) can be thought of as a principle "by which other discourses [for example, discourses related to scientific disciplines] are appropriated and brought into a special relationship with each other, for the purpose of their selective transmission and acquisition" as subjects/learning areas via a process he calls "recontextualization" from a range of "primary" discourses that have their origins beyond the confines of the school (p. 32). When the state apparatus controls this *recontextualizing* process for a narrowly standards-oriented curriculum agenda, it can begin colonizing a teacher's professional knowledge and reduce a teacher's capacity for critique—what Alcorn (1986) referred to as the perception of dissonance (Locke, 2013). As we shall see, this deprofessionalizing tendency has a bearing on the way problems are identified in the school context and deemed worthy of action research inquiry.

32.1.1 *Identifying a Research Problem*

Both authors shared global (Andrews, 2008) and national (Parr, 2010) concerns related to (1) the practice and teaching of writing in schools; and (2) poor performance in writing compared with reading. Prior to becoming deputy principal of Western Springs College, Hawthorne had conducted doctoral research focused on reluctant writers (Hawthorne, 2008). Between 2009 and 2012, Locke had led a two-year study entitled: *Teachers as writers: Transforming professional identity and classroom practice*, which investigated collaboratively how participation in Writing Workshops affected the competence and confidence of teachers as writers, and sought to demonstrate positive effects in the writing performance and motivation of students in the classrooms of participating teacher-researchers. There is ample literature on the way Writing Project practices and principles can transform the teaching and learning of

writing in a range of contexts (see Wood & Lieberman, 2000). Indeed, in the *Teachers as writers* project, findings suggested that teachers found the intensive, Writing Workshop professional learning beneficial (Locke, Whitehead, Dix & Cawkwell, 2011). In addition, researchers found a range of positive effects on student motivation and learning through a range of case studies conducted along action research lines (e.g., Dix & Cawkwell, 2011; Locke & Kato, 2012; Whitehead & Murphy, 2012). Engagement in the project led to enhanced self-efficacy in relation to both writing and the teaching of writing (Bandura, 1997; Locke, Whitehead, & Dix 2013).

While the focus of *Teachers as writers* was on the individual teacher and her students, it became clear that a kind of “seeding effect” was occurring in these teachers’ schools, which enabled the dissemination of the knowledge and practices they had developed (Scanlan & Carruthers, 1990, p. 16). In the American context, Lieberman and Wood (2003) tracked the work of six teachers who had undergone Writing Project development in the context of a “professional learning community (PLC)” (p. 72). These study participants had subsequently become *teacher consultants*, who took on “the mantle of teacher leadership” and shared their learning with “widening circles of colleagues” (p. 52). The project discussed in this chapter addressed the question: How might a culture of writing be developed in a high school, so that all teachers view themselves as both writers and teachers of writing, and students in all learning areas also identify as writers who consciously address the writing demands of specific disciplinary discourses?

32.1.2 *Participatory Action Research as an Ethical Enterprise*

In line with academic practice worldwide, the first author drafted a research proposal for the purpose of applying for TLRI funding, developing a research design, establishing a team, scheduling (see Appendix), addressing ethical issues and providing evidence of a partnership with participating schools.¹ The second author, as deputy principal of Western Springs College, agreed to be co-researcher. The school was viewed as an ideal site since it had a strong Māori immersion program, or *rumaki*, which catered for the special needs of Māori students through Māori-medium instruction. We posed the following research questions:

1. What Writing Workshop features and practices are viewed positively by teacher participants as contributing to increased self-efficacy as writers and teachers of writing?
2. What pedagogical strategies enhance the motivation and writing performance of students (including Māori students) in case-study classrooms and which of these are attributable to changes in classroom practice prompted by engagement in the Writing Workshop experience?
3. How can Writing Workshop-based principles and practices be embedded within a school culture as a community of writing practice through the utilization of teacher “experts”?

Participatory action research is an ethical enterprise characterized by variously ascribed core values. Locke, Alcorn, and O’Neill (2013, pp. 113–114) identified eight ethical principles underpinning such research:

1. *Inclusivity*: The action research group respects as stakeholders all those who have an interest in the focus of the research investigation.
2. *Maximal participant recognition*: All those whose practices, knowledges, identities, and constraints are part of the focus of the investigation are entitled to be considered full members of the action research group, even though roles within this group may change over time.
3. *Negotiation and consensus*: Where practicable, the research aims, design, ownership of data, and dissemination processes in relation to an investigation, should involve consultation with all stakeholders, and minimally involve negotiation and consensus building among members of the research group.
4. *Communicative freedom*: Members of the research group have the right to withdraw or renegotiate the grounds for their participation at any time. (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 588)
5. *Plain speaking*: It is the right of members of the research group and the wider interest community to be communicated with in clear language.
6. *Ethical action*: Members of the research group should adjudge collaboratively whether research goals are morally right, as they see it, in relation to the circumstances they find themselves in.
7. *Critical self-reflexivity*: Members of the research group need to be transparent in respect of the discursive assumptions they bring to the investigation.
8. *Affective respect*: It is the right of members of the research group and the wider group of stakeholders to have their feelings respected, and it is appropriate that feelings count as research information.

These were the principles we aspired to as leaders of the project team. Reflecting them in practice was sometimes challenging.

32.2 IMPLEMENTING AN INTERVENTION

32.2.1 *Phases 1 and 2: Seeking Participation in Professional Learning*

Both authors determined the overall focus of the research *prior* to the formal establishment of an action research group. Staff were invited to join the project as “Group 1” teachers, that is, teachers who would play a major role in Phases 1–3 of the intervention (see [Appendix](#)). Six educators volunteered representing a range of curriculum areas: English, Science, Geography, and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). One of the science teachers taught in the school’s Māori immersion unit. These teachers with both authors constituted the action research group and had their first meeting in December 2012.

The school already had a fully developed and theorized PLCs approach to professional development, organized by second author, Hawthorne. PLCs enable teachers to work collaboratively to reflect on their own practice, examine evidence, and design changes to improve teaching and learning for students (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). PLCs encourage collaborative conversations that involve teachers identifying in a transparent way their goals, strategies, questions, and concerns. PLCs also are explicitly structured to improve the classroom practice of teachers, individually and collectively (DuFour, 2004).

At Western Springs College, PLCs had previously been formed on the basis of a set of salient topics, with 8–12 teachers meeting monthly to develop topic-related knowledge and skills. Following Dylan Wiliam's (2011) *Teacher Learning Community* meeting framework, each meeting followed a similar structure: an icebreaker activity; new learning; sharing of actions, and outcomes undertaken by each teacher following the previous meeting; new teaching goal/action identified for the next period of time. Over a two-year period, the groups followed a "teacher inquiry" model (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007) with teachers identifying an area of student need for investigation. Teachers subsequently tried out novel strategies related to the topic of inquiry and evaluated their effectiveness. Teachers from each group were encouraged to share their learnings with members of their subject departments so that these were disseminated beyond the topic PLC itself.

Within this PLC structure, the action research group was focused on writing across the curriculum. In summer, the entire 2013 action research group participated in an intensive, six-day Writing Workshop retreat, led by the authors, with input from a science teacher who had been involved in the *Teachers as Writers* project (see Whitehead & Murphy, 2012) and Ruie Pritchard, an experienced Writing Workshop colleague from the USA.² All participants, including researchers, engaged in writing tasks in response to a range of stimuli, giving and receiving feedback in small groups, and taking turns at sharing their writing with the whole group (as per an author's chair [McCallister, 2008]). Participants were engaged in a process approach to writing, recognizing that this term can be interpreted in a range of ways (Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2007). Over the course of the workshop, participants produced a large range of genres serving many language functions: biographical/personal, literary, expository, and argumentational (see Locke, 2015a). They engaged in professional reading, explored issues around writer apprehension, discussed a range of assessment issues in relation to writing, and canvassed the thorny issue of disciplinary metalanguage (grammar). As writing workshop participants, they were positioned as research "subjects," and were provided with opportunities to provide feedback on their workshop experiences so that future workshops might be improved or modified (Locke, 2015a).

32.2.2 *Phase 3: Planning Interventions at the Classroom Level*

As a medium for enhancing self-reflexivity, the Writing Workshop opened up a range of potential practices that participating teachers could incorporate as interventions within the own “case-study” classrooms. These practices included

- A focus on writing as process.
- Teachers writing alongside students (modeling identity).
- Modeling specific writing strategies, including pre-writing and revision.
- The use of role-play to coach peer response to writing.
- The sharing of writing in small groups and with the whole class.
- Expository presentations on aspects of language and grammar.
- Building a “composing vocabulary.”
- Learning the art of constructive feedback.
- Co-constructing evaluative writing rubrics.

As research “leaders,” the principles we understood as underpinning participatory action research included

- A praxial focus, where practice is examined ethically in terms of its effects or ends, and where there is a dialectical relationship between theory and practice (practice underpinned by and generative of theory);
- A recursive process of action, reflection and analysis, planning, further action (intervention) reflection and analysis;
- Non-hierarchical collaboration and partnership;
- Critical self-reflexivity, where researchers are “aware of the ideological imperatives and epistemological presuppositions that inform their research as well as their own subjective, intersubjective, and normative reference claims” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994, p. 140);
- Dissemination, with engagement and networking with others in the field viewed as a crucial aspect of action.

We viewed emancipatory action research as a means to improve practice, challenge, and reorient thinking *about* practice, and transform contexts of learning through dialogue and collaboration. This approach makes explicit links between the micro-level of classroom practice and the macro-level of society at large, where a range of discourses are at work, variously positioned to empower some groups and disempower others. We saw *discourse* as “a practice not just of representing the world, but of signifying the world, constituting and constructing the world in meaning” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 64). While the concept of social justice is a slippery one, this form of action research generally aspires to a social justice agenda (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).

We saw collaborative action research as recursive (see Table 1 and Appendix); it is far more dynamic than, for example, studies where an intervention is pre-determined and implemented in a way that attempts to eliminate the “teacher factor.” Our use of the term “phase” (see Appendix) signifies how the recursive spiral of action, reflection and analysis, planning, and further action often seg-

ments the research enterprise and calls for research questions to be revisited. As indicated in Table 32.1, and in line with Principle 4, we viewed action research as allowing for changes in participants and participant roles. We saw revisiting decisions about the character of an intervention as integral to action research, from which it follows that related decisions around evidence collection are subject to renegotiation.

In Phase 3, Group 1 teachers were invited to become action researchers who collaboratively designed and implemented classroom-based interventions, where specific practices were investigated in relation to identified learning goals. These small-scale interventions were contextualized in units of work with just one class. Teachers were provided with a research guide outlining the steps we saw as constituting “methodological induction” (Locke, 2010, p. 49).

By Phase 3, all Group 1 teachers were recognized as full members of the action research group (Principle 2) and were engaged in negotiation and consensus building in a number of respects:

- They had conducted their own focus group, which reviewed all aspects of the six-day Writing Workshop (Locke, 2015a).
- Working collaboratively in regular PLC meetings, they determined the classes they would conduct “interventions” with, the learning objectives they would focus on, the tasks/processes/activities they would introduce in endeavoring to achieve their objectives, and the evidence they would collect to determine the effect of the intervention on students’ learning and motivation.

Group meetings were fruitful, cross-disciplinary occasions for the sharing of ideas and teaching strategies. The word “recognition” in Principle 2 means a number of things. First, there is the recognition that each member of the research group contributes a unique kind of expertise. (As university researcher, the first author offered help in aspects of research design.) Second, there is the recognition that participants’ roles are not static. For many reasons, the transition from teacher to researcher is not straightforward. Table 32.2 represents the varying roles a teacher might assume in the context of an action research project. The three “Teacher researcher” columns are a sequence of steps leading to an assured identity as teacher/researcher.

In the case of this project, teacher participants occupied columns 1–4. Some moved across columns, depending on time, degree of confidence, and the sup-

Table 32.1 Action research as a dynamic process

Stable factors (all phases)	The collaborative relationship The setting
Stable factors over a single phase	The research questions
Dynamic factors	The participants The character of the intervention The nature of the data The role of participants

Table 32.2 Teacher roles on a practitioner/researcher continuum

<i>Practitioner</i>	<i>Reflective practitioner</i>	<i>Teacher researcher (Evidence collector)</i>	<i>Teacher researcher (Analyst)</i>	<i>Teacher researcher (Reporter)</i>
Plans, manages, and evaluates learning	Reviews performance on the basis of observations and student work	Systematically plans and collects data collection to ascertain learning strategy success	Systematically analyzes data to identify patterns/trends related to strategy impacts	Writes up analyses as reports to reflect on findings and for dissemination

port available, from either action research group members or other colleagues. It would be fair to say that there were times when we were not always the best observers of Principle 8, that is, respecting the feelings of group members. Occasionally, one or two teachers committed themselves to a teacher-researcher role and then found themselves swamped with work or otherwise unable to fulfill this role. They felt they were letting us and the project down, and needed reassurance that their contribution as reflective practitioners was highly valued. We should have anticipated this. By the end of 2013, of the six teacher participants (including the second author), one had left teaching, one had become a reporter, two had become analysts, one had become an evidence collector, and one was a reflective practitioner.

32.2.3 *Making a Difference: 2013*

Research question 2 sought to identify pedagogical strategies that enhanced the motivation and writing performance of students in case-study classrooms. In this section, we briefly discuss “actions” undertaken by Group 1 teachers with particular classes. We also share some in-progress learning related to these actions.

Two English teachers, in the context of a four-week story-writing unit, investigated response groups similar to those experienced in the six-day workshop (Hoogeveen & van Gelderen, 2013; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2007). To ascertain the effect of this intervention, they collected pre- and post-intervention survey data and conducted focus group with each other’s classes. Focus group analysis indicated a need for more attention to response group composition, targeted coaching on how to respond, the provision of a metalanguage, and more flexible ways of utilizing peer response in the context of a classroom writing culture (Hawthorne, Locke, & Tai, 2015).

A science teacher of one of the *Rumaki* classes built on the personal and cultural knowledge of her Māori students by having them write creative narratives (Martin & Brouwer, 1991; Seraphin, 2014) recounting the journey of a *tomato pip* (tomato seed) through the human digestive system. This was a new

departure for her, and emerged directly from her experience of writing narrative in the 2013 Writing Workshop.

32.3 MAINTAINING MOMENTUM

As Table 32.1 indicates, one of the dynamic factors characterizing action research is the composition of the action research group—participants join, leave, and shift roles. As the project entered its second year (2014), there were changes. Hawthorne had moved to a professional learning consultancy, another Group 1 teacher left teaching, and a third went on maternity leave. Such unpredictable factors are unavoidable when conducting research in a school context. At the same time, the PLCs approach to professional development was replaced with a whole-school approach with a focus on learning conversations (Robinson, 2014).

In the second year of the project, four “Group 2” teachers joined the project (one each from ESOL, Visual Art, Mathematics and Media Studies). They became members of the action research group, along with a new staff member who had replaced Hawthorne as deputy principal. Acknowledging the value of the project for his school, the principal agreed to the continuation of the action research group as a PLC and supported it with the provision of teacher release time. In its second year, then, the action research group had grown and represented an increased number of curriculum areas.

Phase 4 (see Appendix) was a reiteration of Phases 1 and 2. In keeping with the recursive nature of action research, the Writing Workshop the first author conducted with Group 2 teachers in January 2014 was modified in response to the feedback of Group 1 teachers in 2013 (Locke, 2015a). Similarly, Phase 5 was a reiteration of Phase 3, again involving teachers in small-scale case studies with their own classes. The research group now consisted of the first author, three Group 1 teachers, four Group 2 teachers, and the new deputy principal. The group met regularly as a PLC and the first author was invited to the school regularly to work with teachers undertaking interventions in their own classrooms. In terms of Table 32.2, of these seven 2014 teacher participants, two exercised the role of reporter, one of analyst, three of evidence collector, and one of reflective practitioner.

32.3.1 *Making a Difference: 2014*

All project teachers implemented changes in their teaching of discipline-specific writing during 2014, drawing on the practices listed earlier in this chapter. On the basis of the research on peer response undertaken in 2013, the remaining English teacher in the group modified her use of response groups. In the following examples, action occurs in the context of the classroom, via a change in teacher practice resulting from a process of reflection, analysis, and the planning and implementation of an intervention.

The *rumaki* science teacher, having tried using creative narratives with her Year 10 class in 2013, decided to systematically analyze (via word counts) in 2014 successive drafts written by her students over a three-week period. In terms of Table 2, she had jumped two steps from *evidence collector* to *reporter*. Word count data based on these versions and from a summative test were analyzed and correlations found between test scores and two types of word count total (total words and total science words). Questionnaire and focus-group data indicated that the use of creative narratives was both motivational to these students and effective as a bridge into science discourse mastery.

The ESOL teacher used sentence combining and structured peer response for report writing with her students, with a resulting enhancement of student performance, motivation, and confidence in using metalanguage in peer-response situations. As a result of his involvement in the Writing Workshop, a mathematics teacher investigated whether a focus on using spoken and written language would help develop algebraic understanding in his Year 9 class. His intervention involved the use of concept circles, paired feedback, and translating algebraic language into plain speech and vice versa. As a result of introducing these strategies, he found that, compared to previous years, his students made better connections between abstract algebra and the number system. Students' ability to express their understanding of algebra in verbal language and their ability to talk about algebra was better than students in previous years. Moreover, there was a better retention of knowledge between lessons and a high level of engagement (cf. Pugalee, 2001).

32.4 CONCLUSION

Townsend (2013) cites approvingly Elliott's claim that: "The fundamental aim of action research is to improve practice rather than to produce knowledge" (p. 49). This claim, we believe, posits a false binary between theory and practice. It is clear to us that the intensive Writing Workshop engagement of Group 1 and Group 2 teachers was transformative in terms of their mindsets, not just in terms of their professional disciplinary and pedagogical knowledge, but also in terms of their identities as teachers. The project in fact precipitated a kind of professional journey as *inner* action, to borrow a term from drama. This point is illustrated by a science teacher, interviewed 15 months into the project:

The greatest epiphany I've had is you do need to teach it [writing] for students to be able to do it. I felt going to the workshops and being taught to dispense with my anxiety or at least acknowledge what my anxieties were and then have the range of strategies that I experienced to break down my fear of putting pen to paper was very helpful and it also gave me an awareness of what it must be like for a lot of kids in class, where in the secondary school writing is probably the way they're going to be assessed the most—how fearful they must be in committing themselves and I can see it now (Science Teacher Interview, 2014).

An English teacher, interviewed at the same time said:

I feel a lot more conscious of what it is that I do as a writer now, but particularly in the classroom at specific times when I teach alongside and model certain aspects of the writing process. ... I ... instinctively knew it was important but it hadn't been part and parcel of my practice (English Teacher Interview, 2014).

In these instances, transformation is associated with ways of thinking and ways of practicing, perhaps reflecting an impetus generated within the group setting to take risks and to try something different.

However, as Alcorn (1986) noted some decades ago, it's all very well aspiring to agendas of social justice, transformation, and emancipation. Even in relation to the relatively confined context of a teacher and her students, self-reflection and critical self-reflexivity (Principle 7) are easier said than done. In order to identify the discourses that underpin our practices, we need to (1) assume a kind of non-defensive detachment and (2) develop a discursive map that enables us to see our own set of practices as just one among multiple sets. Our attitude from the start was that, while teacher participants would be engaged in intensive professional learning drawing on Writing Workshop principles and practices, this learning would be underpinned by an assumption that there is no one "story" or discourse about what it means to write or to teach writing (Ivanič, 2004). As a partial solution to the self-reflexivity challenge, teachers were introduced to an overview of four discourses (Locke, 2015b) related to the teaching of writing and invited to complete a personal template of themselves as a writer and teacher of writing in relation to a variety of prompts to serve, in part, as baseline data, but mostly to encourage self-reflexivity in relation to writing and writing pedagogical practice.

In the current political climate, participatory action research finds itself called upon to counter hegemonic education policies associated with neoliberal agendas, together with attendant discourses of managerialism, performativity, extrinsic accountability, and "reprofessionalization" at work in a range of national settings (Balogh, 2011). Mockler (2014) argues that the logic of practice associated with participatory action research offers classroom practice a mode of resistance to a widespread "culture of instrumentalism ... where the end is prized over the means, the standardized is privileged over the differentiated, and a desire for quantifiable 'proof' is privileged over good teacher professional judgment" (p. 152). To what extent has this kind of resistance been evident in this project?

When these project teachers engaged in professional learning and a range of recursive action research cycles aimed at modifying classroom practice, they were engaging in self-reflexive consideration of the *ideas* that underpinned their practice and, even more, their *consciousness* of who they were as teachers. For high school teachers, the assumption that they are required to be teachers of writing is not widespread, let alone the possibility of their identifying *as* writers. In the context of an intensive Writing Workshop, project teachers

began to think of themselves as writers, in part because they found themselves called upon to reflect metacognitively, via a developing metalinguistic vocabulary, the choices they and others were making in the process of writing a range of genres.

In other words, in different ways for each teacher, there was a discursive shift in their identities as writers and teachers of writing. This produced a *dissonance*—the sense of a gap between the teachers they were and the teachers they could be. In general, we would say, this experience of dissonance turned them back on themselves, inclining them to call their own teaching practices to account, rather than the policies and technologies (in a Foucaultian sense) that were shaping the nature of their work. Although there was evidence of outward-looking dissonance directed at aspects of educational policy, for example, National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) assessment practice, it would be inaccurate to say they were overtly politicized.

According to Bevins and Price (2014), there are three conditions for successful collaboration between academics and teachers: addressing workload considerations, ensuring time to engage collaboratively, and relationships in terms of group dynamics. They suggested that school cultures might need to change if they are to enable the development of effective collaboration. Specifically, Senior Management Teams (SMTs) “need to provide release time for teachers, and structures which ... enable them to engage more thoroughly with classroom inquiry through collaborative action research” (p. 273). In this latter respect they echo Gore and Gitlin (2004), who draw attention to the way in which material working conditions for both academics and researchers lead to role differentiation and shape the expectations of parties involved.

In terms of this project, the school’s senior management team (of which Hawthorne was a member) funded workshop participation and release time for roundtable meetings. Roundtable meetings via PLCs allowed time for the action research group to engage collaboratively and pool expertise in the design and implementation of classroom interventions. Teachers, who engaged in practitioner inquiry themselves, supported one another by providing observations or conducting focus-group interviews with one another’s classes. Even so, workload considerations were a major constraint on teachers aspiring to adopt the kind of stance of inquiry recommended by theorists such as Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009). In practice, thinking through and implementing systematic practitioner inquiry was beyond some of the teachers in this project—a state of affairs attributable in part to the workload intensification and the shaping of teacher’s work associated with the NCEA qualifications system.

Did the project achieve a school-wide transformation in terms of the development of a culture of writing? Not really. It must be remembered that at no point did the school commit itself to such a transformation as a school-wide goal. The PLC professional learning structure, which the school had adopted up to the end of 2013, meant that the project was confined to a seeding *modus operandi*. In a dissemination questionnaire completed at the end of 2013, four

out of five Group 1 teachers reported engaging in casual conversations with other colleagues about project-related learnings. While a number of departmental presentations were planned, only one took place. There had been no attempt to institute whole-staff professional development related to the aims of the project. You could say, then, that rather than generating a school-wide culture, the Writing PLC became a subculture within the school. But it was a foundation on which to build, in phases to follow.

32.5 CODA

Townsend (2013) devotes a whole chapter to “Concluding” action research. One section, entitled “Knowing when to stop” (p. 118) is a question the first author continues to reflect on. As Townsend indicates, sustainable change requires two conditions, “systemic change” and “sustainability through participation.” With 2015 under way, the project, which was originally conceived in terms of a two-year timeframe, has entered another phase. In this instance, the spirit of inquiry has been sustained by the mathematics teacher, whose work was discussed previously. As head of the Junior Mathematics Syndicate, he has initiated a project with the first author, which extends the work conducted as a pilot study in 2014. The title of the new project is: *Developing mathematical understanding through spoken and written language* and involves a number of mathematics teachers, including those who teach mathematics in the *rumaki*.

APPENDIX: PROJECT TIMETABLE

Phase 1	
December 2012	Initial research team roundtable Project members begin to plan a six-day writing workshop for January, 2013 and begin a review of current school structures and processes around the implementation of professional learning (in writing).
Phase 2	
January–March 2013	Six-day writing workshop (January). Initial baseline data collection.
Phase 3	
April 2013	Second research team roundtable: Collaborative reflection on selected Year 1 baseline data. Beginning of action research cycle, including collaborative planning of classroom teaching strategies drawing on writing workshop experiences. School-based Writing Workshop-based PL is planned for and scheduled.
July 2013–November 2013	Two kinds of intervention will be occurring. 1. A classroom-based intervention where specific practices are investigated in relation to aspired-to, writing-based outcomes for students. 2. School-based, writing-related, professional learning systems/processes are implemented. Initial dissemination at school level of class-based findings. Data collection continues. University-based researcher works closely with Group 1 teacher-researchers.

Phase 4

December, 2013–December, 2013–February, 2014 **Third research team roundtable:** Review all intervention-related data with some preliminary analysis. Planning of 2nd, six-day writing workshop, to take place in January, 2014. Initial dissemination and publication of findings in various settings.

Analysis of data related to Phase 3 continues. Modification of PL model around writing is revised.

A 2nd, six-day writing workshop takes place for Group 2 teachers. Writing Workshop-based professional learning (PL) programs are evaluated with a view to refinement and modification.

Baseline data collected in respect of Group 2.

Phase 5

March–July 2014 **Fourth research team roundtable:** A further action research cycle similar to Phase 3 and learning from it.

July 2014–October 2014 Interventions occur in a similar way to Phase 3.

Phase 6

Nov 2014–December 2014 Analysis and reporting continue. Continuing dissemination of project findings and conclusions in a range of genres and settings. The “Where to from here?” question is addressed.

NOTES

1. The funding bid was ultimately unsuccessful and the school agreed to fund a number of expenses such as teacher relief out of its own professional development budget.
2. Professor Ruie Pritchard, North Carolina State University, well known to many New Zealand teachers through her frequent visits and contribution to New Zealand’s own National Writing Project in the late 1980s.

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Organisational Change in Non-Profit Human Services: Reflections on a Collaborative Action Research Approach to Working with Child, Youth, and Family Organisations

Robert Urquhart and Michael Wearing

We did a lot of stuff about what makes a good parent ... and she (the client) is actually able to tell me more about what two year olds do and what the boys could do and hear her hopes and aspirations for them. We worked a lot around how she could play with them and teach them about the world, teach them different things. How she could, we ... help them learn.

(Family Support Worker quoted Wearing & Edwards, 2003, p. 55)

The key example of action research in this chapter was undertaken by the authors from 2001 to 2003 in a large New South Wales (NSW) non-profit organisation, UnitingCare Burnside, a child welfare agency auspiced by The Uniting Church in Australia. This chapter is a reflection on the action research project with Burnside and will discuss the “lessons learned” from small-scale action research projects that aim to initiate organisational change. We have chosen to write a reflection on this study as a way to illustrate to others the viability and limitations of working in a collaborative way with human service organisations with small-scale qualitative studies of their practice and programmes.

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A combined qualitative-collaborative methodology ensured research findings were fed back to front-line workers including programme coordinators and senior managers. Principles of participatory action research were used as a central part of the project (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005). The study was conducted in four family support services run by Burnside in South West Sydney.

The study involved a three-stage process: (i) individual interviews with the front-line managers or coordinators of the local family support centres; (ii) four focus groups with three centre-based teams and one mobile team; and (iii) one follow-up focus group for feedback on the draft report. The fieldwork took approximately six months to complete during 2001 with a further two months for feedback and writing up of the final report with further engagement of the researchers in the project that continued until 2003. A paper on the study (based on the final report) was delivered at the Australian National Social Policy Conference in July 2001 (see Urquhart & Wearing, 2001).

The aims were pragmatic and applied in that there was a need to improve vertical communication, clarity, and transparency on practice between senior management located in the head office and the family centre workers located in under-resourced communities in outer metropolitan areas. The central issue was to help support family teams more effectively engage with children and families in high-poverty areas of Sydney and ultimately prevent child abuse and neglect, by strengthening the front-line workers' practice thinking and reflective skills in a team-based setting and improving organisational congruence.

A way of organising this planned participative process was to think in terms of the "layers" provided in action research through first- to third-order planned change: First-order planned change requires change within existing norms and thinking in the organisation (Pounder, 1998). Second-order change takes this further and begins to question core assumptions and helps to develop lateral thinking around a problem. In developing second- and third-order changes, it may also be necessary in the longer-term to more deeply shift and transform the culture of an organisation. Third-order change involves shifting organisational practice based on reconsideration of assumptions. Both first-order and second-order changes were explicit objectives of this study with some overlap into the possibility of third-order change. Our feedback workshops with the staff at the end of the data collection phase clearly showed that staff in the front line were aware of recent research findings and wanted to engage with updated and new models of case management in front-line practice. They anticipated that our research would reinforce a need to update their personal and programme practice frameworks. Whilst not strongly guaranteed by the aims of this study due to its small scale, third-order change might help participating staff learn to question their own assumptions and change these if necessary to better fit the requirements of organisational practice (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005, pp. 120–121).

33.1 QUALITATIVE COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

33.1.1 Purposes of the Study

The two specific purposes of the study were: to explore how workers’ understandings of child abuse risk and protection factors are used in front-line practice; and to address implications for good practice. We decided to address the following general content questions in focus groups:

- (i) How do family support workers see their practice in front-line service delivery?
- (ii) What knowledge frames, values, and skills do they rely on to help them process, manage, and organise their caseloads (given also the diversity of competing orientations)?
- (iii) How do these workers work as a team?
- (iv) Based on the perceptions of front-line workers, are there discernible strengths and weaknesses in working this way with individual service users, communities, and families as a means to prevention?

33.1.2 The Action Research Process

Figure 33.1 gives an overview of the cyclic process involved in the collaborative action research approach used with the four Burnside teams. At step 1,

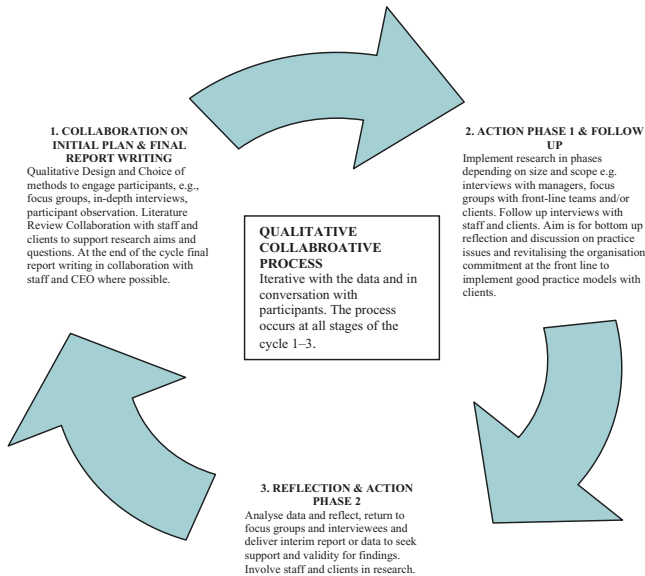


Fig. 33.1 Collaborative action research cycle

collaboration with front-line and senior staff on the plan and methodology was sought with a decision to research best practice models using action research. Research questions and protocols were designed at this step along with ethics clearance. At step 2, the researchers engaged in dialogue and sought feedback with the participants as well as conducted focus groups and in-depth interviews. Some workers who participated in step 1 also became part of the focus groups in step 2. Step 3 moved to the reflective and action phase with interview transcripts being sent to and read by participants. Sessions were then conducted with each of the four Burnside teams including the focus group participants to discuss the research findings so far. This took place as a series of meetings with the participants and/or in larger meetings with all front-line and senior staff and with some clients. The overall effect of the three-step process was to create, at one moment in time, an accurate qualitative understanding and thick description of the actual practice of the reflective models of practice used.

This action research methodology was adopted by senior management and front-line staff and grounded in phenomenological view focused on staff perceptions of critical child abuse cases in their family support work. Data were primarily drawn from focus groups that discussed their team's practice with client families requiring support because of a risk of child abuse. The focus group interviews were conducted with four family support teams of up to six staff. To complement the focus group data, strategic discussions on how practice in the agency could be improved through individual interviews with front-line managers in the teams were also conducted. Focus groups were used as a time efficient and economical way to collect data. These groups also enabled a team-based discussion and staff "voice" on several critical cases that various members of the team had worked on. Socio-demographic data on workers provided background to the themes and issues raised in the worker's accounts of cases.

Principles of participatory action research were used to include participants (Wadsworth, 1998), particularly in checking back with participants on the accuracy of transcripts and on interpretation in the writing up process (Wearing, 2015; Zeller-Berkman, 2007). The front-line managers and workers in the field who participated in this study commented that the climate of inquiry and questioning initiated by the research did enable them to begin to question their own assumptions about their practice and offered alternatives for this practice. Some general guidelines for good practice were canvassed as they emerged from the analysis of workers' own accounts of critical incidents in their family work. These issues were revisited in follow-up focus groups with senior managers and front-line coordinators for family centres.

33.1.3 Emergent Themes from Analysis and the Use of Feedback Loops

The action research project enabled the child welfare agency to learn about issues raised by their own workers. In particular, guidelines for good practice were canvassed as they emerged from the analysis of workers' own accounts of critical incidents in their family and case management work. These issues

were revisited several times in follow-up focus groups with managers and coordinators over the two-year period. Some of the most recent writing on organisations encourages the processes of labelling and constructing how practical thinking occurs around clients, based on phenomenology. Gray (2013) explains that “phenomenological research is about producing ‘thick descriptions’ of people’s experiences and perspectives within their natural settings. But it is often based upon quite small case studies ... it is generally unstructured, ... (and) may be difficult to replicate.” (p. 30). Nonetheless, we used greater structure in the research to ensure efficient time use and set boundaries around the topics and areas covered in the focus groups through careful questions and guidance.

Primarily, this study exemplifies the use of critical case examples as a way of raising questions about good practice. In brief, the findings of the study are

Table 33.1 Summary of dimensions of good practice in family support work

Individual Work Within the Team

Child protection focus, that is, rights and interests of child beyond those of parents or others

Slow engagement and establishment of trust with key family members

Worker’s level of perseverance with a family

Use of formal and informal support networks

A worker’s readiness to acknowledge partial success or even failure in their family support work. Worker’s awareness of closeness or distance from family members. Is the child at risk of abuse or neglect?

Self-critical and reflective practice, emphasising positive relationships and changes within the family or members of families

Team Orientation.

A multi-dimensional/disciplinary, co-operative, and open team approach to intervention, for example, team members can discuss with service users, and other members, solutions to problems for children and families

A strong intervention model with agreed principles and theories for practice that guide explicit programme objectives, for example, the use of strengths-based approaches in these teams. Team uses other community resources enabled by state departments for example, NSW Department of Community Services and Education

Agency Orientation

Practice is child focused

Key role of volunteers

Active participation of the family or family members in the programmes and case assessments of an agency, e.g., the use of service folders jointly shared by service users and staff. Keep focus on children at risk

Advocacy on behalf of service users and families and community building via networking, lobbying, and general activism

Encourage partnerships and linkages to other services

Explicit programme objectives for research and evaluation purposes

Community and Social Capital Building

Individual and integrated service advocacy

Research and development of services

Using local social infrastructure such as schools and churches, for example, supplement K-2 NSW Education Department Teacher Input

provided in a descriptive table (Table 33.1) that illustrates the themes derived from focus groups. The table shows a list of criteria for good practice in family support work within the context of the Burnside child protection programme and based on the study itself. We have divided these criteria into four areas: individual work within teams; team orientation; general orientation of the agency; and significance for community and social capital building. The findings frame family support practice as the lived experience of these workers—a dynamic, co-constructed knowledge between client-worker or what is called *critical reflective practice*. In this sense, the investigations and writing for the report offered a bridge to enable practitioners and management to frame and co-create practice in the organisation.

As we analysed the interview transcripts, the themes in Table 1 emerged from the data. The use of qualitative critical incidence techniques (Newman, 1991, 1992) were particularly useful for exploring reflective practice in service delivery, and the emerging literature has helped to frame workers' perceptions of practice (Hughes & Wearing, 2013; Wearing & Edwards, 2003).

The approach to management change that underpinned the study allowed for feedback on “top down” management changes that had enabled good practice in front-line resourcing such as strengthening team work and a focus on better communication between front-line professionals and managers. We incorporated organisational learning theory as part of the research process to this effect (Glassman, Erdem, & Bartholomew, 2013). We use as background here the organisational learning approaches current in child welfare and organisational practice literature (Argyris, 1992; Hughes & Wearing, 2013; Suarez & Oliva, 2005; Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2013). This dynamic model of critical reflection is based on the actual dimensions of change and learning in social work practice contexts. Beyond the limited resources of this study, a rigorous evaluation of how learning effective practice occurs requires both process and outcome evaluations to help to identify change (Kanter, Stein, & Jick, 1992; Moxley & Manela, 2000; Suarez & Oliva, 2005). This study provided some initial insight into how such process and outcome evaluations could be employed in the future for Burnside.

33.2 REFLECTIONS ON CULTURAL AND ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

The internal change responses in Burnside at the time and just after the implementation of the research go some way to pointing to success in changing organisational thinking about practice. There were also some failures and mistakes in the process that could have been remedied by further collaborative efforts. For example, the project had little success with revitalising changes to the agency practice models. In hindsight, it is clear that our research team had minimal influence in changing a culture that resisted acknowledging the issue of notification of child abuse to the Department of Community Services (DoCS). This type of organisational change is classified as *revitalisation* because it involves improving

the organisation's performance and some of its systems but overall does not involve any substantial restructuring of the organisation or its mission (Moxley & Manela, 2000). It was not until the later part of the decade that further privatisation of child welfare such as foster care started to impact in more structural ways on NSW non-profit child and family welfare agencies. We conclude that good action-oriented practice research will work when the aims, goals, and strategic mission of the organisation are aligned with the programme and existing internal environment. The following section will seek to further unpack some of the historical and contextual factors that locate the Burnside research project within the broader aims of the organisation and the perceived need by management for updating and revitalising practice models.

33.2.1 *Programme Environment and External Environment in the Early 2000s*

There are many different theories and models of practice now available in family and community services for family support work in the context of child protection. Burnside has three family centres conducting family support work in South West Sydney and used a specific model of practice and intervention in its "Family Centres." The Annual Report for 1998–1999 states that these "Family Centres aim to strengthen families living in high risk communities to prevent children from coming into care, and to support parents to create a safe environment for their children while building a protective, caring and connected community" (2000, p. 13). This approach to practice was used within a stable team-based programme environment and a slowly changing external organisational environment.

The programme environment of *UnitingCare* Burnside (one of the three family centres) was to focus on the family and individual clients in helping them adjust to crisis and in building their capacities for finding solutions to life problems and skill development in parenting and other aspects of family life. According to the 1998–1999 Annual Report, these Centres were open to everyone, not just people in crisis. The focus of the Centres was on "solutions and skill development, rather than problems," with the aim being to "tailor services to each family's individual needs." Broadly, the philosophy of the Centres was one of caring for and nurturing the people within these disadvantaged communities. Burnside (2000, p. 13) set up these services because there was a need to work specifically with the most disadvantaged families with the ultimate aim of preventing child neglect and abuse. The diversity of backgrounds of Burnside family support staff in South West Sydney site alone tells us that practice involves spontaneity and creativity, use of a variety of training and educational backgrounds, and the use of service intervention models. Staff at Burnside Family Centres and the mobile support team received their training to support a range of service delivery and practice models including those from social work, psychology, childhood education, and youth work. The explicit model of service delivery that guided these practices was *strengths-based* and *solution-focused* work.

The external environment of UnitingCare Burnside was also changing at this time with government policy at both State and Federal levels placing more responsibility on non-profits in child and family welfare. In Australia, this external environment was one of significantly greater responsibility amongst non-profit agencies for programmes and service delivery to disadvantaged communities in NSW (Spall & Zetlin, 2004). Low full-time pay and increased use of casual and poorly paid children services workers were evident across the sector. This meant that quality of service delivery and practice itself struggled under resource pressures and some poor work conditions. Through the late 1990s and into the 2000s, many non-profit charities were also under attack by government for their supposed poor performance in child and family welfare, or they were targeted to take more responsibility for direct service delivery.

The four family teams sampled in the action research study used the strengths-based and solution-focused approach as their main model for practice. This approach to family support work is defined in the literature as that which:

begins with identifying the competencies and resources families can bring to helping relationships ... Strengths-based approaches acknowledge family resilience, their ability to cope with challenging circumstances and their struggles to survive in hostile environments. Strengths-based work does not minimise the impact of structural factors on clients' lives but rather wants to incorporate an understanding of these as part of the intervention strategies. (Munford & Sanders, 1999, p. 212)

There is also the need to link the strengths-based models of the 1990s to later reflective practice models developed in the last decade-and-a-half to provide participants with up-to-date tools to critically reflect on their practice including family learning and development (Dolan, Canavan, & Pinkerton, 2006; Ruch, 2005, 2007). Bringing the older models of reflective case management up-to-date with new ones using the strength approaches occurred through some professional training in-house for workers either on site in the Centres or through professional development workshops. Some awareness of these newer models was incorporated into the process of implementing the action research dialogue and reflective processes.

This explicit model of strengths-based and critical reflective practice was intended as a way to demonstrate how family support workers engage with disadvantaged families in practice and to a limited extent show and reflect upon their effectiveness in these interventions. Workers' points of view and the meanings given to their practice were the primary concerns of this study, and the term *family support* is used generically to refer to services provided to disadvantaged families (Wearing & Edwards, 2003, p. 6).

Rather than focusing on typical or standard cases, the study drew out some of the important areas and dimensions to good practice from select, yet crucial, cases in the work of the four family support teams. Thus, the emphasis of the final report was on qualitative accounts from workers that provided examples as a guide for good practice.

33.2.2 *Reflections on the Role of Reflective Practice*

In this research, we made a clear distinction between taken-for granted *practical knowledge* and thought out *reflective practice* defined by Van Manen (1995) as “a union of skilled method with attitude” or “thinking on your feet” (p. 34). Within this framework, we also emphasised the development of reflective practice, from novice to expert, as abandoning rule-based thinking and replacing it with experiential understanding (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 21). The array of skills displayed by the workers involved in this study is thrown into sharp relief by an awareness of the context of family disadvantage within which they worked. The families they work with live in a seriously disadvantaged and economically depressed area of South West Sydney, the Campbelltown Local Government Area. Socio-economic indicators show that this is one of the most disadvantaged communities in NSW.

The term *reflective practice* takes its meaning directly from both the workers (in conversations with the researchers) and from the literature around the epistemology of practice (e.g., Munford & Sanders, 1999; Van Manen, 1990, 1995). Munford and Sanders (1999, p. 176) have identified four key aspects of reflective practice in family support work: building trusting relationships with service users; providing practical support and recognising the full range of factors which influence client family functioning; careful planning for multi-levelled interventions; and support strategies that “enable and empower service users to identify and make changes.” We also sought to qualify, extend, and add to such criteria for reflective practice through the Burnside-based action research project with staff as collaborators and participants. For example, thematically, in the focus groups, there was a clear agenda of reflective practice between worker and client—a model of practice that gives service users some ownership and choice in involvement with a team.

What we provide is a space for them to explore the issues and seeing if they can come to some agreement with us on the family situation. And the other thing that it does is enable us to talk to them about the child’s safety. It’s a very slow process. (Site 1 Coordinator)

Considerable time and effort on the part of the worker was put into ensuring the co-operation and participation of service users in the engagement process. Such efforts need to be recognised as an essential part of good reflective and solution-based practice in the area.

33.2.3 *Some Limitations of the Burnside Study*

The limitations and scope of the action research given its small scale did not allow for concrete definitions of key terms and conditions or for the production of “hard” quantitative or qualitative evidence on questions of the effectiveness of programmes and work in the area. The limits of the final report

related to the small scale of the research, the size of the sample, and the need for more time and more research effort to focus on the issues raised. There were also organisational constraints on the level of the participatory nature of the research and more could have been done to make the project more truly bottom-up and participant directed in terms of setting the research agenda and priorities. Nonetheless, a second layer of action enabled the participants in the focus groups to feed back their own concerns raised by the research. This layer deepened “the climate of inquiry” and was a key educational strategy used to prompt change in practice models amongst front-line staff through clarification of issues confronting clients (Holland, 2000, p. 150). The final report written in collaboration with front-line and senior staff was an initial step in the process of understanding the important work that Burnside and similar agencies do in the areas of abuse prevention and how they learn from their often unique practice innovations.

33.2.4 *Reflections on the Key Outcomes of the Project*

The key outcome of this action research was to develop some criteria for good practice in front-line delivery of family support. Front-line staffs in these organisations develop the ability to “think on their feet.” Such ability uses informal, contingent, and constructionist knowledge (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Van Manen, 1995). These issues of knowledge and front-line practice are raised by steps 2 and 3 of the action research cycle (see Fig. 1) in the context of evaluating services for quality assurance and best practice. The report framed family support practice as the lived experience of these workers, as a dynamic, co-constructed knowledge between client and worker, or what is called *critical reflective practice*. The authors concluded that such experience-based and action-oriented practice knowledge is not necessarily amenable to rigid good practice standards or a *mechanistic* and fixed coding of best practice. On the contrary, the study initiated the use of critical case examples as a way of raising questions and establishing an ethos of inquiry and learning in the organisation around good practice.

33.2.5 *Practice-based Knowledge Creation*

I think often what happens in the housing estates, in particular with the poverty and the oppression, is that oppression gets internalised. Like the tension is in their house, then the next door neighbour, then the street’s fighting, the kids fight with each other ... But actually working in the intervention with the Family Centres to reframe community to get a sense of ownership such as ‘this can be yours’ and ‘how can we assist you to build in your community a strong community that’s yours, that you can feel safe in, that you can support each other rather than have a war in the street.’ I think that that’s protection. When they actually have got enough food in the fridge and the stresses are reduced, the violence is reduced. That’s protective behaviour. (Mobile Team Worker: Wearing & Edwards, 2003, p. 55)

We have emphasised that this small-scale action research oriented to practice-based knowledge creation and change in the organisation is not a social audit or a programme evaluation of the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the family support services involved. We could not hope, in the limited time and resources made available for the project, to fully outline a good practice framework. The strategic aim of this research was as an action-oriented learning experience for the organisation as a whole, that is, to provide feedback to Burnside and an opportunity for staff to engage in dialogue through the focus groups and to interact with the findings as elements of a framework concerned with good (critical reflective) practice in family support work.

One assumption built into the action research and part of our general focus on front-line knowledge, values, and skills is taken from the authors' own experience in professional social work education. Our approach uses models of intervention work on good practice from a "person-in-context approach" to learning and education. This means workers and their service users need to be understood from within their socio-cultural context within local histories and practices of place and belonging in building useful and sustainable knowledge in communities of practice (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). We also heed Webb's (2001) critical insights into the conceptual and methodological shortcomings of debate on evidence-based practice and deliberately distanced the action research from positivist views of both practice and evidence-based programmes. We wanted staff to take up critical reflective learning as supported and recommended in the practice evidence of the report.

It became clear to these front-line support workers, notably those with some years of experience in the field, that their engagement with families was more reflective and less routine than prescribed government case management techniques.

What we do in our reflective developmental practice, which is critical case management, is that we have a whole process that we go through. In the first section of our engagement we are looking at what are the aims of DoCS, the aims of the family, the risks and concerns that the family have [sic] and do they marry with DoCS' perception? Are they the same thing? Is there any conflict? Does the family or people in it have a different understanding around that? (Mobile Team Worker)

In particular, the mobile team felt strongly about the difference between their practice and the case management prescribed by government departments. The mobile team approach is what they called a *critical reflective practice*. This practice required using evaluative tools and assessments, and reassessments of practice as a team in ongoing and on-site professional training.

33.2.6 *The Role of Reflection and Collaboration*

Participatory action research offered some important guidelines for this small-scale study (Wadsworth, 1998). For example, we aimed to gain the

co-operation of staff in the process of the research from the outset. These participants became contributors (participants) in all stages of the research cycle—as designers, selectors of methods, contributors of “data,” “analysers,” and “concluders,” and then “takers (or monitors) of new actions,” and so on. All parties began to operate much more as both co-researchers and co-subjects (Wadsworth, 1998, p. 5). Input from staff on the research process and content was also reflected in recommendations for future action and research in Burnside.

Arguing for an action research paradigm, Reason (1988, p. 2) adopts a participatory approach that he calls “co-operative research.” (p. 2). The emphasis of participatory research is in establishing a dialogue between research workers and the people with whom they work, in order to discover and realise the practical and cultural needs of those people. In the study under consideration, the researchers endeavoured to use this approach as a guide for effective small-scale action research in a service delivery context. This included participation of the service workers in preparation of the project’s final report. To this end, a draft of the final report was circulated to select front-line staff, research officers, and coordinators in the agency for comment and feedback before final write-up. Focus groups with these workers were also conducted to facilitate such comment. Reports were published on the web page, and many conversations were had with senior management on the action research findings including the CEO authoring the preface to the initial report (Wearing & Edwards, 2003). However, ultimately, the concrete impact of organisational change in terms of Burnside’s front-line practice base is difficult to assess.

33.2.7 *Future Directions and Lessons Learned*

A key part of any framework for good practice is to acknowledge and examine areas of uncertainty or mistakes in working with families. The quote below illustrates how critical feedback can help to frame good practice:

Interviewer: Is there something the team could have done better?

Coordinator: One of the issues for the mother was our feedback challenging her. She was saying that sometimes we were expecting too much. The team had so many things to achieve in a relatively short time period, and perhaps we could have been clearer in setting out the effects of goals and expectations, but there were so many things to achieve. Usually things stall when it is apparent that the client is not ready to move on ... That’s why we have regular reviews of cases and say why is something happening or not happening in the family? (Wearing & Edwards, 2003, p. 35)

The framework for good practice in the final report (Table 1) followed Ferguson’s (2001) suggestion that the focus of family support work should be on innovative and creative approaches to best practice and not on what does not get done. As Ferguson noted more than a decade ago in the UK context, “the deficit approach ... is characterised as stigmatizing, ... driven by procedures, legalism and a forensic approach [and] a relatively restricted practice repertoire which most service users don’t want” (p. 9). The critical reflective

and strength-based approach to family support practice moves away from this focus on deficits and instead concentrates on the strength and resilience of family systems. This shift in focus recognises the family members also have agency and helps to identify “scripting” within families (or a repeated sequence of family interactions and roles related to certain events) and how these scripts are shaped by the family members. The latter is an idea borrowed from family therapy models (Briar-Lawson, 1998; Dolan et al., 2006; Schwartz, 1995).

It is useful to pause here to assess some of the limitations and difficulties of the action research approach we have suggested. This discussion is informed by some of the mistakes we believe were made, in particular, related to the assumptions about change and the design of the original study. Firstly, a focus on the practical benefits of the research in relation to the organisation and the action research participants needs to be maintained. In this regard, it is important that the research be focused on precise structural issues and problems, such as the need for professional development training for staff, and involve stakeholders such as management boards and government funders. Secondly, over the life of the action research we have presented, staff changes meant it was difficult in some instances to follow up with the original participants over a one-year period. Key family support workers, especially in the intensive support work, usually work outside of normal 9 am to 5 pm work hours in Australia, and, due to the high levels of work stress related to the emotional intensity of such work, there can be a fairly high turnover of staff. One suggestion we did not make in our reports was increased clinical and counselling supervision for workers, which in hindsight was a mistake because the workloads and pressures on non-profit workers in the area have increased. Given the workload increases, NSW and Federal governments have, since 2004, contracted out more and more family support work to large child and family welfare non-profits in Australia, such as Uniting *Care* Burnside.

Also, as independent researchers, it was not always easy to understand the internal politics and lines of authority within a large non-profit human service organisation such as Burnside. A greater focus on the significant players in terms of authority and power within the organisation would have helped mobilise the evidence that came out of the research for the development of better practice with families.

Further qualitative, quantitative, and participatory action research is needed to give more concrete answers regarding the dimensions and key features of good practice in terms of strengths-based, anti-oppressive, and empowerment approaches to children and families in Australian communities. For example, quantitative survey research and evaluation might explore the range of measurable variables of good practice process and outcomes that could provide a broader statistical picture of the fulfilment of these criteria in service practice (see Tomison & Poole, 2000). In terms of knowledge of good practice, we would argue that the qualitative participatory-collaborative approach to evaluation of practice is the most useful research approach for linking inquiry with the education and training of workers in the field (i.e., workers reflecting on

their own and colleagues' practice) (see, Mason & Urquhart, 2001; Mason, Urquhart, & Bolzan, 2003; Smith, 1998; Titterton, 1999; Urquhart 2013; Wearing, 1998). The action research methodology included in the project considered in this chapter encouraged a culture of inquiry into the nature of reflective practice and how improvements to practice might be made (see also, Mann, Gordon, & MacLeod, 2009; Penn & Gough, 2002; Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2013).

33.3 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Site 2 Worker: For me I had an experience with the Department (of Community Services or DOCS NSW) yesterday. It makes me think that the Department needs to be properly resourced so they can actually carry out the functions, and that's not happening at the moment. So it means that when you have a situation where there is a family where risky things are happening that the response is not adequate—Then you're left in a situation of 'We'll see how this one plays out' but it could be that in actually notifying and bringing this family to the attention of the Department, that could actually work out negatively, in the sense that no positives come out of that involvement. (Wearing & Edwards, 2003, p. 56)

The Burnside study initiated dialogue and change within the organisation of family support services in the South West region of Sydney, notably regarding select issues of family support practices. Service providers need ways of conducting internal and collaborative research that supports deeper understanding of their work, its contexts, and what is unique about their services.

Qualitative research on the front line that focuses on the experience of practice and on prevention education is one indirect strategy for organisational learning that we believe can benefit disadvantaged communities in the mid- to long term. The action research project for Burnside was completed in 2003 and disseminated over a five-year period from 2001–2005 (Mason & Urquhart, 2001; Urquhart & Wearing 2001; Wearing, 2010, 2015; Wearing & Edwards, 2003; Wearing & Gibson, 2004). Such public research dissemination is crucial for the longer-term sustainability of practice knowledge gleaned from action research.

What was seeded and initiated from the action research in Burnside family support services was an awareness amongst front-line practitioners, front-line managers, and senior management of the practice-based issues that workers confronted in their daily workloads and how the early intervention and prevention model used by the agency worked in practice. Many of the issues addressed are still salient a decade later, notably those related to practice-based research and organisational learning in the delivery of family support.

A central issue that emerged from the action research was how and why certain families had been reported to the NSW DoCS. DoCS was often seen by worker-participants in the action research as a negative influence in the lives of the families. The strengths-based approach to family intervention and sup-

port was used by Burnside practitioners to stand up to this negative view and show the Department that these families can face adversity in their lives, but still show resilience and keep their children safe. Whilst we in general agree this was part of the useful work being done by non-profit family support agencies, there is also a need to question some of the assumptions behind the failure to notify child abuse and neglect in certain circumstances—a failure that could lead to further harm or violence towards children or adults within the family. This abuse and violence needs to be stopped by non-profit agencies irrespective of difficulties in negotiation with families and statutory government child protection. Further collaborative research with stakeholders and clients is needed to understand where responsibilities in preventing harm, abuse, and violence in child protection should fall. Notification of potential harm and abuse to authorities can (but not always) directly assist police and statutory child welfare officers in preventing such child and family violence.

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Donor Influence in Community-Based Action Research: A Typology for Advancing Reflexive Decision-Making to Protect Essential Participatory Values

David P. Moxley, Valerie Thompson, and Zermarie Deacon

Community-based participatory action research (CBPAR) likely begins when members of marginalized groups or communities undertake collaborative research to advance the quality of their community life (Foster-Fishman et al., 2006). True CBPAR supports the aims of participants who address the issues they prioritize as important within their own communities (Boog, 2003). The resulting knowledge is probably unintended for generalization even though stakeholders outside of the community may find the forthcoming knowledge applicable to their situations and, therefore, may come to adopt it for the purposes of advancing the quality of life of the communities in which they are situated (Gagnon, 2011). However, academics may approach CBPAR as a means to improve instrumental knowledge and, as a result, select a community site opportunistically (Leung, Yen, & Minkler, 2004).

In this chapter we, two academics highly involved in and experienced in CBPAR and a well-experienced administrative practitioner, consider the pres-

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ervation of distinctive values of CBPAR as its participants seek external funding to support their work. External donors often use their own preferences to shape a project so it fulfills their own ends. Therefore, participants in CBPAR must remain mindful not only of the kinds of resources they seek but also of how powerful funders or donors can co-opt the action participants seek to take in their communities (Deacon & Moxley, 2012).

One form of co-optation involves the process of conversion in which less powerful actors yield their values to the more powerful and adopt the values of the more powerful (Selznick, 1966). Alternatively, co-optation can involve the actions taken by the less powerful to either shape the values of the more powerful making them consistent with those held by the less powerful or to motivate the more powerful to relinquish their values and adopt those held by the less powerful. Co-optation and its direction (from more powerful to less powerful; or from less powerful to more powerful) is a central idea in understanding how donors can come to influence, dominate, or support the work of CBPAR and the communities in which it is implemented.

34.1 DISTINCTIVENESS OF COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

The principal intent of CBPAR is to advance the quality of life of a given community, and, therefore, knowledge building aims are likely intrinsic (Letiecq & Schmalzbauer, 2012; Loizou, 2013). University-based researchers may confuse such aims with more academic ones in which instrumental knowledge likely holds the most value (Ibanez-Carrasco & Riano-Alcala, 2009). This confusion can mistakenly blur the lines separating CBPAR from more traditional academic approaches to knowledge building inherent in community-based research (CBR). Those academic researchers embracing a more traditional stance may build partnerships within a particular community solely for the purposes of creating discipline-focused knowledge. Alternatively, CBPAR seeks to make participants within the community central in the process of framing purpose and taking action and in legitimizing local knowledge building as a meritorious end of inquiry (Fenge, Fannin, & Hicks, 2011).

Both the issues community participants prioritize and the fulfillment of their knowledge aims typically focus on social betterment within the community. Social betterment requires action, and it is the action the participants take that can address or resolve the issues they prioritize and produce the local knowledge they seek (Kennedy, 1997). The interplay among participant aims and those of university researchers reveals the importance of collaborative inquiry producing mutual benefits for what can be diverse or even disparate groups (Savan, 2004). But to overlook the core values and aspirations of participants can vitiate the promise of CBPAR—that knowledge can emerge benefiting both a community and a domain of practice (Savan, Flicker, Kolenda, & Mildenerger, 2009).

We underscore the differences between CBPAR and CBR because they likely differ in their resource development requirements (Plumb, Price, & Kavanaugh-Lynch, 2004). CBPAR practitioners garner resources to support intrinsic action within a community (Sahota, 2010), while CBR likely focuses on the issue of research significance to external investigators who approach a community as an embodiment of the social issue that serves as a relevant focus of their own inquiry (Rubin & Rubin, 2008).

CBPAR is therefore steeped in its *core substantive values*: (1) self-determination in which participants establish the focus, agenda, and knowledge building agenda; (2) autonomy in which participants function independently of (but perhaps in collaboration with) researchers based in institutions located outside of the community of focus; (3) empowerment in which participants heighten their status and increase their stature by becoming assertive, controlling their own immediate situations, and gaining respect for the situationally specific knowledge they possess, their own first-hand experience, and their understanding of social issues in their communities; and (4) capacity building in which local groups gain competencies to bring about positive changes they seek for themselves and their community, a process Rubin and Rubin (2008) refer to as bootstrapping.

Other values imbue CBPAR with distinctiveness. Those values pertaining to *relationship formation* are integral to realizing the distinctive character of this form of inquiry. Those values can include the development of mutual respect among individuals and groups as well as between a community and major institutions. Additionally, trust and a commitment to co-production of knowledge can come to characterize the relationships forming within a CBPAR process. *Process values* also figure into CBPAR in important ways. For CBPAR stakeholders, such values can involve the creation of an inclusive context of participation, the development of the project as a practical resource within the community, pragmatic action that results in social betterment in the community, and the pursuit of sustainability so the project is long lasting if not permanent (Selznick, 2008). Overall, such process values alert participants to the importance of making the CBPAR project locally relevant and meaningful for the members or residents of a community.

Substantive, relationship, and process values can emerge as so essential in a CBPAR project that they can become fundamental elements of the project's goals and objectives. They can influence the articulation and evaluation of principal outcomes and come to serve as ends trumping in their relevance more materialistic outcomes. From our practice experience in CBPAR, we find that these categories of values are so different from traditional research that those institutional researchers seeking partnerships will likely groom new skill sets so they can more effectively engage in CBPAR (Flicker, Savan, McGrath, Kolenda, & Mildenerger, 2008). Within a traditional framework of inquiry, researchers act on subjects within specialized environments or controlled circumstances. CBPAR may strike traditionally trained researchers as radically different. It calls on a researcher to gain competencies in collaboration and co-operation as well

as adapt traditional research methods to new circumstances or even abandon those traditional methods altogether in favor of nontraditional ones (Foster-Fishman, Nowell, Deacon, Nievar, & McCann, 2005). Researchers can redesign methods to promote community participation with the aim of engendering empowerment as the principal impact of a project (Feen-Calligan, Washington, & Moxley, 2009; Prins, 2010; Tulinius & Holge-Hazelton, 2011)

34.2 THE INTRINSIC FOCUS OF CBPAR

Within such a value constellation, the subordination of research to the intrinsic aims of action distinguishes CBPAR from other forms of CBR. While knowledge building aims are important within CBPAR, inquiry itself plays off of action participants take to change circumstances within their communities for the better (Elden & Chisholm, 1993). It is the action groups undertake that serves as the fountainhead of local knowledge and even innovation. Thus, linking action and research is yet another distinctive quality of this form of inquiry (Kennedy, 1997). Without action, and without learning from action, what is initially conceived as a participatory approach with intrinsic social betterment aims could decay into CBR in which researchers control the agenda of inquiry. As a result, community groups become marginalized both in the process of action and in the application of research findings and insights to improve local conditions.

Retaining the local focus and significance of action melded with inquiry is of ultimate importance if participants are to fulfill the promise of CBPAR or any other empowerment method (Horton, 1998) in which differences in stance, perspective, and location can introduce diverse ways of knowing and taking action (Hynes, Coghlan, & McCarron, 2012). To fulfill the aims of local development and social betterment inherent in CBPAR, preserving the constellation of values we enumerate earlier is essential to respecting the character of this distinctive approach to inquiry. CBPAR not only melds action and research but also typically focuses on locality and the advancement of quality of life within a given locality. Locality development is essential to addressing health and quality of life disparities separating disenfranchised communities from more affluent ones (Kreuter et al., 2012; Shuman, 2008).

Ultimately, this is the principal reason CBPAR often invokes the value of empowerment. Control over local priorities, action valued and directed by residents or members, and the development of resources or infrastructure to advance quality of life demarcates CBPAR in the pantheon of social research. It complements those strategies of community organizing and development that seek the empowerment of people whose voice is muted by more powerful forces within a particular locale (Horton, 1998; Rubin & Rubin, 2008).

This is where we seek to consider external funding. As CBPAR stakeholders come to search for resources so they can advance their local projects, they may inadvertently compromise this constellation of values by engaging donors or funders who could distort intrinsic aims. In considering the precarious nature

of values that imbue a local institution with distinctiveness, Selznick (1984) in his classic work on administration warns leaders (and we would add social activists) to consider how decisions influence or otherwise shape organizational purpose. The tension between CBPAR values and donor values is inherent in the process of developing external funding for advancing inclusionary, participatory practice. Such a tension is characteristic of most social research, particularly academic work in which values of the funder become dominant in shaping the agenda of inquiry. In CBPAR, however, such a tension may dampen the enthusiasm of participants who are not exclusively academics.

34.3 INTRINSIC RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT TO STRENGTHEN CBPAR PROJECTS IN THEIR EARLY STAGES

CBPAR is an intrinsic approach to building knowledge by, for, and about a given community. Sometimes, the project's acquisition of external funding where expectations of the donor do not support local knowledge development results in a somewhat precarious or even an antithetical action. This is why we endorse local resource development as a principal early strategy for shaping the CBPAR project's focus, identity, and aims, and in justifying its existence. Early in its emergence, a CBPAR project likely needs ample opportunities for exploration and relationship formation among principal participants and local leaders, as well as those residents or members who may remain on the periphery of a project. The requirements of external entities may distort a project's principal identity and enforce a form of co-optation in which the values of the funder—and the expectations those values set—may interfere with the formation of the project's distinctive organizational or institutional features.

Our experience suggests that successful navigation of the early tasks of formation will strengthen the identity of a CBPAR project, so that participants can then identify the kinds of funders they seek or funding partnerships with donors. Later in this chapter, we offer a framework for organizing those kinds of funders or donors. Suffice it to say at this point that donors can differentiate themselves across two dimensions. The first dimension involves the *level of engagement* the donor seeks in a CBPAR project. Some donors will seek to be active in a particular project and their considerable engagement in the project can influence how participants implement the CBPAR inquiry and the extent to which the project retains or actuates its substantive, relationship, and participatory values.

A second dimension, which we refer to as *strength of the donor's stance on knowledge development*, can range across a continuum from weak to strong. Some donors may not care about the knowledge aims of a project, and, therefore, they express a weak orientation on this dimension. Alternatively, some donors will express very strong preferences for the kind of knowledge a CBPAR should produce. Here, the CBPAR project may serve as a vehicle for donors fulfilling their own knowledge aims and, therefore, they could become quite

influential in shaping or even determining the value base of a project and the agenda of social betterment a project pursues.

A mindfulness of what participants seek to bring about through CBPAR in their own community is likely its strongest asset in screening potential donors and in determining their involvement in the context, deliberations, and decisions project actors may make about the action and inquiry they are undertaking in their community. So, early in the project, intrinsic resource development as a strategy will likely be an essential step in the local actors' efforts both to preserve their value base and strengthen the distinctiveness of a CBPAR project as a form of action research.

Early in the project, initial resource development tactics may prove essential in shaping a CBPAR project and in strengthening its identity as a local capacity within a given community. Resources members bring to the project through their own social capital are a fund that practitioners and project actors can easily ignore, particularly early in a project's development. The social capital members can bring to a CBPAR project can encompass their social networks and the people, groups, organizations, and institutions populating them. A member's own knowledge and skill base may strengthen a project and build or extend its capabilities so the project can undertake activities that were previously out of reach. Casting a broad membership net early in a project, recruiting members who identify with the project, and paying attention to those resources members can contribute will strengthen a CBPAR early in its development.

Yet another resource development tactic involves the assessment of assets embedded in a community (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Those assets may come in the form of tangible physical facilities, local organizations, particularly those reflecting civil society, and institutions that can offer space for meetings, meal preparation, and programming. McKnight and Block (2012) consider the abundance of informal and formal resources embedded within a particular community. Green and Haines (2012) inventory the assets useful to communities in the process of development.

Voluntary associations whose members are concerned about the quality of life within a community may serve as partners in facilitating the aims of a given CBPAR project. Informal groups likewise can contribute resources, such as time and members to get things done. In one community, an informal group of military veterans whose skills involved construction, debris removal, horticulture, and auto repair proved to be an important resource in supporting a CBPAR project devoted to involving young people in supporting households in which elders were living alone. As these groups strengthened their relationships, the number of innovations they produced through intergenerational collaboration improved community life in measurable ways.

A project's early development may not only include a broad engagement of people in the project but can also incorporate a community asset assessment to identify those community resources that the CBPAR project can incorporate into its own development. By incorporating social capital, and engaging in community asset development, a CBPAR project can deepen its roots within a

given community and produce dense interconnections with other local groups, organizations, and institutions. Through the process of program development, a CBPAR project can foster additional resources in the form of what Nussbaum (2011) considers central human capabilities. The collective augmentation of such capabilities can advance development and, as a consequence, increase community quality of life.

Tactically, through such an intrinsic character, a product of early resource development, the project amplifies its distinctiveness, may engage in early innovation, produce key collaborative relationships, and build a base of in-kind resources. It is these kinds of capacities that can attract funders or donors who will likely respect the values and agenda the CBPAR project is pursuing in its local community. For the donor to subordinate its aims to those of the CBPAR project can indicate the project’s strength of identity and relevance—and reflect its ability for co-opting more powerful entities. Staying true to its intrinsic purpose, incorporating local resources and assets to strengthen the project’s initial capacity to bring about social betterment, and building a strong local identity may serve as essential tactics in achieving substantive values of CBPAR.

34.4 THE DONOR TYPOLOGY

34.4.1 Overview of the Typology and Its Formation

Figure 34.1 offers a typology of donors based on the integration of two dimensions: (1) degree of engagement of the donor in the CBPAR project and (2)

		Strength of Perspective	
		Strong	Weak
Degree of Engagement	Engaged	<u>Type I</u> The Engaged Donor with Strong Perspective	<u>Type II</u> The Engaged Donor with Weak Perspective
	Disengaged	<u>Type III</u> The Disengaged Donor with Strong Perspective	<u>Type IV</u> The Disengaged Donor with Weak Perspective

Fig. 34.1 Donor typology in community-based participatory action research

strength of perspective on CBPAR knowledge building through a project. The typology offers four types of donors. Each possesses a distinctive stance on CBPAR emanating from a donor's standpoint of interest in CBPAR in which they serve as a funder. The typology emerges from our work with various CBPAR projects, many of which include projects with which we have worked in other countries including South Asia and Africa, and including areas of the USA, both rural and urban ones. Initially, we generated a list of CBPAR projects in which we have been involved as researchers, consultants, or participants or key stakeholders. We then examined each project in terms of its funding dimension and the external funding history of each project. Some projects never came into existence but we did conceive of them and communicated their possibilities through proposals for funding to foundation and governmental sources.

As we interrogated each project, and evaluated its experience with funding, we generated the two dimensions of degree of engagement and strength of perspective. Then we sorted the cases, identified their principal funding themes, and considered the resulting influence of each funder on a given project on both dimensions. When we joined the dimensions into the actual typology, we also sorted those cases into the discrete cells. The two academic authors met on several occasions to talk through the features of each cell and how a principal case reflected the intent of a particular cell. We then elaborated the features of a principal case within a cell to clarify the issues donors or funders created for the particular CBPAR project a case incorporated.

Through this process, we increased our own awareness of the importance of funding to a given CBPAR project, particularly when it blended community and academic aims. National funders are prominent here since they tend to have an agenda that is more instrumental than intrinsic. In the case of government sources, such as the US Department of Health and Human Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and National Institutes of Health, CBPAR offers an opportunity to engage at-risk or vulnerable communities as partners (typically defined as the community receiving some kind of benefit that is above and beyond involvement in research) so researchers can study a social or health intervention in such a way to produce instrumental knowledge for a given field or domain. From our experience, those projects tend to be opportunistic, more indicative of CBR than CBPAR.

Alternatively, from our experience, local funders tend to focus on community capacity building. While CBPAR may not be a motivating factor in funding by these entities, those projects fulfill avowed values they claim as important to them: broad-based involvement, participation of key groups, and linkages of communities with major institutions. All too often, local funders want to see local results that make an impact on issues they prioritize within a given community and their interest in generating knowledge concerning social betterment is somewhat attenuated.

There is yet still another donor emerging from our experience whose perspective on funding forms a salient type. This is the corporate foundation or

corporate philanthropic program. Such programs typically align their giving or donations with corporate strategy, although this is not necessarily problematic. For CBPAR programs understanding corporate strategy and considering whether a national or local giving program is most appropriate to the project's intrinsic aims becomes a strategic priority. Corporate programs may be in the hands of external experts the corporation recruits for the purposes of making substantive decisions about giving or they may invest that responsibility in senior executives or staff representatives from local offices of a corporation. Such corporate giving programs may find local community projects, especially participatory ones, quite relevant in addressing their own needs since it enables a corporation to highlight the support it invests in the communities in which they do business. From such investments, corporations can achieve what Bolman and Deal (2008) refer to as honorific ends. In other words, a corporate funding source may obtain considerable honor from their lending support to programs that foster the involvement of community members.

These options communicate a diversity of alternative funding options and how those options may engage CBPAR projects. There is considerable diversity here, so the types we offer do not reconcile the many differences distinguishing donors. Donors are diverse. Each likely has its own priorities and its own aims. Still, a donor may also express a certain tendency in relationship to local communities, and, therefore, various donors may cluster into certain types, ones we capture in our typology. So, our readers should treat each cell as a certain type and come to understand how particular types can influence the recipient of funding.

34.4.2 *Specific Types of Donors*

The four types we identify in Fig. 34.1 capture the key qualities of specific kinds of donors with which we have had experience in CBPAR. The four types are (1) The engaged donor with a strong perspective on knowledge building through CBPAR, (2) the engaged donor with a weak perspective, (3) the disengaged donor with strong perspective, and (4) the disengaged donor with weak perspective.

Type I Donor: Engaged Donor with Strong Perspective The first donor type is likely the most active kind. Such donors may see their commitment as contingent on their own engagement in the projects they fund. Type I donors often have a particular motive for elevating their engagement, perhaps even becoming dominant in the community process making CBPAR distinctive. In such situations, the donor has a particular objective in mind wanting to advance social action or augmenting their learning about CBPAR processes. The donor may appear somewhat intrusive about the involvement of its representatives in the project, although from a positive standpoint, the high level of such involvement may enable project participants to strengthen their relationships with the donor, educate its representatives about the distinctiveness of the proj-

ect, and position the representatives to witness the CBPAR project in action. Alternatively, if the donor is not well versed in CBPAR, or hold its values and practices suspect, this degree of donor involvement could become problematic. The donor's representatives could assert their dominance, set priorities for the project, introduce external evaluation that is not consistent with the CBPAR project and the autonomy participants enjoy through this kind of inquiry or insert specialized experts to ensure that the donor's priorities are met.

Thus, as Deacon and Moxley (2012) indicate in another paper, Type I donors (like all types of donors) can bring to bear values, perspectives, or behaviors that are either dissonant or consonant with CBPAR. Consonance suggests positive features donors bring to a project while dissonance suggests negative or problematic features donors may introduce. We should appreciate that any type of donor will bring to bear both a degree of consonance and dissonance, and so, consistent with critical inquiry, CBPAR participants should weigh their experience with particular donors in shaping their fund development agenda. Involvement of project participants in assessing donors and vetting how they would seek to influence a project will strengthen the fund development strategy a CBPAR project pursues to achieve viability without sacrificing its distinctiveness as a form of inquiry.

Type II Donor Engaged Donor with Weak Perspective Although this donor may place a premium on controlling or influencing the social action or knowledge building agenda of a project, such control may not be as strong for this kind of donor as it is for the Type I Donor. The Type II Donor likely searches for engagement as a way of learning and for advancing their own agenda through that learning. This donor does not seek to bring the project in line with their own agenda and does not seek to be intrusive even though representatives of the donor may participate in the events and activities the CBPAR project undertakes. CBPAR participants will likely find the representatives of the Type II Donor to honor the aims of a given CBPAR project, and they will likely gain considerably through their own participation. What stands out here is a form of learning that extends from the involvement of its representatives in a project that for them may hold considerable novelty. As Deacon and Moxley (2012) observe:

The donor is well motivated to engage in the project and recognizes its relevance and the value of learning from a given CBPAR project. The donor, however, does not have a firm perspective on the project and its purpose, and may often times appear aimless with regard to the specific action and knowledge generation goals of the project. The donor often has little experience with the CBPAR process and requires of the participant considerable guidance. (p. 27)

Participants in the CBPAR project may come to see the donor as an essential stakeholder of the project and work with its representatives to build their understanding of CBPAR as a form of community inquiry. This donor may

become consonant with the values of CBPAR since they may see their involvement as an opportunity to learn about the context, process, and products of CBPAR within a particular local community. This is especially relevant for the donor who can learn how a model linking community engagement, participation, and knowledge building can advance social betterment within a specific community context, typically characterized by distress and even degradation. For this kind of donor such engagement may help the entity (whether corporation, foundation, or governmental source) actuate its social responsibility. Indeed, CBPAR may be a very relevant strategy supporting a funding source's efforts to advance its agenda of social responsibility within a particular locale.

On the negative side, the involvement of the donor may interfere with the process of intrinsic community building. Fulfilling the donor's educational needs may reduce some of the time CBPAR participants can invest in addressing issues emerging within the community context. But this is probably a minor consideration.

Type III Donor The Disengaged Donor with Strong Perspective While the two previous donors demonstrate considerable engagement with a CBPAR project, the third donor type is likely to refrain from such engagement. The donor's disengagement is visible in its removal from the actual project, both physically and psychologically. Its representatives come to see the responsibility for project design and implementation as residing within the participants' sphere of responsibility. Nonetheless, donors representing the third type can express considerable interest in and preference for certain forms of knowledge, which can exceed those the participants establish as relevant to them and as holding intrinsic importance for the community. The strong perspective on action and knowledge may heighten performance expectations and influence the administrative implementation of the project. Deacon and Moxley (2012) indicate that

For this donor, disengagement does not mean that it refrains from stipulating what it wants, and it enforces this through accountability, oversight, and summative evaluation. These activities do not constitute engagement in the actual research project as quasi- or full participants, but reflect administrative tactics for the enforcement of perspective. (p. 29)

Keeping donors informed consistently may increase the formalism and frequency of communication that project personnel may need to achieve. Such formalism could become a burden as those undertaking administrative leadership of a CBPAR project invest considerably in such communication when they may have little organizational capacity to do so. The activist strategy on part of project leadership is somewhat intrusive here but nonetheless necessary. They prevent the donor from disengaging totally by offering regular communication, information, and updates on the issues the project is facing, documenting the project's achievements, and identifying the emerging lessons learned about advancing social betterment within the project community.

Given its collaborative ethos, project personnel may experience frustration from their assertive efforts to communicate with the donor. But on a positive side, CBPAR participants and their community partners may experience considerable autonomy with this type of donor when it comes to engaging them in the process of action and inquiry. On the other hand, CBPAR project personnel will likely experience some discord in negotiating substantive goals with such a donor. Donor representatives may seek to enforce their regime of goals or even a specific methodology that may strike project personnel as somewhat intrusive or as drifting away from the participatory aims of the project.

As such donors focus on the fulfillment of their substantive knowledge goals, they may refrain from investing in those aspects of CBPAR so essential to this form of action and inquiry. These aspects can involve participatory research methods, participant involvement in research, social action undertaken by participants themselves, partnership formation, group development, and relationship building among members and groups. Indeed, the latter may dominate a CBPAR project in its early stages requiring as much as a year of investment in concerted work project founders undertake to build positive, balanced, and productive relationships within a community.

The donor may be uncertain about the merits of such investment. They may be reluctant to support costs integral to relationship building including resources project leaders wish to invest in community events, production of social media content, and food and related perishables to support meetings within community settings. In those communities experiencing some degree of food deprivation ensuring adequate snacks, lunches or other meals can be essential in fostering involvement. Also, in those communities struggling with infrastructure challenges like transportation ensuring the mobility of participants may be an essential investment. The resources a CBPAR project requires so it can foster involvement, participation, and partnerships are central to this kind of inquiry. And such resources may be costly, particularly in the early stages when project leaders hold multiple meetings, planning sessions, and participatory venues. Resource investment to foster inclusion within communities experiencing considerable diversity may be a salient if not substantial part of a project budget. Without these early stage investments many projects could simply fail to get off the ground or even collapse.

Type IV The Disengaged Donor with Weak Perspective This kind of donor leaves the project with considerable autonomy and with the related freedom to focus on those issues and priorities the project will seek to address through action and knowledge building. Here, the donor is disengaged but is not necessarily disinterested. In this sense, they yield project design and implementation to project personnel, and likely communicate considerable respect for the project's autonomy within the context of the community in which project personnel are taking action.

That the donor and project could drift apart is a potential challenge in this situation. The disengaged donor will not necessarily challenge the core values

of CBPAR, but may require the support of the project in coming to understand the distinctiveness of these values and their operationalization in action within a given community. Achieving this understanding early on in the project, particularly in the preparation of the proposal or letter of intent, may increase the donor's insight into the rationale for CBPAR. All donors can benefit from such an orientation and education early in the lifespan of a project. While project personnel may find the early stages invigorating and they may be preoccupied with getting started, participants should remain mindful of the information needs of a detached donor. This could prevent subsequent misunderstanding, and help the donor understand the project's need for resources that more traditional projects do not likely require.

Why would a donor become disengaged? First, the donor may invest funds, perhaps coming from a local community foundation, or family fund, in serious and festering local issues. The local funder invests attention in immediate challenges and perhaps it simply leaves the substantive methods up to the local institution or group in which it invests. Thus, this kind of funder may be more concerned about the investment of their funds in local settings, and may not have the staff nor infrastructure to become engaged in those projects it funds. At the point of awarding funds, the donor may be very concerned about the appropriateness of the investment as well as the capacity of a project to bring about the key processes and outcomes it proposes.

What the donor may find impressive is the project's early capacity building within a local community the donor sees as deserving of its investment. Early organizing, creating meaningful partnerships, undertaking needs and asset assessments within the community, involving residents or members in such assessment activities, and developing local in-kind resources may figure into the local case for funding, which can capture the attention of a local donor. The donor's attention to the project, therefore, may be strongest in the project's initial stage but this attention may wane as the project gains momentum only to re-emerge again once the project is closing out the donor's funding.

The freedom a project possesses in such circumstances should be seen as a potential challenge to a project's effective administration and enactment. Remaining mindful of the donor is important here. The unwillingness of the funder to intrude into the life of a project may mean that the project could disinvest in the donor during the period of implementation. Engaging the donor at various project milestones, offering ample information about successes and challenges the project experiences, and communicating the realization of project outcomes, both intended and unintended ones, could strengthen considerably the relationship between this kind of donor and the CBPAR project.

34.5 REFLECTIVE CONCLUSION

For a project to invest in its own development using local resources early in its formation is part of a community's empowerment. Early on in a project's lifespan the presence of a potentially intrusive donor in the mix of participatory

structures may divert project participants from their own focus, and prevent them from realizing the coherence.

Resource development strategy is vitally important in CBPAR. A project requires resources for its own viability in the long run, and its own responsiveness to what often stands as considerable community need. Becoming critically mindful of who contributes those resources, and with what intent, requires strategy. The participants' critical assessments of those resources (considering who will provide them, what the project must do to engage those resources, and project accountability for those resources) are best answered as participants weigh their distinctive priorities, shape and implement the project, and protect intrinsic project aims in the face of perhaps countervailing values a funder could potentially introduce.

As a CBPAR project establishes its identity early in its formation, fund development strategy will begin to emerge and take root in the immediate intrinsic needs of a community. The empowerment aims of CBPAR suggest that such strategy starts with an objective of understanding and incorporating local resources, including social capital of members, and local assets, strengths, capacities, and capabilities. Working out a charter in which the project identifies its core or central values, and achieves at least a working agreement among participants and groups to protect those values are not administrative tasks. Rather, they implicate the importance of governance a project undertakes within the context of its immediate community. Insulating such governance decisions from the influence of external funders or even institutions is for us an important developmental step for CBPAR projects seeking to define themselves in the early stages of implementation.

In our experiences, some funders' values pertaining to research have distorted the action a project wished to undertake by introducing what the funder considered to be rigorous methods as an essential expression of its own interests and values. Here the funder may inadvertently trump local interests and intrinsic purposes of a CBPAR project as it seeks to build knowledge about an issue without considering the context of the immediate community in which participants take action for the sake of social betterment as they conceive of it. So there is always the possibility in CBPAR that donors may inadvertently distort a project, or even undermine its specific aims or objectives. By strengthening project identity, however, particularly through locally controlled participatory governance of a project, a community can protect what it establishes as substantively important, and equip it to interact with potential funders as assertive but collaborative and welcoming partners (Quigley, 2006).

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Praxis and Axis: Theory as Practice in a Melanesian Case Study

Anitra Nelson and Natalie Moxham

35.1 INTRODUCTION

Action research is participatory, collaborative, and co-constructed by inquirers who are often the subjects and agents of their research. Action researchers apply general social science skills and theories alongside distinctive approaches, methods, and techniques. Action research is activist in perspective: conceptualized as non-linear, cyclical, and integrative (Wadsworth, 2010). The action researcher exercises more agency than other types of researchers—responding to daily realities that they analyze not only by recommending change but also by testing alternatives. Thus, action learning and research is experiential, albeit scholarly. In theory, action research is democratic and horizontal in terms of power relationships. Yet, because hierarchies and vertical protocol work in numerous ways in ‘the real world’, the context of our research, our practice, often counters our ideals.

Change consultant Natalie Moxham practices in community and government organizations as a facilitator, strategist, team builder, and evaluator—applying deep collaborative thinking and theory of change program logic to support rigorous program design and evaluation (Barefoot Collective, 2009, pp. 90–91). From November 2013 through to July 2014 Moxham worked with staff of a not-for-profit company, the Forest Management and Product Certification Service (FORCERT) of Papua New Guinea (PNG)—scoping, visioning, and strategizing FORCERT’s future three- and five-year plans. She used participatory action research approaches and methods and trained staff to

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use action research to engage partners and members in exploring and contributing to re-visioning and re-modeling their organization.

This case study centers on fieldwork and challenges common in action research. Community forestry has been a strong focus of action research over the last few decades (Brown, Malla, Sckreckenber, & Springate-Baginski, 2002; Nelson, 2003, 2010). Action research is often conducted cross-culturally and frequently involves organizational change, the focus here. Action research is values-driven, inductive, qualitative, constructivist and critical research, embracing many different methods, including ‘appreciative inquiry’ (Grant & Humphries, 2006). Appreciative inquiry is a strengths-based—rather than problem-focused—process driven by empowerment techniques (Ludema & Fry, 2008).

Appreciative inquiry was a particularly appropriate way to foster a culture of action research both as Moxham worked with FORCERT staff and when FORCERT staff worked with partners, members, advisers, and informants. Wadsworth (2010) draws parallels between appreciative inquiry and action research values and principles. Appreciative inquiry:

uses a four-concept epistemology matching that of action research—*Discover* (observe)—*Dream* (reflect)—*Design* (plan)—*Deliver* (act)—it rests on the familiar living systems assumptions of recursive emergence and construction, and works as a fast track to the reframing of problems as ‘already in the process of being changed for the better’. (p. 146) (Italics from original)

Appreciation assists in collective change: appreciating and building on organizational and staff strengths; appreciating and learning from others by carefully and respectfully listening; and appreciating team member skills and relations (Cooperider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2008).

The co-authors of this chapter reflected on and analyzed records from the FORCERT project organized by Natalie Moxham. Anitra Nelson, an academic practitioner met with Moxham several times—before, during, and after the project. Nelson reviewed records, including dozens of pages of detailed workshop minutes taken by FORCERT staff, and observations and assessments by participants. Figure 35.1 derives from Moxham’s notes on project activities. On 6 August 2014, Nelson taped a 124-min interview with Moxham (all quotes below without other reference derive from this interview). Nelson drafted the chapter. Moxham revised it. FORCERT offered feedback, including correcting matters of fact. We discussed, and Nelson altered, the draft. This ‘original’ draft was subject to editorial review and revised accordingly.

This chapter begins with, first, pertinent points about action research and, second, background on PNG and ‘development’. Third, we discuss challenges facing FORCERT that the project aimed to address and, fourth, the project’s plan. Subsequent sections deal with practitioner techniques for addressing challenges: facilitating an action research culture, using authority to share power (a contradiction), steps for change, the ‘animal personalities’ team building tech-

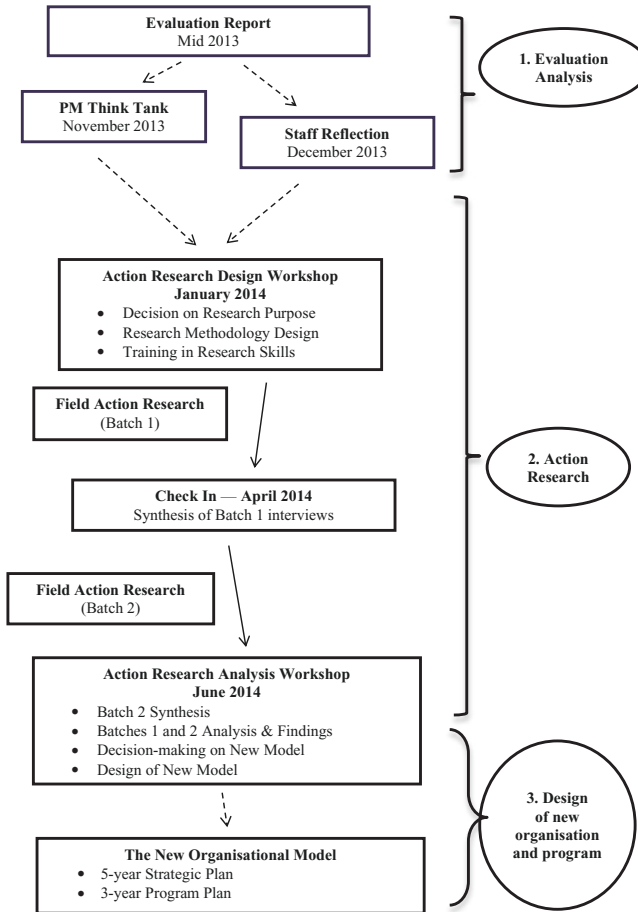


Fig. 35.1 Stages of the FORCERT change process

nique, and cycles of monitoring, reflection, learning, and improving. Finally, we identify indicators of success and offer a brief conclusion.

35.2 ACTION RESEARCH

Participatory action researchers draw on an array of research approaches and methods to address various demands associated with aims or goals, clients, or funding organizations. Canny practitioners listen carefully and respond sympathetically while trying to negotiate a brief that will apply key principles and processes of participatory action research. This includes involving participants—erstwhile subjects or objects of other kinds of research—in decision-making and design (determining the what, where, how, and why) of the research, in co-operative inquiry with the researcher (Reason, 1999) and analysis and use of findings.

Beyond learning and experience in action research inquiry in universities, action researchers benefit from engaging with fellow practitioners. Participatory action research is ‘real world’ research in a world that constantly changes. The Action Learning, Action Research Association (<http://www.alarassociation.org>) is an Australian professional network, a community of practice, advocating and generating action research approaches and methods—a network that action research practitioners use to learn more from one another about the diversity of contexts in which they work, sharing techniques and co-developing skills.

Like PNG, Australia’s land and oceans supported hundreds of Aboriginal tribes prior to the eighteenth century British invasion to establish a penal colony. Today, Australia is a multicultural nation in Asia’s southwest, surrounded by Pacific and Oceanic nations. Consequently, Australian action researchers often work cross-culturally with diverse aims and outcomes. Cultural norms can disrupt communication between people from distinctive backgrounds. Pacific international development consultant Deborah Rhodes (2014; Rhodes & Antoine, 2013) enabled Moxham to crystallize her perspective on Melanesian cultural norms for PNG practice, while Nelson has benefitted from reading, engaging, and working with international action researchers, such as Yoland Wadsworth (2010).

In PNG, where leaders traditionally make decisions while other members execute and administer those decisions, incorporating staff, board, and shareholders in FORCERT’s re-design presented challenges. As designer and facilitator, Moxham tailored a sophisticated process, which was a veritable work-in-progress. Indeed, most participatory action research proceeds this way. The challenge, indeed excitement, of such work lies in uniquely designing each project, pre-planning to address likely barriers to participatory action processes, and solving unexpected developments and stumbling blocks as they happen.

This chapter reports on approaches and methods used to assist FORCERT staff to re-assess their purpose, programs, organizational structure, aims and processes, and to consider options for changing direction. To design and guide this process, certain methods were strategically applied: a strengths-based approach, incorporating appreciative inquiry (Cooperider & Whitney, 2005); a deep participatory analysis and synthesis based on action research inquiry, for which participants required training; and team building, in particular using ‘animal personality types’ (<http://www.ausidentities.com.au>). The latter assisted participants to engage with tasks and decision-making in ways that shifted yet remained appropriate to traditional Melanesian thinking and cultural values.

35.3 ‘DEVELOPMENT’ IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

In the south west of the Pacific Ocean, north of Australia is PNG, covering 462,840 square kilometers (178,704 mile²) of the eastern half of New Guinea and numerous coastal Melanesian islands. PNG gained sovereignty as

a Commonwealth nation in 1975, following 70 years of Australian administration. Remarkable for its cultural and ecological diversity and rich natural resources, many of PNG's 7.3 million (2013) residents live in rural, customary communities practicing agriculture to meet basic needs. Traditional owners (communities, families, or individuals) hold most land under customary land title, with the rest leased or owned and managed by the state. FORCERT operates from Walindi Nature Center on the shores of Kimbe Bay (West New Britain Province) with regional bases in Kokopo (East New Britain Province) and Madang (Madang Province). Most FORCERT staff members have been university-trained in PNG, say in forestry, and work in town, but frequently visit and stay with communities.

PNG is the most linguistically diverse country in the world. With 800+ highly distinctive languages, many spoken by as few as 1,000 people, the common languages are English-based creole '*Tok Pisin*' and English. Many communities have held fast to substantial customary knowledge and practice sustainable ecological forest management, but commercial and government interests constantly challenge them. Production for trade has developed slowly, partly due to rugged geography, poor access, and unreliable law and order. Foreign interests must negotiate with genuine owners, and ownership is often contested. In 2010, amendments to the Lands Act and new Land Group Incorporation Act promised to improve State land management, dispute resolution, and access of customary landowners to finance and partnerships for developing urban and rural economic activities.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (2014) forecast that PNG would be Asia's fastest growing economy in 2015. However, international concerns to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions to which PNG deforestation and forest degradation contribute continue. Forest and other wooded land diminished by more than 2 million hectares (almost 6%) in 1990–2005, with primary forest falling almost 14% as 'modified natural' (cleared) forest and plantations grew by more than 80% and almost 50%, respectively (FAO, 2005). The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change introduced Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) into its agenda in 2005 prompted by countries such as PNG, and REDD+ (2013) enhanced this direction further (Corbera, Schroeder, & Springate-Baginski, 2011).

Evidence mounts that community forestry maintains healthier forests (Stevens, Winterbottom, Springer, & Reytar, 2014), improving forest sinks to absorb and lower carbon dioxide emissions—with potential for international transfers of payments for environmental services. Policies, programs, and projects protecting forests from clearing are supported by foreign and international aid agencies because, literally, millions of communities worldwide rely on forests to satisfy basic needs. Sustainable community forestry enhances local management with immediate benefits for local citizens. Such developments contrast starkly with say, trade in timber managed by entrepreneurs, often foreign, with foreign partners or for export overseas. Babon (2011, p. 1)

reveals strong criticism of the PNG state for neither ‘owning’ nor implementing REDD+ strategies, for failing to adequately address illegal and unsustainable logging by commercial industry and to consult with PNG communities on REDD+ policies.

Australia has supported development in PNG since 1975, being PNG’s largest source of international aid. FORCERT was established as a company in 2003 to encourage and facilitate both group certification of small-scale timber producers and sustainable small-scale community-based forest industry. Certification via the international Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) aimed to assist small PNG operators achieve local social and environmental sustainability and, by opening export markets, enhance economic development (Barr et al., 2012). The initial plan for FORCERT was to organize with marketing bodies, such as Fairtrade Australia and New Zealand, so PNG’s forest communities had a viable ethical alternative to leasing their land to a large timber, mining, or palm oil plantation company. FORCERT’s initial ambitious mission was to develop communities to produce for trade.

35.4 THE CHALLENGE FOR FORCERT

FORCERT’s manager and technical adviser approached Moxham late in 2013 to assist with scoping, visioning, and strategizing FORCERT’s future (three- to five-year) plans. For years, Moxham has worked in PNG supporting organizations to respond constructively to evaluations and re-design their organizations and strategic plans accordingly. While not strictly using an action research approach, Moxham constantly draws on participatory techniques and explicitly integrated an action research component into FORCERT’s project.

FORCERT solicited a three-year evaluation (Ericho, Nigints, & Barchaum, 2013, p. 29) and independent assessment of its original rationale and goals. That evaluation identified that FORCERT had unusually strong leadership, management and staff, and organizational ability to build enterprise capacity and develop their member communities. FORCERT could be proud of its organizational strengths and numerous successes with developing communities’ local timber enterprises. However, FORCERT (2004, p. 6) had not fulfilled key 2004–2008 business plan goals to certify 50 producer members to export 3000 m³ of sawn timber in 2008–2009. In 2004, FORCERT supported five community enterprises producing 225 m³ timber (70 m³ exports). In 2008, 40 enterprises (the peak) produced 1443 m³ timber (420 m³ exports) and were working toward community-based fair trade or certification. By 2013, just 20 enterprises produced only 300 m³, while timber exports stopped in 2010 (Ericho et al., 2013, p. 6).

FORCERT’s initial goals had been far too ambitious. Many PNG communities have strong local economies based on barter, in-kind exchanges of labor and formal use rights. FORCERT underestimated the effort needed for community enterprises to become monetary-based for national and global markets. FORCERT assumed that community development organizations would

assist enterprises to operate in global markets. Instead, establishing capitalist-oriented enterprises and fulfilling the FSC's formal sustainability requirements was not a community priority and, if it was, the capacity building needed was far greater than expected. Adapting to this reality, FORCERT had developed capacity to support communities to become more sustainable and viable to directly meet basic needs. By 2013, it supported a couple of dozen village enterprises to trade much more viably locally.

The funding body was prepared to support a 12-month project for FORCERT staff to fully and collaboratively explore their options, re-imagine their vision, goal, and mission, and strategically plan their future. Being in such an unfamiliar innovative space was strange and perhaps frightening for FORCERT yet, once named as an 'action research project', its manager and technical advisor became more comfortable with an extended process, simply explaining to staff, board, and shareholders that they had firmly decided to embark on an elaborate and collaborative form of determining their future.

35.5 PLANNING THE PROCESS

The re-visioning project included all FORCERT community members, shareholders, and staff. Majority shareholders were FORCERT communities with FSC certification (seven at December 2014). FORCERT staff comprised a manager, a technical advisor, eight foresters, two business development officers, and two financial and administrative staff. FORCERT institutional shareholders included the PNG Center for Environmental Law and Community Rights, Greenpeace Australia–Pacific and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-PNG).

Figure 35.1 summarizes Moxham's overall design of the process and offers a context for discussing its methodological challenges.

A two-day think tank facilitated by Moxham and composed of FORCERT's managers, shareholders, and representatives from collegiate organizations was held in November 2013 in Port Moresby (PNG's capital). The think tank identified FORCERT practices to continue and questions for exploration. The manager and technical advisor returned to FORCERT to conduct a similar reflection with other staff in December 2013.

FORCERT asked Moxham to return in January 2014 to facilitate a two-week workshop to plan for the participatory action research project and train staff in interviewing techniques that would propel an inclusive and collaborative re-design of FORCERT based on the opinions and intelligence of community member groups and advice gathered from national and international experts via interview that would:

- draw lessons from viable community enterprises that FORCERT already worked with successfully
- examine member and other communities for ways to improve development work
- consult with other PNG organizations and practitioners to discuss best practices

- investigate community members' thoughts on 'viability' and socio-economic options
- identify other commodities with potential markets that communities might produce
- consider different economic and organizational models (including other income-generating options) for FORCERT.

The workshop also dealt with practical tasks and details for planning, delegating, and interviewing, translating Tok Pisin–English and transcribing in English, and ethical approaches to interviewing.

Throughout the five months of interviewing and collecting data, Moxham had little contact with FORCERT, except for a long phone conversation after the April 'check-in' meeting, when staff debriefed on interviewing and discussed analyzing the 29 interviews to date (Batch 1). The check-in enabled them to reflect on and refine the research process, monitor progress against original plans, and check for data gaps to fill on return to the field to complete 24 more interviews. Meanwhile, a desktop review included reading and drawing on 23 documents.

Moxham returned for the final two-week workshop in June. The two project leads, manager and technical advisor, briefed Moxham on the team's research, especially their initial analysis of Batch 1. The leads adjusted and refined Moxham's pre-mapping of workshop tasks. In the first week, they analyzed and agreed on research findings. In the second week, they built on this learning to decide FORCERT's new vision, theory of change outcomes, programs, values, principles, and organizational structure detailed further.

In another culture where equal relations and mutual respect regardless of position was more the norm, Moxham might not have had to drive this process to such an extent. Under the circumstances, it seemed appropriate to adapt to some cultural norms while challenging others, encouraging flatter relations and more equal engagement. Indeed, this is what an action research brief and method demands.

35.6 NURTURING AN ACTION RESEARCH CULTURE

Creating an inclusive and collaborate space, processes, and activities in a culture where brainstorming, creative deep analysis, open inquiry, and strategic discussion are unfamiliar, even inappropriate, was a delicate demanding task. Villagers speak freely, but it is inappropriate to openly challenge or speak against the views of a PNG elder or leader. By comparison, many Australian workers are theoretically free to speak their mind but fear that challenging work policy might have negative consequences. Fortunately, FORCERT considers itself a special PNG case—encouraging staff involvement and teamwork, creating an unusually critical work climate. Such openness helped Moxham promote an appropriate action research culture, a model for the staff's subsequent action research project.

In PNG, relations are the priority. If Australian culture values individualistic thinking, analytical and critical thought, hierarchical relationships and collective thinking are characteristics of PNG culture. Scoping, speculating, and exploring ideas take more time as participants' prioritize maintaining and reinforcing relationships. Moxham estimates that strategic planning can take three to five times longer in PNG than in Australia.

This cross-country comparison is instrumental not judgmental. Neither PNG nor Australian culture is deficient for valuing particular behaviors. Yet the PNG culture challenged Moxham because action research demanded skills inappropriate and unfamiliar in PNG. In PNG, Moxham has encountered great 'power distance', strong respect for people in high or distant (foreign) positions, and a paternal 'cargo cult' mentality, where 'saving face' and discomfort speaking out suggest that 'relationships trump everything'. Drawing on a GLOBE (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004) study to map Pacific cultural characteristics, Rhodes (2014, p. 11) confirms these observations.

Moxham needed to encourage horizontal learning-cum-interaction (Barefoot Barefoot Collective, 2009, pp. 158–162). As a facilitator, she was careful to ignore the content of analyzing, strategizing, and decision-making processes. The collective PNG culture pre-disposed participants to ask her what she thought, seeking her endorsement. Consequently, Moxham would sidestep all requests to reveal her opinion, being careful to always deflect questions back. Participants used to looking for direction were prompted to think reflectively and analytically and develop confidence in self-expression. In these ways, Moxham offered them more, and more intense, personal experiences of critical analysis.

35.7 CONTRADICTION: USING AUTHORITY TO SHARE POWER

Moxham had had the manager open the initial two-day think tank to constructively respond to the evaluation, held in Port Moresby, far from FORCERT's headquarters. Working with the manager and technical advisor, Moxham carefully planned a highly structured agenda. FORCERT's manager encouraged participating staff, shareholders, and representatives from collegiate and government organizations (such as Eco-Forestry Forum and PNG Office of Climate Change and Development) to think and speak freely about FORCERT's future. He explained their challenge and need for input.

When Moxham took charge, she made subtle use of their respect for her as a guide and teacher, but constantly encouraged a peer relation with and between the participants—all raised in PNG except for FORCERT's Dutch expatriate technical advisor. There were around six male and four female participants most in mid-career (in their 40s). They were mainly from environmental, not entrepreneurial, sectors. The think tank required participants to think and relate in culturally uncharacteristic ways: to 'think outside of the square', innovatively,

and share knowledge and opinions as peers in what Moxham called an ‘ideas space ... not a decision making forum’.

Participants collaboratively analyzed the evaluation findings, identifying FORCERT’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The key evaluation findings were mapped onto the wall in a theory of change program logic diagram (Community Tool Box, 2014) showing: the effectiveness of FORCERT’s activities, inputs, and outputs; strengths and weaknesses of FORCERT’s foundational activities from governance to human resource capacity; qualities of FORCERT programs; community outcomes, including unexpected ones; and, finally, the extent to which goals had been achieved. This first day ended in agreement that the evaluation by Ericho et al. (2013) had been fair and reasonable. Participatory tasks resulted in a collective ‘owning’ of the evaluation’s main findings and developing evaluative skills.

On the first day of the January workshop, Moxham found staff reluctant to speak, often silently looking at one another when she posed a question. This was a critical risk to the process of re-designing FORCERT in a participatory way. Moxham met with FORCERT leadership to frame a plan. At the reflection the following morning, the manager spoke to staff in *Tok Pisin* on the importance of participation and inquired as to their reluctance. Their responses suggested a lack of clarity about how to participate. He patiently engaged with them and, subsequently, Moxham reported a subsequent shift in their engagement. Paradoxically, the manager had exerted authority to ensure that staff owned responsibility for the organization’s future journey.

35.8 STEPPING TOWARD CHANGE

During the Port Moresby think tank, Moxham introduced a keep-drop-create technique, used later in the process. For instance, they decided to drop FORCERT’s initial goals but to keep the organization. This left issues that needed further thinking or research to answer that could be clustered around ‘provocative questions’, 50 of which became the focus of deliberations on the second day of the think tank. An example follows. In PNG, various business models exist: family businesses, clan businesses, community enterprises, and co-operative enterprises. How might a PNG community define a ‘viable business’? Quite differently from a Western concept of what is viable? So, ‘What is viability in our context?’ became a key ‘provocative’ question to answer, around which supporting questions clustered.

Groups of two or three people formed to determine six fairly broad options for FORCERT’s future. After deep thinking and discussion, they settled on the general thrust of one option with elements of another option—leaving matters that were up-in-the-air as provocative questions. Such decision-making techniques evolve as steps to collective change. Once learnt, they infiltrate ways of being and managing. Heightened sensitivity to women’s potential became a

hallmark of this project—as shown further—perhaps prompted by Moxham as a role model and by her encouraging women to participate fully. Significantly, when FORCERT briefed Moxham later, in January, on outcomes to their December staff reflection, they announced deciding to employ extra women for their impending action research project. Alongside two male leaders, three women and seven men would be on the action research team.

While Moxham prompted and provoked distinct and novel forms of thinking and behavior, she also had to adapt to, sit with—even sit out—certain PNG cultural norms. Working in groups is common in the collectivist PNG culture. Collectivist interaction is an important counter-balance, even contradiction, to PNG hierarchies. While the leader's role is to direct, 'the rest' take on the responsibility of executing the leader's decisions in collective ways. Moxham found challenges sitting with collective response norms, patiently scoping, deliberating, and collectively agreeing on actions or statements, with 'each process delayed by the most contemplative thinker'. Not surprisingly, participants complained that she failed to give them enough time to work through collective processes, which they valued because they ensured that everyone understood and was engaged in each step of the process.

Such norms in PNG counter time and motion efficiencies in advanced capitalist realities, such as Moxham's Australia. Practitioners need good reasons to ask participants to work in novel ways. Successfully working in cross-cultural ways requires an analysis of what behavior needs to be challenged and what—for time, ethical, and entrenched cultural reasons—might be best to work around and appreciate. In this instance, the project focus on change and action research methods prompted Moxham to challenge certain norms. For the same reason—and contra ideal action research principles—she opportunistically capitalized on others, say occasionally using powers conferred on her as a foreign expert.

The PNG 'cargo cult' mentality of deference (Rhodes, 2014) has parallels with the Latin American patron–client model, built on expected patronage—that visitors will bring gifts such as money, services, or goods to maintain relationships. As forestry and enterprise extension officers, FORCERT officers are seen as experts, advising and assisting community members to set up timber enterprises. To overcome the implicit entrenched hierarchy in this relationship, FORCERT staff needed to move from an 'extension' to an 'empowerment' model of community development—to treat community members as experts, confident in their knowledge and capacity to develop their own enterprises, while FORCERT supported them as partners. When forestry, trade, and national policy categories were discussed in terms of the best interviewees, they decided to not only consult scientific and academic experts but also interview, listen, and learn from experienced community members. Moxham developed staff members' skills in semistructured interviewing. They all deemed acceptable a range of styles, discussed countering bias and how to overcome what

Moxham called a ‘Yes culture’, say by prompting normal village talking styles—relaxing interviewees to encourage reliable and thoughtful responses.

35.9 TEAM BUILDING: ANIMAL PERSONALITIES TECHNIQUE

The first days of the January workshop focused on merging outcomes from the Port Moresby think tank with staff reflection. This process confirmed and further developed six categories of knowledge, and identified key research questions, mapped out so participants could nominate the best kinds of people to approach for answers. They decided to ask community members what makes a well-organized community and other NGOs and government what role they thought FORCERT could undertake nationally.

Staff needed to engage and listen to people from all different kinds of backgrounds. Moxham trained FORCERT staff in straightforward and practical research skills, including interviewing, collecting information, and analyzing their findings. They had to prioritize joint concerns and organize common and delegated approaches so Moxham enhanced the January workshop with team building exercises to support such practical organization.

She introduced a novel and entertaining animal personalities team building technique (<http://www.ausidentities.com.au>) for the critical and strategic collaborative thinking needed to develop and strengthen the action researcher team. She intended this appreciative inquiry technique to provide new lenses to view each other. Moxham uses this technique to suspend prevailing power relations and allow people to self-define, to appreciate—and be appreciated for—their personal strengths and weaknesses, personalities, and thinking styles.

The distinctive ‘personality’ characteristics of four animals were shared with participants and their descriptions placed on tables, as follows.

- Kangaroo: passionate, cause-focused, change agent, active, jumpy, all over the place, good analytical and conceptual thinkers
- Eagle: classic leader, give direction, open to change, forthright, strong, stubborn, insightful, strategic and big-picture thinkers
- Dolphin: emotional, avoids conflict, relationship (heart and feelings) focused
- Wombat: consistent, well-performing plodders, habitual, not strategic thinkers, attentive to detail, good at managing workplace systems, averse to change.

Participants identified themselves with one animal or somewhere between, say two animals that they felt best represented their personality. Moxham facilitated discussion about how specific personalities approach, see, and do things. She made it clear that people can learn new animal personalities. Kangaroos, Dolphins, and Wombats were asked to identify the strengths of Eagles. Eagles were asked to work out what types of communication they liked best and present these findings. The aim of applying this technique was to enable a shift sideways from hierarchical framing, to break down gender, age, and position

barriers, offering ways for better use of staff in strategic and other types of thinking and communicating.

Moxham finds that this technique encourages humor and allows co-workers to see and relate to one another in new ways—softening, even dissolving, established tensions. It fits with traditional mutual-obligation frameworks yet unlocks personal strengths for use in work places as professionals. It helped build FORCERT staff abilities to research collaboratively—revealing the diversity of knowledge and talent beneath a world framed by hierarchical power relations. It helped the team when deciding whom, and how, to interview. Moxham aimed to shatter the assumption that a more senior or authoritative person would have all the answers and encourage peer discussion. Later, Moxham asked Eagles and Kangaroos to focus on strategizing, Dolphins to monitor mood in workshops, and Wombats to pay particular attention to details. They were offered various experiences of identifying team members' special skills for productive use.

Adopting animal personalities and delegating strategic review tasks to appropriate 'animal' clusters made the process more efficient than following normal laborious collective deliberation. It enabled FORCERT staff to rely on and trust each other's strengths and showed how a few members could undertake thinking on behalf of the group. FORCERT management reported that staff developed professionally from this novel technique, applied animal personality knowledge and skills to better coordinate and delegate tasks in action research teamwork, and appreciated that all personalities had to be drawn on to strengthen the team's work.

Reporting on 'interesting and inspiring' aspects of their June workshop, participants showed an understanding of the goals of the technique—as the following quotes show.

- 'The use of different animal personality to do tasks ... was really good to get an excellent outcome'.
- 'Use of animal personality to do tasks (getting right staff to do activity), right combination of team to get views from all sides/corners'.
- 'How we were able to analyze all the information within eight days combining all the different personalities in the room and see where we are heading'.
- 'How a team can work together despite the different animal personalities'.

Furthermore, Moxham suggested that FORCERT leadership draw on such assessments of personal skills. Significantly, by the end of the process, certain position descriptions were altered, and women promoted into senior roles.

35.10 MONITORING, REFLECTION, LEARNING, AND IMPROVING CYCLES

After five months in the field gathering data, starting to analyze interviews and completing the desktop literature review to inform their re-design of FORCERT—participants reflected on unexpected findings and remaining information gaps at the June workshop. They reported especially enjoyed interviewing—learning ‘to allow story telling per category instead of going question by question’. But they had been besieged by logistics and overwork. They found it challenging to keep interviewees on topic, grasp interviewees’ points, and do justice to their views when recording. Many village communities were distant, requiring multiple forms of transport, car, bus, boat, and plane, making the process costly and frustrating when connections failed.

They developed a process to analyze their 53 interviews. The first week involved collating data and cross-referencing (triangulating) findings—working toward a synthesis with overarching conclusions. Synthesis concentrated on capturing themes evident in most interviews and threads, that is significant points that emerged only occasionally, even just once. Each point included the data source on cards posted on a sticky wall and clustered by theme (Photograph 35.1). They found almost no data on alternative entrepreneurial organizational models and some unsatisfactorily answered questions. They only found a few informants with ideas for new commodities to support. FORCERT staff decided to re-analyze some of the data, then concluded that they needed to further explore ethical, organic, and fair trade goods.

This final analysis created a set of categories and themes, marking a critical and climatic moment. Staff struggled to draw out overarching patterns and conclusions. Moxham suggested the use of the animal personalities technique to delegate work. Eagles and Kangaroos focused on the conceptual analysis of findings. Meanwhile, Wombats and Dolphins cross-checked findings against the original questions, to systematically analyze in depth the extent of answers to each question. Moxham observed very different group styles: Wombats and Dolphins were quiet, considered, and systematic, while Eagles and Kangaroos were louder, spontaneous, excited, and dynamic. Significantly, the process enabled two younger women—an Eagle and a Kangaroo—space and permission to make excellent contributions without undermining their seniors.

The FORCERT staff had completed the equivalent of a Masters’ level research project: gathering data in *Tok Pisin*, writing it up in English, evolving some strong findings, and a number of insightful conclusions. Staff decided to integrate participatory action research into everyday FORCERT operations in future.

Based on their research, in the second week, staff designed a program for the new FORCERT organization using theory of change mapping (see Photograph 35.2). To prepare, Moxham detailed the ‘theory of change/program logic’ method (Community Tool Box, 2014) in order to create an understanding of how actions lead to change. Some staff members found this



Photograph 35.1 FORCERT staff engaged in research synthesis (Photographer: Natalie Moxham)

difficult but were able to determine numerous enhancements to organizational processes along action research monitoring-reflection-learning-and-improving cycles. They decided to implement a program logic structure for FORCERT, regular internal reflections, and annual self-evaluations. They reviewed board composition and governance structure, budgetary allocations by area, reviewed possible donors, and defined aims in national (political) influence. Staff decided to apply participatory monitoring to assess change in communities within which they worked.



Photograph 35.2 FORCERT teams at work (Photographer: Natalie Moxham)

They confirmed a greater focus on community development (including community enterprise development) and decided on further exploration of establishing a separate FORCERT fair trade business arm to work with producers, develop markets, and generate income. On the final day, a number of staff focused on improving their knowledge and practice of community development, the new central focus of their work. They shared research findings that effective community development required: initially and clearly explaining FORCERT's work, avoiding false hopes of funding, and instead, focusing on each community owning their development process using Melanesian community development approaches and processes. To further continuous learning, knowledge, and capacity within FORCERT, a team collated advice from their research and certain international texts into a practitioner-focused *FORCERT Community Development Manual*—an iterative working document to hold their collective knowledge of practice.

After four days on organizational design, they collectively stated a new FORCERT vision, goal and mission, theory of change, and seven priority principles and values. Moxham spent several hours with the manager and technical advisor discussing: staff strengths and weaknesses, funding sources to more fully explore the potential of fair trade commodities and national markets, and tools with criteria for selecting communities and for planning community development land use.

35.11 CONCLUSION

A series of axes of power coursed their way through the FORCERT project. Tensions mainly arose from practicing in a different, Melanesian, cultural milieu and with challenges in guiding the process so that the participants determined its substance, the future of FORCERT. Reflecting on such tensions, and disjunctions between ideals and realities, allows for praxis, that is the continual refinement of theoretical reflection on our everyday work practice.

Moxham's reflections centered on the challenge of being a foreign 'expert' in PNG, analyzing how she strategized to lose that authority and foster communication as peers. When Moxham asked for ideas and criticism from participants, they initially lacked confidence to engage with any 'superiors' as peers, but soon started to share suggestions more freely and challenge one another. Applying action research in field interviews with all kinds of people cemented mutually respectful peer-style communication. Moxham reported moving from the role of guide to simple adviser, becoming less strategic and more functional, so much so that participants sometimes started on new tasks unguided. Toward the end of the process, Moxham noticed another indicator of success when a female participant opposed one of her suggestions. Indicating satisfaction with the process, FORCERT asked Moxham to continue working with them. Most significantly, staff decided to integrate participatory action research into FORCERT's future operations.

This case study suggests that being a participatory action research practitioner in Melanesia demands a deep understanding and consciousness of cultural norms, using appreciative inquiry to draw on the strong collective milieu in PNG communities to strengthen peer decision-making and work against hierarchies. Practitioner strategies showed how both adaptation and interventions were critical to using participatory techniques to guide the form of a process while ensuring that participants determined its substance. Empowerment focused on allowing space for, encouraging and listening to, everyone's voices. The animal personality technique undercut cultural mores that might otherwise have interfered with action research practice.

Real practice undercut ideal theory as action research and learning principles of horizontal, shared, and open communication met traditional neo-colonial hierarchies that valued vertical, expert, and oblique decision-making. In such circumstances, Moxham initially found collaboration, analysis, and joint decision-making difficult. Yet, over time, participants mobilized, gained a shared purpose, became strategically focused, decided on a clear way forward, taking over and owning what was essentially a process not only for, and with, but also by, and of, them.

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Through a Lens of Reinterpretation: Roles in Facilitated Action Research

Rachel Perry and Tim McGarry

The term “role” is used frequently when considering the way we work across a variety of industries and circumstances. We see role defined within theatre, use metaphor for roles taken by teachers or those in corporate teams, and define roles we take in our personal lives. The adoption of multiple roles by individuals is also understood within action research (Adelman, 1993; Feldman & Weiss, 2010; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2008; McNiff & Whitehead, 2005; Somekh, 2013), action learning (McGill & Brockband, 2004), traditions of collaborative and community-based action research (Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh, 1993; Bruce, Flynn, & Stagg-Peterson, 2011; Oja & Smulyan, 1989; Stringer, 1999), as well as through an understanding of effective action research-guided professional learning (Aubusson, Ewing, & Hoban, 2009; Groundwater-Smith & Mockler, 2009).

The Oxford Dictionary Online (2015) provides three simple definitions of the term *role*, all relevant in their own way to the process we undertook:

1. The function or position that somebody has or is expected to have in an organisation, in society, or in a relationship.
2. An actor’s part in a play, film/movie, and the like.
3. The degree to which somebody/something is involved in a situation or an activity and the resulting effect.

Guided by these broad definitions, this chapter considers the reinterpretation of roles we played when applying a facilitated action research process to a journey of professional learning in drama by teaching artists, teachers, and an academic.

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36.1 THE CONTEXT

Every good journey has a purpose, with that purpose triggered by past experiences, a desire to learn something new, and shaped by our beliefs. It is also located within a broader context and series of events that led to its commencement. Our collective experience was no different. The language of “journey” has been adopted to respect the fluid and often-unpredictable path through a facilitated action research process.

For this journey, the location was Australia, with a particular focus on Sydney and regional and remote Queensland. The context was a climate of National Curriculum implementation in education, resulting in change and uncertainty for many teachers. The context even more broadly is that of the creative arts, teacher development, and the action research process, in particular, an action research process underpinned by principles of action learning, collaborative and community-based action research, and the integral role of the facilitator. To consider the multiple roles undertaken on this journey and how they were then reinterpreted, we must first clarify the broad context in which the facilitated action research took place and the perspective on action research adopted.

36.2 PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND DRAMA

If we are to give more than lip service to creativity in children, we must actively support the creativity of the teacher. That is to say, we must come to recognise the creativity of good teaching. (Heathcote, 1984, p. 80)

Literature connecting drama and professional learning within schooling takes a number of forms. One approach considers externally located development by which drama teachers participate in sessions to improve practice (Kempe, 1998; Somers & Sikorova, 2002). Participation in externally located courses designed for teachers of drama is historically the most common style of professional learning in this area (Hundert, 1996). While advocated only in balance with school- and classroom-based learning, such an approach not only has benefits for skill development but also provides challenges for site-based application of knowledge. Externally located development of this kind adopts clearly defined and fixed roles for facilitator and teacher. The teacher becomes the recipient of knowledge with those offering skill development or modelling coming to the experience in the role of expert. There is little room for roles to be reinterpreted fluidly and organically within the learning journey. The need for teachers to be offered continued support when attempting the inclusion of drama is also missing in these more static forms of professional learning.

The establishment of a school-based initiative allowing for team-based learning is recognised as a more effective way to build new understandings (Aubusson, Ewing, & Hoban, 2009; Perry, 2012). Respecting each of the workplaces as critical sites on the journey of action research allowed for the

teaching artists and academic to see their roles in multiple ways dependent on the physical location and combination of individuals involved. All three groups became less information recipients and more directly instrumental in the learning process itself.

In 2012, we began a three-year programme to improve the creative arts learning experience for students in remote Queensland schools by offering professional development opportunities for teachers. We believed that structuring our work from an action research perspective would enhance teacher skill and, importantly, improve the ability of artist facilitators to deliver more effective, curriculum-based drama. It would also provide a mechanism to systematically evaluate our work. The programme initially involved twelve teachers from five remote schools outside the Ayr and Mount Isa regions in Queensland. To *clarify the situation* prior to the teaching artists' arrival, teachers completed a background questionnaire and were interviewed by the academic. The aim was to gather data to further support existing research into the reasons teachers struggle to integrate drama effectively into their classrooms and informing the subsequent *cycles of plan, act, reflect*.

The initial gathering of teacher stories identified key factors impacting on their work in remote and regional communities, one of which was access to effective arts-based professional learning. The need for basic skill development as a trigger was integrated into the plan. As an academic, Rachel took on the role of *translator* spending time with each group of teachers providing language and curriculum integration guidance. She also translated for the artists in the first planning phase, providing a path to a shared language by which the learning could be more easily accessed.

As teaching artists, Tim and Sandra then began delivering drama workshop programmes exploring a variety of teaching strategies in a practical and creative way. Workshops ran between 50 and 90 minutes depending on the age of students and required active participation from both students and their class teacher. Within a one-week period, two facilitators delivered fifteen workshops in each region. In tandem with these workshops, the academic engaged teachers in a collaborative, guided process of curriculum integration to achieve practical and sustainable outcomes. Isolation was a key issue for many teachers working in rural and remote communities, and a professional learning project such as this encouraged interaction and collaboration via the use of technology to connect them.

The means of *making the knowledge public* took place deliberately twice across the project, with incidental sharing also occurring from a site-specific perspective. The first sharing opportunity took place halfway through the journey with the teachers from each specific region coming together and providing stories of their successes and challenges. During these gatherings, they not only were storytellers but also adopted the role of *guide* for each other as they directed their peers through the complications and roadblocks identified. The second sharing opportunity occurred through a week-long experience where the teaching artists, academic, and teachers worked together to deliberately

reflect on the experience, share stories, facilitate learning for each other, and celebrate the journey that had taken place.

36.2.1 *The Travellers*

We are using the concept of *travellers* as we view the facilitated action research process undertaken as a journey. We were travellers on this journey, who, like in a favourite film, faced our challenges, and, as the journey progressed, learned that the roles we took were not static. The many roles we found ourselves taking were sometimes predictable, sometimes unexpected, including roles such as the *translator*, the *architect*, the *guide*. This journey had a unique setting. We as travellers worked and engaged in places far removed, places where we were required to challenge and explore within ourselves, and, through our exploration, found our own lives enriched.

There were three groups of travellers who came together on this journey: teaching artists (Monkey Baa Theatre Company); an academic/educator (Dr. Rachel Perry, Australian Centre for Child and Youth—University of Technology, Sydney); and the teachers (five schools in regional/remote North Queensland). Two key voices, a teaching artist and the academic, explore the roles we imagined for ourselves and for the teachers as well as their reinterpretation.

The Teaching Artists—Monkey Baa Theatre Company Monkey Baa was established in 1997 to provide young audiences in rural and remote areas with high quality theatre experiences. Since that time, we have consolidated our reputation as both a theatre of excellence, creating new Australian work solely for young audiences (aged 3–18); as Australia’s widest reaching touring company, we provide a broad range of arts education programmes both at our home base and in regional and remote communities as well as professional learning opportunities for teachers in the belief and knowledge that this builds resilient, creative young people and collaborative communities. One of our key goals is to be trailblazers in connecting arts with education. We develop programmes that engage and excite students and teachers, exploring with them opportunities to deepen their participation, awakening in them new forms of expression, infusing young people’s lives with art.

As participants in one of our workshop programmes and observers of the theatre work on stage, young people are given the opportunity to reflect on their world and gain greater empathy for their community and the world around them. We are committed to inclusion; it lies at the very heart of who we are and why we were founded. We strive to ensure that young people—wherever they are located or whatever their economic circumstance—have the opportunity to experience quality arts education programmes that reflect their own or their community’s experiences of life in Australia. It was this consistent and long-term engagement with remote schools, which led to the development of the Monkey Baa Arts ED Programme.

From the outset, we saw our role as *facilitator*, with the action research process providing an opportunity to extend our own practice through working intimately with teachers in the selected schools. This engagement provided opportunities for us as artists to enhance our understanding of the needs of teachers and curriculum content. The programme also gave us the opportunity to take on our regular role of *teaching artist* when we worked directly with young people who make up our core audience base. As teaching artists, we also knew we would be working closely with Rachel (academic) to extend our practice and find a common language and ground with the teachers in situ. We also worked closely with the teachers exploring classroom management and differentiation opportunities. These interactions assisted us in developing a deeper understanding of the teaching and student learning process, from a teacher's perspective. We knew our knowledge on the curriculum would be greatly challenged—and it was!

The Academic—Dr. Rachel Perry I have worked in education and the arts for over 20 years across schooling, the arts, and tertiary and government sectors. Grown from a passion for the need for a socio-cultural and situated approach to learning, I have focused my engagement in education and the arts on processes that respect beliefs, experiences, and the nuance of context. I developed a strong working relationship with Monkey Baa over many projects since 2003, including the development of teacher resource materials for all the Company's touring programmes, advising on the educational content and impact of workshop programmes, as well as evaluating regional teacher feedback. These evaluations reinforced my beliefs about effective education in the arts, revealing that while teachers valued *one-off* experiences, they were crying out for sustained, professional learning that focused on skill enhancement in classroom-based drama, programming, and broader curriculum integration. The teaching artists from Monkey Baa and I made the decision to shift focus and work with a smaller number of teachers offering a longer term, deeper engagement. The Monkey Baa Arts ED Project was born.

Coming to the journey with a background in action research and action learning, I believed strongly in my role as *facilitator*, being responsive to the needs of those around me. Past research had also helped me understand that multiple roles were likely to occur along the way (Perry, 2006). What they would be and the complex inter-relationships in this context took me by surprise. The first aspect of my growing understanding came through a consideration of whether it was in fact “self” at all that I was considering. I came to realise that I was playing a number of constructed roles within the project. These were based on my own expectations of what a researcher/facilitator must do as well as those I perceived were expected by the teaching artists, schools, and teachers. I saw these roles as similar to those an actor plays in a production, guided by the set, script, and context of a show, or in this case, the classrooms, lessons, and curriculum.

36.2.2 *The Roles Reinterpreted*

Exploration of the place of the “self” is a characteristic of action research and is guided by a consideration of whether we have a choice in the model of self we assume as action researchers (Somekh, 2013). This journey differed due to its focus on the key travellers, acting also as learners, facilitators, or as collaborator. The process of self- and collaborative reflection clarified our thoughts and helped us address “living contradictions” (Whitehead, 1989) in our practice through exploring the various roles undertaken and their reinterpretation.

Drawing on principles of self-study methodology, the process of reflection as an individual and collaborative process is important with learning “especially likely to be significant when we make the effort to reflect upon moments of disruption in our practice” (Wilcox, Watson, & Paterson, 2004, p. 276). A “disruption” was experienced through the questioning of role, requiring us to consider more deeply our place within the professional learning journey. Reflections focused on the way in which we perceived ourselves, the way we were perceived by the other travellers on the journey, and, more importantly, what this meant for the process of sustainable professional learning.

This process of reflection allowed us to identify a number of roles we consciously played within the action research process:

- *Researcher (Academic)*—It was important for me to present myself confidently in this role to the artists, schools, and teachers. I attempted to remain focused at all times on the facilitated action research process being undertaken.
- *Teaching Artist (Artists)*—It was central to the programme that we maintain our identity as artists and not shift into a “drama educator” role. This differentiated us from the academic and classroom teachers and allowed us to bring non-education-based experiences when possible through the process.
- *Confidante (Academic, Artists)*—The teachers clearly trusted us and openly expressed frustration, joy, and anger over issues that arose. To collaborate effectively within the intimate nature of classroom practice requires deeper level conversations that reveal personal aspects of self and practice resulting in the necessity of such a role being adopted.
- *Facilitator (Academic, Artists)*—We all worked actively with each other through the action research process. The academic supported the teaching artists in the development of classroom experiences, with the artists bringing expertise through a theatre/drama approach in the classroom. The academic also supported the teaching artists in the shared language of curriculum.

36.2.3 *The Reinterpretation—The Artists: Tim McGarry*

Arriving in Townsville for the first time to meet the seven teachers I was going to be working with closely for several years flooded me with mixed emotions.

Besides the stifling heat that slapped me as I hit the tarmac, my own feelings of inadequacy rose to the surface. I questioned my role as *facilitator*. What if I wasn't good enough? What if I didn't have enough material? What if the teachers had more knowledge of classroom drama than me? What could I possibly teach them? Arriving at the first school on day one and greeted by enormous smiles and expectations, I saw the teachers eager to learn and clearly as nervous as we were. Underneath it all, though, was a sense of excitement—Who knew how the programme would evolve? With the inclusion of the trial programmes, we ended up working with many of the same teachers for nearly four years. My very practice as a teaching artist was challenged continuously. I didn't quite realise the multiplicity and diversity of roles I would adopt.

Learner My greatest learning curve began with recognition of my limited knowledge of the National Curriculum. My role as learner was to understand the basics of each curriculum area for the particular stage we were teaching. I would then use the teacher's knowledge to enhance the learning through drama. Working with Rachel became more valuable as the programme developed. We would spend time pouring over the vast amount of content sent by the teachers, matching ways of incorporating drama to enhance the various subject learning outcomes. With the need for knowledge growth at times exhilarating and at times frustrating, Rachel was the very personification of calm itself through instilling confidence, content, and experience. Rachel's support continued when we were physically located within each school. A late night call provided a key moment in my learning journey. Struggling to find specific content for developing in-class drama that really connected with students, Rachel encouraged me to trust the students' own creative writing. Doing so, I witnessed the effect that seeing their own words come to life had on learning and self-esteem. This was later reinforced when the class teacher emailed me describing the impact that session had on the students' confidence and learning. They had found their voice. This ongoing support and reassurance was probably the greatest ingredient in our recipe for success and provided the guidance, resources, and direction we needed in our role of learners in the facilitated action research process.

Guide The shift in role from facilitator to guide took me by surprise. While it was hoped for, it revealed itself in different ways with different teachers. I recall coming into one session, with a specific method of physically reinterpreting a picture book with Year 1 students where we would take the pictures and create tableaux images. The teacher explained that she had been thinking about my plan and felt confident the students could be challenged in new ways by using the text. The session went brilliantly, with students extending themselves through imaginative storytelling, warm ups, and exercises that were clearly planned and prepared. The journey the teacher took the students on was absorbing and creative, reinforcing student understanding and knowledge of the book and characters. This teacher's vast educational experience

was being extended even further and the benefit to students was breathtaking. Once again, the joy on their faces told a thousand words. In my role of guide, slowly weaning the teachers from being passive observers to active facilitators was more challenging in some instances, and I realised that it was my perception of what a facilitator was that needed to be reinterpreted. I needed to stop leading, letting go of my own fear of a teacher or class failing. Failing in itself became the greatest teacher of all. Watching these teachers move from a passive to active role brought about the most point of satisfaction for me as the teaching artist.

Peacekeeper As the programme developed, I felt that a number of teachers had become dependent on the original model whereby they participate or observe, and we as teaching artists took the lead. Building confidence and skill in actually delivering the exercise was an aspect I did not quite achieve in some cases. Instead of pushing, I opted to keep the peace. In retrospect, the project should have set clearer parameters through having the teachers lead simple exercises from an earlier point in the programme, thus holding them accountable while still respecting individual journeys. I think their reluctance related to a basic fear of failure and a fear of actually failing in front of their class. As much as we offered our full, enthusiastic, and non-judgmental support and assistance, some teachers were reluctant to take the lead. Some teachers, on the other hand, threw themselves in the deep end and happily worked with the exercises and, when necessary, brought us in to team-teach. Teachers who made the greatest progress in the programme were those not bound by fear of failure.

Model The other teaching artist facilitators with whom I shared the journey inspired me constantly. Their style of facilitation provided an important learning tool for me, particularly in the role of model when working with younger students, as this is a self-identified area in which I needed additional professional development. As much as we were modelling good drama practice to the teachers, the teachers were modelling good teaching practice for us, and the other facilitators were modelling their own style of drama facilitation for me.

Ambassador One of the aspects that made our visit to schools so satisfying was a welcoming Principal. While unconsciously I was aware of this role, on reflection, my place as ambassador was more than just about building relationships. It was also about being an ambassador for drama and the arts in schools more broadly. I had such admiration for Principals who took the time to introduce us to other staff members, spent time on the playground with students, and took time to chat in the staff room with anyone and everyone; the welcoming feeling in these schools was palpable.

Manipulator Space was a challenge. Exercises needed to work within classroom constraints rather than being run in a school hall as I was used to doing in past programmes. The need to take on the role of manipulator challenged

me as the teaching artist. I had to redesign exercises quickly to adjust to small classrooms full to capacity with desks, resources, computers, bags, and projects decorating the ceilings and walls.

As working actors and occasional teaching artists, the journey was greater than we ever anticipated. No two sessions were ever the same, which kept it constantly stimulating for all participating artists. The simplicity of expected roles, and the reinterpretation of them through reflection along the journey, added to the depth of understanding and broadened the reach of the project to be not only about teacher development but also that of teaching artists as well.

36.2.4 *The Reinterpretation—The Academic: Rachel Perry*

I was conscious of the roles I knew I was taking in the facilitated action research process, but through reflective conversations with the teaching artists began to reinterpret what those roles meant, and how to understand them. One approach I considered was to think of my work as a storyteller, placing those I am on the facilitated action research journey with as “*actors in a research narrative*” (Tierney & Lincoln, 1997, p. xi). This led me to consider another perspective, considering the actions of a theatre director and the theatre-making process as a metaphor for shedding light on my broader approach to the action research process, as well as my interpretation of the roles adopted.

Theatre Director Theatre directors have a vision of their show cast, rehearsed and being performed for a respectful, but critical audience. The journey to reach an opening night is filled with negotiation, repetition, and selection as the cast are finalised and scenes set. Researchers in the action research process embark on a journey with a vision in mind of what they might achieve. They establish what they wish to discover and questions to be answered. In addition, they establish the means by which this information may be gathered and analysed. There is expected within the unexpected and therefore understood roles to be played.

I was positioned in the role of *theatre director*, being placed in such a central role by the teaching artists and teachers. I was looked to for overarching vision and asked to take on the role of *guide* through the facilitated action research process. This role never changed; however, the artists and teachers gradually met me as *co-directors*, sharing and shaping the story that has ultimately been told. I was also placed in the role of *storyteller* through the external repositioning and sharing requirements of various stakeholders, just as a director would promote and communicate about their work.

Scenic Designer The set design for any production helps to create the ambience that will encapsulate the performance. The set is the first thing an audience will see as they enter a theatre, and therefore what it says to them should connect with the acting to follow. Sometimes, the set is designed to contrast with the performance where the actor’s dialogue may be in conflict with

what the audience expects. At other times, the set is naturalistic and what is revealed within its bounds fits with convention. Despite which occurs, the set establishes the context within which the action occurs. Action research exists within a specific and naturalistic context in which the actions of the participants play out. The establishment and understanding of the setting/context is critical to assist in understanding the project more clearly. The context is also embedded within the process, as it is inseparable from the participants contained within.

The context, or set, for the facilitated action research process took place in three locations. The first was the Monkey Baa Theatre and local cafes as well as the motel restaurants, the cars and airplane seats where reflective conversations and planning took place. The second was that of the schools and classrooms and the unique communities and North Queensland landscapes in which they were contained. The third was the private space of my office where I went inwards reflecting on elements of the project and the associated interactions. With interactions taking place in multiple locations, translation was crucial to allow the teaching artists and the teachers to maintain clarity in relation to the language and approach they adopt and yet understand the ways of working undertaken by the other. It was through this understanding that the role of *translator* emerged. The provision of this translated experience would then allow all parties to work effectively together, irrespective of location, and eventually see them form a new, shared language for which no translator was eventually required.

Rehearsal Process/Architect Every director is different when approaching the rehearsal process. Some directors are fixed in what they wish to occur and direct their actors in such a specific manner that no negotiation or flexibility is allowed. Other directors like input from their actors. They ask them to live the characters and allow these characters to shape the direction in which performance moves. This latter style of director talks with the actors and is responsive to their suggestions while still ensuring the overall vision for the production is not lost. An action research paradigm allows for flexibility in the details of the research design. Unlike much predetermined scientific research, a facilitated action research process allows for the research to shift as it progresses dependent on actions in the journey itself. The overall aims do not change, but the way in which they are addressed may shift. The “direction” given and therefore roles undertaken will shift accordingly.

Just as in the rehearsal process, to ensure effective connection between the work and actions required me to take on a new role, that of *architect*. In taking on this role, I understood more explicitly the responsibility required by a member of the action research team to maintain clarity of the design, the overarching and interconnecting process, while supporting the freedom of genuine planning, acting, and reflecting characteristic of a facilitated action research process.

CONCLUSION

Teaching artists across Australia, and internationally, regularly embark on engagement with schools, teachers, and their students. We believe that flexibility within the journey of facilitated action research allowed for the reinterpretation of roles and resulted in deeper and more sustainable engagement than that offered within less flexible models of engagement.

Increased *awareness* along with a greater sense of *openness* emerged as the two key areas encapsulating the journey for both the artists and the academic, with *flow-on* implications for others engaging in a sustained experience with schools and drama. Enhanced awareness by all stakeholders is crucial for ensuring maximum growth and depth of experience within the facilitated action research process.

- Awareness by schools that teaching artists are not teachers and come to the experience from an artistic perspective, using a different artistic language, underpinned by a knowledge of arts in education and a broad but basic knowledge of the curriculum.
- Awareness by teachers participating in a professional learning journey that their role will shift, and they are more than recipients of modelling and information in the classroom.
- Awareness by artists that they will be more than providers of experiences.
- Awareness that when working in rural/remote communities what they do within the classroom will have broader reaching impacts than that that might be witnessed in metropolitan schools
- Awareness by an academic facilitator that each teacher and each teaching artist has varying degrees of strengths and weaknesses in their specific fields of expertise.
- Awareness of the academic facilitator as translator, as the artist and the teacher approach the same task using different descriptive language and terminology.

Shifting awareness of roles by all stakeholders resonates with both the tradition of school-based drama as shaped by the work of Dorothy Heathcote (Aitken, 2013; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995) and the repositioning of “audience” as explored by Augusto Boal (Paterson, 2012). Both Heathcote and Boal reinterpreted the expected, allowing for new and often unexpected roles to be played.

In parallel with the way in which Boal (Paterson, 2012) transformed his audience from “viewers,” to having the ability to stop a performance, make suggestions, and shift the action, we saw the participating teachers also take on more active roles. As expected, they adopted Heathcote’s teacher having the mantle of the expert (Aitken, 2013; Roy, Baker, & Hamilton, 2012) through taking on the role of *facilitator* rather than instructor in classroom drama engagements. They became more of a *guide* and *model* for the teaching artists supporting us as visitors in their contexts and as experts in relation to the needs

of their students. As within the goal of the *Theatre of the Oppressed*, the teachers, along with us as artists and academic were “empowered not only to imagine change but to actually practice that change” (Paterson, 2012, n.p., para. 2). The collective reflections built into the facilitated action research process, and the duration of the project, allowed space for such practice to take place.

The need for openness in relation to the roles artists, teachers, and academics play also connects with the need for change to be more than imagined. There is also need to consider new roles as a journey progresses and engage deliberately in their exploration.

The ability to reinterpret roles takes confidence and at times challenged what we knew of our own practice and our expectation of the other travellers on the journey. The facilitated action research process provided a responsive and fluid model that allowed us to challenge what we knew. Further research and exploration of the teacher voice in this change process is essential. For us, the result was a growth of understanding, greater depth, and sustainable engagement on the journey of enhancing classroom practice in drama.

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Inside the Outside: Reflections on a Researcher's Positionality/Multiple "I's"

Nathalis Wamba

37.1 POSITIONING MYSELF AS A RESEARCHER

I was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Africa, a former Belgian colony. I came to the USA in 1982 for graduate school. While in graduate school, I worked with street-oriented youth and also taught as an adjunct in a number of colleges. In 2005, a college hired me as a full-time faculty member to teach in the Education Division. In 2012, I received a Fulbright award to teach and conduct research at Mzuzu University in Mzuzu, Malawi, in Southern Africa.

Malawi is a landlocked country located in the Southern part of Africa below the equator. The country's population is about 15.91 million. It is one of the poorest countries in Africa. The per capita gross national income is about US \$ 270 per year. Thirty-nine percent of the population lives on US \$1 or less a day. Fifteen percent of the population is categorized as ultra poor living on less than US \$.50. The country has also been severely affected by the legacy of HIV/AIDS. Eleven percent of the population is infected (National Statistical Office (NSO) & United Nations International Children Education Fund (UNICEF), 2009).

Mzuzu is the third largest city in Malawi, located in the mountainous northern region of the country. It is more a sprawling village than an urban center. Its five tarmac roads spread out toward the labyrinth pathways of neighborhoods, where residents survive largely through subsistence farming.

I was invited by Mzuzu University, a relatively new university founded in 1997, to help build capacity for new faculty and implement new programs. Today, the university has about 3,500 students, 150 faculty members, with two full professors (one Irish, the other Malawian), three associate professors,

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lecturers, and instructors. Very few faculty members hold the earned doctorate. I was introduced to a few faculty members in the education department who had just returned to the country after completing their doctoral programs in England, South Africa, and New Zealand.

Building capacity sounds great to funding agencies and proposal evaluators. However, in an era when African scholars and intellectuals are thinking about decolonizing their universities, building capacity to reproduce a Western type of university does not further this cause. This tension compelled me to reassess whether my acculturation and its derived benefits were an asset, a liability, or both. Colonial experience suggests that Western knowledge has long dehumanized Africans and justified the colonial enterprise. Idris (2013) writes, “The colonialists, overcome by their rapacity, abandoned any sense of morality in their colonial exploits around the world. They built a web of lies—that the colonized were infantile, uncultured and grotesque beings who needed to be cultivated and saved. In the worst cases, with indigenous people, they even denied them their humanity and committed genocide against them” (p. 14).

Considering the additional claims that current universities are the purveyors of an imperialist worldview that perpetuates Western hegemony through their education models that are so destructive to indigenous cultures, languages, ways of life, and knowledge systems, I had to ask if I was a trustworthy individual to “build capacity” in a way that might counter the intellectual imperialist hegemony of the West. Would coming from the USA, a non-colonial superpower, absolve me from the sins of colonization? What about US imperialism in the world? Idris (2013) remarks, “In spirit and in practice, we do not want to be part of an intellectual world in which we have only the role of peddlers and parrots” (p. 15). Although I agree wholeheartedly with Idris, at Mzuzu University, I felt from faculty members in particular, a deep sense of gratitude toward Western knowledge that was perceived as the only way to social, economic, and political growth. Malawians and many other Africans feel that Western knowledge is much needed for economic development, a belief that feeds the inferiority complex that many sub-Saharan Africans hold, especially in the absence of well-articulated local and indigenous ways of thinking about development. Colleagues with whom I had the opportunity to engage in these conversations not only understood the need for change but also felt powerless to initiate it.

As I arrived at Mzuzu University in August 2012, the staff and the faculty were on strike. Not knowing how long the strike would last, I decided to volunteer at Kwithu, a community-based organization, serving poor and orphaned children in the Luwanga neighborhood. My work there took an unexpected turn for the best, leading to a community-based participatory action research initiative for school improvement that I did not plan—The Kwithu Project.

The Kwithu Project started when a volunteer who joined Kwithu to teach English to the children gave a diagnostic test to a random group of 40 7th and 8th graders (20 boys and 20 girls) and discovered that most of them could hardly read or write in English. The test results prompted the Kwithu director

and co-founder, the teacher, and myself to meet with the head teachers of the three schools where most of the Kwithu children were enrolled.

At the meeting, we shared the results of our diagnostic test. The head teachers were not impressed. One head teacher asked us if we had tested the children's math skills, which we had not. He remarked that had we tested them in math they would have done a little better. "Math is a universal language; English is not," he added. As the conversation proceeded, the oldest of the head teachers expressed his appreciation of our concerns about the English proficiency of the children, but advised us to focus, if we truly wanted to help, on more pressing issues, e.g., lack of teaching and learning materials, lack of running water in schools, hunger, teachers' qualifications, lack of toilets, and so on. This advice shifted our initial concern about English language teaching to a project addressing the school conditions in the sprawling working-class and poor neighborhood of Luwinga.

In New York City, I had worked in some of the most challenging schools when I was a graduate student. I felt tempted to offer solutions and clear advice. After all, people expected solutions from the "university professor." However, when Maureen, the Kwithu director and co-founder, asked me what to do, I suggested that we talk to the community people. Specifically, I proposed that we organize them to conduct a needs assessment of schools that we would facilitate before asking them to engage in a process of proposing and implementing solutions. We identified a group of 15 individuals we thought represented the community to attend our first meeting. Among the fifteen were school teachers, head teachers, parents, community leaders, students, clergy, and small business owners. On the day of the meeting, 75 people showed up, including a village chief. Through this 'much larger than anticipated' attendance, we learned that our original sample had not necessarily been representative of the community, and the community had taken it into its own hands to remedy that. We also learned how eager the community members were for the sort of forum we had created. An uninvited old gentleman in the crowd expressed how happy he was to attend a meeting where community people would talk about children.

The Kwithu Project and my work at Mzuzu University caused me to wear multiple hats: a community organizer, an activist, a college teacher, and a servant leader—to name only a few. In this paper, I reflect on my multiple identities as an African, an immigrant to the USA, a college professor, and who I was in relationship to people at Kwithu and Mzuzu University and how they viewed me. Going back to Africa after more than twenty years of absence raised a host of questions for me. Was I an insider or an outsider? What did the locals think of me? These questions cut to the core of what action researchers have referred to as positionality, self-study (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001), or auto-ethnography (Bochner & Ellis, 2002; Reed-Danahay, 1997). Maher and Tethreault (2001) explain that positionality is the idea of people not being defined in terms of fixed identities, but rather by their location within shifting networks of relationships that can be analyzed and changed. Takacs (2002)

writes “understanding positionality means understanding where you stand with respect to power, an essential skill for social change agents” (p. 172). Action researchers concern themselves with positionality because it helps them reflect on trustworthiness, research ethics, solidarity around issues, and motivation into action.

Positionality faces much criticism, too. For some critics, it is reflexive self-obsession (Kobayashi, 2003; Peach, 2002). Kobayashi (2003) argues that reflexivity has little purpose unless it is connected to a wider purpose and agenda about how the world should be and how the world needs to change. It is essential for researchers to consider what they are doing and how and why they are doing it, in the context of thinking about who they are (Hopkins, 2007). In an attempt to better understand what I was doing, I needed to address the multiple “I’s” that I brought to Mzuzu University and Kwithu in relation to those I was tempted to frame as the “other.” Lacan (1977) distinguishes between the “I” which looks and the “I” which is seen, including the “I” that is ‘seen by me.’ I needed to reconcile these “I’s” with the image others had of me (Zizek, 1989).

I reflect on the way these multiple identities (“I’s”) came into play while working at Mzuzu University and Kwithu. My work in both settings compelled me to revisit earlier assumptions that I cultivated when I grew up in the Congo, specifically my unstated sense of inferiority in relation to the Western culture. Perhaps, the most devastating thing that I later realized was my adoption of systems of knowledge used to oppress me and my folks for my own career advancement. I found myself uncritically dispensing that same kind of knowledge to my students. Weis (1995) remarks that the colonial other and the self are simultaneously co-constructed, the first being judged against the latter. I needed to confront my identities deriving from my colonial past and my multi-acculturation, including the “I” that is seen by me, the “I” which looks, and the “I” that is seen.

37.2 IDENTITY ONE: THE “I” THAT IS SEEN BY ME

I was the fourth child of a family of eight: two boys and six girls. My father, who was one of only a handful of college-educated Congolese, firmly believed in education and was determined to see us all get a college education. It was unpopular at the time in sub-Saharan Africa to send girls to school. Girls were expected to get married. They did not “need” an education. My father was ahead of his time. He always told my sisters, “Your true husband is your diploma. A husband can leave you any time, but your diploma will never leave you.”

I attended the best schools in Congo, which were created and run by Belgians. After my primary school, I took the exam to enroll in a seminary to become a Jesuit priest. I was the only candidate who passed the examination. The seminary was very regimented, but the education was superb. I learned to play piano and organ. At home, we were expected to speak French. We had

to learn and to practice *les bonnes manières* or proper etiquette, including how to sit at the table and how to greet people. My whole family committed to acculturation, even though it meant separating ourselves from the rest of the Congolese people except those few of our social class.

I read Marx, Kant, Hegel, Sartre, Simone DeBeauvoir, Fanon, and Camus to name a few. However, it was in 11th grade when I read *Les Damnés de la Terre* (*The Wretched of the Earth*) (1961) and *Peau Noire, Masques Blancs* (*Black Skin, White Masks*) (1956) by Fanon that my political education started. I began to question colonialism, capitalism, imperialism, and economic exploitation and class differences. I became a fierce debater. I felt Fanon accurately described what was happening in my house: being forced to speak French, observing the *bonnes manières*, and following a dressing code. Fanon remarks that in the presence of the oppressor, the colonized unavoidably assume that because their native language is so dissimilar from the new dominant population, they are intrinsically inferior. My family lifestyle reinforced my inferiority complex.

I was unaware of what was going on in my father's mind. He worked closely with the Belgians and was very conflicted about his relationship with them. As a young man, he witnessed firsthand the atrocities committed by Belgians during the colonial time, including people whose limbs were severed because of their refusal to harvest rubber, police dogs unleashed on protesters, and the destruction and confiscation of cultural artifacts that were later found in museums in Belgium. On the other hand, he was one of the early beneficiaries of a college education made possible to him by the Belgians because of his father's hospitality to the Catholic missionaries who settled in the Manianga region in Congo. So he was the good black man, the Congolese version of a "house nigger."

As a young boy, I was unclear about my privilege until one day when my family went to a concert. There was a long line of people waiting to go inside the concert hall. As we arrived, we were immediately ushered in by a Congolese usher who told his colleague, "They are the children of an 'évolué'." Although we spoke French at home, this was the first time I had heard the word *évolué*, literally an "evolved" or "developed" person, and used during the colonial era to refer to a native African or Asian who had "evolved" by becoming Europeanized through education or assimilation and had accepted European values and patterns of behavior. It was also used to describe the growing native middle class in the Belgian Congo between the end of World War II and the independence of the colony in 1960. Colonial administrators defined a *évolué* as a man having broken social ties with his group and having entered another system of motivations, another system of values. The administration viewed education, income, morality, and holding a position of responsibility to be important parts of determining whether an individual was an *évolué* or not (Delancey & Delancey, 2000; Gillet & Cornet, 2010). When we returned home, I asked my father what it meant to be an *évolué*, and he was hesitant and a little embarrassed by the question, but he finally explained the term to

me. What about the other people, I inquired? Aren't they *évolués*? He had no answer.

Upon graduation from college, as a son of an *évolué*, I was expected to go abroad to continue my education. Although we often traveled to Europe, I decided to go to the USA, where things became much more complicated. If there was a "payoff" for acculturation in the Congo, that is, a certain privilege as an *évolué*, in the USA, I was both black—which took on a new set of freighted meanings—and also an immigrant, and therefore free of some of the tense and bitter history that stood between white and African Americans. In the USA, I experienced blatant racism firsthand, as I still do. A Brooklyn realtor told me that the white female landlord who had shown me her basement apartment had confessed, "He may be a nice guy, but I cannot rent my apartment to a black person." I was the son of an *évolué* in Congo but now denied an apartment because of my skin color. I was coming to learn that this would be my reality in the USA, an ongoing dialectic between acculturation and marginalization.

At Mzuzu University, I worked with college professors, teachers, administrators, comparatively privileged people; at Kwithu, I dealt mostly with the poor, those living on less than US \$.50 a day. (I will say more about this later). I did not have to worry about my skin color. Blackness, the object of marginalization in the USA, became the substance of my kinship with the people at Kwithu. Unfortunately, as I will examine, it was insufficient to claim full insider status. Outsider that I was, I still built a modest level of trust. I felt accepted. I was able to observe, listen, and talk. I was a half insider.

37.3 IDENTITY TWO: THE "I" WHICH LOOKS

The "I" which looks had to contend with various ways of seeing. Berger (1980) notes thus: "It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relation between what we see and what we know is never settled" (cover page).

During my second month in Mzuzu, I was invited to attend the first ever conference organized by Mzuzu University and other partner universities on Malawian literature. Most of the speakers were Malawian writers living abroad or in exile whose work was published abroad. They all write in English, and the general Malawian population does not speak English. During the conference, most speakers emphasized the necessity of an authentic Malawian literature. During breaks, classical European music like Mozart and Bach was piped into the conference main hall.

At the conference, I met more new faculty members. These new faculty members were individuals exposed to aspects of European culture superimposed on the local ethnic cultures. They have acquired Western values, adopted Eurocentric education associated with capitalist values of economic rewards. They returned to the country as multi-acculturated individuals unaware that

one day they would have to work out this confusingly new cultural identity. Their deference to Western knowledge was deeply ingrained. Fanon notes that the root of the inferiority complex is a massive psycho-existential complex derived from the “juxtaposition of the black and white races” (Fanon, 1952, p. xvi). On the subject of race, Fanon writes, “There is a fact: White men consider themselves superior to black men. There is another fact: Black men want to prove to white men, at all costs, the richness of their thought, the equal value of their intellect” (p. 10). Although I agree with the gist of Fanon’s statement, I would argue that not all people whom we identify as white accept this construct or subscribe to this way of thinking.

A great deal of talk at the University was about promotion and university quality control. Seldom did I hear concerns about social justice issues or economic inequality, except when comparing their own salaries. When people talked about quality control, the idea was “to be like a western university.” The criteria for university quality control were unclear. When I inquired about those criteria, I was given a laundry list of resource needs: technology equipment, library resources, Internet access, and so on. This is not to suggest that these things are not important, but to rely solely on equipment to evaluate the quality of an academic institution is insufficient. Others were concerned about the ranking of the university compared to other African universities. Nowhere did the curriculum, instruction or quality of the faculty figure in the quality control analysis of the institution.

Simultaneous to my initiating contacts at the university, I began to volunteer three days per week at Kwithu, a community-based organization. Kwithu (*Tumbuka* word for home) was established in 2004 by two Malawian women who wanted to create a program for the burgeoning number of orphans resulting from the HIV/AIDS epidemic. They built a makeshift kitchen and started feeding about 20 children a day. But soon the number soared from 20 to about 250. Feeding was not enough, they realized, so they also decided to start an after-school program to help children access academic support, participate in recreational activities, and secure financial assistance to pay for school fees and uniforms.

I met Maureen, a co-founder of Kwithu, and asked her if I could volunteer at the center. She first gave me a tour of the facilities, including the tomato garden. She suggested that I work in the office, but I told her that I would prefer to work in the tomato garden, which came as quite a surprise to her. In many ways, this set me apart from the only three men who worked in the office. This contributed to their surprise at my choice of tending the tomatoes garden over office work. It also made that choice crucial to forming a more equal partnership. I knew that I wanted to introduce myself to people and interact with them. In the garden, I would have an opportunity to see, to observe, and to listen. I kept asking myself, “What do you see? What don’t you see? How did you learn to see? Why don’t you see?” The Kwithu women came each day faithfully. They seemed to enjoy each other’s company. Speaking to some of them, I learned that they were all volunteers. Most of them were widows who had lost

their husbands to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. They showed extreme resiliency and an unflinching commitment to see the children succeed. They wanted the best for them. Kwithu was willing to provide help and even secure scholarships for some children.

My knowledge of the two local languages, *Chichewa* and *Tumbuka* was very limited. However, I was able to relate to people. What was striking with the people at Kwithu was their strong sense of community, something colonialism had not dismantled as it had with the poor in Congo and most African countries. Kwithu folks were far less acculturated. However, I witnessed excruciating poverty and the contradictions created by the new capitalism. I saw people without shoes and lacking food carrying cell phones. Despite these conditions, Kwithu women took care of themselves and the orphans. Understanding their conditions brought me closer to them, while my privileges, the result of my acculturation and education, kept me at a distance.

Two hundred and fifty children came to Kwithu every other day for food, homework assistance, and recreational activities. Eighty children were HIV positive. Some of them had full-blown AIDS. Most of them attended the three schools located nearby Kwithu.

I visited those schools to see firsthand what the children were dealing with. The first thing that grabbed my attention was the overcrowded classroom. In one particular classroom, there were nearly 250 students sitting on the cement floor. There were no books, no teaching or learning materials. In one school, in particular, children were being taught outside, sitting under trees. This I was told was the result of the introduction of Free Primary Education as part of the United Nations "Education for All," which was ill planned and created an instant overcrowding situation, especially in all primary schools. As fees were waived, children flooded the public school system that was poorly equipped to handle them. Between 1994 and 1995, enrollment in primary schools surged from 1.9 million students to 3.2 million (Wamba & Mgomezulu, 2014). It was the crisis of school overcrowding, under-resourcing, the AIDS pandemic, and other issues we would confront as our community-based participatory action research project progressed.

At an early stage of our work, Maureen and I and three Kwithu women visited a school. This was part of the conversations we initiated with community people about school improvement. As the meeting proceeded, a gentleman rose to say, "You came here and I was expecting you to tell us what to do and now you are telling us that we have to solve these problems ourselves," to which a woman replied, "You (to the gentleman who made the point) have become accustomed to taking, always taking and you bring nothing to the table."

This was one of the problems Kwithu women were dealing with: convincing other people in the neighborhood that they could rely on the power of their agency. People at the university talked about the dependency trap, a belief that the government, the non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or other organizations would take care of the schools. NGOs are present in Malawi in

large numbers. The Malawian government has partly surrendered its education sector by opening its doors to the donor community. In 2001, about 30% of the ministry of education budget and between 70% and 80% of the education development budget was donor-funded (Nielsen, 2001). Donors commissioned a significant body of research supporting their continued work in the country.

Excessive reliance on outside donors carries serious implications for the Ministry of Education and the country in general. Donors often pressure the Ministry of Education, demanding educational changes before dispensing aid. Outside donors identify and define the educational needs of the country and often impose solutions with minimum consultation with the stakeholders, a contradiction to the policy included in the Framework for Poverty Alleviation Program established by the government, which advocates that poor people be “empowered to improve their plight and contribute to national development”(United Nations Development Programs [UNDP], 1997, p. 14).

The issue of how NGOs facilitate participation has come under serious scrutiny. Scholars are now debating the efficacy of NGOs in service delivery. It is questionable whether NGOs have fully embraced the concept of participation. White (1995) remarks that the politics of participation regarding who participates, what they participate in, how they participate, and for what reason they did. (in Meyers, 1999; Yamamori, Myers, Bediako, & Reed, 1996).

Wamba and Mgoomezulu (2014) write,

Because of this massive outside intrusion (of NGOs), a great number of Malawians bear a misconception about who owns their schools. Schools have been associated with the government, or donors, or missionary organizations or even with the construction companies that built them. The notion that schools belong to the community is not widely held (USAID, 2006). Consequently, communities have tended to play almost no role in school activities. (p. 329)

Despite the disconnect between communities and NGOs, the people’s faith in them remains strong. During our focus group meetings, participants talked about involving NGOs assistance in improving schools, and, in fact, some of them have learned to work quite well with local communities in creating true partnerships.

The “I” which looks saw people like myself experiencing struggles that many people in Africa are undergoing. Mzuzu University and Kwithu were two worlds apart. The university was not engaged in and was poorly informed about the struggles of surrounding schools. Kwithu had no relationship with the university. I arranged for a meeting between Kwithu women and the university vice-chancellor to discuss allowing children who attended Kwithu to use the university’s children’s library. This was the first interaction between these two institutions.

37.4 IDENTITY THREE: THE “I” WHICH IS SEEN

How did people see me? The “I” which is seen’ represents the ways the participants read and interpreted the researcher/facilitator. Maureen introduced me as a university professor from the USA working at Mzuzu University. People associated me with power, not only because of the title, but also because of my association with Maureen and also the conclusions that are born out by clothing and posture and the appearance of wealth.

Gee (2000) writes,

When any human being acts and interacts in a given context, others recognize that person as acting and interacting as a certain ‘kind of person’ or even as several different ‘kinds’ at once.... The ‘kind of person’ one is recognized as ‘being’ at any given time and place, can change from moment to moment in the interaction, can change from context to context, and, of course, can be ambiguous or unstable. Being recognized as a certain “kind of person” is what I mean here by ‘identity.’ (p. 99)

What the community people saw, I guess, was my multiple identities (Gee, 2000). They saw a black man (nature identity) and a university professor (institutional identity). I was identified with people with power (discourse identity). I lived in the USA and spoke *Chizungu* (English... the language of white people) rather than *Chichewa* or *Tumbuka*. I was an enigma to most people, an object of curiosity.

My nature identity is that of a Black man from the Bakongo tribe in the DRC. This is my biological identity. This is not the result of anything I have done or accomplished. The source of this identity is genes over which I have no control. The source of this is nature, not society, and the process through which this works is human development. I recognized this identity and so did the people I worked with in Luwingu. They saw this as the “kind of person” I am, with whom they identified.

The second identity that people noticed was the institutional one, a university professor. This is a position. It is not something that nature gave me, unlike my skin color. The source of my position as a professor is a set of authorities (in this case the Board of Trustees, the administration of the University). The source of this power is my university. The process through which this works is authorization, that is laws, rules, and traditions. At Mzuzu University and Kwithu, this was a sign of success. I heard people telling me, “We will be following in your footsteps.”

The third perspective on my identity was my association with power, which developed through the dialogue I had with the people. I worked with Maureen, who is the co-founder of Kwithu, a woman highly respected in her community for the work she was doing with orphan children. I joined her and soon became her right hand. We both benefitted from our collaboration. I also felt that Maureen was looking for something new to do. I gave her that opportunity by having her focus on the community-based participatory action research

project for school improvement. For me, she became my interpreter to the whole community. We created a strong team. We traveled together to schools, interviewed people, and organized meetings. Through my partnership with Maureen, people came to accept my role in this school improvement project.

The fourth perspective on my identity was what Gee (2000) referred to as affinity perspective. This was very obvious to people. Gee defines “an affinity group as a group made of people who may be dispersed across a large space (may in fact be in different countries)” (p. 18). What people in the group share and must share to constitute an affinity group is allegiance to, access to, and participation in specific practices that provide each of the group’s members the requisite experiences. The process through which this power works, then, is participation or sharing. My affinity has been with the Western culture because of my family history and where I have spent most of my adult life participating in specific practices.

Regardless of my skin color, a couple of times I was referred to as *muzungu* (white person). For example, one day my car broke down on the road. Soon, I was surrounded by a group of neighborhood people who I felt wanted to help me. However, because of my language limitation, I could not communicate with them until a gentleman who spoke English came along. It became clear to neighborhood people that I was a *muzungu*, since I could only speak English, and I drove a decent car. I was being “otherized” in a manner that was both superior in terms of my privilege but also inferior in terms of the cultural literacy that I needed to have in order to be part of the community.

The interpretive research community has called for a reexamination of the researchers’ position and motives toward the research participants (Fine, 1994; Lather, 1991; Roman & Apple, 1990). Researchers also acknowledge that they have been implicated in imperialist agendas (Pratt, 1986; Rosaldo, 1989) by participating in the “othering” and in the exploitation and domination of their research participants (Roman & Apple, 1990). Thus, the researcher’s multiple identities may influence and reshape research encounters, processes, and outcomes.

37.5 DISCUSSION

At this point, these multiple “I”s make me feel like an individual with a multiple personality disorder. My personality has gone through fragmentation. Confronting this fragmentation helps me come face-to-face with things I never thought I would revisit. Paulo Freire (1988), the famed Brazilian educator, points to the importance of “third world” scholars grappling with this schizophrenia and writes:

How can the oppressed, as divided, unauthentic beings, participate in developing the pedagogy of their liberation? Only as they discover themselves to be “hosts” of their oppressor can they contribute to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy. As long as they live in duality in which *to be* is *to be like* and *to be like* is *to be like the oppressor*, this contribution is impossible. (p. 33)

To be like the oppressor, Fanon (1952) explains, is to lead a life of wishing to be like the colonizer and to develop an inferiority complex that increases on every occasion in which the individual is confronted with the fact that he is not.

The “I that is seen by me” begs for a rethinking and a reexamination of the results of my acculturation, and its benefits/privileges, and its limitations. The “I which is seen” is perhaps the most challenging because we have no control over how people perceive us. To our collaborators, we are texts, plural texts, so open (or vague) as to yield an infinite number of interpretations (Roseneau, 1992).

As a beneficiary of Western privileges, I had to make sure that I did not participate in the construction of the other in Malawi because to do so would be to allow humanity to be divided into two groups: one that embodies the norms and whose identity is valued and the other that is defined by its faults, devalued, and susceptible to discrimination (Staszak, 2008). Among colonized people who were stigmatized as others, called barbarians and savages and relegated to the margin of humanity, I struggled with what Bell Hooks (1989) referred to as the politics of location: “Within complex and ever shifting realities of power relations, do we position ourselves on the side of colonizing mentality? Or do we continue to stand in political resistance with the oppressed?” (p. 145).

Although I worked well with people during my stay, I also experienced multiple challenges. Using community-based participatory action research was my way of positioning myself outside the colonizing paradigm. Working at Kwithu felt liberating. At Mzuzu University, I struggled with the oppressor hosts. I traveled on a troubled continuum from being an insider to being an outsider. Herr and Anderson (2005) write, “Positionality occurs not only in terms of inside/outside, but also in terms of one’s position in the organizational or social hierarchy, and one’s position of power vis-à-vis other stakeholders inside and outside the setting” (p. 41). I did not fall neatly into a pre-arranged category but rather kept shifting from one position to the other as the project moved along, something that helped me appreciate reality from different “I’s” and deconstruct my taken-for-granted truths. Fine (1994) talks about “working the hyphen,” suggesting that researchers probe how they are in relation with the context they study and with the informants, understanding that they are all multiple in those relations. Working the hyphen means creating occasions for researchers and informants to discuss what is and is not “happening between” the negotiated relations of whose story is being told, why, to whom, with what interpretation, and whose story is being shadowed, why, whom, and with what consequence.

Being both an insider and an outsider had its privileges, blurring the boundaries between the “I’s” and the presumed other. Being a co-leader in this community-based participatory action research project and working at Mzuzu University challenged me to interrogate my multiple “I’s” in relationship to the people and to the setting. By making explicit the tensions, I experienced in my various roles, I was able to understand the people better and rethink my role.

Perhaps, what makes positionality essential in my situation is the fact that as an African scholar, there are several ideological trends one can subscribe to. Some of us are embedded with colonial powers that want to continue the exploitation of Africa; others have emerged as postcolonial critics interpreting Africa to the West and the West to Africa; and last but not least, there are the committed radicals engaged in the struggle for transformation in Africa (Seleza, 2015). I am in for transformation, but the path to transformation must first be articulated, and I hope that an examination of the positionality embodied by the “I” which looks, the “I” which is seen, and the “I” that is “seen by me” adds to the articulation.

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Digital Technology in Service of Action Research

Margaret M. Riel

Action research is a form of individual or collective inquiry into practice that revolves around enacting change to better align values or solve problems followed by a systematic set of steps for learning from that action (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005; Feldman, Paugh, & Mills, 2004; Lewin, 1946; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). Riel and Lepori (2014) conceptualized the outcomes of conducting action research in three overlapping arenas: (1) change in the professional skills, knowledge, and identity of the action researcher; (2) change experienced by those participating in the action research; and (3) change gained through and from sharing action research findings with others in and beyond the immediate context. The outcomes of action research benefit the person conducting the research, the local community, and extended research communities. In this chapter, I discuss these systems of outcomes, providing the broad strokes of action research, and then narrow in on ways that digital technology can support these outcomes.

I focus on tools by function and then provide current examples since new tools and applications will evolve faster than any publication process. Fortunately, functions are a bit more stable than tools and applications (Straub, 2009). I also focus on tools that are widely available, either free or with minimal fees. Some of the tools will be discussed in more than one section as they serve multiple functions. I explore tensions and challenges that surround the use of technology in each of the overlapping arenas of action research.

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38.1 TECHNOLOGY AND CHANGE IN PROFESSIONAL SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, AND IDENTITY

Action research is an ongoing iterative approach that takes place across cycles of innovation and reflection. It is *not* a single research project. It is a way of learning from and through systematic inquiry into one's practice. Action researchers progressively transform problems into questions, use those questions to shape action, and reflect on the results to create *living theories* (Whitehead, 2009) that frame new questions and actions.

While Lewin (1946) is credited with the first use of the term action research, Dewey (1910) might be invoked for professional learning through action research. In 1910, Dewey described a set of mental habits and dispositions that arise from a highly reflective process of problem-solving, driven by inquiry and with a clear role for judgments rooted in intuition and curiosity (see Riel & Rowell, Chap. 40, this volume). Dewey's design of the University of Chicago Laboratory School, its focus on creating a democracy in the school, and the way he modeled research may well earn him credit as an early advocate of action research.

But would Dewey welcome digital tools' use in the lab school if he were alive today? To the extent that technology is used to connect and engage both learners and researchers into authentic tasks, his writing suggests that he would have encouraged teachers to use these tools of the adult society to engage students in authentic learning experiences. He believed the school should mirror adult life, being "a miniature community, an embryonic society" (Dewey, 1907, p. 22). However, Dewey warned us that when technology is used to create "inert learning" or "passive learning," as he saw in the overuse of textbooks, "there is a danger of creating an undesirable split between the experience gained in direct association [with the world and each other] and what is acquired in school" (Dewey, 1916, p. 9).

Inquiry, analysis, and reflection, and with a focus on increasing democratic participation and social justice follow an iterative "progressive problem solving" pathway to developing professional expertise (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993; Hatano & Inagaki, 1986; Riel & Rowell, Chap. 40, this volume). The research cycles displayed in Fig. 38.1 can be thought of as a process of living one's theory into practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006; Whitehead, Chap. 24, this volume).

38.1.1 *Digital Technologies and Professional Change*

It is hard to imagine engaging in research today without the utility of basic productivity tools such as word processors and communication tools such as e-mail or social networks. Technology can support professional inquiry with tools that action researchers *personally* use to plan, research, implement, analyze, and reflect on action research in their workplace. These tools can contribute

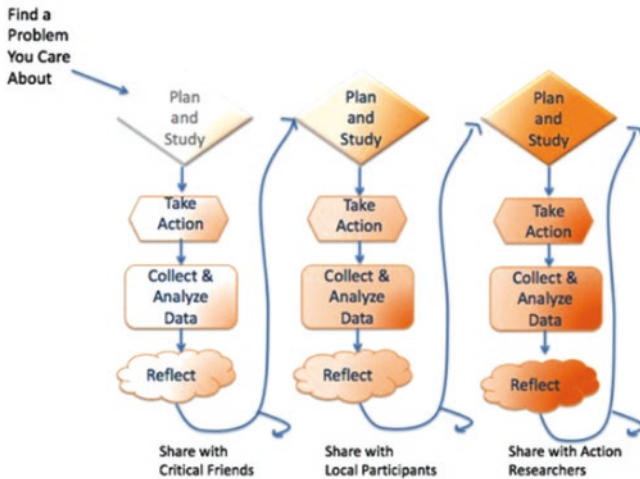


Fig. 38.1 Action Research—A progressive problem solving process

to outcomes associated with increasing one’s professional identity, knowledge, and skills.

Project Planning For planning the research project, a logic model (Kaplan & Garrett, 2005) and force field analysis (Lewin, 1943) provide tools to explore one’s theory of action and the conditions that might support or impede that action. The online course on action research developed by the author provides templates for developing an action research logic model and/or a force field analysis (ccar.wikispaces.com/T5+Activities). Other idea-organizing tools like *Mindmapping*, *Timeliner*, and Graphic Organizers can help with the planning process.

Searching Research Literature Many action researchers, eager to get started with their ideas, miss the valuable insights that come from a careful review of the relevant research related to their issue or problem (Bell, 2014). *Google Scholar* is a specially designed search engine that helps to locate peer-reviewed articles and academic books linked to action research problems. Those with access to university databases can add their university name to “advanced options” to gain easy access to full text. Those without access to academic databases might also want to try academic social networks such as *ResearchGate* and *Academia*, where they can request copies of research directly from researchers. Search tools on academic networks make it possible to find research “digital habitats” of research communities who care about the problem they have identified (Wenger, White, & Smith, 2009). A third strategy is to create a *Google Alert*—automated web agents that scan

the Internet for content. Alerts can identify concepts such as “collaborative learning;” tools like “learning circle models;” reviews of applications, for example, “reviews of videoconference tools;” or a specific researcher’s name. Options make it possible to limit the number and frequency of the information messages delivered through e-mail.

Reviewing the Literature Note-taking on Internet documents can also be facilitated with digital referencing (*RefWorks*) and web annotation tools (*Diggo*). *Diggo* enables note-taking or highlighting of text for quotes directly on web pages. To organize notes across reviews of literature, a spreadsheet can be helpful. A Google *form* with a set of relevant questions can be created and used while reading to store notes in a Google *sheet*. For a demonstration, see the template form in tutorial four of the Center For Collaborative Action Research (CCAR) online course in action research (ccar.wikispaces.com). Academic writing involves the use of citation and references. A quick strategy for formatting references is use *Google Scholar* to search for the researcher, and select the “cite” link and the citation appears in three different formats (MLA, APA, and Chicago) to be copied into the references.

Communication The action researcher needs to establish contact, gather information, sustain interaction, and coordinate project work with others. The digital “cloud” or centralized servers for the creation and storage of collaborative documents (*Dropbox*, *Box*, *Google Drive*, *iCloud*) enables the researcher to create, share, and access information and media. A “box” or “drive” space on a distant server with multiple access points can be used to create, store, and access materials from any Internet-connected device. Sharing information among participants in the research setting can be supported by creating websites displaying artifacts in one central location with multiple points of access. Basic word processing skills make it easy to create websites to use as action research portfolios (*Google Sites*, *Weebly*).

Data Collection Constructing short surveys for small numbers of people is easily accomplished on survey applications like *Survey Monkey* (see Bigenho, 2006). For larger-size surveys or larger groups, Google *forms* are useful. Selecting “create *form*” from *Google Drive* automatically also creates a linked *Google sheet* (spreadsheet) for collecting and organizing the data for later analysis. The survey form can then be shared by adding a link in e-mail, or embedding it on a website. More complex surveys might benefit from the paid services of survey analysis programs (e.g., *Qualtrics*). Polls can be easily added to websites with tools like *Surveygizmo* (e.g., see ccar.wikispaces.com/T2+AR+Dimensions+Polls).

It no longer takes bags of equipment and hours of preplanning to make a video recording of an activity. Often, ethical issues rather than technical constraints are the limiting factors. The technology required to record meetings,

conduct interviews, record observations, or administer surveys is a smart phone or tablet. Increasingly, computers are also able to aid in translation, moving voice to text and text to voice quickly, and removing long hours of transcription from the data analysis process.

Data Analysis For support in learning how to analyze data, the action researcher can interact with a range of tutorials, consult examples of different methods, and make use of research analysis tools (ccar.wikispaces.com/T8+Resources). A search of the web for “qualitative methods,” or “action research methods and tools” will provide a wide range of strategies, tools, and techniques that have been used effectively in action research.

Reflection Finally, perhaps one of the most useful class of tools that support the action researcher is blogging technology. Blogging tools (*Blogger, Wordpress, Weebly*) support recording, storing, reviewing, and, where appropriate, sharing one’s professional and personal reflections. Dewey (1910) describes reflective thought as the way we make sense of consequences. “Reflection involves not simply a sequence of ideas, but a consequence—a consecutive ordering in such a way that each determines the next as its proper outcome, while each in turn leans back on its predecessors” (p. 3).

Storing this information on “cloud” servers makes it easier to record and then review entries about personal change because each entry is dated, as are comments and annotations. When engaged in collaborative research, it is easy to share blog entries and use the comment feature to discuss ideas. Blogging applications enable one to keep reflections private, to share them with a limited audience, or make them public. They can be created with real names or pseudo names. For a good example of how an action researcher used a blog to keep track of personal change, see Anne Smith’s (2006) action research portfolio and blog (cadres.pepperdine.edu/ar/c11/smith/). It is also helpful to compare her blog entries during her formal period of action research (2008–2009) and afterward when she was engaged in what Beck (Chap. 3, this volume) calls “informal action research.”

38.1.2 *Tensions and Challenges of Technology Use for Professional Change*

Action researchers with Internet access have at their disposal valuable tools for professional learning, which can help them understand the history of their problem, develop systematic plans for conducting their research, collect and analyze data, and reflect on the outcomes. Tools, however, bring new tensions.

Matching Tool to Task When action researchers decide to use a new tool, an initial challenge is that the growing list of tools makes finding the optimal match

of tool-to-task far from easy. After decades of active use of technology, I still face this problem every time I choose a tool for a task either for myself or for a group. The speed of innovation is challenging. Even if one recently reviewed the range of offerings, new tools or modifications to tools can make the choice of tools difficult.

Making the process even more challenging, extensive tool use is often required for assessment of the fit between the tool and the task. Fortunately, people can, and do, share their insights directly with others. While using reviews and alerts can be helpful, there is no optimal match of technology-to-task that will remain stable. The process of action research—continual professional learning and sharing of knowledge, skills, and practices—can help educators make wise decisions. Wenzel and Peterson (Chap. 43, this volume) provide a good example in describing their classroom-based action research examining the use of E-readers.

Rethinking the Role of Learning in Teaching Action researchers often begin this practice with little formal education in consuming research reports, reading from a critical analytic stance, designing action research, collecting and analyzing data, and reflecting on outcomes. Action research is a way to learn these skills over time and technology can help, but the challenge is how to make this form of inquiry a part of the everyday life of educators and other professionals. Earning a certificate or a graduate degree should be the starting line of a lifetime of progressive problem-solving as a path to expertise (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993). More difficult is the challenge of transforming schools and workplaces to support ongoing inquiry and learning in processes like action research. Currently, teachers not enrolled in a university degree program do not have much support to engage in action research. While technology can play a limited role, what is needed is rethinking the role of professionals in the ongoing construction of professional knowledge (Riel & Rowell, Chap. 40, this volume). This will require universities, districts, and governments to understand the need for and support activities like action research as an ongoing form of professional development (Shosh, Chap. 39, this volume).

Informed Consent The ease of storage and sharing is another challenge, in this regard related to the necessity of following ethical research protocols for permission to share information or videos (Derry et al., 2010). One of the conditions of giving informed consent is that the participant in the research can choose, after being informed, not to participate. In work or classroom settings, participants cannot choose to opt out of work or learning. Foster and Glass (Chap. 31, this volume) have written an extensive and thoughtful discussion that explores these issues with equity-oriented community-based research.

38.2 TECHNOLOGY AND CHANGE IN THE ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

Lewin (1946) suggested that the ability to predict and then create change through one's action was a reasonable test of deep understanding of the social dimensions in a workplace. The rapid speed of technical innovations and the costs of keeping current make it increasingly important to be able to predict organizational change. Lewin, followed by others, focused on how inquiry skills could be used to foster continual learning in the workplace, organization, or community (Coghlan & Brannick, 2005; James, Slater, & Bucknam, 2012).

More recently, activity theory has provided a framework for understanding the forces and conditions that contribute to organizational change. Building on a Soviet tradition of psychology that placed a high value on the historical, social, and contextual factors that shape the way people act, Engeström (1987) used a set of overlapping triangles to facilitate the study of human action in organizations. I have modified Engeström's model to show how action researchers might use this approach to examine relationships (Fig. 38.2).

Activity theory asserts that actions between a person and an objectified motive or change are always *mediated* by a system of relationships (Nardi, 1996). The activity framework (Fig. 38.2) provides a way to understand how the actions of the action researcher are shaped by his or her membership in a community with roles and rules and mediated by technology to affect an outcome. Technology plays a central role in knowledge management, access, and communication in social contexts (Nardi, 1996). Sociocultural theorists (e.g., Vygotsky, 1978) emphasize the mediation of language, while activity theorists focus on the mediation role-played by tools, including digital technology (Zinchenko, 1995). Action researchers can use this model, as well as

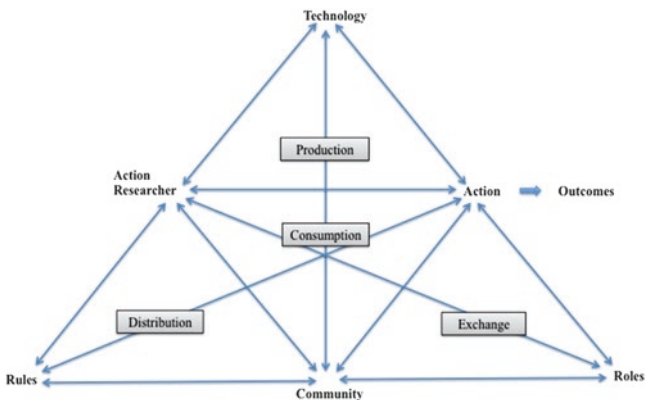


Fig. 38.2 The Action Research Process based on Engeström's Model

the growing literature on activity theory, as conceptual tools (Bereiter, 2002) to help them attend to the consequences of their action by orienting them to important dimensions that they might have otherwise missed.

38.2.1 *Digital Technology and Organizational Change*

In this section, I focus on the tools that might be introduced, in the course of the action research, for use by those in the social setting. For example, in the previous section, I described how action researchers use websites to share ideas with a group (professional use), but the action researcher might instead use a wiki website so that group members share information with each other (organizational use). The “group use” affordances of tools will be the topic of this section. The democratic and collaborative nature of action research is well supported by the range of digital tools now available. Many of these tools revolve around different forms of communication and group planning.

Synchronous Communication The participants in action research are often co-researchers doing research and supporting others to be co-researchers. Collaboratively and democratically, they create a shared theory of change. The meanings of actions emerge from the complex, social, political, and material interactions in the work of participants to share, debate, challenge, and record their interpretations (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). In this way, the researcher is engaged in developing the capacity of the group for active knowledge building and collective action. Synchronous and asynchronous communication tools enable group coordination and knowledge-building sessions. Synchronous tools, including audio and video conferencing tools, are becoming more powerful. Phone bridges of three people can be easily created on many smart phones. Free audio conferencing tools, *Skype* for example, can connect large groups of people in conversations from any point on the globe with Internet access. *Google+ Hangouts* can connect up to ten locations with video conferencing for each of the locations. The leadership groups of the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) regularly use *Google+ Hangouts* for their meetings. During the meetings, an ether pad (e.g., *Titanpad.com*) or a Google document (*drive.google.com*) can enable the group to transform the agenda into minutes with equal control from all keyboards.

Asynchronous Communication Communication can continue in both open and private forums. *Edmodo*, *Moodle*, and *Skai* are often used in elementary, secondary, community college, and university settings. Prevalent social networking tools can also be used for open- and limited-group networking including *Linked-in*, *Facebook*, *Google+*, and *Skype*. For more limited-group discussions, free space can be set up on a *Google Group* or a *Glassboard* forum, or on many corporate intranets, like *SharePoint*. The Action Research Special Interest Group (AR SIG) of the American Educational Research Association (AERA)

is currently using a *Facebook* group site called Practitioner Research to create dialogue among a number of Special Interest Groups.

Shared Access to Written Communication Rapidly evolving information and communication tools facilitate new forms of collaboration and communication. These tools can provide the inspiration for change that underlies action research. The action researcher can use technology to create cognitive (Newman, Griffin, & Cole, 1989; Norman, 1991) or conceptual artifacts (Bereiter, 2002) to mediate the interaction among community members in new ways. Specifically, tools that allow for real-time collaboration on a document (*Etherpads*, e.g., *Titanpad.com*; *Google Docs*) over the Internet from multiple keyboards change the power relationships in groups. In applications such as *Etherpads*, individual contributions of text are visually marked by assigning different text colors to participants. Shared bulletin boards for text work (*Padlet*) and images (*Pinterest*) make it easy to post and organize messages and images to help a team brainstorm together or virtually. Wikis and wiki-website combinations can be used to organize group work since all members of a group can share the role of “webmaster” (e.g., *GoogleSites*, *Wikispaces*, & *PBwikis*). This open access fosters group empowerment that is often essential to action research. ARNA uses a wiki website (*GoogleSites*) to present a website to the public, while ARNA members can add and modify content, making it a shared working space. The Center for Collaborative Action Research uses *Wikispaces* for their tutorials on action research.

Sharing Internet Learning Tools continue to evolve to support social networking and sharing, storing, and accessing of important information resources. Social referencing and markup tools (*RefWorks*, *Diggo*) help communities share their web explorations through shared citations and web page annotations. *Diggo* is a social annotation tool, which enables groups of users to collect a set of websites and add notes directly on the web page visible only to those in their shared group (for how this supports collaborative learning, see Gao, 2013). Teachers can use tools that help them to create a safe space where students can explore a limited set of Internet tools (*Symbaloo*) or websites for special tasks or to complete an assignment. Tools like this help increase the amount of time students spend on task and not distracted by open-ended searching, as well as provide a safer environment for younger students.

Group Project Management Tools that encourage democratic participation support collaborative action research. *Podio* is a free project management tool for professional groups that incorporates a range of tools into a common platform. Conference planning, project work, or group activities can be managed in a way that allows and facilitates participation. There are also simpler group management platforms such as *UpToUs* aimed at school, parents, and community groups. Mapping tools (*Clustrmaps*, *Googlemaps*) can help a community understand its growth. A particularly powerful use of mapping technology

is described in Chap. 15 in the Handbook, in which a community-mapping project is conducted among slum dwellers in India (Rai, Chap. 15, this volume). The ARNA, Online Learning Circles, and the Center for Collaborative Action Research use ClustrMaps to help them visualize and track international participation.

Group Use of Video The use of digital videos was initially difficult as drive space was costly and not portable. Today, anyone with Internet access can store videos privately or publicly (*YouTube*, *TeacherTube*, *Google+*, *Dropbox*, *Google Drive*, *icloud*, *Blogger*). YouTube allows creation of video broadcast “channels” that can be “followed.” For example, *The Action Research Tutorial Channel* (bit.ly/artutorials) is the *YouTube* channel for videos from the Online Action Research Course. The ease associated with using videos makes it easier to support multiple voices in action research efforts. For example, as discussed in Gutberlet, Jayme, and Tremblay (Chap. 41, this volume), marginalized workers in Brazil used participatory video as a powerful vehicle to engage in critical self-analysis and political action.

Videos can increase group participation. For example, ARNA invites action researchers who cannot attend the yearly conference to send video clips, which are shared at various times during the conference. In another example, Korte (2015) used videos to help “flip” her classroom. To make more time for project work in the classroom, she condensed her lectures to ten-minute videos that students watched for homework. And when unable to attend a conference that she ordinarily attends,¹ she presented her action research by video.

Another way that video production, editing, and sharing tools are being used is to create video guides for online tasks using screencasting (*YouTube*, *TeacherTube*, *Jing*, *Screencast.*) Simple video instructions can be created by making a screencast—an audio recording of verbal instructions played on a video showing the actions on the computer screen. *Jing* has a particularly easy-to-use interface for making screencasts and sharing them. On a wiki, groups can post video “help files” for website tech support (see, e.g., ARNA and AERA AR SIG).

Shared Educational Resources Many tutorials for both teachers and students such as those of the *Khan Academy*, online courses at *Coursera*, and lesson sharing at *TedEd Lessons* can inspire innovative ideas. These examples of technical resources provide vehicle for transporting information more effectively within the social networks of one’s workplace. Depending on the nature of the change implemented in any given action research project, many specific technology applications are available that support the community. A great resource for schools is the Learning Registry (learningregistry.org/), a joint effort of the US Department of Education and the Department of Defense, with support of numerous groups, which acts as an aggregator of metadata to search for online learning resources. *Great Websites for Kids* sponsored by the American Library

Association collects books, audio books, e-books, videos, apps, and websites reviewed by librarians.

38.2.2 *Challenges and Tensions in Using Technology to Support Organizational Change*

When action research involves helping others to use technology, challenges and tensions can arise from a number of different fronts. Collaboration, learning curves, and technology support are the issues that I address in this section.

Trust, Respect, and Shifting Patterns of Communication and Collaboration Group skill and capacity in communication and collaborative underlie effective use of technology. The tools are plentiful, but the interpersonal skills that give these tools value may be less evident. Building trust is an essential precondition to knowledge sharing (Casimir, Lee, & Loon, 2012). Creating communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in the workplace is a change in the activity structure that can be mediated, but not caused, by technology. For example, norms of privacy, issues of intellectual property, personal insecurities, and competition among colleagues or students are often much more difficult issues inhibiting the use of knowledge-sharing technology than any lack of technical skills. As a catalyst for change, technology can sometimes enter a community as a *Trojan Horse*. At first, it is openly accepted as a new way to solve intractable problems, but then surprises participants by challenging their accepted collaboration practices, communication norms, and values (Tapscott & Williams, 2006). Developing respectful group consensus on why a tool is of value, before starting to use it, can be vital to the change process.

Over the past decade of supporting new action researchers in a technology education program, I have watched as action researchers start out with an inflated vision of how technology will reshape their context, but then refocus their attention on strategies that help participants engage in collaborative learning. What is clear in their reflections, however, is that deep learning comes from learning to listen, and getting others to really listen to each other. Technology has a role to play, but only a supporting, not a central role (Riel & Lepori, 2014).

Technology Infrastructure Challenges At this point in time, most schools have some form of Internet access. However, high-speed access needed for many innovative educational applications is not in place (Ross, 2015). Furthermore, as has always been the case with resources, the problem is more critical in US schools in poorer neighborhoods, according to Ross, with only 14% schools having high-speed access compared to 39% schools in affluent neighborhoods. While President Obama's ConnectEd Initiative seeks to connect all schools with high-speed access in five years, the funding and the current rate of change makes this likely to be what Ross (1915) described as wishful thinking.

Technology projects can expose unexpected access problems. One action researcher worked with a tool that provided online virtual reading, with a plan to provide classroom story time with deployed military parents. The company agreed to give them free access and plans had been finalized. All testing had been done on the teacher's iPad. When they moved to the school iPads, the site failed to load and after lots of frustrating technical problem-solving, they found that her district had blocked the site. It took a number of weeks to locate the source of the problem and then to convince the district to allow access to the site. By the time this happened, the school was focused on high stakes testing and there was no classroom time for the students to read with deployed parents. The school year ended without this project being implemented.

Learning Curve for New Tools Often an action researcher is so excited about the potential of using a new tool with a group that he or she either underestimates the learning curve of a group of people or does not prepare for the amount of support for learning that is needed. If vocal members of a community get frustrated with a new tool and describe it as too hard, or not useful, this can make the introduction even more difficult. Thinking through the introduction plan, and support needed, is an important part of the process. The use of new technology tools assumes that the learning curve will be flat enough to be adopted by people with a range of different skills, or that there will be nodes of expertise within the network for providing the necessary learning supports. As the tools become more interchangeable, and the generative learning skills develop, the learning curve for new tools is becoming less of a barrier (Straub, 2009).

When Technical Expertise is Needed Technology is not stable and is never likely to be stable. When things do go wrong, the difference between a tech expert and a novice is mostly in attitude and learning skills; novices panic, feel helpless, and often blame themselves for the trouble; and tech expert views the situation as an opportunity to learn, uses social resources, and often blame the technology. Tech experts do not have to know how to solve a problem when they first confront it. They just need to know how to learn to solve the problem.

As stewards of change, action researchers do not have to have personal expertise in all of the applications or tools they use. However, it is helpful to model good practices such as saving and storing multiple copies of important group work and anticipating technical difficulties and arranging alternate plans. When using technology with others and problems arises, modeling a calm confidence can go a long way toward solving the problem. Here is a sequence of steps to resolve a problem that technology experts often follow. First, check connections—plugs, cables, power, restarting any technology or program that

can be restarted. If that does not resolve the problem, switch parts or applications to try to isolate the source of trouble. Next, use the Internet to find answers. Most problems have already been solved by others who have shared the solution. A problem description in a search engine often returns a solution. Finally, if the problem is not resolved, using one's social learning network to "phone a friend" can help.

38.3 TECHNOLOGY AND CHANGES IN SKILLS, PRACTICES, AND IDENTITY AS ACTION RESEARCHERS

Action research is very similar to other forms of emergent, iterative, cyclic, and data-driven research. These include formative assessment (Black & William, 2003), grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006), data-driven decision-making (Mandinach, Honey, & Light, 2006), and design research (Collins, 1992; Schön, 1983). The important difference is that instead of practitioner-researcher partnerships, the practitioner incorporates the practices of research directly into his or her own practice. Of particular concern is the interplay of the factors that contribute to the understanding of complex dimensions of social actions. The advantage for action researchers is that they develop an evolving understanding of their setting over time; the drawback is that they often begin their work lacking deep knowledge of research methods. Partnerships with university researchers can provide valuable insights and help at the outset, but ideally the action researcher is evolving in personal identity as a researcher. Communication, presentation, and networking tools can help support action researchers as they work toward expertise within communities of action researchers.

38.3.1 *Technology Support for Changes in Knowledge, Practice, and Identity as Action Researchers*

In this final arena, the focus is on technology that helps one join and participate in larger communities of action research. It is focused on personal use of tools and practices like those described in the professional arena, but now the focus shifts to tools and practices that serve the action researcher in her or his participation in the larger research community. This section is organized from tools and practices that support the process of doing action research and those for sharing outcomes with the larger action research community.

Critical Support While Doing Action Research Learning to be an action researcher is most often an intensely collaborative enterprise. Critical friends both in and beyond the setting help shape the outcomes. The *Learning Circle Model* (onlinelearningcircles.org) can provide a structured organizational process for groups of people doing action research for the first time. The

distributed leadership and knowledge-building dialogue in learning circles can be quite helpful for new action researchers. These virtual partners can help formulate the design and plans for the action, can review the data analysis process by helping to check for reliability and validity, and can engage in shared reflections on the process. (Learning circles can also be used as a method for developing shared knowledge, as in Rowell, Polush, Riel, & Bruewer, 2015).

Peer Feedback on Writing Increasingly, groups are finding that shared editing is an effective way to increase the amount of feedback that writers receive on their work (Riel, Rhoads, & Ellis, 2006). While technology can support this process, sharing written work with others is an act of courage that requires the development of trust and respect. In a community where action researchers are prepared to share their ideas, tools like *Dropbox* can be used to provide group access to evolving action research texts. However, computers can be used more effectively to manage this shared task and provide some level of anonymity that makes the process less threatening. Peer editing programs collect writing and then assign reviewers. The document plus the reviews are returned to the authors. Currently, tools that make peer editing anonymous are available and are included in platforms of open education like *Coursera*. *Peer Scholar* is a tool developed for exchange of classroom writers but could be used by action researchers as well.

Presentation Tools Technology plays a critically important role is recording, storing, accessing, and sharing action research reports. When action researchers make their theories, methods, and outcomes available for public critique examination and validation, they are building knowledge that has value for both the local community and larger professional communities (e.g., Whitehead, Chap. 24, this volume).

Action researchers can use a range of presentation tools to share their work locally with their peers and online with larger communities. While *PowerPoint* was the first widely used presentation tool, action researchers now have access to a wide range of high-quality free tools. *Prezi*, *SlideShare*, *Present.me*, and *Google Presentations* are just a few of the many options for creating and sharing professional presentations. *Present.me* places two screens side-by-side with one showing slides and the other containing video of a person narrating the slide show. This video can be placed on websites. Users can choose to create a silent slideshow, a slideshow with voiceover, a slideshow with parallel video, or just a video without the slideshow. The explosion of free interactive tools like this that are server-hosted make it possible for action researchers to share their work both within their local communities, and, equally important, with other action researchers throughout the web.

Video Sharing of Action Research Action researchers are no longer limited to text, which may not be the best conceptual artifact for sharing practice (Whitehead, 2009). They can create, annotate, and publish a range of multimedia products in electronic portfolios of research. The options to post video on sites like *YouTube* and *TeacherTube*, or Screencast and share ideas around these videos by embedding them in blogs and wikis make it possible for any person to “publish” the results of their action research in ways that would have been impossible a few years ago.

Publishing Action Research Action research reports can be submitted to print journals, online journals, and online sites that provide examples of action research. Universities often host sites that serve to share exemplary work of their students from year to year so that new students can learn from those who preceded them. Examples of some university-based collections of action research include

- Brock University & Bluewater District Schools, Canada—Action Research Canada (Jacqueline Delong) (www.spanglefish.com/actionresearchcanada)
- Moravian College, PA, USA: Teacher Action Research Collection (Joseph Shosh) (home.moravian.edu/public/educ/eddept/mEd/thesis.htm)
- Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, South Africa—Action Research Unit (aru.nmmu.ac.za) (Lesley Wood)
- Pepperdine University, CA, USA: Center for Collaborative Action Research (Margaret Riel) (cadres.pepperdine.edu/ccar/)
- Queens University, Australia—Action Research at Queens (Tom Russell) (resources.educ.queensu.ca/ar)
- University of San Diego, CA, USA: Action Research in School Counseling (Lonnie Rowell) (www.schoolcounselor-advocate.com)

Joining an Action Research Community The creation of “digital habitats” (Wenger et al., 2009) or electronic homes for specific communities of practice is an evolving use of technology. Often websites that started as university sites have become small hubs around a person who has spent many years teaching action research and now provides more personal collections of ideas and resources for supporting the development of the action researcher identity. Jean McNiff’s personal webspace (www.jeaanmcniff.com), Jack Whitehead’s action research network (www.actionresearch.net), and Bob Dick’s action research/action learning site in Australia (www.aral.com.au) are examples of this development.

In this volume, there is a good description of a number of regional and global networks of action researchers. These are digital habitats where many volunteers serve as community stewards fostering the development of new members to the community and providing a range of opportunities and resources. A few that are mentioned in this handbook include

Action Learning and Action Research Association (ALARA) (www.alarassociation.org/)

Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) (www.arnacconnect.org)

Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) (www.esri.mmu.ac.uk/carnnew/)

Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) (<http://www.pria.org/>)

Pedagogy, Education and Praxis (PEP) (www.ips.gu.se/english/cooperation/networks/pep/)

Each of these networked communities invites members to join and provides a range of resources to help them work toward expertise as action researchers. The formation of a “community of practice” of action researchers can be initiated at any place within the system (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Technology makes it possible for individuals to work together to create regional organizations, and for these regional organizations to group together under what is described in the last chapter of this volume as the “big tent” of action research.

38.3.2 *Challenges and Tensions in Using Technology to Support Scholarly Change*

Assuming the identity of an action researcher involves sharing findings. These findings are often shared with a range of participants involved with the problems explored, as well the community of other action researchers. Doing research involves a commitment to engage in a knowledge-building process conceptually, methodologically, and theoretically with research communities. The challenge here involves the relation of action researchers to the academy and ethical issues in action research.

A Quest for Learning Versus Quality Control In the eyes of most people, the academic community defines the standards of research expertise. Membership in the academic community requires demonstration of expertise, usually through peer-reviewed publications and advanced degrees. It is important that all members are well trained and understand the complexities of research. These are thought to be the assurances of quality of research.

Action research takes a different approach. It invites membership to practitioners who commit to learn over time. This raises issues of quality and conventions for judging the quality of the work. While creating a democratic push to have practitioners own their theories and tell their own research stories, there must be forms of quality control so that reports are not simply story telling. It remains the work of the action research community to establish standards for learning over time. Practitioners who conduct action research are, by definition, practitioner-researchers, but the research remains a work in progress. They often use simple descriptive analytic tools during the first phase of their

research, but as they master skills, subsequent cycles might involve the use of more complex tools. The challenge remains: Can action researchers, working in concert with other action researchers, reading their research, and engaging in continual cycles of learning, create rigorous knowledge that is both valid and reliable? The chapters in this volume explore this issue and provide a range of examples and responses.

Ethical Issues While the technology tools described can help one collect data, it is vital to be aware of ethical issues that are part of data collection using video (Derry et al., 2010). When practitioners are working on their own, what institutions are responsible to ensure their research adheres to ethical practices? When doing research on your own practices, often there is little change from what is done as part of workplace responsibilities. But when and where there are changes, institutions, organizations, and companies will need to have a review process. Understanding what permissions are required to take or use photos and videos is part of evolving media literacy. Most of the current policies, rules, and norms around appropriate use of technology are struggling to keep pace with the rapid change in possible uses (Locke, Alcorn, & O’Neill, 2013). This means that users of technology will need to both be aware of the constraints and also be vigilant in evolving new “common” sense about what is, and is not, acceptable use (Zeni, 1998). An open discussion in action research forums, exploration of policies, or practices in different places will help determine ethical practices in the evolving landscape of participatory action research (see Foster and Glass, Chap. 31, this volume).

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I described three contextual arenas for understanding the outcomes of action research and how different forms of technology might serve to support and extend these outcomes. For each section, I explored a number of tensions or challenges involved when technology serves action research.

All of these issues have in common a focus on human issues over technology issues. Action research can be effectively supported by technology, but rarely will technology be at the heart of any change. The transformational change that is often the outcome of action research is a change in the way that people in communities work and learn from one another. Technology can mediate, but not cause this change. Learning to listen to others, understanding that in any setting there are multiple perspectives and agendas, and achieving the skills of bringing these into a shared focus, that is, the ongoing work of action research. Technology can mediate, but taking action to improve our world is a human act.

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NOTE

1. The author and Ms. Korte met at an International Education and Resource Network conference (iEARN.org) in Qatar. The YouTube video linked to this chapter was shared at a subsequent iEARN conference.

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Toward the Construction of a Local Knowledge Base on Teaching and Learning by and for Teachers and Learners

Joseph M. Shosh

The productivity of this Bethlehem Steel worker, referred to as “Schmidt,” was key to Frederick W. Taylor’s landmark book, Principles of Scientific Management. Noll was credited with loading 45 tons of pig iron a day, in 1899, to increase his day’s pay to \$1.85.

*Pennsylvania Historical Commission Marker,
East 3rd & Polk Streets, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania*

39.1 EXPOSING OUR TAYLORIST HISTORY

When teachers conducting action research in Moravian College’s graduate education program leave our campus in the colonial Historic Moravian Bethlehem National Landmark District and cross the Lehigh River, the giant blast furnaces of what was once the largest shipbuilder and second-largest steel producer in the USA still dominate the river’s edge. The smoke stacks reach into the sky with only an ornamental purpose now, and the hourly workers who forged the steel for Rockefeller Center, the Empire State Building, and the Golden Gate Bridge have few historical markers like the one dedicated to Schmidt.

In 1898, when Frederick Winslow Taylor conducted his research in Bethlehem, he intended to illustrate the nation’s inefficiency to show that the answer to the problem of this inefficiency was the scientific management (or managerial con-

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trol) of the worker and to prove that his scientific principles could as easily be applied to other social institutions as they could be to the steel mill (1911/1919). The historical marker to Schmidt does not reveal that Taylor described him in the book as lazy, incompetent, and motivated by his own self-interest:

Therefore the workman who is best suited to handling pig iron is unable to understand the real science of doing this class of work. He is so stupid that the word ‘percentage’ has no meaning to him, and he must consequently be trained by a man more intelligent than himself into the habit of working in accordance with the laws of this science before he can be successful. (p. 59)

Callahan (1962) documents how Taylorist principles of scientific management were applied throughout the American educational system in the twentieth century to result in what he termed an American tragedy in education. No single educator was more instrumental in promoting Taylorism in public education than University of Chicago Education professor John Franklin Bobbitt, who clearly viewed administrators as managers and teachers as workers who needed to be controlled (Kliebard, 2004). As Bobbitt (1913) explained, “The burden of finding the best methods is too large and too complicated to be laid on the shoulders of the teachers ... The ultimate worker, the teacher in our case, must be a specialist in the performance of the labour that will produce the product” (pp. 52–53). More recently, No Child Left Behind legislation has sanctioned what Au (2011) calls a “new Taylorism,” where a management system that utilizes corporate pre-packaged curricula and high-stakes tests ensures the ultimate efficiency.

We posit that action research is central to maintaining our professional identities as educators in an era of increasing Taylorist outside control of teachers and that it is instrumental to ensuring a democratic and true education for all children—not merely a training in de-contextualized skills where the pre-determined ends trivialize the means for the poor, while true education is reserved in the private sector for the wealthy. Comparisons of the curriculum and opportunities available in the Lehigh Valley community to the wealthiest versus poorest districts, the top and bottom sections within our tracked secondary schools, and public schools versus private, elite institutions raise more questions for us about Taylorist worldviews and how they are in alignment with a neoliberal philosophy that uses a rhetoric of standards and equality of opportunity to provide the best education—not to all—but rather to those who are willing and able to pay for it, supporting social reproduction and increased stratification.

Teachers conducting the research reported on here, with studies published online and added to the Reeves Library permanent collection between 2003 and 2015, were split almost evenly between teaching assignments in elementary and secondary schools and between urban and suburban schools. Eighty-four percent of teachers conducting action research and earning the Master of Education degree were female, with a median age of 30 at the time of

beginning the program and 34 at program completion. This chapter provides an overview of how we connect our construction of new knowledge to the origins of action research, make our commitment to oppose injustice, construct curriculum and professional knowledge, become critical as we expand participatory frameworks, and learn with and from other teachers in dialogue with our exploration of what has emerged as our action research tradition. We are, of course, heavily influenced by the action research tradition as we have lived it, with just a sampling of the teacher learning that has occurred along the way shared here, culminating in a brief metathematic analysis of the more than 1,000 findings that these 175 educators reached through their action research efforts. The best record of our work remains the complete and ongoing repository of action research studies (<http://home.moravian.edu/public/educ/eddept/mEd/thesis.htm>).

Latin American scholar César Osorio Sánchez (2014) delivered his keynote address on Moravian's campus at the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) 2014 Conference, speaking eloquently and passionately about the need to recover our sources of historic memory when preparing to engage in participatory action research (<http://bit.ly/1T148O8>). This chapter attempts to keep the memory of our action research efforts in the first decade and a half of the twenty-first century alive. It also seeks to build upon Somekh and Zeichner's (2009) call for educational reform through the remodeling of action research theories and practices in local contexts by sharing the living history of action research efforts in one American community in the hope that this narrative will help us and others move teacher professionalism forward through the construction of a local knowledge base on teaching and learning by and for teachers and learners and in opposition to those who insist that pre-packaged corporate curricula must supersede local teaching and researching.

39.2 CONNECTING OUR ACTIONS TO THE ORIGINS OF ACTION RESEARCH

Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) define action research as “a form of *collective* self reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices, as well as their understanding of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out” (p. 5). Like Zeichner and Elliott, we use the term *action research* as opposed to *practitioner inquiry* or *self-study*, to describe the work we do, largely because it foregrounds the action at the heart of a research enterprise. We recognize that no one definition or choice of terms will adequately identify all salient features of our action research process, and definitions are themselves culturally bound social constructions (Altrichter, Kemmis, McTaggart, & Zuber-Skerritt, 2002; Rowell, Polush, Riel, & Bruewer, 2015). For us, it is also crucial that we construct our own definitions of action research

as we engage in cycles of observation, reflection, and action in a multiplicity of local contexts.

Social psychologist Kurt Lewin, who wrote a critique of Taylorism in his native German in the 1920s, is generally regarded as the first social scientist to whom many of today's action researchers may trace their efforts. "Lewin not only showed that there was an effective alternative to Taylor's 'scientific management' but through his action research provided the details of how to develop social relationships of groups and between groups to sustain communication and co-operation" (Adelman, 1993, p. 7). As a Jewish scholar teaching at the University of Berlin, Lewin was forced to flee Germany upon Hitler's rise to power, developing a lifelong commitment to social justice in the form of conflict resolution, particularly among minority and other disadvantaged groups (Burnes, 2004).

In "Action Research and Minority Problems," Lewin (1946), when explaining the function of research within social planning, notes that, "Rational social management... proceeds in a spiral of steps each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action, and fact finding about the result of the action" (p. 38). Lewin's early action research projects worked to reduce violence between teenage gangs and to integrate black and white sales staff in New York City department stores. His pioneering work on change included also his contributions to field theory, a psychological approach to understanding group behavior; group dynamics; and a three-step model to organizational change that included *unfreezing* learned behavior, *moving*, which could only occur through the action research process, and then *refreezing* or bringing the group successfully to a new equilibrium. "Underpinning Lewin's work was a strong moral and ethical belief in the importance of democratic institutions and democratic values in society. Lewin believed that only by strengthening democratic participation in all aspects of life and being able to resolve social conflicts could the scourge of despotism, authoritarianism and racism be effectively countered" (Burnes, 2004, pp. 986-987).

Much of Lewin's work occurred with the Commission on Community Interrelations, committed to reducing prejudice and intergroup conflicts, which took on the motto "No research without action, no action without research." In the first academic article to use the term action research, Ronald Lippitt and Marian Radke (1946) called for the study of prejudice, providing their own description of action research on the basis of eight previous studies, including several authors who had worked with Lewin (Glassman, Erdem, & Bartholomew, 2012).

Lewin and his associates were not alone, of course, with Bureau of Indian Affairs Chief John Collier in the 1930s calling for action research approaches in support of native American self-governance and also educational philosopher John Dewey encouraging teachers to engage in reflective practice (Tripp, 2005). Collier wrote in a 1930s editorial thus: "Because heritage has been neglected, assimilation has failed...The Indians, and those who work with them, can make a true contribution to this world problem by choosing not

assimilation and not heritage, but by ardently and skillfully choosing both” (Kunitz, 1971, p. 221). The conscious choices that both Lewin and Collier made in support of marginalized groups remind us that our action research efforts must guide us in understanding the cultural heritage of the children we teach and that what we teach is never values-neutral, as Taylorists might want us to believe.

As we teacher action researchers relate our own action learning to the action learning of our colleagues and the public schools students we serve, John Dewey’s (1938) *Experience in Education* is a crucial text in helping us determine how best to create *educative experiences* for our students and for ourselves. Dewey also reminds us to avoid the temptation of building our own definitions and inquiry approaches in opposition to ideologies to which we may be opposed. Hence, our efforts, rather than being framed as anti-Taylorist or anti-neoliberal are constructed in ways that affirm our belief in learners’ ability to construct their own new understandings and that we must take action to support continued learning in ways that speak out against injustice and in support of learner self determination. As we explained in the conclusion to our contribution to an issue of *English Journal* focused on professional development and leadership,

the reflective practitioners in our teacher inquiry support group are committed to the creation of democratic classroom communities characterized by meaningful social transactions in which students and teacher write to learn as they learn to write. Similarly, we embrace a transactional approach to staff development in which teachers support collegial learning about teaching that promotes student engagement and achievement. We reject staff development models built on one-way directives and transmission of others’ knowledge. As John Dewey reminds us, ‘In education, the currency of these externally imposed aims is responsible for the emphasis put upon the notion of preparation for a remote future and for rendering the work of both teacher and pupil mechanical and slavish’ (110). We exhort our colleagues to join us in supporting democracy by daring to teach writing authentically. (Shosh & Zales, 2005, p. 81)

Teachers conducting action research in the Moravian graduate education program have continued to take clear action in alignment with a commitment to democratic values and social justice. For example, when transferred to an inner city elementary school, Lesh (2013) replaced a basic skills curriculum with one that engaged his third grade students in reading fables, folktales, and fairytales to develop both a love of reading and their own individual and collective values systems. Inspired by the work of 2012 Moravian Action Research Conference Keynote speaker Linda Christensen, Hauser (2013) constructed a social justice curriculum to engage her high school students and support their growth as writers, explaining “By connecting themes of social justice to students’ writing assignments, educators may be able to help students learn about injustices in the world around them...to challenge the status quo” (p. 29). Quinn (2015) broke what she called a “cycle of forced reading” to provide

bottom-tracked high school students with meaningful reading choices that led most of her previously ‘skill and drill’ taught non-readers to want to go on reading, and as Dewey explains, “The most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning” (p. 49).

39.3 MAKING OUR COMMITMENT TO OPPOSE INJUSTICE

Educators like Myles Horton and Paulo Freire help us to understand that many of our unconscious beliefs about what education is and what teachers are supposed to do may unintentionally prevent the very learning we desire. Horton founded the Highlander Folk School in the Appalachian Mountains of Tennessee in 1932 to help educate adults in one of the poorest areas in the USA. In his autobiography *The Long Haul*, Horton (1998), explains,

Although we accomplished some things by the end of that first year, we knew we really weren’t reaching people the way we wanted to. The biggest stumbling block was that all of us at Highlander had academic backgrounds. We thought that the way we had learned and what we had learned could somehow be tailored to the needs of poor people, the working poor of Appalachia....We ended up doing what most people do when you come to a place like Appalachia, we saw problems that we thought we had the answers to, rather than seeing the problems and the answers that the people had themselves. (p. 68)

At Highlander, Horton and colleagues eventually developed a workshop approach set up to engage racially integrated participants in a discussion of a big problem through which they could talk through actions that might be taken locally as they returned to their communities with plans for additional dialog and community action (Horton, 1998; MacLean, 1966). Rosa Parks described her participation in a Highlander workshop, noting, “At Highlander, I found out for the first time in my adult life that this could be a unified society...I gained there the strength to persevere in my work for freedom, not just for blacks, but for all oppressed people” (Horton, pp. 149–150). Horton’s educational work at Highlander was highly influential not only to Parks but also to other Civil Rights leaders, including Ralph Abernathy, John Lewis, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Horton explains, “Highlander has always tried to get people to do their own research, just as we tried to get them to learn from their own experiences. This follows the belief that they can do things for themselves. It is empowerment” (Horton, p. 208).

As we gather data for our action research thesis projects, we also read Paulo Freire’s (1970/2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, exploring how and why both students and teachers experience oppression in the public school system and how we might, through our curriculum design and action research efforts, disrupt a traditional transmission or banking model through our problem-posing education. Freire helps us understand, too, some of the ways in which our

largely middle class, white, and female background can signal an unintentional superiority that threatens relationship building with our poor and minority students, so that we may plan action that mitigates these concerns.

Horton and Freire met at Highlander in December of 1987, and their conversation is captured in *We Made the Road By Walking: Conversations on Education and Social Change*, which provides a wonderful opportunity for us to hear two key voices who have challenged our thinking engage in dialog on topics that include reading, literacy, and citizenship; the knowledge that is constructed in practice; knowing how not to be an expert; being respectful of culture; how conflicts create consciousness; and the need for people to begin to understand their role in history. We find this exchange particularly useful to our action research inquiries:

Myles: Now the use of expert knowledge is different from having the expert telling people what to do, and I think that's where I draw the line. I have no problem with using information that experts have, as long as they don't say this is what you should do. I've never yet found any experts that know where the line is. If people who want to be experts want to tell people what to do because they think it's their *duty* to tell them what to do, to me that takes away the power of the people to make decisions. It means that they're going to call another expert when they need help...there's no empowerment that comes as a result of that.

Paulo: How is it possible for us to work in a community without feeling the *spirit* of the culture that has been there for many years, without trying to understand the soul of the culture? We cannot interfere in this culture. Without understanding the soul of the culture we just invade the culture. (Bell, Gaventa, & Peters, pp. 130–131)

Problematizing our practice and thinking about the injustices we have encountered in our own learning and teaching contexts guides the journey we take through the published action research efforts of those teachers who have come before us in Moravian's graduate education program. To make writing meaningful to her elementary school students, for example, Hunt (2006) mapped the urban and suburban neighborhoods with her fifth graders on walking tours of their neighborhoods as part of her study of authentic family and community writing. Chabot (2013) overcame personal fears to make home visits to one of our community's inner city neighborhoods as she sought out greater understanding of secondary school parental involvement. She speaks candidly about how her principal's metaphor privileging ownership to renting and her own realization of being part of an institution that could be oppressive transformed her thinking while engaged in her research (<http://bit.ly/1HIEyi>). Quartuch (2011) discovered that simulations, community-based research, debate, and discussion supported the development of civic identity among his high school seniors. He describes the importance of his reading of Dewey and Freire to guide his efforts to inspire civic engagement in his students (<http://bit.ly/1K4hzmj>).

39.4 CONSTRUCTING CURRICULUM AND PROFESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE

As teachers, we view ourselves as professionals, whose action research efforts help us lay claim to the highest degree of professionalism to which we aspire. Hargreaves (2000) notes that prior to the 1960s, teaching was in its pre-professional age, where “the basic teaching methods of mass public education were most commonly ones of recitation or lecturing, along with note-taking, question-and-answer, and seatwork” (p. 153). From the 1960s onwards, in the age of the autonomous professional, “classroom pedagogy started to become an ideological battleground between child-centred and subject centred education, open classrooms and closed classrooms, traditional methods and progressive methods” (p. 159).

In this era of innovative curriculum development, Lawrence Stenhouse in Britain headed up *The Humanities Project*, a process-based (as opposed to objectives-based) curricular model designed around teaching adolescents controversial issues in the classroom, where the teacher would not present information and use his or her authority to promote personal views, but rather serve as chairperson of a discussion, encouraging the expression of diverse student opinions and ensuring student learning (Elliott, 2015). Stenhouse (1975) offered a critique of the dominant behavioral objectives model, stressing that “Education as induction into knowledge is successful to the extent that it makes the behavioural outcomes of the students unpredictable” (p. 82).

Stenhouse (1975) worried about the teacher-proofing of curriculum by objectives set outside the classroom and offered this process model as an alternative. In his model, the teacher’s primary role is supporter and critic of student thinking rather than marker. He notes that this process model “can never be directed towards an examination as an objective without loss of quality, since the standards of the examination then override the standards imminent in the subject” (p. 95). To support teacher professional development in the changing roles espoused by the process model would require the teacher, as extended professional, to become teacher as researcher:

The key to the whole approach is the role of the teacher as researcher. Not only is the project a study of teachers who are studying themselves: the application of its results depends on teachers’ testing its tentative hypotheses through research in their own situations. A particular kind of professionalism is implied: research-based teaching... A research tradition which is accessible to teachers and which feeds teaching must be created if education is to be significantly improved. (p. 141, 165)

To enact Stenhouse’s vision of the teacher as researcher in a process model framework requires, for us, the study of social discourse practices in a classroom context (Cazden, 2001; Gee, 2014). Doklan (2011) documented how a shift in classroom discourse from teacher to student control resulted in greater

ownership, accountability, leadership, relationship-building, and student-to-student learning among her high school seniors. She explains how engaging in the process of action research deepened her reflective practice (<http://bit.ly/1IY0ct0>). Varela (2011) studied the types of analysis, speculation, and extended thinking that occurred when her high school juniors created a wiki to discuss American literature. Varela speaks about what her students learned through the opportunity to pose their own questions (<http://bit.ly/1IY06Bw>). Ruhf (2015) provided opportunities for his ninth grade students to engage in microblogging activities on Edmodo, enhancing engagement and achievement through both face-to-face deliberation and asynchronous communication. Teacher researchers Doklan, Varela, Ruhf, and their colleagues provide the crucial guidance to teachers that Stenhouse (1981) called for when he said, “it seems that, while social science applied to education can produce results which help us to understand the ground rules of action, it cannot provide the basis for a technology of teaching which offers reliable guidance to the teacher” (p. 107).

Also working in the UK on a curriculum development project of enormous importance to the development of action research at the time Stenhouse called for the teacher as researcher were John Elliott and Clem Adelman, whose “Ford Teaching Project brought teachers together across the curriculum disciplines and age levels to explore the possibility of constructing a general pedagogy of ‘inquiry/discovery learning’ through action research” (Elliott, 2015, p. 11). Elliott, who had himself worked with Lawrence Stenhouse on the Humanities Project beginning in 1967, reports deepening his own understanding through the Ford Teaching Project, which was methodologically innovative for its use of ethnomethodology and its “very systematic attempt to get teachers to unearth the tacit theories of teaching and learning that underpinned their practice, and to systematically set these out” (Elliott, 2003, pp. 173–174).

As Stenhouse had urged, teachers here would not teach to specific objectives but would, through action research, develop a framework for inquiry/discovery learning that supported the teachers’ goals of empowering students to identify their own problems for inquiry; work through their own ideas as they inquire; discuss their emerging problems, ideas, and evidence; and test their hypotheses and evaluate their evidence. Teachers in the project gathered and analyzed data about the problems they experienced in engaging in an inquiry-based approach to teaching to construct a knowledge base “to provide other teachers, who embraced a similar pedagogical aim, with a set of diagnostic and action hypotheses to examine, test, refine, and further develop in relation to their own pedagogical practice” (Elliott, 2015, p. 13).

While all teachers conducting action research in Moravian’s graduate education program share the findings of their inquiries in the form of themes or hypotheses that they believe may be generalizable to other teachers in similar contexts, some teachers opt to focus their study on the inquiry process itself, as did Ford T project participants. When adopting an inquiry approach in her teaching of sixth grade science in a private elementary school, for example,

Karabasz (2009) found improved motivation, content understanding, and ability of students to use appropriate scientific discourse. Karabasz discusses the importance and difficulty of learning to be a teacher of inquiry at <http://bit.ly/1MPRgFK>. In her desire to understand better how both heterogeneous and homogenous grouping impacted her fourth grade students' mathematical understanding, DeSanctis (2009) hypothesized that "Students are motivated by the opportunity to work on challenging open ended problems in collaborative groups and by the prospect of sharing their findings at the end of the problem solving experience" (p. 161). She explains the importance in the context of a specific example from her study at <http://bit.ly/1P78rlq>. As part of ongoing efforts to use action research to study the impact of the action research graduate program at Moravian College, a new focus on researching inquiry-based approaches to teaching and learning has been adopted to support and enhance inquiry-based teaching and researching (Shosh, 2011, 2013).

Indeed, the importance of the action research models espoused by Lawrence Stenhouse and John Elliott are part and parcel of the larger movement that Hargreaves identifies as the transition from the age of the autonomous to collegial professional, occurring more widely throughout public education by the mid 1980s. Here changing societal and working conditions forced collaboration as the content to be taught expanded rapidly; knowledge and understanding of teaching styles and methods grew considerably; the province of the teacher expanded to include what had previously been viewed as "social work"; special education students began to enter regular education classrooms; society became more multiculturally diverse; structural limits of the traditional secondary school model began to be questioned; the ways in which too many secondary school students felt alienated and ultimately dropped out raised increasing concern; administrative changes to bring schools [even] more into alignment with businesses began; and new research appeared linking collaboration to improvements in teaching and learning (Hargreaves, 2000).

39.5 BECOMING CRITICAL AND EXPANDING PARTICIPATORY FRAMEWORKS

In his 20-year collaboration with colleagues at Deakin University in Australia beginning at the end of the 1970s, Kemmis, influenced by the work of sociologist and philosopher Jürgen Habermas, identified action research with technical, practical, and emancipatory orientations. A technical orientation would involve research designed to change the behavior of participants; a practical orientation might share the technical goals but would also engage the researcher in self-reflection with the goal of changing the professional practice of the researcher every bit as much as the behavior of the participants. An emancipatory orientation sets out to uncover and ameliorate injustice through a critical examination of sociocultural, historical, political, and other forces at play that might not be readily apparent (Kemmis, 2001).

Carr and Kemmis (1986) in their seminal work *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge, and Action Research* explained that “Positivism views educational reform as technical; interpretive research views it as practical. A critical educational science, however, has a view of educational reform that is participatory and collaborative; it envisages a form of educational research which is conducted by those involved in education themselves” (p. 156). In our examination of the experiences of the first 47 Moravian teachers to complete the Moravian action-research-based graduate education program, we identified a progression from teacher to teacher researcher to teacher as agent for systemic change in which the action research process itself demands one ultimately to take practical and emancipatory actions—even when the research intent may begin as technical (Shosh & Zales, 2007). More recently, I have explored how and why the graduate teacher education curriculum has evolved since the program began in 2001 and have, in our local context, sought to develop an emancipatory orientation within “Comenian third spaces,” as we engage in action and reflective dialogue that supports the Comenian value of universal education through inquiries that are mindful, transactional, transcendent, ontological, epistemological, reflective, metacognitive, dialogic, critical, often multimodal, and educative (Shosh, 2013, 2016).

The latest edition of Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon’s *The Action Research Planner* (2014) is subtitled *Doing Critical Participatory Action Research*, and the authors note the special access that insiders have to conduct research in local sites. They argue that only participatory forms of research create the specific conditions for practitioners themselves to (1) understand and develop how practices are conducted from within specific traditions of practice; (2) speak a common language with those whose actions form the central investigation; (3) develop forms of action in which the practice occurs; (4) develop the communities of practice with a focus on key relationships; and (5) overcome ‘untoward consequences’ of irrationality, unsustainability, and injustice. They add,

Critical participatory action research...rejects the notion of the ‘objectivity’ of the researcher in favour of a very active and proactive notion of *critical self-reflection*—individual and collective self-reflection that actively interrogates the conduct and consequences of participants’ practices, their understandings of their practices, and the conditions under which they practice, in order to discover whether their practices are, in fact, irrational, unsustainable, or unjust. (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014, p. 6)

Cammarota and Fine (2008) argue for youth participatory action research (YPAR) to allow youth themselves to study the social problems affecting their lives so that they may determine what actions will best address those problems. “YPAR teaches young people that conditions of injustice are produced, not natural; are designed to privilege and oppress; but are ultimately challengeable and thus changeable” (Cammarota & Fine, p. 2). Wright (2015) recommends

that teachers adopt a PAR pedagogy in which they address power dynamics in classroom discussions, work to maintain successful group dynamics in the classroom, provide students with opportunities for designing curriculum, and engage youth in PAR projects where their values and visions may improve their communities.

Orlando Fals Borda (2006) reminds us that the notion of investigating reality in order to transform it through *praxis* was initially espoused in the 1970s within Third-World countries, in part “to protest against the sterile and futile university routine, colonized by western Euro-American culture, and so subordinating as to impede us from discovering or valuing our own realities” (p. 353). He notes that advances made since the First World Congress of Participatory Action Research in Cartagena, Colombia, in 1977 include generating an interdisciplinary knowledge base centered in the specific contexts of particular settings; building a body of knowledge that supports communities and attempts to keep them free from exploitation, oppression, or submission; building techniques that help people critically recover their history and culture; compiling “with mutual respect” the knowledge from academia, informal wisdom, and popular experience; and transforming the personalities and cultures of participating researchers in support of the struggle for radical change. “Participatory action research, in its different versions, appears to respond to crisis in neoliberal modernity established by the technical, economic and ideological forces of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe, as explained and criticized in turn by philosophers of the Frankfurt School, neo-Marxists and contemporary postmodernists” (p. 356).

In her emancipatory desire to engage her bottom-tracked middle school students in an action project to improve their school, Bowen (2006) learned that to create an environment in which her students would feel free to take risks and make choices, she would need to learn as a teacher to listen and respond in new ways to create a truly dialogic and democratic classroom community. Bell (2005) engaged her sixth grade students as co-researchers to replace the school district’s computer-based reading skills program with classroom projects and readings that the class designed to be in alignment with Csikszentmihalyi’s flow theory (1997, 1990). Richmond (2015) discovered that teaching college first year students to write well was less about transmitting what he had learned through a career as a professional journalist and much more about building relationships that allowed his students to find their own authorial voices.

39.6 LEARNING WITH AND FROM OTHER TEACHERS

We look with admiration to our teaching colleagues in the Madison, Wisconsin school district, who, as of this writing, have posted more than 750 teacher action research studies to the district website (<https://pd.madison.k12.wi.us/car>). Core program principles in alignment with our own include voluntary participation; teacher control of research questions and methods; teachers treated as knowledgeable professionals; research meetings occurring in a supportive environment

for an extended time period; structured meetings; research process and technical support provided by group facilitators, who themselves receive regular support; dissemination of research summary reports; reflective practice at the heart of action research; and a collaborative and democratic relationship between the Classroom Action Research program and the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Two research studies conducted on the program suggest that those teachers participating in action research developed confidence, a greater sense of control over their work, and a more analytic, focused approach to their teaching that extended beyond their action research studies. “Despite pressures of the federal ‘No Child Left Behind’ education act, severe budget cuts, and equally severe reductions of ongoing district professional development, facilitators and participants feel strongly that they want action research to continue in the district, and demonstrate an energy and willingness to ensure its survival” (Caro-Bruce, Klehr, Ziechner, & Sierra-Piedrahita, 2009, p. 108).

We find the resources available at the Center for Collaborative Action Research at Pepperdine University directed by Margaret Riel to be particularly helpful to us as we engage in our action research projects (<http://cadres.pepperdine.edu/ccar>). In addition to connecting us with key resources, including tutorials that comprise a free, open online action research course and sample action research projects conducted by Pepperdine University Master of Arts degree in Learning Technologies candidates in a variety of classroom and community contexts. We also see great promise in San Diego’s High Tech High Graduate School model (<http://gse.hightechhigh.org/GSEdigitalPortfolios.php>) and appreciated the opportunity afforded to us to visit the school and discuss action research with the teachers there as part of the first American Study Day sponsored by CARN, the Collaborative Action Research Network, and hosted by the University of San Diego (Rowell, Inoue, & Getz, 2014). We also wholeheartedly support new modes of democratically crowd-sourcing and publishing action research through new non-profit initiatives like the Social Publishers Foundation (<https://www.socialpublishersfoundation.org/>).

Our teachers have shared their research publicly in a wide array of venues, including the annual Moravian College Action Research Symposium, the University of San Diego’s SOLES Action Research Conference, the National Council of Teachers of English National Convention, the Value & Virtue in Practitioner Inquiry Conference at York St. John University in the UK, the Collaborative Action Research Network Conference, and the ARNA Conference. Sherman (2012), who studied the impact of project-based learning in her fifth grade classroom and Hill (2012), who examined problem-based learning with high school juniors and seniors in their Algebra II/Trigonometry course, co-chaired the Moravian action research symposium after completing their Moravian master’s degree. They both have assumed leadership roles within the ARNA. Sherman explains the importance of presenting action research on site at the inaugural ARNA conference in San Francisco in 2013 (<http://bit.ly/1K4hPlg>). Hill explains why sharing action research beyond the individual school matters to her (<http://bit.ly/1MNtECs>).

Hargreaves (2000) calls the era in which the Moravian action research studies were conducted the fourth professional age, characterized by a “social geography of postmodernity...where boundaries between institutions are dissolving, roles are becoming less segregated, and borders are becoming increasingly irrelevant” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2000, p. 51). Hargreaves and Fullan (2000) ask whether this new age will see a multiplicity of new partnerships forming to support teacher professionalism as teachers work openly and authoritatively with those new partners, or whether de-professionalization, or what Runté (1995) calls de-skilling, will see teachers crumble under the new Taylorist demands of skill and drill testing and accountability. The teachers whose work is reported here have chosen the professional path to counter injustice and to begin to create a knowledge base on teaching and learning by teachers and learners that is informed by both external research on teaching and the action research tradition they have encountered within Moravian’s graduate education program. While each teacher provides, by far, the strongest account of his or her personal learning journey, I have conducted a metathematic analysis that indicates the teachers have provided a preponderance of evidence to suggest:

- (1) Discourse-rich curricula that include opportunities for accountable talk, conferencing, collaborative problem solving, classroom drama, differentiation, discussion, journaling, metacognition, and scaffolding enhance student engagement and achievement.
- (2) Authentic and purposeful curricula that provide students with multiple opportunities for decision-making, choices, independent and collaborative inquiry, the use of technological tools, and safe risk-taking in the classroom promote student ownership of learning.
- (3) Literacy achievement is enhanced through the development and implementation of discourse-rich, authentic, and purposeful curricula that include contextualized word study and opportunities to predict, clarify, question, and summarize, while reading developmentally appropriate texts, both independently and within literature circles or Socratic seminars, and by allowing English language learners to use first-language knowledge to support second language acquisition as needed.
- (4) Mathematics achievement is enhanced through the development and implementation of discourse-rich, authentic, and purposeful curricula that provide an array of collaborative, open-ended opportunities to solve challenging mathematical problems with opportunities to use graphic organizers, reflective writing, and student-generated data.

Will what these 175 teachers have documented about their professional learning count as research that helps to increase our knowledge base on teaching and learning? Somekh and Zeichner (2009) identify this as Appadurai’s (2001) “globalization from below” by showing how engagement and achievement among diverse learners is attained by professionals in local contexts. Or will their professional construction of new knowledge on teaching and learning be ignored in the name of Taylorism? Corman (1957) noted that the professional research community (as opposed to the profes-

sional teaching community) was split over whether action research was really a teaching or a research method. Beck (Chap. 3, this volume) argues for the importance of the informal action research that lies at the heart of everyday classroom inquiry. John Elliott (2015) disagrees, though, arguing for the production of testable hypotheses. The teachers whose work is reported on in this chapter have, I believe, followed their own respective paths to share the importance of the everyday and the informal within local contexts, while also attempting to construct and share new knowledge on teaching and learning. A tension between personal and public knowledge creation lies at the heart of how teachers use action research beyond the master's degree, which we discuss in more detail in the context of CARN's First East Coast American Study Day in conjunction with ARNA's second annual conference at Moravian College (Shosh & McAteer, 2016).

That conventional teacher education programs have not done enough to ensure that practitioners have meaningful opportunities to learn in practice has been well documented (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Levine, 2005, 2006, 2007). Unfortunately, this evidence is used by those who call for an end to university-based teacher education, while fueling neoliberal arguments that well-educated teachers are too expensive and that the additional education does not lead to greater student achievement anyway. What has not yet been embraced by higher education is a model of teacher professional development through action research that calls into question the very foundations of the Taylorist accountability movement that gained prominence throughout the twentieth century, leading to the Nation at Risk Report in 1983 and subsequent legislation. The type of twenty-first-century research on teachers and learners by teachers and learners in local contexts presented here must be more widely enacted as we move further into the twenty-first century, for it is the only form of research that can ensure that all children—not just the children of the wealthy attending elite private institutions—receive a true education rather than the training composed of a disconnected set of skills, that ensures continued alienation of learners and social stratification of society. Father of modern education, Moravian Bishop John Amos Comenius, argued for what was nearly unthinkable in 1649 when he wrote in his *Great Didactic*:

Our first wish is that all men should be educated fully to full humanity; not any one individual, nor a few nor even many, but all men together and singly, young and old, rich and poor, of high and of lowly birth, men and women—in a word, all whose fate it is to be born human beings: so that at last the whole of the human race may become educated, men of all ages, all conditions, both sexes and all nations. (Comenius, 1957, p. 97)

To bring this Comenian vision to fruition in the twenty-first century requires us to move beyond the modernist remnants of Taylorism and requires us to make a post-postmodern commitment to true universal education. Together we must believe in the ability of all those who commit to a lifelong process of

becoming educated as teachers to use action research to engage in reflective practice, document their evolving understandings of that practice, and construct a local knowledge base on, by, and for teachers and learners. Moravian College Teacher Action Researchers, 2003–2015, offer up their work as a cornerstone of the new cathedral of learning that must be built from our efforts.

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Action Research and the Development of Expertise: Rethinking Teacher Education

Margaret M. Riel and Lonnie L. Rowell

As we near the 100th anniversary of John Dewey's work *Democracy and Education*, his ideas continue to resonate with the dispositions of mind that underlie action research. This chapter blends Dewey's ideas about learning with the work of contemporary cognitive scientists who have explored novice-expert distinctions and pointed to the importance of a generative-adaptive form of educator expertise in the context of the preparation of teachers. We reach back to John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and others in making a case for changing the framework for teacher preparation in contemporary times. Because we place action research at the center of our reconceptualization, we begin by addressing the "elephant in the living room" in regard to barriers to wholesale adoption of action research in teacher preparation.

We begin with the idea of continuous improvement in relation to practice in education. Although often cited as a key element in the practice of action research (Rowell, Polush, Riel, & Bruewer, 2015), the iterative nature of action research is also discussed as one of its most difficult dimensions. From the standpoint of often-overwhelmed educators, trying out new ideas through multiple cycles of action, data collection and analysis, and reflection can appear unrealistic.

In the context of the static forms and flavors of much of what is now offered as professional development for educators, the perspective of continuous learning as an essential part of teaching has been at best marginalized. Within many

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institutional settings, professional development is often delivered by corporate educational entertainers with overly simplistic approaches, often bolstered by claims of research-proven strategies. These approaches lack significant teacher participation in the “shows” that are in the form of *sit and get*, *spray and pray*, and *drive by* trainings (see, e.g. Walker, 2013). These contrast with approaches that do incorporate real involvement of practitioners and do extend over time with the goal of changing classroom practices (e.g. National Writing Project, Lieberman & Wood, 2002; Senese, Chap. 44; Feldman, Chap. 8). We explore in this chapter the connection between examples of transformative professional development and action research.

Action research has been widely discussed in regard to its great potential to better connect theory with practice, to strengthen practice, to empower practitioners, and to promote professional development in education (McNiff, 2013; Mertler, 2014; Pine, 2009; Rowell, 2006). Yet, as Mertler acknowledges, despite the clear benefits it offers, action research is still somewhat unknown compared to traditional research models, can be quite challenging to conduct, has a non-conformist feel to it, and stretches practitioners to think in new ways regarding how to present results (p. 22).

During a time when education policy makers throughout the world have allowed themselves to be convinced that the “blame” for the perceived failure of the educational system must fall on teachers and principals (Ravitch, 2013), a bit of practitioner defensiveness about “outcomes” and “data” is understandable. When teachers are made out to be the enemy and when they are continuously asked to do more with fewer resources, the tendency to want to “work to the contract” is understandable. Similarly, the likelihood of educators embracing practitioner research is decreased (e.g. Beck, Chap. 3). Yet, what if the issues of time involved with practitioner research were reframed at the national, state, district, and education union levels such that practitioner research was understood as career development, an absolutely indispensable feature of teacher expertise? What might that reframing look like?

Our belief is that a closer understanding of John Dewey’s views of the nature of learning and teaching and a determined effort to apply these ideas in the context of modern teacher education and professional development for teachers and other school-based educators is very much in keeping with calls for strengthening the professionalization of educators (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007; Ravitch, 2013). Perhaps, here an acknowledgment is needed: No teacher starts out his or her career as an expert, and unfortunately many leave the field before they attain the deep and fluid knowledge, flexible skills, and intellectual habits that characterize expertise.

Teacher expertise has been shown over and over again to be crucial to students’ success in school (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000; Darling-Hammond, 2000). Expert teachers can analyze situations, make accurate diagnoses about what students know and need to learn, and make decisions about how best to structure learning (Tsui, 2003). They can do this in the time-sensitive, rapidly changing context of classroom lessons. Teaching expertise is also evident in what Dewey (1910) referred to as the process of developing “suggestions” about what further observations or experiments might be necessary to

determine whether current teaching decisions are addressing evolving learning needs. These suggestions, tentatively held, are ideas, suppositions, conjectures, guesses, hypotheses, or, in some cases, theories. This reflective process of examining one's teaching practice in light of student learning and developing suggestions (or hypotheses) about next steps is what deepens teacher understanding.

To develop teaching expertise, novice teachers use their practice as a site for systematic inquiry on learning—both their own and that of students (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Feiman-Nemser, 2001, 2012). While some approaches to developing expertise find a focus on problem identification as negative (Cantore & Cooperrider, 2013), we do not share that stance. We understand the meaning of the word *problem* to be “whatever—no matter how slight and commonplace in character—perplexes and challenges the mind” (Dewey, 1910, p. 6). Thinking involves transforming problems into questions, using the questions to shape action and reflecting on the results to frame new questions (Dewey; Coghlan & Brannick, 2005).

We wish to make very clear at the outset that in this chapter what we address as *expertise* is different from what is frequently heard in both academic circles and the popular culture. Often expertise is thought of in the context of the possession of technical knowledge and skills, which has been called *efficiency expertise* in the cognition literature (Bransford et al., 2000; Hatano & Inagaki, 1986). These “experts” are the people who have years of skills and knowledge within their respective fields having progressed from “novice” to “expert” in “stages,” building their knowledge and skills as professionals (e.g. Berliner, 1987). Our focus, on the other hand, is on a much more fluid, adaptive, and generative process than that suggested by stage theories (Hatano & Oura, 2003; Tsui, 2003).

In addition, teacher “expertise” has become the center of debates among educational reformers, sometimes with extremely hurtful consequences for teachers (e.g. Emery & Ohanian, 2004; Giroux, 2013; Ravitch, 2010, 2013; Shor, 1986). This results because a narrow definition of expertise, embedded in reform efforts and based on a denigration of the work of teachers, is often imposed on teachers in ways that devalue the subject matter, pedagogical content knowledge, and contextual knowledge of learners that teachers have developed over years of experience. Finally, the use of the term seems to play into the hands of those who assert that the development of a strong teacher workforce can only occur through the addition of more and more layers of input by outside experts.

What we are examining, on the other hand, is a different conceptualization of teacher growth and development. We propose grounding teacher education and teacher professional development in a continuous and integrated conceptualization of growth and change that goes far beyond the notion of expertise as primarily reflected in technical knowledge. This approach, we maintain, opens both pre-service and in-service teacher education to the possibility of incorporating action research as a blending of technical, practical, and transformative orientations toward teacher practice (see Rowell, Riel, & Polush, Chap. 6, this volume). We believe that the entire infrastructure of teacher education and ongoing professional development in education as currently

constituted can be, and should be, replaced with an infrastructure based on the idea of developing expertise through a continuous process of learning from practice, with action research and practitioner research constituting the core of the idea.

Unfortunately, at present many teachers do not engage in a continuous process of learning from practice that leads to teaching excellence (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Elmore, 2002). That is, some teachers become experienced teachers without developing expertise or develop a form of expertise that is not well suited to the flexible, changing context of classrooms. Our concern is how to link accumulating experience with the development of teacher-learning and the acquisition of teaching expertise. The case for support for practitioner research can be built around the notion that teachers with generative and adaptive expertise, and not just experience, are far better equipped to address student learning. To make our case, we first examine the kind of learning we believe is essential for teacher development. We then introduce three pathways related to the acquisition of teaching expertise. Finally, we examine the possibilities and challenges associated with instituting “architectures of practice” (see McTaggart, Nixon, & Kemmis, Chap. 2, this volume) based on the development of the generative and adaptive expertise that we are advocating.

40.1 DEWEY AND THE TRAINING OF THE MIND

Kurt Lewin is credited as the first person to use the term “action research” (Lewin, 1946) specifically to understand how taking action can change groups. Yet, well before this usage, Dewey (1910) described a process of “training the mind,” which leads to embodied knowledge in a process that is highly similar to action research. This has often been understood by those who read Dewey’s work today as *learning by doing*.

Dewey described a highly reflective process of problem-solving, driven by inquiry and with a clear role for judgments rooted in intuition and curiosity, and analytic reflections. His educational approach was designed to support the development of these mental habits and dispositions, which are also essential to both formal and informal practices of action research and the development of teaching expertise.

Dewey described the work of education as the training of students’ minds. In his view, it is the purpose [of education] to

cultivate deep seated and effective habits of discriminating tested beliefs from mere assertions, guesses, and opinions; to develop a lively, sincere, and open-minded preference for conclusions that are properly grounded, and to ingrain into the individual’s working habits methods of inquiry and reasoning appropriate to the various problems that present themselves (Dewey, 1910, p. 28).

To be effective in providing such an educational environment, teachers also need these same habits of the mind. Action research, when conducted in a rigor-

ous and disciplined manner, also leads to a “training of the mind” that stays with educators and continuously enriches their practices. It is also in this context of the development of “habits of the mind” that generative and adaptive educator expertise is developed. Dewey’s set of mental habits and dispositions are also supported by more recent research on cognition and expertise (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2007; Ericsson, 2014; Hoffman et al., 2013).

40.2 COGNITIVE SCIENCE AND EXPERTISE

More than two decades of research on expertise, much of it influenced by cognitive science, has documented a set of general characteristics of expertise and the differences between the performances of experts and novices in many domains of knowledge, skill, and practice (Bransford et al., 2000). Among the hallmarks of expert performance are the following:

- (1) Experts have rich, complex but domain-specific knowledge schemas, constructed from large amounts of experience, that are differentiated and hierarchically integrated (Chi, Feltovich, & Glaser, 1981; Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986; Glaser, 1999; Schneider & Stern, 2010; Wineburg, 1998).
- (2) Experts notice features and meaningful patterns of information that go unnoticed by novices (Chi, Glaser, & Farr, 1988; Collins & Evans, 2007; Feltovich, Spiro, & Coulson, 1997); Spiro, Feltovich, Jacobson, & Coulson, 1991).
- (3) Experts can retrieve relevant knowledge holistically and intuitively, making decisions that they often cannot explain, thereby enhancing their speed and efficiency (Bransford et al., 2000; Collins & Evans, 2007; Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986; Feltovich, Prietula, & Ericsson, 2006; Glaser, 1999).
- (4) Experts process events at a deeper level in contrast to novices who might be distracted by surface-level issues (Bransford et al., 2000; Chi et al., 1988; Wineburg, 1998; Wolf, Dougherty, & Kortemeyer, 2013).
- (5) Experts find problems and use case-sensitive analytical and diagnostic reasoning to arrive at solutions to these problems (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993; Cross, 2004; Schön, 1983).
- (6) Experts exhibit flexibility in their thinking as they formulate and evaluate possible solutions (Bransford, et al., 2000; Collins & Evans, 2007; Feltovich et al., 1997; Spiro et al., 1991).
- (7) Experts use strong self-monitoring or metacognitive skills as they work on problems, balancing the need to complete a task with the need to explore a domain (Chi et al., 1988; Eraut, 1994; Glaser, 1999).

Cognitive approaches to understanding teaching expertise often invoke a distinction first made by Hatano and Inagaki (1986) (see, e.g. Hatano & Oura, 2003) between expertise that develops crystallized knowledge—*routine expertise*—and the more fluid, changing, and changeable generative knowledge of *adaptive expertise*.

Routine expertise, Hatano and Inagaki claimed, involves the development of cognitive skills and dispositions that make it possible to quickly and effi-

ciently recognize the nature of the problem and prescribe a solution that will work if the problem is similar to those encountered in the past.

This form of expertise is consistent with Dreyfus and Dreyfus' (1986) description of effortless and fluid performance guided by intuition. For a routine expert, rapid access to prior knowledge is a key component. The use of a teaching routine, including a "best practice," may be expertly executed but without careful attention to outcomes that might challenge its effectiveness. Rather than engage in extended diagnostic work to understand how this solution interacts with the current case, routine experts rely either on extensive experience or on the authority of others who have developed this method or strategy. Routine experts have been found to take a reductionist approach to the complexity of situations by viewing new problems as variants of familiar ones and applying known solutions (Feltovich et al., 1997). This mental disposition often involves ignoring information that might necessitate a change in procedures, in service of efficiency.

In contrast, Hatano and Inagaki (1986) described a form of expertise that results in fluid, flexible, and generative understandings. Building on the work of Piaget (1952), they called this form 'adaptive expertise.' Adaptive expertise arises from knowing how to balance two values: situational constraints which require efficiency, and thinking-in-action that leads to continual change of practice to achieve the best possible design (e.g. Schön, 1983). Schwartz, Bransford, and Sears (2005) extended the work of Hatano and Inagaki to suggest that adaptive expertise might best be thought of as a middle corridor that exists between two axes—innovation and efficiency.

Our model builds on this conception and contextualizes it for education. In addition to routine and adaptive expertise, we add innovative expertise that by itself, like routine expertise, might not create the balance that is important for quality teaching. Innovative expertise characterizes educators who are open to testing out new ideas, who seek out new tools, and who see teaching as a kind of improvisational art performance. These teachers are less likely to explore past "best practices" as they see continual change as the hallmark of great teaching. They also are less likely to reflect on their practices to understand what worked, why something appeared to work, what it means for something to work, or what evidence might support another approach.

In our view, balancing innovation, openness to new practices, and the efficiency that comes from figuring out why something worked align with action research. Action research can help educators make judgments based on the context and the optimal balance of innovations (actions) and efficiencies (research) that lead to a deep and holistic understanding. Figure 40.1 displays these three approaches to expertise and positions action research as the path to developing the adaptive expertise that underlies continuous learning and quality teaching.

To move from a novice to an expert educator is clearly a complex process that takes time, determination, and support. In our view, both pre-service and in-service professional development should be organized based on the characteristics of learning and teaching expertise, and we contend that action research

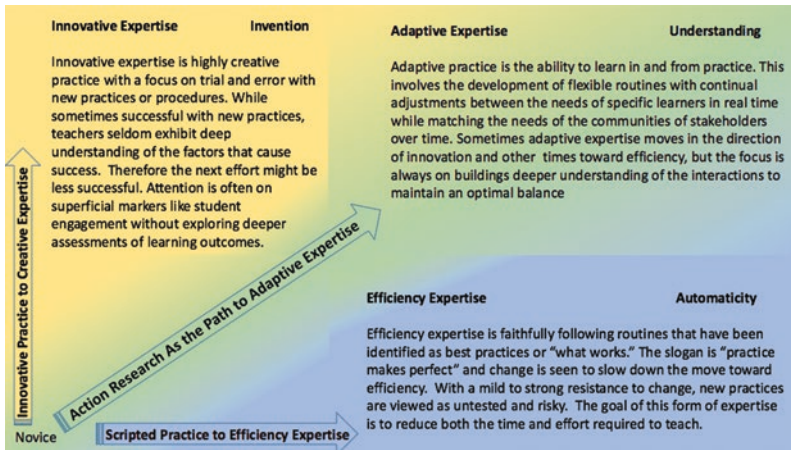


Fig. 40.1 Three paths to expertise with action research balancing innovation and efficiency to achieve the deep understanding of adaptive expertise

is a particularly well-suited vehicle for fostering this development. In addition, if strengthening the expertise of teachers is a crucial component of meaningful school reform (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Ravitch, 2013), a more comprehensive approach to developing expertise is needed, both in pre-service learning and in-service professional development. Teachers who come to value the development of their own "living theories" of learning and teaching (Whitehead, 2009) are more likely to develop the "habits of the mind" that lead to continually evolving practice and generative expertise (see, e.g. Whitehead, Chap. 24).

40.3 PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACHES: THREE DIFFERENTIATED ROADS TO EXPERTISE

Dewey (1910) described a problem as a felt difficulty, a sense of perplexity, the feeling of discrepancy. This unsettled experience of an event can start a problem-solving episode or fuel recursive cycles of thinking to arrive at a conclusion. The ability to see problems, as Bereiter and Scardamalia (1993) indicate, is one of the primary processes of developing expertise. The objective of problem-solving, according to Dewey, should be to discover meaning through a set of mental processes including seeing a problem, forming suggestions (ideas or actions) that might lead to a solution, and then determining which suggestions might lead to the best solution. Dewey believed that such skills and habits can be learned, and he created a guide for how to teach these mental processes. In the next section, we have integrated the philosophical assertions of Dewey with cognitive science research on the development of three forms of expertise—efficient, innovative, and adaptive. We apply three approaches to teaching—scripted, improvised, and generative—to illustrate the different

paths that teachers choose as they develop their skill as teachers. We end by making the case for adaptive and generative learning and teaching and suggest formal and informal practices of action research that lead to the generative and adaptive expertise that is needed in our schools.

To illustrate these three paths to teaching expertise (scripted, improvised, and adaptive), we walk through the problem-solving process from initial problem framing to reflection on the problem solution using three fictitious teachers to help make these distinctions. In each account, the steps are not always sequential and the degree of recursive cycling will depend on the content, the scale of the problem, and the approach taken. But for the sake of making the differences between the paths clear, we progress through one cycle involving (a) Problem Framing, (b) Problem Processing, and (c) Problem-Solving.

Problem framing starts with the initial felt difficulty or cognitive dissonance about what is and what could be. It involves observation to determine the nature of the problem and the importance of the solution. In action research, this is the phase of finding a problem, exploring the problem, and planning an action. *Problem processing* is the more deductive process of testing one or more suggestions or ideas for solutions and determining the information needed and a way forward. In action research, problem processing represents the cycles, or iterative process, of taking action. *Problem-solving* involves a reflective judgment of the order and coherence of the process that leads to a solution, an assessment of the outcome, and the generation of new principles for future problem framing. In action research this is the reflective stage.

Using this model, we describe three approaches to problem-solving, with the third being a dialectical blend of the first two. We use fictional names for fictionalized teachers, but we think the three paths shown in Fig. 40.1 do represent the everyday choices that teachers make about how to develop their skill and knowledge in teaching. The differences of these paths are shown graphically in Figs. 40.2, 40.3, and 40.4 and are explained below.

40.4 PATHS TOWARD EXPERTISE

40.4.1 *Path One: Scripted Teaching and Problem-Solving*

We start with Mrs. Effy, who engages in scripted teaching (Fig. 2) and is working to make her teaching easier, more fluid, and faster. She implements lessons she has perfected with rigid fidelity to achieve the outcomes she expects. She sees herself as an expert teacher because she has a repertoire of lessons that fit any situation and she has taught these lessons so many times she can almost teach them with her eyes closed.

- (a) *Scripted Problem Framing.* Mrs. Effy does not go looking for problems, or spend too much time thinking about change. She uses well-researched techniques and feels no need to scan the classroom trying to detect small problems. Her choice of lessons is justified by pointing to school or state

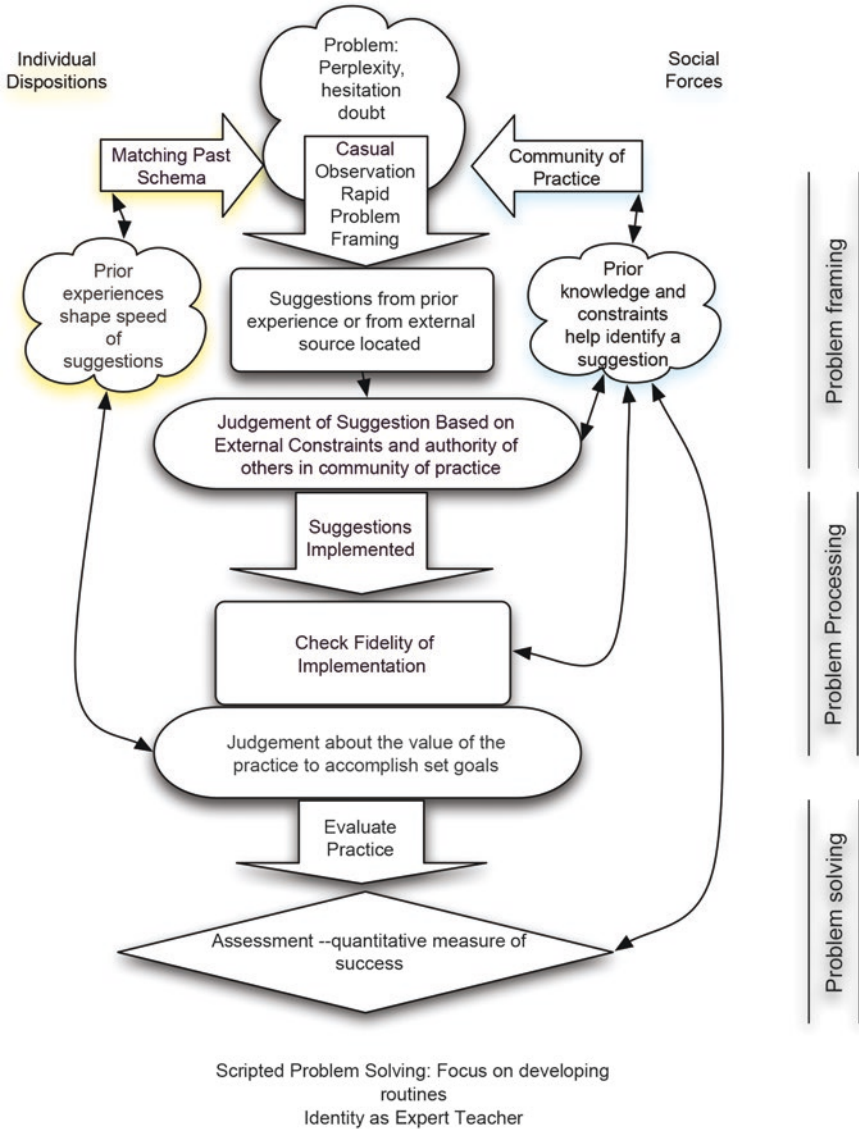


Fig. 40.2 Scripted teaching for efficiency

standards, the “proven” quality of the lesson, or her many years of experience. Problems that cannot be ignored are assessed in terms of the most rapid match to the most efficient solution, with only casual attention to the dimension of the context. The judgment process is truncated by her confidence in relying on the authority of others, past success, or external constraints to change.

Mrs. Effy's rapid, and sometimes premature, selection of an approach to a problem closes down divergent thinking. She depends heavily on teaching routines and practices developed over many years, and she is likely to avoid new ideas claiming there is no need to change, or respond to current teaching "fads."

- (b) *Scripted Problem Processing.* Mrs. Effy focuses on her fidelity in the implementation process, and works to control factors that make the implementation work more effectively. While no routine solution or script works perfectly in all settings, her confidence in the quality of her lessons and teaching skills blinds her to signs of problems. When students are not completely engaged, Mrs. Effy is more likely to blame the students than question aspects of her lesson or its delivery. She begins with the solution, the lesson, and tries to fit the dimensions of the current problem into the suggested solution.
- (c) *Scripted Problem-Solving.* For Mrs Effy, the solution is then defined in terms of a match between the predicted and actual learning outcomes. For example, if it is a history lesson, the students should be able to pass the unit test. However, when the expected outcome does not occur, there can be a bifurcation of teaching and learning so that it makes sense for her to claim, "I taught a great lesson today, too bad it was wasted on the students; many of them do not pay attention and therefore are not learning." Or, Mrs. Effy might account for lack of student success by pointing to negative characterizations of some students (especially minority or English-language learners) as lazy, not engaged, or unprepared, which then preserves, in her own mind, the value of her lesson.

For Mrs. Effy, change is unwelcome and risk-taking is avoided. Complex problems are reduced to simpler, more manageable problems. While imitation—following the prescribed steps—may yield immediate results, it may also strengthen habits that are likely to be fatal to the development of strong reflective power of the educator. Dewey (1910) described the problem with this approach as overdependence on repetitive behavior that resulted in "uniform external modes of action" (p. 63). In this stance, an educator can be "misled into supposing that he is developing mental force and efficiency by methods which in fact restrict and deaden intellectual activity, and which tend to create mechanical routine or mental passivity and servility" (Dewey, pp. 63–64).

From a professional development viewpoint, Mrs. Effy sees herself as an expert teacher because she can retrieve relevant information quickly and intuitively, which increases her speed and efficiency. However, over time, her reliance on scripted behavior can result in boredom from lack of challenges. Her well-developed and integrated knowledge of teaching practice becomes calcified knowledge that blocks adaptation to the changing social and technological conditions and the individual needs of learners.

40.4.2 *Path 2: Improvised Teaching and Problem-Solving*

Ms. Impro welcomes change and often volunteers to try new methods or experiment with new technology. For example, a new tool that teaches mathematical place value is all she needs to get things rolling in her classroom. Her decisions are made intuitively. She is confident in her skill to develop new lessons, invent solutions to any problem, or use any new tool. Ms. Impro rarely points to evidence or generates an explanation of why one lesson might, or might not, be effective. She sees her teaching as an art and believes that good teaching comes from developing one's unique teaching style.

- (a) *Improvised Problem Framing.* Ms. Impro is more attentive to problems in teaching than Mrs. Effy, but she is likely to characterize these problems at a superficial level. For example, when some of her students are confused about place value when using the computer application, she decides that they need technical rather than conceptual help and offers peer assistance. Although Ms. Impro is a risk-taker, the focus on surface features of the situation often blinds her to underlying complexities.

When Ms. Impro plans a new lesson, more time is spent creating fresh original ideas, either alone or with colleagues, rather than relying on what has been developed or researched. Her strong focus on her creative designs makes it harder for her to identify student-learning problems. In fact, the fragile link between teaching and the problem situation is often broken and the planned innovation takes on a life of its own, independent from the needs of the learners. Other options are forgotten in determining the suitability of the proposed solution. In a way, that is similar to the scripted problem framing of Mrs. Effy, the search often ends with a single suggestion—an action plan, lesson, or activity—but in this case, it is likely to be one that is original and untested. Also similar to Mrs. Effy, the specifics of the problem context are not driving the process.

- (b) *Improvised Problem Processing.* When Ms. Impro evaluates a potential solution, the process involves some degree of risk as the dimensions of the problem are not well understood and there is often little evidence to predict an outcome with confidence. Her main form of testing is trial and error, often with the hope of validating the invented solution. There is little interest, therefore, in searching for disconfirming evidence. Her reasoning moves forward from the problem to the solution, with less backward reasoning from solution to problem.

In trial-and-error testing, the coherence of the solution is often out of focus. Rather, the attention is on the outcome and not the *tie* between the causes and outcomes. If the solution makes the problem disappear, this is seen as a success, even if an understanding of the underlying causes is absent. Underlying causes, disconfirming evidence, or inconsistencies are often not in focus.

- (c) *Improvised Problem-Solving.* Ms. Impro mostly focuses on the originality of her solution rather than thinking about why a solution or lesson

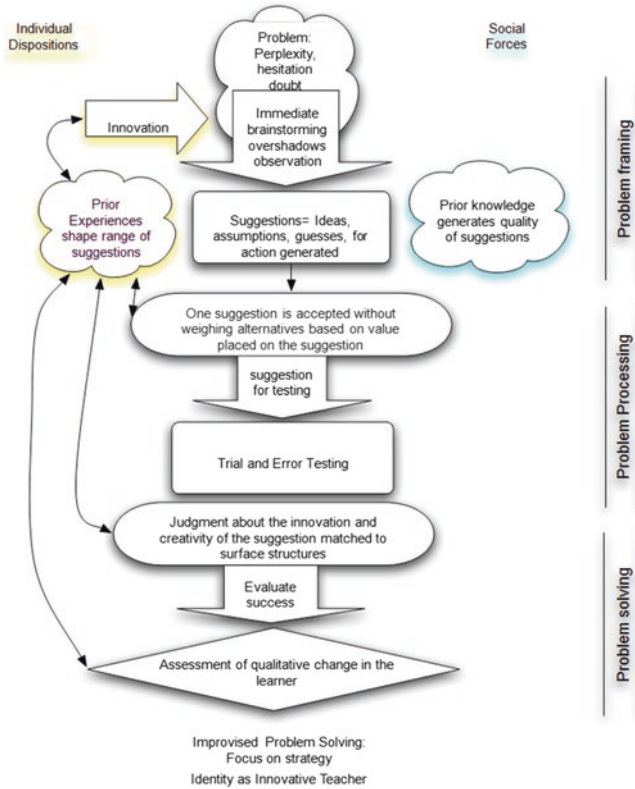


Fig. 40.3 Improvised teaching for innovation

worked. She is likely to invoke attitudinal characteristics rather than the learning outcomes, for example, “The students were so engaged; they had so much fun, I know they were learning.”

If the outcome of the lesson is viewed as a success, Ms. Impro gains confidence in her intuitive process of problem processing. If the experiment goes poorly, a new idea is found and there is another trial. Repeated failure undermines confidence in improvised problem-solving and might result in change to a different form of problem-solving, or more often, a decision to change careers. But with either success or failure, little effort is invested in causal reasoning to understand the factors and relationships that shape the outcome.

In summary, Ms. Impro is willing to engage in a high-risk, continual process of experimentation. She views her expertise through the lens of being an innovative teacher. She has a positive orientation to novelty yet lacks deep understanding of change, which may cause stress and eventually dissatisfaction with teaching. While Ms. Impro embraces change, her selective attention to surface features, rather than to developing a systemic understanding of teach-

ing and learning, increases the risk that she will lack confidence in her skills and experience teaching as overwhelming.

40.4.3 *Path 3: Approach toward Understanding: Generative Teaching and Problem-Solving*

Ms. Gener, the last of our hypothetical teachers, engages in a process of problem-solving by employing acute observation driven by a well-developed intellectual curiosity. For example, Ms. Gener is teaching science by having her students study changes in a local pond over time. She is consciously teaching them to be scientists, as they learn together.¹ Even as problems are solved, they lead her to new design experiments suggested by the presence of confirming and disconfirming evidence. In the pond project, she saves the data collected by prior years of student investigation, which enables her current students to discover patterns of *change over time* that would not otherwise be visible. Using the Internet to share their current data with peers in other countries, the students receive valuable feedback on how to take action. Ms. Gener encourages her students to direct their learning. She is willing to engage in progressive problem-solving as a way of developing deep and flexible knowledge that leads to a continual evolution of her teaching and learning. This drive to understand how larger systems of meaning interact makes Ms. Gener more attentive to new problems using surface-level issues as *symptoms* to access and index more serious problems. Her teaching reflects movement between surface-level issues and deep issues and a high degree of metacognitive awareness that comes from writing about her experiences.

- (a) *Adaptive Problem Framing.* Ms. Gener balances the creative and curious spirit of Ms. Impro with the efficient search of known techniques by Mrs. Effy to create a range of possible actions to study. The speed and range of her planning comes from the extent of prior experiences balanced by the depth and quality that comes from placing these ideas in the context of the most current knowledge in her field. As Ms. Gener developed expertise, the range and quality of her generated plans and the implications of ideas she gained from others were assessed in close relationship to the specific, and changing, dimensions of the problem context. Her problem framing process is more likely to challenge the plausibility of an assumption based on the contextual evidence, rather than relying heavily on past experience for the best solution as was the case for Mrs. Effy. Ms. Gener views the iterative process of action research as a strategy for learning and teaching. When she goes to conferences, reflective thinking drives the process of searching for new strategies, programs, or procedures with the goal of understanding how change provides new clues to how the classroom functions as a complex system of interactions.

Ms. Gener examines a range of ideas or suggestions with the goal of moving forward with those selected as “best fit” with contextual cir-

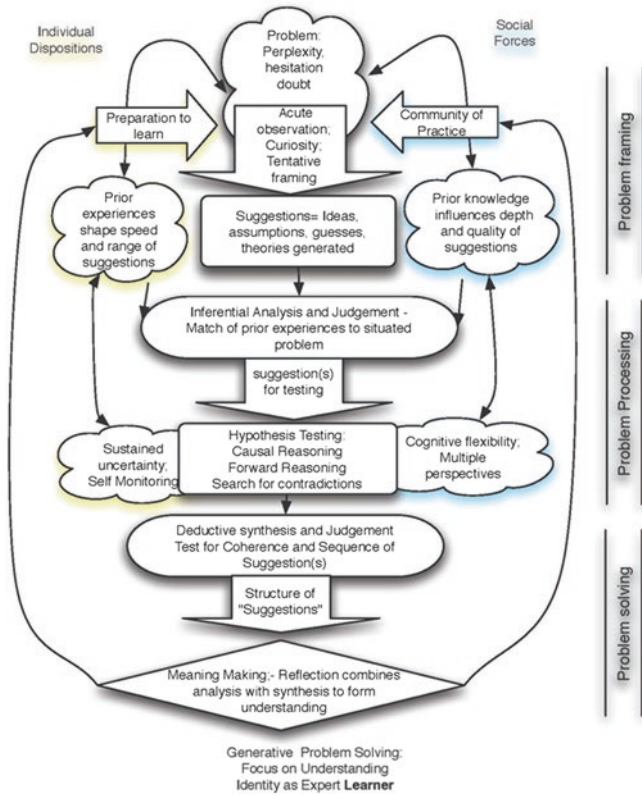


Fig. 40.4 Generative teaching and adaptive problem-solving expertise

cumstances. However, her selection or rejection often remains tentative. The information given in the specific problem informs judgment, but in a highly interpretive manner. The mark of expertise in this process is the ability to judge what information is, and is not, important or the “promise” of an action or solution (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1993, p. 235). This process of not foreclosing early on a solution but instead tentatively entertaining multiple possibilities is what makes Ms. Gener’s process more complex. By moving forward on more than one suggestion, there is a need for metacognitive monitoring and flexibility of thought.

- (b) *Adaptive Problem Processing.* Ms. Gener has as her goal a deep understanding of the interaction of the problem-setting variables, learning science in a real context, with the factors that appeared to result in learning. It differs from scripted or improvised problem processing in important ways. First, Ms. Gener holds more than one suggestion (ideas, assumption, theory, conjecture, or approach) under consideration. Second, the ideas, assumptions, actions, and hypothesis in play have been intention-

ally, yet tentatively, organized to provide the best guess at how the factors in the problem might be linked. For Ms. Gener, this is done by creating a theory of action, a logic model, or other model that deliberates on hypothetical or conditional ideas. And finally, the search is for the connections that will bind the isolated ideas into a coherent whole, that is, a system of meaning tempered by time and circumstances.

The disciplined or logically trained mind—the aim of the educative process—is the mind able to judge how far each of these steps need to be carried in any particular situation. No cast-iron rules can be laid down. Each case has to be dealt with as it arises, on the basis of its importance and of the context in which it occurs. To take too much pains in one case is as foolish—as illogical—as to take too little in another... The trained mind is the one that best grasps the degree of observation, forming of ideas, reasoning, and experimental testing required in any special case, and that profits the most, in future thinking, by mistakes made in the past. (Dewey, 1910, p. 78)

Rather than Ms. Impro's approach of intuitively inventing a solution that somewhat arbitrarily addresses some aspects of the problem, or Mrs. Effy's approach to efficiently select a routine that works well enough to "get by," Ms. Gener is focused on experimenting with actions to understand why one solution might be better than another. This involves a judgment of the amount and kind of evidence required and plans for collecting this information. She balances reasoning backward from ideas about actions to the problem context, and forward from the problem context to ideas for change. This constant back and forth checking for contradictions makes it more likely that this form of problem-solving will avoid *scripted* solutions when they are not productive and wasting time in creating new solutions when there are "best practices" or more efficient ways to handle a problem.

- (c) *Adaptive Problem-Solving*. The development of well-connected knowledge is the test of good solutions for Ms. Gener. She holds a set of nested goals for her students with clear indicators. This enables her to ask better questions and develop new inquiry plans rather than looking to validate a procedure. In contrast to scripted problem-solving, adaptive problem-solving often questions the meaning of the outcome variables in a larger context. When the students wanted to know why there are less ducks or if the water is becoming more polluted, this pushed the project in directions that Ms. Gener did not expect. Each new year and new group of students continues the quest rather than simply repeating a set of steps or routines that were done before. Student interest, questions, and plans restarted the problem-solving process, with the educator proactively looking for clues that might either support or contradict the forming assumptions about the connections, coherence or sequence of the assumed outcomes.

40.5 ACTION RESEARCH AND ADAPTIVE AND GENERATIVE TEACHING

In our view, action research has great potential for helping teachers develop the habits of generative teaching described above. When expertise is acquired through action research, it shifts the meaning of expertise. It changes from a process of reducing the complexity of the problem by finding reusable solutions—Mrs. Effy’s approach—to one of finding ever better solutions. Instead of the relentless search for new ideas that Ms. Impro engages in, Ms. Gener seeks to understand what aspects of a prior solution might be effective, and when it is necessary she examines the setting more carefully and modifies, or finds a new, solution. It is not wholesale reinvention that Ms. Gener pursues, but targeted innovation. While all three teachers show some of the seven characteristics of expertise we summarized at the outset of the chapter, only Ms. Gener’s practice demonstrates all of them. She is likely to characterize her expertise as one of “expert learner.” Her reflective process and her willingness to adapt her practice based on what is learned is how she learns more from practice:

Reflective thinking is always more or less troublesome because it involves overcoming the inertia that inclines one to accept suggestions at their face value; It involves willingness to endure a condition of mental unrest and disturbance. Reflective thinking, in short, means judgment suspended during further inquiry; and suspense is likely to be somewhat painful . . . The most important factor in the training of good mental habits consists in acquiring the attitude of the suspended conclusion, and in mastering the various methods of searching for new materials to corroborate or to refute the first suggestions that occur. To maintain the state of doubt and to carry on systemic and protracted inquiry—these are the essentials of thinking. (Dewey, 1910, p. 13)

To value Dewey’s ideas on the development of educator expertise is to acknowledge how hard it is to develop that expertise. The work requires bringing educators’ personal theories about “how things work” in the classroom and in schools to the surface, examining them critically, and questioning one’s personal theories in regard to how they affect teaching practice (Pine, 2009; Zeichner & Liston, 2013). Taking up such challenges requires education, support, and a strong will: in other words, it is not for the faint of heart.

40.6 DEVELOPING EDUCATOR EXPERTISE AND IDENTITY: ON LEARNING AND SOCIAL CHANGE

In our view, the path toward generative and adaptive expertise and deep understanding should be the path that all educators walk. Schools, students, society, and technology all change at rates that require continuous adaptation, and we believe that pre-service teacher preparation and ongoing professional development should be oriented toward this recognition. We make the case that the

development of the action research mindset—the metacognitive skills that will enable a teacher to move toward teaching expertise and career satisfaction—lies at the heart of finding creative solutions to the problems of educational practice. In our view, effective educational reform for the twenty-first-century needs to be based on preparing teachers, and all educators in the schools, with the mindsets that best facilitate the long-term development of educational expertise. This simply cannot be accomplished by means of the currently favored *technocratic* approach to educator accountability, as evidenced in narrow conceptualizations of evidence-based practice (Biesta, 2007) and teacher expertise.

We agree with Pine (2009) that teachers need to be at the center of school reform and be engaged in continuous learning through practice. In his words:

Teachers as researchers can advance and enhance the professional status of teaching, generate theory and knowledge, improve student learning, increase the effectiveness of reform efforts, and promote teacher development. (p. 92)

This does not mean simply completing an action research project as part of a graduate program. While conducting action research in a guided context is valuable, the value is realized when the graduate adopts the identity of an action researcher as a lifelong part of being an educator. This need not mean that all teachers engage in action research with the same intensity as when they were completing work on a master's degree project or writing a doctoral dissertation, but it does mean that the skills developed become a part of teachers' everyday learning. It also means being willing to take a professional stance toward one's work in education that challenges bureaucratic approaches or mindless "performativity" standards for educators (e.g. Beck, Chap. 3; Balogh, McAteer, & Hanley, Chap. 30; Ledwith, Chap. 4; and Senese, Chap. 44). As action researchers, educators see problems to be solved where others are blinded by everyday routines or imagined constraints. Furthermore, problems are not seen as intractable, but rather as opportunities to learn. In this regard, action research emerges as a critically important tool in helping teachers to develop the kind of expertise needed to work effectively with students in a wide variety of contexts and settings and to experience the kind of personal and professional renewal and revitalization associated with lifelong learning and professional satisfaction.

As we have worked to develop the ideas presented in this chapter, we have been reminded of the current challenges facing educators across the globe (e.g. Giroux, 2013, 2014; Kapoor & Jordan, 2009; Rodgers, 2011). We have thought about the challenge of *where to begin* in addressing the problem of the current "reign of error" (Ravitch, 2013, i) in education. With Claudio Naranjo (2009), we recognize the importance of a comprehensive approach to transforming education, one that reexamines the relationship between education and society and that appreciates the need for the development of teachers' self-knowledge and expertise in a holistic manner. In our view, such a

transformation might begin with a total deconstruction and reconstruction of teacher-learning.

Educational environments are needed in which beginning teachers can develop the habits of mind associated with what we have tentatively called *Generative Teaching and Problem-Solving*. Such habits cannot be developed in the context of “units” of curriculum and academic “programs of study.” Something else is needed and we believe that something is to create and institutionalize learning environments centered on iterative experiences of reflection, action, and data collection and analysis, that is, action research. The outcome of such a program would not only be completion of a wide variety of action research projects in conjunction with initial teacher education but induction into the habits of the mind associated with generative expertise in education and with a profoundly new conceptualization of what it means to be a professional educator. We see, in a return to Dewey today, the same spirit evident in the founding of an earlier “New School” in 1919 by Dewey and other intellectual activists dissatisfied with the educational systems of their times and looking for new ways to address social problems (Katznelson, 2009).

We also have been reminded again of how Dewey’s ideas became anathema to those guiding the “Conservative Restoration” (Shor, 1992, p. 12) that has marked the direction of educational reform in the West since the mid-1980s. This anti-intellectual “back to basics” approach may in part have been a retaliatory move against Dewey for his serious early criticism of the directions that American education headed in the twentieth century. In 1983, for example, a featured article in *Fortune* magazine blamed Dewey and his followers for the rise of a social reform agenda over “excellence in education” (Shor, p. 9). As a proponent of democracy, Dewey’s voice was often heard in opposition to schemes that narrowed students’ choices or “tracked” them into predetermined curriculum strands based on race or social class. Perhaps, the zealotry of the conservative restorationist criticism of Dewey has been an attempt to “blame” Dewey for all that had supposedly “gone wrong” in the 1960s. In this context, as Berman (1996) details, the early university-based organizations of student protest were sometimes called “John Dewey Discussion Clubs” (p. 53) out of recognition of his contributions to the very notion of “participatory democracy.”

In the challenging world we now inhabit, Dewey’s ideas again offer hope for education and apply in a global context. In now returning to Dewey’s ideas regarding the development of expertise in education, we are mindful that the links between action research and Dewey’s body of work are deeply rooted in the context of educational systems driven by a social justice framework for sustaining democratic societies. The practice of democracy in the context of action research, in other words, extends from the production of knowledge about education and communities (Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991; Pine, 2009) to the development of curriculum (McTaggart & Curro, 2009) to ownership and control of natural resources (Horton, 1993). Ultimately, the empowerment of teachers cannot be fully realized without a concomitant empowerment of

students and local communities. They are “joined at the hip,” because all these issues of empowerment reflect the same desire for social justice. In suggesting a model for revisioning the education of both pre-service and practicing teachers and educators, we are hopeful that the project of bringing this model to life serves the larger aim of a more just and democratic future.

NOTE

1. We wish to acknowledge primary teacher Kristi Rennebohm-Franz for the essence of this example. While Ms. Gener is fictional, we suggest that the choices that Kristi Rennebohm-Franz has made throughout her career to engage her students, and herself, in a process of continual learning through action research serves as a real-life example of developing expertise in the profession of teaching in the ways we are suggesting. More details and links to student work over time can be viewed at http://www.internationaleadwa.org/coalition/reports/kristi_report_to_legislature.pdf

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Case Studies in Action Research

Introduction to Case Studies in Action Research

Catherine D. Bruce

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY CASES OF ACTION RESEARCH?

In this Handbook, we present a set of five *cases* of Action Research that illustrate the geographical, philosophical, and contextual range of Action Research on the international scene, but they also exhibit essential characteristics of Action Research that are distinct and compelling.

Case study research involves the study of a particular issue, person, or situation, within a bounded context. It is sometimes referred to as a methodology (a type of design) and otherwise considered a method (a choice of data collection and analysis strategies). According to Creswell (2007):

Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information... and reports a case description and case-based themes. (p. 73)

Yin (2009) describes case study as “one of the most challenging of all social science endeavours” (p. 3) and that “the more your questions seek to explain some present circumstance, the more that the case study method will be relevant” (p. 4). Essentially, according to Stake (1995), in his seminal text *The Art of Case Study*, “the case is an integrated system” (p. 2) under study. And through this case, one generates knowledge of the particular.

It is important to underline that although there are significant similarities between case study and Action Research (including some shared methods of data collection and a broader goal of creating knowledge about the particu-

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lar), these two methods are distinct. In an incomplete but concise description, we may consider that Action Research is an emergent process of progressive problem-solving focused on practice and knowledge creation, whereas case study is a systematic way of conducting an in-depth examination to better understand a bound system. In an effort to distinguish Action Research, Bradbury (2015) states thus:

Action researchers are concerned with the conduct and application of research but, unlike applied researchers, we engage stakeholders in defining problems, planning and doing research, interpreting results, designing actions, and evaluating outcomes. We step beyond applied research into the democratization of research processes, program design, implementation strategies, and evaluation. (p. 67)

Further, validity and value in Action Research stem from this process of collaborative practitioner-researcher knowledge generation, testing, and application in these democratic projects of social change (Levin & Martin, 2007).

Thus we may note, throughout this Handbook, that there are at least three essential characteristics (among others) of Action Research that are distinct: First, there is an integral personal-professional and social change imperative embedded in Action Research methodology stemming from some form of deep dissatisfaction or lack of justice, often in the form of marginalization or human atrocities (see Sanchez, Chap. 47). Second, the direct involvement of the participants in the research process is a central and essential feature of the methods. The research participants work collaboratively (as a group of practitioner-researchers) to understand problems of practice, and to take action to better understand these problems or heal the wounds of injustice. And third, there is an action, reflection, and refinement structure in Action Research that enables local validity (the viability of new ways of knowing) and the assessment of the sustainability of shifts in practice. It is possible, in light of these three distinguishing characteristics of Action Research, to consider case studies of Action Research, but it is somewhat more difficult to imagine Action Research on a case study. The chapters presented in this *case* section of the *International Handbook of Action Research* are indeed examples of the methodology of Action Research, not case study. However, we present them here as a set of illustrative *cases* of Action Research that offer the reader some detailed and vivid examples of studies that meet the three characteristics of Action Research outlined above (a social justice imperative; a collaborative and participatory approach to the research; and the implementation of action and reflection cycles that enable local validity and transformative learning). There are many other chapters in the Handbook that could have been added to this section, and the chapters that are included in this section could have been placed elsewhere in the Handbook. However, the five cases of Action Research included here were selected because of their specificity. In particular, we encouraged the authors of these chapters to indulge in recounting the details of their respec-

tive Action Research projects, including how the project was initiated and navigated, who was involved in the collaboration, and how relationships were negotiated to enact change.

Some argue that it is in the particular that we create knowledge, and make sense of phenomenon, people and situations, which can then be compared to other similar and different contexts and theories. And it is in examining these varied cases/stories/situations of Action Research in the chapters of this section, that we can gain a broader and richer sense of the horizon before us. As Gadamer (1997) explains:

Every finite present has its limitations. We define the concept of ‘situation’ by saying that it represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence (an) essential part of the concept of situation is the concept of ‘horizon.’ The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. ... ‘to have a horizon’ means not being limited to what is nearby, but being able to see beyond it. (p. 302)

Gadamer’s notion of the fusing of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*) is the central goal of this section of the Handbook—that is, each case in the Handbook has its own horizon that requires sensemaking; but importantly, in the set of cases of Action Research presented in this section, we see a varied range of nations, perspectives, data treatments, and theoretical lenses from which to learn about the particular, and reflect on the larger context (or fused horizon) of *what Action Research looks like, feels like, and sounds like* when considering the cases in their totality. To that end, in this introduction, we first describe the distinctions of each case of Action Research presented in this section of the Handbook. We then ask the reader to consider some of the interconnections between these seemingly disparate Action Research projects by posing some questions for assessing Action Research projects across cases.

Gutberlet, Jayme de Oliveira, and Tremblay (Chap. 41) present the experience of recycling cooperatives in Brazil aiming to raise awareness of the value of recycling and the marginalized workers who engage in this undervalued work. In this social justice-oriented study, an arts-based approach (Butterwick & Dawson, 2005; Clover, 2011; Leavy, 2009; McNiff, 2008) to Action Research leads to the production of story, craftwork, and film to raise the profile of recycling cooperatives in an effort to educate and influence political bodies and citizens about how the community of recyclers contributes to improving the physical, ecological, and mental health of the overall community. The authors present a compelling argument for the “co-generation of knowledge and collective learning” as an “effective and feasible” strategy for tackling “acute social and environmental problems.”

Barajas-Leyva and Rowell (Chap. 42) describe a middle school guidance project in Baja California, Mexico, aimed at developing an understanding of responsive guidance and counseling practices of one school faced with the introduction of a new curriculum, *Orientacion y Tutoria*. The context of bilin-

gual and bicultural living conditions on the borderland (see Cline, de la Luz Reyes, & Necochea, 2005 and this chapter, for more on “border pedagogy”) between two nations (the USA and Mexico) sets the stage for productive communications and collaborative knowledge building. It is the third research question of this project—*How do the results of dialogue between a team of US graduate students in counseling and an Orientador in a Mexican middle school impact the practice of the Orientador and the understanding of cross-cultural factors in education and counseling among the graduate student members of the Action Research project?*—that offers particular insights into the collaborative nature of knowledge building through Action Research among practitioners and researchers (Bevins & Price, 2014; Capobianco, 2007; Rowell, 2005, 2006). Immediate impact of the study and the limits (aspects of the Action Research activity that may feel thin or insufficient) are strongly developed in the conclusion of this chapter, signaling a refreshing level of local validity and transparency.

We move next to South Africa, where Wood and Damon (Chap. 45) consider a school–community improvement project through the efforts of one influential school principal working in collaboration with an under-resourced community, and using a framework of respect, relationships, and reflection (Zuber-Skerrit, 2012). The outcome of the joint Action Research was daily involvement of community members at the school with an underlying theme of respecting and infusing indigenous knowledge at the school. Most profound here is the administrator learning and shifts in leadership practice, as well as evidence of sustainability and positive school–community change.

The remaining two cases of Action Research are located in the USA and are school-based in nature. Wenzel and Peterson describe a very particular teacher-researcher joint project studying the practice of using e-readers with seven- and eight-year-old children. The students in this study were struggling readers, who were consequently already disengaging from school at this early age. The goal of Wenzel and Peterson was to incorporate technology (e-readers) to both engage the reluctant readers and simultaneously build reading skills. The study was a collaboration between school and university educators and combined reflection with efforts to refine teaching practices related to integrating the e-readers into the reading program: “Assessing what worked, what didn’t, and what should be modified helps teachers improve their practice.” (Wenzel & Peterson, Chap. 43). Most interesting is the analysis of reading activity of two students—one proficient reader and one struggling reader, as well as the unintended consequences of using the e-readers, such as having the effect of leveling the playing field for all readers through anonymity, social bonding, and shifts in cultural capital. This study clearly falls into the category of working on a *problem of practice* with an improvement orientation.

In that same spirit of exploring problems of practice, in our last Action Research case, Senese (Chap. 44) reflects back on the birth and development of an Action Research laboratory (ALB) at one American high school beginning

in 1995. Through teacher-directed and sustained job-embedded professional development, and through a constructivist orientation, multiple communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) within the school were established and professionalized. Importantly, Senese reflects on his role as facilitator of the Action Research program that increasingly dwindled in terms of management and authority over time, as the number of voluntary and self-directed teacher participants increased (from 4 in year one to 26 teachers ten years later). This chapter offers an interesting blueprint for administrators to consider when embarking on Action Research with their teacher colleagues (also see Beck, Chap. 3, for an example of efforts to increase local validity and sustainability of “informal Action Research” with educators).

The particulars of these examples of Action Research stand alone, and will resonate for each reader differently. And the particulars of each project also have their own universality—where we can learn universal lessons through the illustrative cases of Action Research (see [Hegel’s Science of Logic](#) for more on finding universality in the particular). Given the range of nations, topics, social, political, and cultural contexts, and the range of participants of these Action Research cases, we are certainly challenged to consider how this tapestry of projects and foci weave together in a fusing of horizons. However, we encourage you to read all five cases, not only because they are each powerful examples of Action Research that transformed practice, but because in their entirety we begin to see how the three central characteristics of Action Research outlined above play out in these very different contexts and circumstances.

Each case presented attempts to address issues of social change stemming from some form of injustice—from our very youngest underprivileged school-age learners who are already at a disadvantage, to bilingual and bicultural youth making sense of their identity, to marginalized and impoverished adults who are fighting for dignity and respect in the community—and from self-identified educator challenges to school-wide and community problems of practice—these cases of Action Research offer a compelling pastiche of *action for justice*.

Each chapter also illustrates forms of practitioner-researcher collaboration with direct involvement of the participants in the research process, in making sense of the problems, and in reflecting on those processes. This reflection on practice takes the form of as few as two collaborators (a teacher-researcher and researcher) in one case, to small groups of collaborators (such as teachers, graduate students, researchers, counselors), to whole school or working community collaborations. Importantly, the researchers are not only clearly gaining as much insight from the Action Research process as the other participants, but these insights are articulated explicitly and reflectively.

Finally, the problems of practice identified in each chapter are acted upon, with careful attention to critically reflecting on the validity of these actions, their impact, and the related learning. This process organically reveals continued and new tensions along the way which are welcomed, because of the deep commitment of the participants to (1) maintaining open communication

with one another; (2) revising, reimplementing, and reviewing actions taken in order to ensure local validity and knowledge creation; and (3) identifying the limitations or areas that are “thin” in the project (including research methods, local tensions, and issues of sustainability).

A CRITICAL CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS: SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Now we turn to the more challenging task of thinking critically across the cases of Action Research (Bruce, Flynn, & Peterson, 2011) presented in this section. This is a difficult task because each case is entirely unique and presents evidence of local importance that inherently pushes against generalizations. Nonetheless, collectively, Action Researchers aim toward improvement, and this includes examining our own ways of engaging in research (Swantz, 1996). Therefore, in the spirit of exploring the edges of the horizon, pushing to new horizons, and continually deepening our understanding of what it means to engage in Action Research, we may ask ourselves: How well do the cases *fit* with the three distinguishing characteristics of Action Research outlined in this chapter? What may be missing or limiting in these cases? And do these cases help us keep to the “critical edge” that Carr and Kemmis (2003) advocate for, in efforts to dismantle conformist or unthinking norms of practice? In order to encourage critical analysis across the multiple cases of Action Research, we return again to the above set of three distinguishing characteristics of Action Research. Although incomplete and inadequate (see Bradbury [2015], and Rowell, Polush, Riel, and Bruewer [2015] for further elaboration of characteristics of Action Research), these distinguishing characteristics of Action Research at least provide us with a working framework. What follows is an elaboration of the three characteristics and a series of related critical questions for the reader to ask while reading the cases of Action Research in this Handbook section.

Working on Problems of Social Justice and Marginalization

This entire Handbook seeks to feature the essential role of Action Research for identifying and challenging critical issues of injustice. As Maguire (1996) so clearly explains, Action Research challenges “oppressive structures, relationships, and practices that stifle participation and voice raising.” (p. 109) Voices are raised in each of the cases of Action Research presented in this Handbook; however, we must ask ourselves some critical questions while reading the cases: Whose voices were raised? And do we hear those voices in the reports? Further, how much voice did the participants actually have in shaping the goals and learning outcomes of the project? Was there room to negotiate differences? And finally, were oppressive structures better understood and challenged, or disbanded, or reshaped?

Collaboration and the Nature of Knowledge Creation

In 2007, Capobianco described collaboration in Action Research as involving (1) mutually defined research problems; (2) collaborative investigation of solutions in situ; (3) direct participant involvement in data collection, analysis, and interpretation; (4) ongoing personal and critical reflection for all; (5) new knowledge creation for all; and, (6) the sharing of results with an eye toward learning from the experiences of others. These forms of collaboration clearly push well past the minimum ethical considerations of member checks. What Capobianco and current participatory Action Researchers are promoting (see also Rowell & Hong, Chap. 5, this volume) is direct engagement of participants in *all* aspects of the research process. A simple litmus test here is to ask: Have the participant-researchers declared themselves in describing their personal interests in the project? Whose problem is the research attempting to work on? Further, did the participants engage in analyzing the data? What was the role of participants in communicating the results of the research? And finally, whose knowledge is reported on in the communication of findings?

On a more philosophical level, in analyzing these cases, we need to attend closely to the dangers of academic researchers becoming the “bell ringers” and decision-makers in Action Research activity. Are all members of the Action Research activity deeply invested in their own learning and in how that relates to the learning of the other Action Researchers in their community? Is the Action Research essentially “an enquiry by the self into the self, with others acting as co-researchers and critical learning partners” (McNiff, 2013, p. 23)?

There are of course very healthy and relevant forms of Action Research that are individualized and independent (see Feldman, Chap. 8, this volume); however, all of the cases presented in this section are indeed describing group efforts that also included academics. In this context, we may need to carefully consider the degree of validity of taking action when “outsiders” seek to engage with “insiders.” As Swantz (1996) explains: “Awakened consciousness brings painful experiences. If society is not ready for change, then individuals suffer. To what extent one, as an outsider, can be part of painful change remains to me an open question.” (p. 125) We might argue that “painful change” is not the ultimate goal of Action Research, but we must at least consider how the Action Research activity has catalyzed or enabled a *choice of identity* for participants (McNiff, 2013), and how has it enhanced our abilities to appreciate other view points as a source of knowledge creation.

Reflection and Action That Assesses Impact and Learning

Action Research involves learning in and through action and reflection, and is conducted in a variety of contexts.... The meaning of Action Research is in the way people learn to negotiate ways of living together and explaining how they

do so, emphasizing the problematics as much as the successes. (McNiff, 2013, p. 24)

Although it is gratifying to observe and report on the immediate impact of Action Research activity that appears to alleviate some of the issues or tensions in focus, we might also need to consider the longer-term effects on practice and knowledge, beyond the initial energy and apparent transformations. This issue of sustained impact or lasting knowledge creation is often neglected across research paradigms, and is of key importance in Action Research where participants aim to not only alleviate or better understand immediate problems but also offer a long-view of moving forward in culturally relevant and sustainable ways. And so the questions we might ask ourselves regarding impact include: Did the participants reflect on and articulate their personal learning as part of the collective knowledge creation process? Was there an explicit effort to report on the “after effects” for the community as a result of the Action Research work? Did the participants wish to continue with the efforts initiated through the Action Research? What might limit them in doing so? Essentially, did the reports on the Action Research activity include information on whether the efforts have been sustained and why the efforts were continued or not?

The above questions related to reports of impact, learning, and sustainability are also strongly tied to the *degree of transparency and clarity* of the Action Research reports. Beyond suggesting that Action Research must be dialogically valid, meaning, published, and peer reviewed by other Action Researchers (Anderson & Herr, 1999), we might add that the ideas and findings of these reviewed reports, papers, and presentations should be clearly communicated in a language that is non-exclusionary. Perhaps this holds true for all forms of research, but it seems particularly salient for Action Research since one of the central tenets of Action Research is *inclusion* and the validation of marginalized populations in efforts to increase voice and understanding. Academics typically engage in a process of developing a specialized vocabulary to increase precision in understanding complex issues, which unfortunately also may lead to excluding those who are not part of that culture or specialty. In publications, transparency and clarity are central to conveying meaning that is expressed in an inclusive manner rather than complicating the meaning with exclusionary, specialized language. In reading the cases of Action Research in this section of the Handbook, we must ask: Is the language clear and written in an accessible way that allows people outside of the field of study to engage and learn from the study? Are the methods and findings or “learnings” of the project clearly described? And if specialized language is used, is it explained clearly? Do the authors reflect on their learning explicitly and/or articulate new questions that they are posing about the study? Naturally, Action Research leads to more questions and challenges to address, and rather than seeing this as a weakness of the impact, we might instead consider assessing these new and deeper questions as a sign of success in revealing hidden or complex challenges.

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

There are far too many questions in this introduction to answer in practical terms; however, certain questions may resonate for the reader and these can be selected and kept in mind while reading across the cases. Alternately, a selection of questions can be applied to one of the chapters for an in-depth critical analysis with a chapter that is of particular interest. As a further form of analysis, we charge Action Researchers to put some of these questions to the test with one of their own Action Research studies or reports. To say that, by reading these cases of Action Research, we have an opportunity to learn deeply about the lives and experiences of others engaged in Action Research, would be an understatement. It is with a profound sense of humility and openness that we examine these cases of Action Research so that we may develop a better understanding of what it means to engage in Action Research and what it is to be an Action Researcher.

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Arts-Based and Participatory Action Research with Recycling Cooperatives

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41.1 INTRODUCTION: CONTEXTUALIZATION AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter discusses experiences in arts-based research (ABR) and participatory action research (PAR) undertaken with organized and informal recyclers (*catadores/catadoras*) in the metropolitan region of São Paulo, Brazil. We introduce the concept of informal and cooperative recycling as forms of selective waste collection and separation for reuse and recycling as it is widely practised by low-income individuals worldwide. The Participatory Sustainable Waste Management (PSWM) programme has worked with recycling cooperatives and local governments for six years to consolidate selective waste collection and to develop inclusive policies in municipal solid waste management (for more information, see Gutberlet, 2016, 2015). This programme provides the umbrella under which the case studies we present further were developed. We also describe our methodological framework, which is best described as PAR (Arieli, Friedman, & Agbaria, 2009; Brandão, 1987; Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007; Reason & Bradbury, 2008), and

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ABR (Butterwick & Dawson, 2005; Clover, 2011; Leavy, 2009; McNiff, 2008) grounded in transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000; O'Sullivan, 1999). Finally, we describe two case studies conducted under the PSWM programme.

41.1.1 Informal Recycling in the Global South

In many poor neighbourhoods in cities of the global South, waste is not properly collected and accounts for serious health and sanitation problems. Parallel to formal waste management, an extensive and diversified informal sector makes a living from collecting, separating, and selling recyclable materials; these people are called recyclers in the South. The work of these recyclers, whether informal or organized in associations and cooperatives, is mostly unrecognized. Yet, without them, more valuable resources would be lost in landfills. The International Solid Waste Association (ISWA) recognizes that the informal sector and micro-enterprise recycling, reuse, and repair systems achieve significant recycling rates, with 20–30% in low-income countries, an activity which saves local authorities approximately 20% or more of what they would otherwise need to spend on waste management, representing many millions of dollars every year for large cities (ISWA, 2012). Research suggests that these activities generate work and employment for approximately 1% of the urban population globally (Gutberlet, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2016; Scheinberg, Wilson, & Rodic, 2010; Wilson, Rodic, Scheinberg, Velis, & Alabaster, 2012).

In Brazil, as in many other parts of the world, recyclers have been organized into recycling cooperatives and sometimes in regional networks and national movements for collaboration and collective action. In developing countries, some of these organizations have achieved significant political influence (Ahmed & Ali, 2004; Gutberlet, 2008, 2015). The collaborative approach of organizations generates different opportunities for capacity building and human development of recyclers, giving them a stronger political voice, besides real possibilities for improving the working conditions, occupational health, and income. Organized recycling also contributes to social cohesion in the community, where recyclers do household collection (Tremblay, Gutberlet, & Peredo, 2010).

Cooperatives provide opportunities for training and education through programmes run by the government, universities, and non-governmental organizations. These experiences have contributed to building leadership and to empowering the recyclers, opening avenues for social development and collective action (Tremblay & Gutberlet, 2011). Cooperative members participate in decision-making, and leaders negotiate with government or business and contribute to public events, conferences, and exhibitions. The collective work in the cooperative helps expand social cohesion amongst the members and those with whom they interact. The recyclers' contact with community members represents an opportunity to increase environmental and social consciousness, acting as hands-on disseminators of information regarding waste reduction and resource recovery, creating stronger communities (Couto, 2012).

41.2 PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH (PAR) AND ARTS-BASED RESEARCH (ABR): CO-CREATING KNOWLEDGE

PAR promotes mutual involvement, personal growth, and empowerment of participants through the research process. Researcher and participants are actively involved in developing the goals and methods for collection and data analysis, as well as implementation of the results that will promote social change (Kidd & Kral, 2005). Methods within PAR are formed over time during a process of action and reflection, referred to as reflexivity, aiming to spark participants' critical thinking with the ultimate goal of positive social transformation.

PAR is based on Critical Social Theory and radical pedagogies that are committed to provoking social and political change (Brandão, 1987; Santoro Franco, 2005; Thiollent, 2008) through meaningful dialogue. PAR is built on Kurt Lewin's social psychology applications, and it is a type of "social research with empirical basis that is conceived and carried out in close association with an action or with the resolution of a collective problem and in which researchers and participants representative of the situation or problem are involved in a cooperative or participatory mode" (Thiollent, 1986, p. 14).

Along with PAR, ABR has been used worldwide as an alternative way of qualifying the unquantifiable and a better way of addressing research questions in a holistic and engaged way (Huss & Cwikel, 2005; Leavy, 2009). From this perspective, ABR opens up new spaces and discourses that uncover power structures that perpetuate the status quo. Empowerment is a key concern in our research and challenging social and political change, a desired outcome.

Since we are interested in learning, particularly in the process of social and transformative learning, ABR is useful because a variety of creative tools can be applied to collecting data, to describing, exploring, discovering, and to capturing the research process. We combine PAR and ABR in this study because it is through the process of making art in a participatory manner that dialogue is generated, and thereby new knowledge is co-created.

41.3 TWO EXAMPLES FROM OUR WORK WITH ORGANIZED RECYCLERS

In this section, we present two case studies to illustrate our arts-based and participatory action-oriented projects conducted with members of organized recyclers involved in the PSWM programme. In these case studies, we introduce participants from the 32 recycling cooperatives from São Paulo that were affiliated with the PSWM programme (Gutberlet, 2015). The following excerpts and individuals we present were neither chosen randomly, nor are more important than the others, but they illustrate the claims we make in this chapter.

41.3.1 *Popular Art (Gossip Circle)*

This is the story of Helô and Bahia. They are a lively couple in their fifties. They have been married for many years and met each other whilst working as recyclers

on the streets of São Paulo. Although they no longer act as recyclers, their work is intimately linked to a recycling cooperative because they are now community leaders at *União de Vila Nova*, a low-income community in the outskirts of São Paulo. As community leaders, they keep their community informed about the political decisions that are made by the City that affect people's well-being.

At *União de Vila Nova*, Helô and Bahia run a sewing studio that was established by the City to train anyone who is interested in the fashion industry. They also facilitate numerous sewing workshops, and most of the materials they use during the workshops are provided by a recycling cooperative. They, in turn, use all these materials to create art pieces to be sold at a local market, fairs, and conventions.

Helô and Bahia have also participated in our arts-based workshops. There were ten participants in the art studio, with Bahia being the only man. For the purpose of this chapter, however, we focus only on what Helô and Bahia have to say. It is important to highlight that the episode we present next unfolded just a few weeks prior to the elections for São Paulo City *Councillors*. We invite readers to observe how these protagonists negotiate their perceptions in and around a women's circle in the sewing studio, and, through a feminist lens, we will make sense of what they are saying to explore how their conversation can contribute to the literature on ABR and PAR.

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- | | | |
|----|--------------|---|
| 1 | Bahia | I quit the course. That one led by the women, because |
| 2 | | they would arrive here, and instead of sitting on a |
| 3 | | sewing machine and think of something to do. |
| 4 | | You know what I mean, have a thought, say something |
| 5 | | like, look, create something and show it to their |
| 6 | | peers, but they don't. They start gossiping. |
| 7 | | Real gossip. |
| 8 | Helô | Yes, because in every women circle |
| 9 | | is like that. |
| 10 | Bahia | We have the time to work and the time |
| 11 | | to sit and articulate. We both and our group like to chat. |
| 12 | Helô | To have ideas. |
| 13 | Bahia | Yeah! To have ideas. That is where |
| 14 | | good things come from. It is when we sit around and |
| 15 | | have a good dialogue. |
| 16 | Helô | With no disagreements |
| 17 | Bahia | Otherwise—Looking into other people's lives. Let's |
| 18 | | look into our own lives. |
| 19 | Helô | Well. This is how I think. I had one—I had one |
| 20 | | experience with the women Bahia is talking about. We |
| 21 | | were a little bit separate, because we were not just |
| 22 | | involved with crafts making. We were involved with |
| 23 | | politics as well. |
| 24 | Bruno | What do you mean by politics, Helô? |
| 25 | Helô | Politics? I am always involved with it during the elections. I give my support to |
| 26 | | a candidate for our community. I work for him, why? Because I am a |
| 27 | | community leader (...) and as a community leader I try to find out about our |
| 28 | | community needs. |
-

Bahia starts out by arguing that he quit the course in which he was enrolled due to the fact that women who were also enrolled in that same course would not sit at the sewing machines. Rather, they would engage in something else that later he describes as gossiping. It is clear in Bahia's opening speech that the gossip the women were engaged in most likely did not involve him in the conversations and was not about their craftwork because they (women) did not have a complete or a physical piece to show to their peers. Neither was it anything thoughtful, meaningful, intellectual ("have a thought"—line 4). In other words, according to Bahia, the women in that circle were just minding other people's business. Hence, for Bahia, the conversation the women were having was useless talk, because it was not relevant to the course. Bahia ends his opening speech by confirming that the women were indeed gossiping (line 7). At this point, it is clear the male-dominant discourse that places the conversations the women have as just gossip, devaluing not only just what they have to say but also reducing the importance "gossip" holds in PAR. A hierarchical status is established in their discourse in which the man is placed in a higher or more intellectual position than the women. This is evident when Bahia states that whilst the women were gossiping, he was the only one in the room who was producing something tangible to show to his peers. The fact that the women were gossiping upset him so much that he did not complete the course, and "women's gossip" was the only reason he presented for quitting.

At this moment, two things happen in Bahia's discourse. He first brings forth the subject of gossip to the conversation, which later sparks Helô to provide a counter-narrative, where she is able to articulate her previous knowledge about women's circles. Second, Bahia overlooks the power of gossiping in women's circle that may evolve in art-making environments. However, "gossip plays a key role in human society" (Jelasi, 2011, p. 9) and is not a new topic of research in the Social Sciences (Besnier, 1989; Gluckman, 1963; Haviland, 1977; Levin & Arluke, 1985; Loudon, 1961; Stirling, 1956). Historically, gossip has been perceived as just individuals minding other people's business with, most likely, no confirmation of evidences. However, in the case we presented earlier, there is more depth in gossip. For Helô, political articulations were taking place. Some research (Foster, 2004) argues that gossip is a valuable and, sometimes, essential part of communications in order to function efficiently in a complex social environment. Humans require information about those around them, therefore they gossip.

Following, Helô confirms that the women were indeed gossiping, and she goes on by explaining to Bahia that this is a normal behaviour for that group of women since, according to her, "every women circle is like that" (lines 8 and 9). Helô's statement at this point of their conversation illustrates the importance of informal women's circles, because according to Hooks (1994), in times and places where women do not have access to women's studies classes or even feminist literature, "individual women learn about feminism in groups" or through "word-of-mouth" (p. 19). According to Freire (1970), moments like this (e.g., women's circle) spark liberation and emancipation because learning happens freely, informally, and incidentally through the sharing of stories and through each other's personal experiences.

Next, Bahia picks up on what Helô previously said by confirming that they do have time to work as well as time for chatting. Bahia perceives the work they perform in the sewing studio as something different from the conversations women were having in the room so much so, he allocates different times for each activity (e.g., time to chat and time to work). This positioning devalues conversation because it is not part of the job itself. Hence, any discourse that may emerge in the art studio, if not directly related to the work itself, is not relevant. If we persist with this perspective, we risk neglecting the richness of women's circle and shut potential windows for dialogue, thus ignoring possibilities for teaching and learning in an environment like this.

Bahia does not detail the kind of discussions the women were having. He simply identifies it as gossip. However, Helô explains to Bahia that through conversation, individuals can gather new ideas. In doing so, Helô begins to provide her counter-narrative to what Bahia refers to as gossip. For her, the women were sharing their stories, learning from each other, and generating ideas. Bahia does affirm that conversation is important because it allows brainstorming amongst participants. In other words, for Bahia, it is through *articulation* and *chat* that good ideas come to the surface and not through gossiping. Here, Bahia makes a distinction between gossip and something else that he calls articulation/chat, in which the former should not be encouraged in the workplace because it is useless talk, whereas the latter generates good dialogue. This is evident when Bahia explains that these women should focus on their own lives. Helô's counter-narrative is prefaced by explaining that she is focusing on her perspective and her own previous experiences ("This is how I think"—line 19). This is a key feature in gossip conversation because gossip is based on the individual's knowledge of the topic. She explains that they were not only just taking sewing classes but also talking about politics.

Following, Bruno asks Helô to further articulate what she means by politics. Helô connects her response to her work in governmental politics. She describes her work during the elections as a community leader, rallying for a specific candidate. This type of work is common amongst community leaders during elections in Brazil. Here, Helô talks about the upcoming elections for São Paulo City Councillor. Helô explains that it is her duty as a leader to uncover the needs of her community and to pass that information on to the candidate. Helô's counter-narrative brings forth a different perspective on gossiping. According to her, the women from that sewing workshop were indeed engaged in some kind of conversation that was not directly related to the workshop *per se*, but were talking about politics.

In sum, this conversation offers evidence of the male-dominant discourse that establishes a hierarchy amongst men and women, where the conversations that occur within women's circles are deemed inconsequential. Indeed, according to Foster (2004), gossip is *idle talk* or *chitchat* about one's ordinary daily life. Dunbar (2004) extends the definition by broadly defining gossip as conversations about social and personal topics. Etymologically speaking, gossip is attributed to women, and it is often used as synonymous to "girl talk" or "women talk." On the other hand, it is culturally accepted, especially in

Latin countries, that men instead, just “kill some time together” or “shoot the breeze” (Fine & Rosnow, 1978). These definitions do not use the term *talk* when referring to men’s conversations, reinforcing the idea that men do not talk about people’s lives—they are doing something else when they are gathered together. Further, there is no specific terminology to describe men’s gossiping in the literature, reinforcing the idea that men do not gossip. Culturally, there is a distinction between female and male conversation, where women’s talk is trivialized compared to men’s conversation. However, in reality, both genders engage in some forms of gossip, and it is indeed from these relaxed conversations that learning takes place, because it is a co-construction of individual stories and people’s previous knowledge about the topic they share.

The Role of Gossip in Our Research Methods In our work, we do not take gossiping for granted but rather explore its potential for dialogue and knowledge co-creation. In research terms, we take advantage of Gossip Circles in our practices to explore what people have to say, regardless of what they are gossiping about. Therefore, we have tailored and applied Gossip Circles as workshops to generate dialogue amongst research participants. This activity can be easily adapted to different groups.

The word “gossip” when translated into the Brazilian Portuguese language becomes *fluxico*. *Fluxico* in Brazil embodies strong cultural and historical connotations. It can carry the same meaning as in English, which is an informal conversation amongst people. But *fluxico* also describes a small fabric circle in which its border is basted and furrowed, forming a little pouch, inspiring the creation of decoration pieces and even bigger compositions such as blankets and clothing (Photograph 41.1). *Fluxico* is a traditional present in all regions of Brazil, and it received such a peculiar name because, according to Brazilian folklore, women, especially from rural and working class, would gather around to sew and also to talk about other people or to gossip. Both *fluxico* meanings (e.g., gossip and pouch) when interwoven become the starting point for our Gossip Circle workshops, which started as a warm up activity by getting people talking but soon took on a life of their own as a full workshop *structure*.

Gossip Circle Workshop Structures Here is the basic structure for the workshop:

Time: The time for this workshop is adaptable depending on the goals of the community and facilitator. It can range from 30 minutes (as an icebreaker) and last for hours if the intentions are to further explore what participants have to say.

Material: Leftover fabric, string, sewing needles, bottle caps, and scissors.

Method: We cut out a set of fabric circles before the workshops began, in order to save time during the workshop. Each fabric circle was 3 centimetres in diameter. There was no exact number of circles; the more, the better. We often use different colours of fabric, so whatever we created would be colourful, and we worked with only leftover materials. To make the little



Photograph 41.1 Artwork created by recyclers using the *fuxico* technique

pouches, participants first basted around the borders of the circle with the needle and string. Then, they placed the bottle cap with the flat surface touching the fabric. Holding the fabric and the bottle cap together, we furrowed the basted fabric edges, so the fabric circle would close around the bottle cap. We then sewed the ends shut. Participants would make as many as desired. Once the group had a considerable number of *fuxicos*, participants started to assemble them, creating much larger pieces.

The Gossip Circle workshop was a participatory- and process-oriented activity, whilst researchers focused on the dialogues that emerged in the sewing studio. This structure offered the potential to highlight the many individual and collective experiences from that community and the challenges they faced. This aspect of arts-informed research is important because it is an effective way to understand communities' social dynamics and inform alternative realities for social change. For instance, looking back at Helô and Bahia's conversation, there are clear unbalanced power relations regarding gender, where there are certain expectations from the women to produce something to show to their peers, or as Bahia articulated "have a thought," meaning that the "gossip" women were having amongst themselves was not thoughtful. However, as Helô points out, the women's power in the studio actually involved talking politics.

41.3.2 *Participatory Video*

The second case study presented here describes a Participatory Video project we conducted with members of the PSWM project between 2009 and 2012. The aim of the project was to facilitate empowerment and strengthen dialogue

and engagement for inclusive public policy with members of the project and local government in the greater metropolitan region of São Paulo. The project provided opportunities for the recyclers to explore video not only as a way to shed light on their livelihood challenges but also as an approach to celebrate, demonstrate, and legitimize the value and significance of their work to local government and society. Working through a participatory approach, 22 leaders from 11 cooperatives were involved in all aspects of the video-making process, from script writing to filming, group editing, and knowledge mobilization. This collaborative approach equitably involved community members and researchers as partners in all aspects of the research process (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998).

The purpose of the videos was to relay the message that recyclers perform a valuable service to society and through the organization of cooperatives have the capacity to be further supported and integrated into waste management programmes. The videos were used as a tool for communication with government and for community outreach. The project involved several stages including the technical training workshop, in-depth interviews with participating members, and, finally, focus group discussions with local government representatives (see Photograph 41.2).

The weeklong workshop included teaching the technical skills and using communication tools necessary for production and post-production, resulting in four short videos. The final products revealed unique stories, each highlighting the strong capacity of the recycling cooperatives to provide an important environmental and social service to society. The major themes of the videos ranged from occupational health, validation and recognition of service, environmental sustainability and education, private sector development, and gender equality. Each participant had the opportunity to perform a different role in the preparation and production of the videos. Storyboards were collectively developed in each group to identify who would handle the camera, narrate, and give interviews when out in the field. Each group filmed at their respective cooperative, interviewing colleagues and local business owners, demonstrating the process of collection and separation, and local partnerships in the community. The clips reflect the perspectives of the participants, who collectively created the script and storyboard of the video.

The content of the videos varied amongst the groups. Two of the groups focused on highlighting the capacity of the recycling cooperatives to perform the service of door-to-door collection, interviewing both the *catadores/as* at the cooperative and residents and business owners in the community participating in the collection service. One of the groups also demonstrated in their video the production of the value-added product *Varal* (washing line), made out of recycled pop bottles that are sold in local supermarkets. The third group decided to perform “*the making of a catador/a*” by recruiting an informal recycler from the community and inviting him to the cooperative, explaining the benefits of working collectively and asking him to join their group.

The final videos were presented to municipal government representatives during focus group meetings in the municipalities of *Diadema*, *Mauá*, and



Photograph 41.2 Participatory video workshop

Ribeirão Pires. The focus groups were facilitated by the leaders of the cooperatives, who co-produced the videos, supported by the executive committee of the PSWM project. These focus groups were videotaped and analysed to evaluate the use of the videos as a tool for enhancing dialogue and communication with the government.

Following the focus groups with local government representatives, the recyclers were interviewed about their reflections on various elements of political agency, leadership, and knowledge mobilization. The results of this research demonstrated that Participatory Video was an innovative and powerful vehicle for individuals and communities to both engage in critical self-analysis and political action. Participatory Video can enhance and stimulate new and inclusive forms of communication, by placing the camera in community hands. The images can be revealing and eye opening—it can provide new ways of seeing, challenge existing perceptions, and give opportunity for creative processes. Given the increasingly accessible nature of video technology, this form of representation has enormous potential for widespread, immediate, and powerful impact on how communities are perceived and understood by both community members and outsiders. This approach is recognized as important in yielding and validating community knowledge and understanding to guide

policies and programmes for reducing social disparities (Flicker & Savan, 2006; Ritas, 2003), particularly by improving communication between stakeholders (Hickey & Mohan, 2005; Luckin & Sharp, 2005). The main outcomes of the research and the different ways in which Participatory Video can foster empowerment, mobilize community knowledge, and stimulate inclusive governance are summarized as follows.

Mobilizing and Validating Community Knowledge and Empowerment The Participatory Video process in this research was instrumental in mobilizing community knowledge of the recycling sector, in addition to cultivating empowering outcomes. Similar outcomes are well documented in White's (2003) research on how Participatory Video can be used to encourage change in both attitudes and social behaviour in an effort to solicit the participation of communities who identify development solutions. Media literacy, Criticos (2001) argues, can help facilitate critical citizenship and encourages marginal voices to produce counter-discourses.

Vilma, a recycler from the *Vida Limpa*¹ programme in *Diadema*, for example, expressed her confidence and motivation in recognizing her power to "fight and defend work that is beautiful and important." Others, such as Monica, expressed appreciation for the Participatory Video capacity in revealing recyclers' realities by themselves. Participation has been argued to be the active ingredient for development (Stiglitz, 2002). Since authentic development is driven from within through personal and social transformation, involving the people whose development is being promoted in every aspect of the process is necessary, and in essence the basic principles of PAR.

Participatory Video is a powerful tool for enabling authentic participation. The process enhances self-confidence and communication skills, bringing feelings of pride and ownership in the finished product. This also reflects and reinforces recyclers' consciousness of the value of their own knowledge in addressing societal challenges and influencing policy and ideas in a positive way. This self-fuelling cycle of learning can be the most powerful realization of one's own capacity for change.

Enhancing Communication for Political Change Communication strategies are central to community-based development endeavours because good communication allows people to gain new knowledge, challenge existing oppressive structures, and, above all, gain control over their lives and thus overcome oppression (Melkote & Steeves, 2001). The use of video, guided by principles of community-based participatory research, has become an increasingly effective and creative tool for mobilizing, engaging, and linking communities and government, particularly within the context of development.

The participatory methodology in this project proved to enhance the process of dialogue, by providing an iterative process of visual and communicative

data. The images provided the audience, in this case the government, with a “real-life” picture of the realities of this community, a significant step in challenging pre-conceived perceptions of this community and in documenting their struggles and innovative solutions.

The process was influential in making positive change in the community from a grassroots level, in which a participatory structure of communication is central. These creative community media outlets “permit local communities to question the ideologies which depreciate them, select the information which is truly important for them, and project more positive images of themselves” (Servaes, 1999, p. 84). In this way, communities have the opportunity to influence policy in a broader and more collective way. Monica, for example, shared that a supportive political space was enabled through this project that had real community impact on policy, and furthermore that she was influential in that process:

Particularly here in *Diadema* I believe I have [influence]. I can speak for our community...we recently had a meeting with the mayor and I gave a status report on the program of selective collection and it had a few things that were not legal and he [the Mayor] has totally changed. I expressed arguments to him, I gave him the documents focusing on the problem and we solved it.

The videos were an impetus, a tool, or avenue to create space, opportunity, and enhanced leadership for Monica, and others, to make important change in their lives and the collective benefit of their community.

In this previous excerpt, the local government suggested the use of the videos as tools for communicating with other government departments, the business sector, and for public educational programmes. Overall, the government responses to the videos were positive and sympathetic, despite some of the challenges associated with political agendas and bureaucratic ties (i.e., budget constraints). In each case, there was genuine interest in working with the cooperatives and strengthening their participation and capacity in recycling services. The process helped to build a strong sense of community amongst the recycling cooperatives, an experience of strength as a group to improve their livelihoods.

It is important to note the dynamic nature of empowerment—that it is an ongoing process and not an end state. Individuals become empowered and disempowered as a relation to others and, more importantly, to themselves. The participants in this project voiced their opinions about feeling more empowered than in other situations. Empowerment is not an ultimate state achieved through the Participatory Video experience but rather reflects experienced empowerment in the given context.

41.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS ON PARTICIPATORY KNOWLEDGE CREATION

In our chapter, we reveal the great potential of using two different visual methods in PAR. The methods described in the context of the different workshops and meetings aim to strengthen citizen engagement, where people develop greater self-identity, political awareness, collective knowledge, and a greater sense of their rights and agency. These approaches to research not only inspire self-transformation but also translate into effective action for social and political change. Informed and active citizens are the necessary building blocks for participation in decisions that can have broad impacts across many sectors. Participatory approaches to research also “contribute to more pluralistic societies, bringing new voices and issues into the public arena, providing a sense of recognition, social identity and dignity which are important for a sense of inclusion” (Gaventa, 2013, p. 11).

The interactive, collaborative, and participatory approaches applied in our research contribute to generating new knowledge on aspects considered key in the everyday life of recyclers, including health and risks at the workplace, re-creation and reiteration of self-identity and empowerment, and enhancing communication between recyclers, the government, and the general public on inclusive solid waste management.

The Participatory Video project both documents the challenges that this community faces, such as poverty, stigmatization, and social exclusion and highlights the enormous opportunity and key role that recycling cooperatives play in inclusive waste management strategies. The research has demonstrated that through self-reflection, determination, and developing awareness of one’s own interests, individuals can draw on their strengths, exercise their citizenship, and make action for change. The results point to clear moments during the process of the Participatory Video project where participants experienced personal transformation. It is imperative, and highlighted in the experiences of the recyclers, that transformative change in the decision-making process needs to be driven by the participants themselves.

The research also highlights Participatory Video as an effective and innovative communication tool for informing public policy that can shift power dynamics for greater inclusivity of community voices. In the context of this work, some case studies revealed immense potential in this area and some very subtle possibilities. In looking towards future research in the area of policy impact and Participatory Video, we would inquire into new ways of measuring this impact (short-term and long-term) and the genesis of what is needed to make real policy change. It is still unclear how much weight community knowledge has in terms of shifting entrenched policies and what longer term changes result from these interactions. As Wheeler (2012) highlights, in her research on citizen engaged policy change, “a single space for debate is not enough, there needs to be ongoing pressure on different fronts” (p. 376). Although the Participatory Video process can be the beginning or impetus in stimulating dialogue, it is

insufficient for policy changes without institutional change of the deliberation process.

I am a man. I am a mechanic. I paint cars. I don't know how to sew. (Seu Francisco—a recycler and research participant)

Seu Francisco, a male research participant during the Gossip Circle workshop, uttered these previous sentences repeatedly upfront. He was indeed very reluctant in the beginning of this workshop, not wanting to participate at all. The process of creating the *fluxicos* perhaps moved people out of their comfort zone, by inviting them to experiment and play with materials that may not be part of their daily lives. Such experimentation may, at first, have sparked anxiety, fear, shyness, weirdness, and *uncomfortableness* in some participants. However, after its completion, these same participants experienced joy, happiness, peace, sense of belonging, warmth, empowerment, and, most importantly, love. And lots of it. Because they collectively did it. For instance, as the workshop unfolds, Seu Francisco, encouraged by his peers (mostly women), decided to stay and participate in the Gossip Circle and was very proud of his art pieces: “Oh! Look at this one I’ve just made. So cute, isn’t it,” Seu Francisco kept saying it as he piled his recently sewn little pouches.

The participatory research process highlights the complementary nature of academic knowledge to the local knowledge of the recyclers. Co-generation of knowledge and collective learning provides effective and feasible strategies and resolutions that can help tackle acute social and environmental problems, as discussed in this research. The findings have the capacity to inform models of participatory governance and improved democratic processes in addressing complex urban development challenges, in addition to advancing practices in government accountability and transparency. Democratic processes that inspire and embrace citizenship should therefore provide multiple avenues and spaces for engagement. The methods presented here can be an innovative way to include multiple voices in these arenas, voices of people otherwise left on the margins.

NOTE

1. The *Vida Limpa* (Clean Life) programme was initiated in 2002, as a partnership between *Pacto Ambiental*, a network of recycling cooperatives, and the Diadema government (municipality from São Paulo) to collect door-to-door recycling materials.

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Border Pedagogy and *Orientación y Tutoría*: A Case Study of USA–Mexico Collaborative Action Research

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“U.S. Citizen, nothing to declare officer,” stated the team leader. “What were you doing in Mexico?” the border patrol agent continued. “Visiting a school,” the team leader replied. The officer then asked another team member: “Anything to declare?” “No sir, nothing to declare” was the reply. “What were you doing in Mexico?” the officer inquired. “I was conducting research.” “Research? What kind of research?” asked the officer, and the teammate replied, “Action Research at a school site.” The officer replied, “I’m going to have to ask you some more questions. Can you please step over to secondary?”

42.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Being “pulled over” into “secondary” is a dreaded prospect when crossing the Tijuana–San Diego border. The closer inspection that ensues can involve everything from having your vehicle turned inside out to physical searches that can be both humiliating and infuriating. The case study presented in this chapter illustrates a project conducted in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico, in 2008–2009 in which a team of three bilingual graduate students in counseling and their faculty advisor from the University of San Diego worked collabora-

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tively with an educator at a public *secundaria* (secondary) school in Tijuana and an official of the Baja State Department of Education. This collaboration regarded strengthening practice in relation to the delivery of a newly adopted guidance curriculum for primary and secondary schools throughout Mexico (i.e., the *Orientación y Tutoría* [Orientation and Tutorship (OT)] curriculum). The project was part of a larger collaborative called “BARC” in English—the Binational Action Research Collaborative—established in 2006 by a US university faculty (the second author; henceforth, Rowell), some of his students, and a colleague at a university in Tijuana. The collaboration emerged in conjunction with the university’s involvement with border pedagogy (Barrios, 2011; Giroux, 1992; Romo, 2005) and with Rowell’s interest in developing collaborations across the US–Mexico border. This interest was grounded in both the reality of the border culture found in Southern California and the impact of this culture on educational practices throughout the region (Romo). By subjecting this case to another inspection six years later, we aim to reflect on and learn more about the intricate undertakings of binational collaboration for similar endeavors in the future.

The border-crossing interaction described earlier was a part of the first visit by the 2008–2009 Collaborative Action Research team to Tijuana. The team was crossing the border to visit the school site at which their group of three US graduate students would partner with a teacher, also serving in the role of *Orientador* (similar to a guidance counselor, yet not formally trained as a counselor) and thus responsible for delivering the *Orientación y Tutoría* (Orientation and Tutorship) curriculum. Over the course of a school year, the team crossed the border 18 times. This chapter describes this binational action research, the ins and outs of the collaboration, and the lessons learned by the authors through the experience and the process of reflecting on the project.

Collaborative action research has emerged as a valuable tool for educators in their efforts to strengthen practice (Bevins & Price, 2014; Rowell, 2005, 2006; Sagor, 2010; Wells, 2009). It also has been increasingly evident in many parts of the world (e.g., Bruce, Flynn, & Stagg-Peterson, 2011; Fernandez-Diaz, Calvo, & Rodriguez-Hoyos, 2014), including cross-national collaborations (Broad & Reyes, 2008; McMahan & Bhamra, 2012). This chapter highlights a particular type of collaborative action research that took place in a unique setting.

The Mexico–US border is recognized as “The planet’s longest between a country characterized by economic practices and achievements sometimes known as ‘first-world’ and a country whose economy is sometimes characterized as ‘third-world’” (Cadaval, n.d., p. 1). Although borderlands “have often been the locale of major folk cultural achievements, from the outlaw ballads of the Scottish-English border to the heroic ‘*corridos*’ of South Texas” (Cadaval), in recent decades, the US–Mexico border has become a hotbed of tensions related to the debate over immigration reform and the alleged “ruination” of American culture by “illegals” from Mexico (e.g., Santos, 2013). Quite aside from ballads and heroics, the fact is that at least ten Mexican citizens were

killed by US Border Patrol Agents in the border region between January 2010 and June 2013, with six of the ten killed by bullets fired into Mexico by US Agents positioned on US soil (Santos, p. 1). The tensions associated with the climate of fear, anger, and distrust at the border works its way into the social-psychological fabric of the borderlands (Romo, 2005; Vila, 2000) and challenges the viability of cross-border collaborations.

Against this backdrop, we now explain the context of this project and illustrate the steps taken over the course of nine months.

42.2 CONTEXT OF THE CASE

42.2.1 *Border Pedagogy*

The team began preparing for the collaboration with educators in Mexico by exploring the concept of border pedagogy. According to Cline and Necochea (2006) “border pedagogy is defined as a set of multifaceted, complex, and interactive factors; educational policies; curriculum; instructional practices; and a knowledge base that educators need to consider to increase the academic achievement of diverse students in the border region” (p. 149). Educators working in the US–Mexico border region are faced with the challenge of understanding the phenomena of blending cultures, communities, and countries and developing their skills based on this understanding. In education circles, this challenge is being addressed at present in reference to the development of “cultural competence” (e.g., DeJaeghere & Zhang, 2008; Keengwe, 2010).

Due to the newness of the border pedagogy concept to student team members, they took the step of learning about this concept in preparation for the project. In this action research, border pedagogy involved factors including instructional material development and delivery utilizing resources from both sides of the Mexico–US border. The collaboration occurred by combining the instructional curriculum and knowledge of the teacher in Mexico with instructional and research approaches utilized by graduate students trained in the USA. The goal was to increase the achievement of students in a participating school in the border region (i.e., Tijuana) in the topic selected by the participating collaborators from both sides of the border and to increase understanding of cross-cultural collaboration and its impact on the participating collaborators.

42.2.2 *The 2008–2009 Action Research Team*

For the graduate-student research teams assigned to BARC during the period 2006–2012, developing the understanding and skills associated with “border work” had unique complexities. For the 2008–2009 team, these complexities posed opportunities and challenges. One of the unique complexities was linked to the cultural blend of the team. All of the team members identified as Latino’s, but their perspectives varied based on their upbringings and experi-

ences of socialization. To help explain this, we draw on the framework of *enculturation*, *transculturation*, and *assimilation* (Gonzalez, 2010). For example, the team leader (first author; henceforth, Barajas-Leyva) lived in Tijuana during the time of the project, and this made it easier for the team to navigate the border region. Barajas-Leyva was thus accustomed to the commute required to get to and from the research site. Born in San Diego, California, we see her as representing *enculturation*, that is, she had grown up with the culture and values of North America and had achieved competence in the language, values, and rituals of this culture. Barajas-Leyva did not speak Spanish until formally studying it during her undergraduate education in the USA.

We characterize the second team member as having gone through the process of *transculturation*. Born and raised in East Los Angeles as a first-generation Latina in the USA, she embraced the richness of her Mexican heritage and identity but had successfully adapted to and appreciated the culture of the USA. When traveling across the border to Tijuana, she expressed her respect and appreciation for the food, culture, language, and art. This made it easy for her to connect with the sociocultural environment in general and the “practitioner partners” in particular. The third team member, in our view, was not as empowered by his Latino identity. Also a first-generation Latino born and raised in San Bernardino, California, he leaned more toward *assimilation*. That is, he identified with the culture and norms of the US more than with those of Mexico. When traveling across the border, he often reported feeling insecure and worried about the food and his surroundings. Although this did not appear to hinder his involvement at the school site, his response to the border region very much paralleled the stereotypes associated with the San Diego–Tijuana border region. Regarding language, each team member was comfortable switching from English to Spanish when at the site in Tijuana and when navigating the border in general.

Most of this case study addresses the efforts of a single teacher in a Tijuana school to implement a new national curriculum and the efforts of our team of three graduate students, along with the faculty advisor Rowell, to work with the teacher in documenting the implementation and providing feedback based on the team’s emerging understandings of guidance and counseling practices in schools in Mexico. In this endeavor, the team’s application of knowledge acquired through school counseling coursework in the graduate program was an essential part of the project. The *Orientador* was the team’s practitioner partner for the project. His main role is classroom teacher at the participating middle school in Tijuana, Mexico. He advised first-year middle school students and taught the *Orientacion y Tutoria* curriculum to two classes on Friday mornings. From the research team’s observations, the *Orientador* was confident, well-spoken (not an English speaker), and vested in teaching the students values such as respect, responsibility, and consideration.

42.3 THE BINATIONAL ACTION RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

The Binational Action Research Collaborative (BARC) was established in 2006 through the joint efforts of educators in San Diego and in Tijuana, initiated by Rowell and Maria Mercedes Veyna Figueroa, then a lecturer at *La Universidad Iberoamericano* (UIA) in Tijuana. Its purpose was to facilitate the use of action research and collaborative action research by participating universities and other educational institutions on both sides of the border to explore issues of educational pedagogy, practice, and theory. The project discussed in this chapter was the second of four BARC projects carried out from 2006 to 2012. The BARC project in this chapter involved a diverse collaborative team consisting of three graduate students, a faculty advisor, a school administrator/principal and a teacher (the *Orientador*) from the school site in Tijuana, a faculty member from UIA, and a Program Coordinator representing the Tijuana office of the Baja California Department of Education. Meetings of all involved were held two or three times a semester, with the meeting locations alternating between Tijuana and San Diego.

42.3.1 *Orientación y Tutoría*

As part of a broader educational reform in Mexico, *Orientación y Tutoría* was implemented in all secondary-level schools across the nation in 2006 (Elizarraras, Andres, Cabrera, Villasenor, & Gutierrez, 2006). According to Ramirez and Robles (2006):

Orientacion y Tutoria was implemented to generate opportunities for students to be listened to and accompanied during their formative process. The Tutor, a teacher figure, assumes the mission of working close to a group of students, to observe their integration, coexistence and learning, as the link between home and school. Teamed with the tutor is an *Orientador* who does the individual follow-up and monitoring of the needs of the students (translated by Barajas-Leyva).

The new curriculum required that *Orientación y Tutoría* be taught one hour per week for every middle school student. At our partnering school, the *Orientación y Tutoría* was used to introduce students to values, skills, and attitudes thought to be necessary for success in middle school and beyond. The role of the *Orientador*, in addition to delivery of the curriculum, was to establish positive communications with the students, work with them to identify any academic difficulties they might be experiencing, and assist students who encountered inter-personal problems with other students or teachers as a mediator. In addition, the *Orientador* was responsible for referring students to a school psychologist if a student exhibited unique needs.

42.4 THE CASE UNFOLDS: GETTING STARTED

The project was based on Rowell's (2005) model of collaborative action research in school counseling. In this model, graduate students in school counseling engage in a systematic form of inquiry that is collaborative, self-reflective, critical, and undertaken in partnership with practitioners in the field. The process begins with the development of a question or questions and proceeds to cycles of action research in which change is introduced and data on the change process and impact is collected and analyzed. In a departure from the original model, the core collaborator in this BARC case was a teacher functioning in a counseling-and-guidance-related role, the *Orientador*.

42.4.1 Formulation of Research Questions

The research questions for the project were formulated based on a five-step procedure assigned to the graduate-student team (henceforth, the team):

1. Establish a solid relationship with the BARC group.
2. Work with the US faculty advisor and BARC group members to select a school site for a collaborative action research project.
3. Complete observations at the participating school to foster an understanding of the climate, culture, and dynamics of the school site, including staff relations, student-staff interactions, student engagement, and the school's use of the *Orientador* at the site.
4. Meet with the full BARC group to reflect on the observation data and to brainstorm next steps.
5. Conduct a reflective interview with the *Orientador*.
6. Conduct an analytical dialogue (Sagor, 1992) involving the *Orientador* and the team to narrow the focus of the action research project, specify research questions, establish guidelines for data collection and data analysis, and develop a project timeline.

Establishing Relationships and Site Selection (Steps 1 & 2) The first objective for the project was to establish a partnership with a school site in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico. This was done with the support of the representative from the Baja State Department of Education. This representative arranged appointments with two school sites in Tijuana, with the intention of having the team meet with an educator and administrator at each site to explore possibilities for a binational collaborative action research experience. Following the appointments and a discussion with the faculty advisor, the team selected *La Escuela Secundaria Oriental #1 Lázaro Cárdenas* (Lázaro Cárdenas Middle School #1) for the project. This site was ideal because of the strong support from the principal for engaging in a collaborative action research project and the interest shown by a teacher in particular. It was in becoming oriented to the site

that the team and the faculty advisor were first introduced to the *Orientación y Tutoría* curriculum.

Site Observations and Field Notes (Step 3) The graduate students began observations at the school site in October. Four hours of school site observation and six hours of observations of the participating teacher/*Orientador*'s classroom were conducted over a three-week period. Data collection during this time consisted of field notes maintained by each team member. Each week, team members traveled to and from Tijuana. The field notes documented cross-cultural and inter-cultural experiences as well as border-crossing experiences.

The journals and observation notes kept by the graduate-student team throughout the duration of the project functioned as a memoing process (Creswell, 1998) for the subjective experiences of the project and for eliciting themes associated with the delivery of the classroom guidance lessons in an effort to answer the research questions. Notes were taken primarily in English, although sometimes taken in Spanish/English, also known as "Spanglish," which all three graduate students were quite familiar with. The on-site observations also helped the graduate students begin to meet, interact with, and develop rapport with the students at the school, in particular the students who the *Orientador* was instructing through the *Orientación y Tutoría* curriculum.

Reflective Interview and Formation of Preliminary Research Questions (Steps 4 & 5) The graduate-student team and faculty advisor began to consider specific research questions. We utilized Sagor's (1992) framework for conducting Reflective Interviews as a part of collaborative action research to prepare an interview with the participating *Orientador* at the school site. The purpose of the reflective interview was to provide the *Orientador* with an opportunity to reflect on his practice in the context of a collaborative experience of being interviewed. This technique also allowed the *Orientador* to openly share areas about his practice that might be strengthened.

The team prepared questions to ask the *Orientador* based on the information we had been given at the first visit to the site. During this visit, both the school principal and the teacher (*Orientador*) expressed interest in a project that would address the *Orientación y Tutoría* curriculum (henceforth, OT). Depending on the responses of the *Orientador*, the interviewer, one of the team members, asked follow-up questions for further elaboration or clarification. Given what the team had already learned from the first site visit, three questions were formulated in advance of the interview and served as an interview framework:

1. *¿Cuál es el aspecto más valioso en su trabajo como Orientador?*
(What is the most valuable aspect of your work as an *Orientador*?)
2. *¿Qué preguntas tiene usted sobre el impacto de la clase de Orientación y Tutoría?*

- (What questions do you have regarding the effectiveness of the OT Program?)
3. *¿Cómo puede apoyarlo el equipo BARC para fortalecer la práctica de Orientación y Tutoría en La Secundaria Lázaro Cardenas?*
- (How can the BARC team assist you in strengthening the practice of OT at Secundaria Lázaro Cardenas?)

Following the reflective interview, the research team coded their notes using a qualitative data analysis method, category elicitation (Creswell, 1998). The team extracted underlying topics and developed them into themes connected to the research questions. The emergent themes included:

1. Effective methods for teaching values
2. Improving teaching methods associated with delivery of the *Orientación y Tutoría* curriculum
3. Improving student participation in the *Orientación y Tutoría* lessons
4. Practice in reflecting on curriculum and instruction
5. Effectiveness of the *Orientador's* teaching methods
6. Measurement of student learning in relationship to *Orientación y Tutoría*
7. Overall usefulness of guidance lessons in accomplishing the goals of *Orientación y Tutoría*

Analytic Dialogue and Final Research Questions of the Project (Step 6) The team then facilitated an “Analytic Discourse” (Sagor, 1992, p. 14) experience with the *Orientador*. This dialogue session involved presenting the findings from the reflective interview to the practitioner in oral and written outline form and checking to see if the discourse was guiding the collaborators toward a research question or questions. For this meeting, the team created an agenda that outlined the model for collaborative action research (Rowell, 2005, 2006).

Following a review of the agenda, the *Orientador's* concerns regarding the OT curriculum were summarized. This portion of the meeting focused on whether the reflective interview had identified issues that mattered to the *Orientador* and could be tackled by action research. The team sought feedback from the *Orientador* about the accuracy of the team's perceptions based on the interview. The team found this experience challenging as the *Orientador* had no knowledge of action research. The focus of his comments was on the daily teaching challenges he faced including the large number of students in his classes and the lack of training and resources.

We then drafted a statement of what the *Orientador* thought would be a beneficial research project based on his requests that the team (a) focus on the OT, (b) conduct guidance lessons with his students based on the OT curriculum framework, and (c) enhance his course by incorporating new material in the lessons based on the framework of professional school counseling in the USA. It seemed that the *Orientador* wanted to gain knowledge about “guidance” which he had not been exposed to in his teacher preparation in Mexico. He expressed that this approach also would be helpful to the team,

as the members were being trained to become professional counselors in the USA, and he would make observations of the guidance lessons delivered by the team members and provide feedback based on his experience as a classroom teacher. This seemed to the team a collaborative project as none of the team members had classroom guidance experience so far and delivering lessons in Spanish would increase cultural competence.

Next, focal points for the action research were deliberated. The *Orientador* wanted to know if his students had prior knowledge of the information being taught in the OT curriculum. Secondly, he wanted to use the project as a way to generate dialogue about improving his teaching methods. This would come through his observing the team delivering the OT curriculum and seeing how the team approached organizing lessons and gathering materials. Lastly, the team wanted to examine their evolving understanding of cross-cultural collaboration, including the impact it might have on themselves and the *Orientador*.

Based on the results of the preceding steps, the team developed three research questions and presented them to the faculty advisor, the participating *Orientador*, and the affiliated education official with the Baja Department of Education.

Question 1: Does incorporating classroom guidance lessons based on values increase the understanding of respect, responsibility, and collaboration among 7th grade students in a Tijuana middle school?

Question 2: Does implementing new material and ideas in an orientation and tutorial course (*Orientación y Tutoría*) help students work collaboratively, engage in more meaningful discussions, and make connections between what they are learning and the world around them?

Question 3: Do the results of dialogue between a team of US graduate students and an *Orientador* in a Mexican middle school impact the practice of the *Orientador* as well as the understanding of cross-cultural factors in education and counseling among the graduate-student members of the action research project?

42.5 CLASSROOM GUIDANCE LESSONS

Preparation and delivery of OT lessons and data collection on the classroom experiences took place over a period of four months. The graduate-student research team delivered 8 lessons to a total of 81 7th grade students, ranging in age from 11 to 13.

42.5.1 Lesson Plans

In preparing for the lessons, the team used two books shared by the *Orientador*. The books were “*Mi Primer Libro de Valores*” (My First Book of Values) and “*Orientación y Tutoría, Mi Primer Año.*” (Orientation & Tutorship: My first Year). These books were assigned to first-year junior high students in all Mexican

schools. Each individual team member was responsible for reviewing the books and preparing and teaching two lessons based on the curriculum. The topics of the team's lessons focused on particular values addressed in the OT curriculum. The subjects included: Diversity, Goals and Limitations, and Collaboration in the Classroom. The team designed pre- and post-questionnaires for the lessons with the assistance of the *Orientador* and the faculty advisor.

42.5.2 Lesson Delivery

The team members taught eight lessons based on the OT curriculum. The length of each lesson was about 45 minutes. Although the team had prepared to administer pre- and post-questionnaires for each lesson, the lessons sometimes took the full class period, making it impossible to distribute the questionnaire. Ultimately, 9 of the anticipated 16 pre-and-post questionnaire administrations were completed.

42.6 LESSONS DEBRIEFING AND REFLECTION

The week after the team completed its last lesson, the team and the faculty advisor met with the *Orientador* for a debriefing/feedback session. He gave feedback to the team on their lesson delivery, the team discussed what they had gained from the collaboration, and the *Orientador* summarized what he had gained from the collaboration. This session was held at the school site and was conducted mostly in Spanish. Field notes were taken by the graduate-student team.

42.7 DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS

A considerable amount of qualitative data was collected throughout the project. Field notes and journals documented the various activities and meetings, including the overall cross-cultural experience, school site observations, lesson delivery experience, and reactions to the trips to Tijuana. The data from the journals were critical to clarifying the experience of each team member. The team also had detailed notes from the reflective interview and analytical discourse events with the *Orientador* as well as from the debriefing held at the end of the project.

Data analysis for this project was ongoing and complex. Preliminary analysis of the qualitative data began early in the project, and further analysis took place at various points during the project's eight months duration. A coding approach for theme elicitation (Glesne, 2006) was introduced to the team as a part of their coursework with the faculty advisor, and, as the project developed, team members gained considerable experience with coding.

With permission from the school, the team videotaped one of the lessons while taking notes on student behaviors in order to assess the extent to which the middle school students appeared to have meaningful discussions

during classroom lessons. Photographs of classroom activities associated with OT lessons were also analyzed throughout the project by the team for data triangulation.

42.8 FINDINGS

Findings on two of the three research questions are presented in this section. The first research question was not fully answered due to inconsistent administrations of the instruments because of insufficient class time.

Research Question 2

Does implementing new material and ideas in Orientación y Tutoría (Orientation and Tutorship) lessons help students work collaboratively, engage in more meaningful discussions, and make connections between what they are learning and the world around them?

Data from journal entries, photographs taken during class activities, and the video footage all indicated that the students were engaging in discussions and activities. Regarding how meaningful these discussions may have been, the team looked for evidence in their notes and journal entries. For example, during a lesson about setting goals and facing limitations, the students were given the opportunity to engage in a drawing activity in groups and discuss their goals and limitations.

An example provided here illustrates student activities as documented:

A student shared his drawing and explained to the group that his goal was to complete his middle school education so he could move on to high school. To symbolize this, the student drew himself riding on a train. The engine of the train was labeled “*preparatoria*” (high school), and the three carts attached to the engine represented the *1er ano* (1st year), *2do ano* (2nd year), and *3er ano* (3rd year) of his middle school years. He stated that the train was heading on a path towards his goal of attending high school (Fig. 42.1).

After he explained his goal, the other students in his group asked what would be a limitation he might face in reaching this goal. He answered, “*Estudiando y no teniendo tiempo para divertirse*” (having to dedicate all his time to study and not having time for fun). Other students shared and discussed their goals, the limitations they might face, and how they could possibly reach their goals and overcome these potential limitations. In another instance, responses to an open-ended question about making connections between classroom learning and daily life indicated some success in the lesson. A student wrote, *Porque aveces tener respecto, ser bueno, honesto, y en tu vida fuera de la escuela igual* (Sometimes having respect, being kind, and honest, and this should be how your life is outside of school as well).

Considerable anecdotal evidences of meaningful discussions on values among students were present. This still leaves the question of the extent to which these discussions were facilitated by the team implementing new materials and ideas

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Fig. 42.1 Preparing for High School

grounded in US-based classroom guidance perspectives. Our speculations include: (a) the *Orientador's* previous approach had not involved any discussion with or interaction among students. To the team, this originally seemed somewhat inconceivable, as the graduate students' counselor training emphasized interaction with students, and discussions were assumed to be a central element in guidance and counseling curriculum; and (b) the *Orientador's* approach to *Orientación y Tutoría* (Orientation and Tutorship) lessons had been to present a series of lectures based on the curriculum. Although rather common in the education system in Mexico at the time of this research, it is not an approach that encourages student collaboration, discussion, or making connections between the content and "the world around them." With the approach he had been using, the *Orientador* wondered if the students could see links between his lessons and students' thinking about their futures.

Research Question 3 How do the results of dialogue between a team of US graduate students in counseling and an Orientador in a Mexican middle school impact the practice of the Orientador and the understanding of cross-cultural factors in education and counseling among the graduate-student members of the action research project?

The data illustrated that the binational experience had a positive influence on both the *Orientador* and the research team. This was evident in the debriefing/reflection meeting organized at the end of the project. In the meeting, the *Orientador* described his evolving understanding of the importance of reflecting on his practice and stated that he felt motivated to pursue formal training as an *Orientador*, although this was not a requirement at his school. He had a strong sense of the need to strengthen his practice in the role and connected this with his desire for professional development.

To the faculty advisor, who was an observer at this meeting with very limited Spanish knowledge, this was an opportunity to pay close attention to the non-verbal signals while the dialogue was taking place. Rowell was quite struck by the overall intensity of the discussion, the quality of give-and-take in the dialogue, and the sense that he was observing a meaningful shared reflection among a group of in-service and pre-service educators who had come to value one another's views.

The interactions and dialogues at the school site had positive impacts on the graduate-student team. The team members strengthened their capacities for exchanging knowledge, engaging in problem solving, and finding resources to achieve goals. Further, the team began to better understand the importance of collegiality and working collaboratively in generating positive changes in schools and could connect this personal understanding with the literature (e.g., Levine & Lezotte, 1990; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991). Learning what collaboration means was another major impact the team experienced. Since the research team had a common goal, it was important for them to work together to reach the goal. However, the team reported a deeper level to the collaboration in concluding that (a) examination of feelings and thoughts regarding practice are crucial elements in collaboration and (b) introspection and communication should be encouraged repeatedly when collaborating on strengthening practice.

42.9 CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTION

Overall, the project had a fairly significant and immediate impact on the four "principals" in the project, namely the three graduate students and the *Orientador*.

42.9.1 *The Orientador*

In the process of conducting collaborative action research, "something new" was tried, and an effort was made to collect data on the impact of the change. As much as the project fell short in terms of the systematic data collection and analysis on pre- and post-questionnaires, there were considerable qualitative data supporting the finding of "impact." In a sense, the *Orientador* was provided with a professional development experience in his classroom in real time through the lesson deliveries by the graduate-student team being trained in an area that the *Orientador* had not experienced. Although he was aware of the limitations of the graduate students in terms of actual classroom instruction experience as the team had made no secret of this, he was observing a different approach to classroom guidance, one based on discussion and interaction with middle school students rather than lecture and he stated that he learned from this experience.

In hindsight, we wish that the *Orientador* had been more visible in the work on findings. Although the debriefing meeting seemed to be a richly rewarding experience for all participating, with a little more encouragement, we may

have been able to embolden the *Orientador* to share some written thoughts that could have been included in the project final report. The same is true of the Baja education official and the collaborating university faculty member in Tijuana.

42.9.2 *The Graduate-Student Research Team*

For the team, the mixture of the border-crossings involved in the project took place at several levels. On one level, they were crossing back and forth between two sociocultural, historical, economic, and political contexts in which they were both insiders and outsiders. By virtue of their bi-lingual skills and heritage, they could interact with the *Orientador* and his students in Tijuana with ease. With the exception of the team member who had reached a level of assimilation into American culture that left him uncomfortable in Tijuana, the team felt “at home” in Tijuana and could navigate within the culture quite easily. Yet, in other ways, the graduate students were exposed weekly to the impact of enculturation, transculturation, and assimilation on their identities as individuals and as developing professionals. At times, they were grateful to have this experience, and, at other times, they resented the faculty advisor’s selection of them to lead the project, as the project regularly brought them face-to-face with tough issues of cultural identity and with the massive challenges of the borderlands.

The project involved classroom teaching. As the graduate students were preparing to be school counselors, and not classroom teachers, this was another border to cross. Although experience with classroom guidance is most often included in fieldwork in school counseling (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2012; Rowell & Hong, 2013), the collaborative action research project required close teamwork with a classroom teacher (the *Orientador*) in the preparation of the guidance lessons. Although the team received the supervision required by their counselor preparation program, there was no precedent for fieldwork involving such close involvement with a classroom teacher. The team, in other words, was alone in experiencing classroom guidance in this manner.

The collaborative action research model the team used often puts graduate students and their practitioner partners in a situation in which borders and boundaries between pre-service and in-service educators are crossed (Rowell, 2005). This is because the vast majority of the practitioner partners involved since this model has been in use have had no prior experience with research and with action research in particular. This often means that the graduate students are educating the practitioners regarding the steps and cycles of action research. Navigating this particular border is a challenge for the graduate students and the practitioner partners alike.

As future counselors, the graduate-student researchers found that the cross-border experience added to their cultural competency, specifically within the realm of border pedagogy. Furthermore, self-reflection transformed the experience into something more meaningful, including learning from one another.

In essence, as a team, they found themselves in a place of privilege, working together to strengthen the practice of a fellow educator and learning to produce meaningful change on both sides of the collaboration.

42.9.3 *The Faculty Advisor*

Although he has made it his practice to consistently inform students conducting action research under his supervision that the action research course is based on experiential learning (Guthrie & Jones, 2012) and that such learning is time-consuming and can be anxiety-provoking, this element of informed consent between students and faculty often seems to be largely underestimated by students at the beginning of each year. The graduate students are returning to their studies mostly refreshed from the summer and are eager to begin their fieldwork year in the program (which is when they also complete their action research). What happens as projects unfold, however, brings home to students the realities included in his statement of informed consent.

In the present project, the team spent so much time on the work at the front-end of the project that they began to run out of steam, and time, as they moved into the middle.

In hindsight, the advisor wishes he had observed this and worked out a data analysis plan early with the team.

Certainly, for the graduate students in the BARC team, the complexity of the tasks associated with the model of collaborative action research they were using, the unfamiliar terrain of collaborating with educators in Mexico, the stresses of graduate study in general, and the lack of previous experience with data collection and analysis all created a kind of “perfect storm” that the team survived but came through with much stress and strain. The advisor wonders how he might have eased the journey through the storm.

42.9.4 *Challenges: Borders and Boundaries*

The challenges of all these borders and boundaries ended up being a great strength of the project. Week to week, the team successfully navigated the borders. A different boundary, namely time and inexperience, became the major stumbling block in regard to the project’s findings. This boundary is important to discuss.

The time boundary became evident both during data collection and at the end of the project. During some of the classroom guidance lessons, the team did not have enough time to administer the questionnaires due to unexpected events. For example, there would be a schoolwide announcement over the Public Address (PA) system, and the team would have to stop in the middle of a lesson, or the teacher was not present at the beginning of class and the session started late. The team had not anticipated how such delays and interruptions would affect the data collection and were thrown off a bit as these issues surfaced. This positioning of the researchers (graduate students in this case) as

teachers presents a good example of how teachers are indeed pressed for time, and until collaborating researchers deeply understand this, they typically continue to make unrealistic demands on teacher participants.

In addition, as the end-of-semester (and graduation) clock was ticking for the research team, their recognition of the extensive amount of qualitative data they had gathered became a source of major stress. As they were new to qualitative data analysis, the work of coding and characterizing the data and identifying themes emerging from the data was time-consuming, exhausting and, at times, frustrating. They found themselves needing to check back with their faculty advisor frequently to obtain feedback on the accuracy of their data analysis, and when he indicated that they needed to work at deeper levels of analysis, which they knew would take considerably more time, they grew anxious to find short cuts through which they could “meet the requirements” of their program and “be done with” the project. With all these challenges, the student researchers, or pre-service practitioner researchers, did their best to analyze data and report the findings.

42.10 FURTHER REFLECTION ON BORDER PEDAGOGY

We chose to revisit this project because we both remain interested in and concerned about the experience of children, youth, and families in the border region. In the face of the economic power associated with the Tijuana/San Diego border region being the site of more movement of goods and services than any other border in the world (Barrios, 2011; Reyes & Garza, 2005; Suarez-Orozco, 2002), it is often too easy to minimize the impact of the movement of goods and services on children and youth. This is as true now as it was in 2008–2009. As Barrios (2011) asserts, Transnational Latino immigrant students (TLI), referring to immigrants in California of Latin American origin (including Mexico) (p. 9), are a “forgotten population” caught between “two educational systems that have limited knowledge of how each operates” (p. 9). Transnational students move between educational systems sometimes on a daily or seasonal basis, and the educators working with them on both sides of the border often have “little knowledge of the schooling systems from which their transnational students come” (p. 5).

As we have moved forward with our work in education, the authors came to the realization that we do indeed have much “to declare” at the border. In conceptualizing border pedagogy as a practice based in the work of Paulo Freire, Giroux (1992) explored the importance of empowering teachers and students to make change grounded in the recognition that the borderlands contain diverse cultures, nations, and sociopolitical dynamics. We believe this project represented a step in that direction, and over time, we recognized that we have a responsibility to share the history of the project in a more public arena in the hope that others might seek to make change. Thus, the project stands as an example of something that can be done in the borderlands to increase understanding. Ultimately, we concur with Margarita Calderon of Johns Hopkins’

University's Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed at Risk (CRESPAR). As co-host for the *Fourth Binational Conference: In Search of Border Pedagogy* (2000), she concluded the conference by asserting that "collective inquiry leads to more profound knowledge and meaningful change; bringing two divergent groups together stimulates and enriches each other's ideas and stretches them to dream of things never before contemplated ... Language and cultural differences are erased when educators are learning that which is meaningful and relevant to their students' needs" (p. 15). This, we declare, is both the conclusion of one project and an invitation to many more.

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E-readers' Impact on Early Readers' Engagement and Literacy Achievement

Alicia Wenzel and Cheryl Peterson

43.1 INTRODUCTION

Literacy, defined as the ability to read, write, and communicate effectively, is vital for student success (Bornfreund, 2012; Goldman, 2012). The early elementary school years are an essential time in children's development of literacy skills. These skills enable young learners' transition from "learning to read to reading to learn" (Bornfreund, 2012, p. 2). As students advance through elementary school, literacy tasks become increasingly difficult. Because literacy skills contribute enormously to reading success (LUME Institute, 2009), children who do not acquire literacy skills early on are apt to fall behind peers and not catch up (Hernandez, 2012; Riccards, Blaustein, & Lyon, 2014; Torgesen, Wagner, Rashotte, Alexander, & Conroy, 1997).

Hernandez (2012) discovered that 16% of students not reading proficiently by the end of third grade do not graduate from high school on time, a rate four times greater than proficient readers (p. 4). Children lacking literacy skills are at greater risk for qualifying for special education services, dropping out of high school, getting involved with substance abuse, and having criminal records (Lentz, 1998; National Institute of Health and Human Development, 2000). Further, children lacking strong literacy skills are less likely to complete a four-year college program. While only 26% of middle-class employees had education beyond high school, almost 60% of all jobs in the USA demand higher education (Handford, 2012).

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Whitehurst and Lonigan (2003) describe student literacy as a matter of survival for children. The Annie E. Casey Foundation report (2013) described improving literacy skills as “a way to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty while boosting this country’s social equality, economic competitiveness and national security” (p. 1).

For children to flourish in school and beyond, educators must provide appropriate learning opportunities that engage students long enough to acquire necessary knowledge and skills. As engagement in learning is linked to increases in student achievement and decreases in dropout rates, maintaining student engagement is key to student success (Kushman, Sieber, & Heariold-Kinney, 2000; Walker, Greene, & Mansell, 2006). Blumenfeld, Kepler, and Krajcik (2006) explained that engagement in learning is when the learner is motivated to develop meaning about the experience and is willing to put forth sustained effort. For some students, maintaining engagement in literacy at school is easy. However, for others, it’s a daily struggle.

Facilitating student gains in literacy is a multifaceted challenge that requires educators to question how best to engage students in academic achievement. While practices like student-centered learning, clustering, problem or project-based learning, and individualized instruction are used, Kunz (2012) purports that technology integration is another way to engage students and build classroom skills. Others note the potential of technology to make reading more engaging and relevant to students growing up in the computer age (Meyer & Rose, 1999; Taylor & Parsons, 2011) and that students engage in independent practice for longer periods of time when technology is integrated (Dynarski et al., 2007). Peterson’s belief that technology might have a role to play in supporting student literacy was the start of this collaboration. If students are interested in computers, which so many are, why not see if a type of technology can be an effective tool and help students gain the skills they need?

43.2 RATIONALE AND PURPOSE

Research over the past 20 years has explored technology’s impact on student achievement, engagement, and behavior (Balajthy, 2000; Poole, Sky-Mellvain, Jackson, & Singer, 2006; Waxman, Len, & Michko, 2003). While concerns exist about integrating technology in the classroom (Oppenheimer, 1997; Roblyer & Doering, 2013), most research shows positive influences if technology is used effectively by teachers with thorough training and support (Castellani & Jeffs, 2004; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000).

Current technology integration research has included use of devices with screens as alternatives to paper books when teaching literacy skills (Hoff, 1999; Kamil, Intrator, & Kim, 2000). Recently, this exploration has included “e-readers” as a viable approach for engaging learners and helping students

gain literacy and technology skills (Gibbs, 2000; Selvidge & Phillips, 2000). Poftak (2001) comments on the increasing potential of successfully utilizing technology in the classroom: “[a]t the core of the dream is how digital content, along with the device that houses it, can change the teaching and learning experience” (p. 23). Rose and Meyer (2002) add that capitalizing on the engagement factor of computers, and using appropriate practices and tools, can enhance students’ opportunities to learn.

During pre-project conversations, we discussed our reasons for participating in, and questions driving, this collaborative. Peterson understood that technology would not be a “silver bullet” increasing engagement and learning, but was hopeful there would be positive outcomes impacting students’ achievement. Wenzel wanted to explore new pathways to effective education with a goal of enhancing current pedagogical knowledge.

Research questions included the following:

1. What are participants’ perceptions about incorporating technology in instruction?
2. How are e-readers integrated into literacy instruction?
3. How do e-readers and e-books impact student engagement and literacy achievement?
4. What support systems are needed for effective technology integration?

Ultimately, we hoped to acquire effective instructional practices that improve students’ academic and personal lives, and add to the body of knowledge on how to help students succeed.

43.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) model and Gagne’s Theories of Instruction (GTI) (1985) guided our research, and provided a holistic structure for planning, implementing, and reflecting on our project.

The TPACK model examines content, pedagogy, and technology looking at constructive ways to integrate the three (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). The model proposes that expert teachers who bring together content and technology can enhance learning in ways that enable individual learners to succeed in the learning environment. This approach seeks to make learning accessible and engaging, taking into account each unique learning situation.

GTI purports there are many types and levels of learning, and each of these requires instruction and engagement factors tailored to meet pupils’ needs. To increase retention and home cognitive skills, Gagne suggests employing a variety of instructional and motivational factors, and using instructional events and tools best aligned to support learners’ cognitive and affective needs (Gagne, Briggs, & Wager, 1992; Richey, 2000).

43.4 CONTEXT

43.4.1 *Elementary School*

The elementary school selected for this project is one of three elementary schools located in a rural Northwest farming community where 26% of the families are below the poverty level. The school serves 530 students: 66% Caucasian, 28% Hispanic, 2% Asian or Pacific Islander, 1% Native American or Alaskan, and 3% Multiethnic or African American. For the 2012–2013 school year, the average class size was 23.5 students. In the school, 54% of the students are eligible for the free/reduced lunch program, 15% receive special education services, and 5% are English Language Learners (DOE, 2013).

43.4.2 *Participants*

The participants were purposefully selected because of an existing partnership between the school and Wenzel's university (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). As the project's focus was to explore the impact of technology on emerging readers, Peterson's second grade class was an appropriate choice. Further, Peterson was interested in trying new approaches, specifically technology, and hoped to address engagement and learning issues she faced. Lastly, Peterson's class used mostly traditional reading materials which provided opportunities for a more informative study on the impact of using technology.

43.4.3 *Co-researchers*

This study was completed by Peterson, an elementary school teacher, and Wenzel, a teacher education professor at the local public university. Peterson is in her 23rd year of teaching and in her fifth year teaching second grade. She is experienced in providing literacy instruction and is well-versed in the cognitive, physical, emotional, and developmental needs of this age group. She is familiar with technology and has used action research informally throughout her career to guide her instruction.

Wenzel, an Associate Professor in Curriculum and Assessment, with elementary and middle teaching experiences, obtained funding for the project through a university grant providing five Kindles, chargers, headsets, and \$1000 for e-books.

After many discussions about student achievement, Peterson and Wenzel agreed that when students are engaged in school and learning, most experience success academically. This prompted the exploration of new ways to increase student engagement, particularly in literacy and include technology as a learning tool. Thus, the Kindle Project was created.

43.4.4 *Students*

Twenty-four of 30 students in the class (14 boys/10 girls) received parental permission to participate in the project. However, all students had access to the devices. The class contained 16 boys and 14 girls, ages 7–8, with varying skills and demographics including 86.7% White (26), 10% Hispanic (3), and 3.3% Asian (1). There was one Talented and Gifted (TAG) student, four students receiving speech support, two students assessed for learning disabilities, and one English-language learner (ELL).

43.4.5 *Parents*

Seventy-three percent (22/30) students' parents agreed to be interviewed pre-project and post-project. Nineteen mothers and three fathers completed the initial interview, while fourteen mothers and two fathers completed the second interview. Demographics of the parents paralleled the student population. A segment of the parents who agreed to participate (8/22) also served as classroom helpers.

43.5 METHODOLOGY

We selected an action research framework (Kemmis, 2009; Koshy, 2005) as it enabled us to implement new instructional practices and tools, reflect on approaches, and investigate their impact on student engagement and literacy achievement (Gelo, Braakman, & Benetka, 2008).

43.5.1 *Action Research Framework*

According to Kemmis (2009), action research is used to change three things: “practitioners’ practices, their understandings of their practices, and the conditions in which they practice” (p. 463). Koshy (2005) adds that action research is about developing and advancing knowledge through observing, listening, analyzing, and questioning which informs action, contributes to one’s professional development (PD), and helps refine practice. While discussing project approaches, we agreed that although traditional teaching methods meet many children’s needs, our goal was to find new approaches and materials that support every child. Thus, an action research framework provided structure to try new strategies and materials in hopes of doing something purposeful and that could impact change (Sax & Fisher, 2001).

43.5.2 *Collegial Inquiry*

Teachers engage in research as a solo venture either by choice or circumstance. However, we believed collaborative action research, or collegial inquiry, would provide the necessary support and encouragement for the project and would

facilitate the most fruitful outcome (Cunningham, 2011). A large part of the project's success was working with someone equally committed to the project, the approaches, and its participants.

43.5.3 *Data Collection*

We used observations, interviews, field notes, and to “add rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth” to the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 5). The data collection methods fit this study, the participants involved, and the questions we sought to answer (Creswell, 1998; Mertler, 2011). The sample size of the participants was too small to have confidence in statistical significance of the findings. Therefore, reporting of quantitative data is limited to frequencies and descriptives collected during student observations, with and without the devices, and the reporting of pre- and post-Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) levels.

Student Interviews Twenty-four of thirty second grade students, who obtained parental permission, were interviewed once before and again after the project. Our intent was to discover students' feelings toward reading, engagement in reading activities, paper books, and technology. Additional conversations occurred with students during the year about their reading experiences.

Parent Interviews A total of 21 of the 30 parents participated in the first interview; however, only 16 of the 30 completed the second interview. Pre- and post-project, we asked parents to share thoughts, concerns, and questions about integrating technology in student learning as related to literacy.

Co-researcher Observations Wenzel completed 15 two-hour observations of literacy instruction. Also, she observed two students for 30 minutes during read-to-self time, pre- and during the project to observe on-task and off-task behavior. Observations allowed her to “directly experience the program as an experience unto itself,” to “see things that may routinely escape conscious awareness among participants” (Patton, 1987, p. 73). Peterson also shared her observations of students using Kindles, conversations with students about Kindles and reading, and her reflections on technology integration.

Developmental Reading Assessment (DRA) Data from the commercially created DRA were collected by Peterson pre- and post-project. The DRA is used to determine students' independent reading level and inform instruction. These data were used to determine if students made academic gains in literacy.

43.6 DATA ANALYSIS

We coded data from interviews and observations to identify a set of themes. We use mainly qualitative data collection practices, with some descriptive statistics (Creswell, 2012). Triangulation of data analysis and peer review helped ensure validity of our findings and implications (Stake, 1995). While we only explored the impact of Kindles on one classroom, we hope analytic generalization will allow findings to inform other educators regardless of specific designs or methodologies (Firestone, 1993; Thomas, 2011). Lastly, we chose to display our findings as they related to our research questions: (1) Perceptions of Participants, (2) Integration of E-readers into Literacy Instruction, (3) Literacy Engagement and Achievement, and (4) Support Systems for Effective Technology Integration.

1. Perceptions of Participants

Throughout the project, we continually discussed our own perceptions as well as those of the administration, parents, and students. We were eager to explore how students' initial interest in technology could be used to increase their literacy skills. The administrator was supportive of the project and asked that we share findings with her and the school board.

Pre-project parent perspectives included feelings of excitement (15/21), some hesitation (4/21), and hesitant (2/21) to introduce technology in the literacy class, with some parents feeling worrying that a focus on technology would impact more traditional practices. Concerns were expressed about the use of Kindles, curricular coverage, online safety, management and equitable access, and overuse of technology. A majority of parents felt students should be exposed to technology (Table 43.1).

Pre-project, most students were excited about using Kindles but raised some questions and concerns about access. A quarter of the students had experience

Table 43.1 Parents' thoughts and questions *before* and *after* the project

<i>Before project</i>	<i>Initial thoughts and questions</i>	<i>After project</i>	<i>Ending thoughts and questions</i>
Excited (71%)	Excited children get this opportunity	Pleased (90%)	Will more technology be use in future years and in what ways?
Excited and Hesitant (19%)	Long overdue! Kids frequently should use technology	More focus on paper books (5%)	What technology will students use in 3rd–5th grades?
Hesitant (10%)	Worried about online safety, fair access, appropriate use (tool vs toy) What will not be taught if Kindles are added in?	Not sure technology is needed at this age (5%)	Wished for more communication about the project Children now ask to read on our home devices. Increased interest in reading Children didn't talk about the project during the year

Table 43.2 Students' perceptions, thoughts, and questions *before* and *after* the project

<i>Before project</i>	<i>Initial thoughts and questions</i>	<i>After project</i>	<i>Ending thoughts and questions</i>
Excitement (97%)	What happens if the Kindles don't work?	Happy—I like the Kindles (50%)	Will we the Kindles next year?
Excitement and Curious (2%)	How often will I get to use them?	Prefer paper books (22%)	Will we have more technology in grades 3–5?
Disinterest (1%)	Will she teach me how to use one?	Like both the same (22%)	Liked reading and playing games on them
	Kindles will make reading more fun		Liked the large library and read aloud feature
	I hate reading but Kindles might make it more fun		Not enough books
			Kept my interest; I wanted to read more
			I actually like paper books better
			Wish for more Kindles so I can use them more often

reading on an electronic device. Many students explained that their interest in reading was connected to what they were reading and why, and that if they chose the book, they were likely to read more; 30% reported disliking reading, 40% reported loving reading, and 30% said “it depends” (Table 43.2).

After the project, we discovered that half of the students enjoyed reading on the Kindles while a quarter of the class preferred paper books with the rest having no preference. Common questions raised by students were about access in upcoming years.

2. Integration of E-readers into Literacy Instruction

Pre-project we discussed how to integrate the five Kindles into Peterson's literacy instruction. We identified several ways to use e-readers in the classroom.

- Individual/partner reading
- Book clubs
- Small group reading instruction
- Research in non-fiction books
- Audio books
- Writing summaries of books
- Games

One strategy used was having five students read, or listen to, e-books independently during a 30-minute read-to-self activity while others read paper books. Students also took turns reading e-books aloud in pairs. Another approach included using e-books in small group reading instruction, led by Peterson, covering a variety of literacy skills (e.g., fluency, comprehension, predicting

skills, etc.) while other students read paper books silently. Additionally, students wrote summaries on books, created accompanying illustrations, and shared work with classmates. Peterson used part of small group time to review Kindle features with students (e.g., volume, font, swiping, selecting books, etc.).

Additionally, students used e-books to gather facts for research projects. This extended resources when there was minimal material on a topic or if the class computers were occupied by classmates. However, some students couldn't complete research as e-books on their topics were either not available through Amazon or not available at their reading level.

Peterson tried to set up a book club for her advanced readers. She decided shortly after, that continuing was not appropriate as she wasn't sure how best to manage the group but hoped to revisit this after getting some PD.

One unanticipated use of the Kindles was supporting an ELL. Peterson had the beginning reader paper books, but she believed the additional e-books and online vocabulary games helped the student make English literacy gains. Additionally, a peer taught the ELL to use the text-to-speech feature that she used frequently. Peterson has worked with ELLs previously and felt this student made more progress, and more quickly, than when the Kindles were not used.

Another unforeseen practice was using the devices as incentives once we realized that students desired Kindles for reading or gaming during free time. Peterson decided that the devices would be used during free time by students who met the following goals: completed all work that day, had appropriate behavior, and made good choices.

3. Literacy Engagement and Achievement

As a project focus was exploring how Kindles impacted students' engagement in literacy and literacy achievement, we chose to examine student behavior during "read-to-self," a literacy activity occurring daily in the classroom to identify if student behavior changed when reading paper books as compared to e-books. We also evaluated students' literacy abilities through DRA.

Before implementing Kindles, we noticed three clusters of students during reading time: most always disengaged, most always engaged, and sometimes engaged which was typical from past experiences. We selected one student to observe from the "disengaged" group and one student from the "most always engaged" group. During two 30-minute read-to-self times (pre- and post-integration of Kindles), these two students were observed at approximately 5-minute intervals to identify the frequency of off-task behavior. Figure 43.1 shows Student A greatly reduced the amount of off-task behavior (e.g., disrupting classmates, adjusting Kindle features, changing books, playing with clothes, etc.) during a 30-minute period, when from 23 instances while reading a book to 7 when reading on the Kindle. Peterson noticed that the Kindles

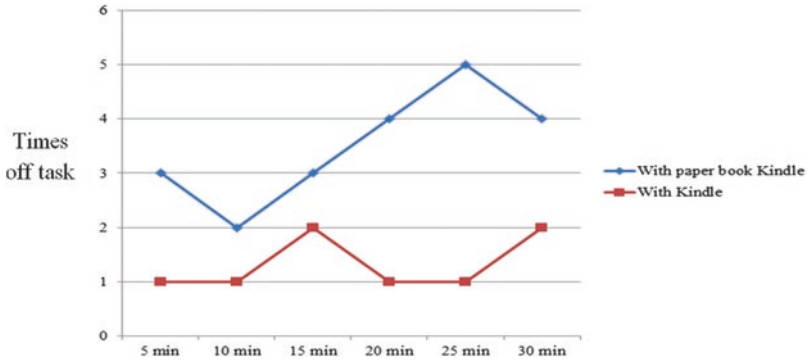


Fig. 43.1 Student A read-to-self time reading paper books vs e-books

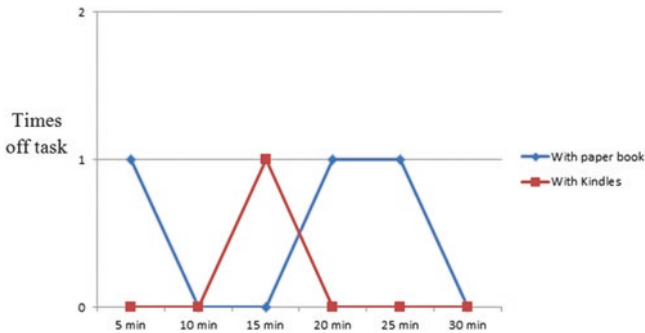


Fig. 43.2 Student B read-to-self time reading paper books vs e-books

helped students want to read, and read for longer periods of time. She felt prolonged engagement with text helped students grow their literacy skills.

Figure 43.2 data show Student B also reduced off-task instances when reading with the Kindle. Student B was off-task three times with book reading and only one with Kindle reading.

In addition to examining e-readers’ impact on students’ engagement during read-to-self, we compared pre- and post-test DRA data to evaluate students’ literacy growth. Peterson assesses students’ DRA scores at the start and end of the year as a part of the school’s assessment protocol. Figure 43.3 shows students’ beginning levels: 50% below second grade reading level, 30% at grade level, and 20% above grade level. Peterson explained that beginning second grader spread is fairly typical though it is uncommon to have a beginning second grader at the pre-school level.

Peterson noted that this class had higher DRA scores than previous classes though its demographics were very similar. By June, two students were reading below grade level, 10 students read at grade level, and 18 students were reading and comprehending 1–3 years above grade level. It is possible that

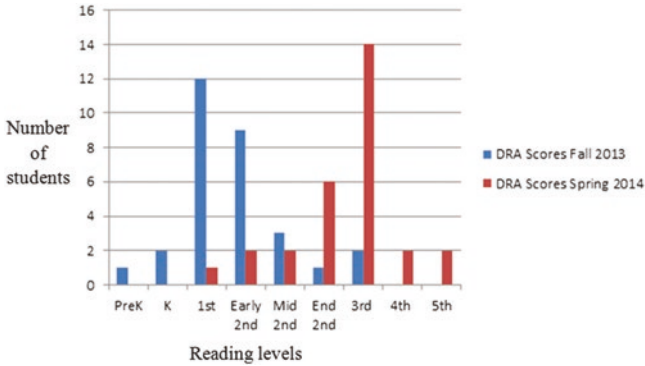


Fig. 43.3 Comparison of student DRA scores before and after using the Kindles

additional adults helping students with the devices and helping with literacy tasks impacted students' literacy skill development. Additionally, we wondered if having more devices and books that kept up with reading levels would have further advanced students' DRA scores.

4. Support Systems for Effective Technology Integration

We observed that certain support systems were necessary for effectively integrating Kindles into Peterson's classroom. Of most significance are purchasing, management, and maintenance of hardware and software, procedures for using devices, additional technological infrastructure, and PD to help problem-solve issues. Further, we discussed benefits and drawbacks of having only one classroom teacher incorporate Kindles and the value of grade level collaboration.

Technology Issues Schools need adequate funding to purchase enough devices and accessories to achieve appropriate e-reader to student ratios and to keep pace with curriculum, students' interests, and abilities. Districts and schools need centralized management systems for coordinating technology, the network to which the technology is linked, and creating district-wide user agreements or contracts to communicate with parents and students. There also must be clear and explicit district-approved procedures for student use of the devices and procedures for handling technical issues, and broken, lost, or non-functioning equipment.

Professional Development Districts must provide funding for PD that enhances teachers' understanding of how to integrate technology into instruction. PD should include how to teach, support, and evaluate students while using the device, trouble-shooting, and resources. Teachers need release time to attend or receive PD with teachers' and students' needs driving PD topics.

Collaboration on Curriculum Teachers need dedicated time to collaborate on how to effectively integrating technology into curriculum. During collaboration, teachers can share expertise and collectively consider goals, curricular practices, problem solving, management, and how to support class needs.

Communication Districts must provide clear, consistent, and frequent communication to stakeholders to ensure all are well-informed regarding technology integration. Schools must provide time to answer questions, reassure stakeholders that student experiences will be enhanced through new approaches and tools, and share changes in policies or practices.

43.7 DISCOVERIES AND DISCUSSION

Our analysis suggests that e-readers engage students in reading tasks and help students meet literacy outcomes. There were positive consequences we hoped for as well as unintended consequences. Further, there were drawbacks and areas where support or change is needed

43.7.1 *Benefits*

The project's findings suggest that Kindles helped *increase student literacy* as measured by the DRA, teacher interactions with students during literacy instruction and observations. Peterson explained that the text-to-speech feature helped many students develop a stronger sense of story as they didn't struggle with each word and sentence; they could grasp more of the action and setting of the story. Peterson believed that students began to view themselves as competent readers.

We also found that using Kindles seemed to *increase students' engagement and interest in reading*. Students often shouted, "Yes!" or "high-fived" a neighbor when their name was selected to use a Kindle. Other behaviors showing interest in reading included rushing to get Kindles for reading time, excitedly sharing portions of text on Kindles with classmates, increased conversations about what students were reading outside of reading time, groans when it was time to put the devices "up," and choosing Kindles during free time.

Additionally, what we saw was *longer engagement with e-books than paper books*. We attribute this to a "cool factor" of using new technology. Students shared that they thought using Kindles was cool because the technology was "new and fancy" and that other classes were not using the Kindles. Plus, we believe the interactive e-books kept students' attention as did having control of Kindle features and the text-to-speech option.

Another benefit was *fewer student disruptions and off-task behavior during literacy time*. Students seemed excited to use Kindles and knew if they misused

them, they would lose the devices. Students also helped monitored each other's behaviors.

Additionally, *students gained digital literacy skills* including, e-book navigation, screen manipulation, online researching, online dictionary, text-to-speech, and adjusting features (i.e., text, image, and voice). Additionally, Kindles seemed to increase students' and Peterson's desire to use more technology in their learning outside of the literacy block. Students were asked to research and complete drafts of reports for other subjects on the computers and iPad. Peterson was motivated to model more on the document camera and use classroom laptops in students' learning activities to enrich math and keyboarding skills.

As the State's online standardized assessments require students to have computer skills like moving objects, manipulating screen views, and typing, we agreed that integrating technology is essential. Using technology, like Kindles, can boost students' confidence in their computer skills which can reduce anxiety levels when taking online assessments. This may increase students' ability to demonstrate content knowledge (Kimby, 2014).

43.7.2 *Unintended Consequences*

During the project, several unintended outcomes occurred. First, we discovered that *Kindles may provide social capital to students*. Social capital is defined by Catts and Ozga (2005) "as the 'social glue' that holds people together and gives them a sense of belonging" (p. 2). Increasing social capital in schools may increase students' academic achievement (Coleman, 1990). We observed a student who struggled academically and socially but due to his familiarity with Kindles, he became the class's "Kindle go-to" guy. He was able to help classmates seemingly boosting his self-esteem and affording him a status he'd never had before.

Additionally, Kindles seemed to help create *social bonds between classmates*. We noticed students who typically have little in common interacting because of shared experiences through books. We observed students writing stories together about the books they'd read or books with similar storylines (e.g., Minecraft, mysteries, animals, etc.). One student might have independently read a book, and another might have "read" it with support from the text-to-speech feature. Both approaches provide students with a common story experience enabling bonding opportunities through collaborative writing. Students also pretended more on the playground, using characters and scenarios from shared books as a launching pad. Peterson explained that she hadn't observed this bridge between students of different abilities as much previously when using only paper books.

We also observed that *anonymity was afforded to students* by making students' reading selections on Kindles private. This anonymity seemed to reduce students' feelings of embarrassment when assigned, or choosing, a book at a lower grade level. We observed students wanting to appear able to read "hard"

books, even though they may be unable to read the story; thus, students could read along with the audio version or just listen to the audio version. With Kindles, everyone looked the same. There wasn't embarrassment reading a simple book next to another student who was reading an advanced chapter book. Further, some students shared that they could explore e-books they usually wouldn't read because they worried others would make fun of them due to the content.

Another unintended consequence was that *students seemed empowered* as students manipulated Kindle features often controlled by publishers (e.g., font size, background color, image size, etc.). Students gained confidence in their ability to manage technology and enjoyed sharing their "expertise" with classmates. Students also seemed empowered by holding an entire library in their hands and helping select books for the class e-library. Students could add their book choice to the "book wish list," and we would order it (or something comparable). This helped keep students interested in a series, author, or topic.

A consequence we never expected was *students' declining interest in the Kindles* toward the end of the year. We attribute this to an e-library that couldn't keep up with growing reading levels and changing interests. Students explained thus: there were no new e-books or advanced e-books, they were in the middle of a good paper book, and they liked the consistency of the paper books which they could have every day, whereas students had Kindle access every four to five days.

Lastly, *some students did not like using Kindles*. Students shared the following: Kindles were difficult to manipulate, the touchscreen was non-responsive—moving too quickly or slowly, e-books were distracting, and the screen created a glare straining eyes. Other students said they preferred paper books because they like the feel of the paper or the smell of the books.

43.8 DRAWBACKS AND CHALLENGES

While there were benefits, we discovered drawbacks and challenges including *learning Kindle features, reteaching Kindle features, unable to teach advanced Kindle features, time spent managing devices, inadequate ratio of Kindles to students, not enough funds for books, technical issues*, and the issue of *keeping up with students' literacy growth and interests*.

Trying new approaches and incorporating new tools takes time. We knew some basic features of the Kindles but had minimal knowledge about how to use these innovatively instead of merely substituting for paper books (Puentendura, 2009). Once we identified the skills and knowledge we wanted students to have, we, with the help of a class parent, worked with small groups of students to practice a few skills each day until all students had training (turning on/off, plugging in headsets, adjusting volume, adjusting screen brightness, selecting font and font size, accessing the text-to-speech feature, selecting books, swip-

ing, enlarging, and how to determine one's place in the book). Since there were only five devices, it could be several days, or even a week, before a student had access again causing many to forget the skills learned.

Also, there was not enough time to learn or teach all device features such as highlighting, bookmarking, and note-taking. These additional features could enhance student engagement and critical thinking. Introducing new technology is similar to introducing new curriculum to students. It takes time to learn the necessary protocols for everyone to be successful and as independent as possible. However, it was encouraging to see students helping each other different options available on the devices, including some of the Kindle features we didn't cover.

While pleased to receive financial support for the project, we felt from the start that the low Kindle to student ratio was not ideal, 1:5, and would require creativity. We wondered how other teachers with lower device to student ratios managed more effectively and if more devices would have made a larger impact on student achievement and engagement.

Additionally, we underestimated students' speed moving through the e-library. We were unable to keep up with students' interests and growing literacy skills. This impacted some students' interest in using Kindles as they had already read e-books of interest or at their level.

We also faced technical challenges. There were no protocols to follow or a technical go-to person to contact with challenges. The district's wireless capability was not consistently reliable often requiring multiple login attempts and delays in receiving newly ordered e-books. This limited our Kindle use at times.

43.9 IMPLICATIONS

At the project's end, Peterson felt that this project was the most impactful process she ever used to improve student reading and writing. Wenzel found the action research approach compelling and wants to continue doing collaborative research. While generalizability may be limited, we believe there are viable implications for educational research and practice.

43.9.1 *Research*

Based on our findings, there are several important implications. First, exploration of effective technology integration approaches are needed that impact student engagement and achievement in varying content areas, contexts, developmental levels, and students' needs. Research must identify effective device to student ratio for optimal outcomes and find practices for effective integration when optimal ratios are not possible. Further, research is needed to determine PD, infrastructure, and systems that effectively support teachers who embed technology in students' learning experiences.

43.9.2 *Action Research*

Involvement in action research positively impacted Peterson's students and increased Peterson's and Wenzel's desire to try new instructional approaches. Unfortunately, action research has been perceived to be of lesser quality than other types of research often not getting the attention or funding it deserves. However, disseminating high-quality, informative global action research projects is needed to help alter negative perceptions and increase acceptance of this type of research as a legitimate methodology (Kavannagh, Daly, & Jolley, 2002).

43.9.3 *Practice*

Findings from this project support technology inclusion efforts in literacy instruction. This has implications for a variety of stakeholders who have a pivotal role and responsibility in helping students gain essential skills.

Schools and administrators have a major role in helping students succeed. Adequate infrastructure, resources, training, support, management, and communication must be a priority so that students are served effectively (OECD, 2012). As funding is often an issue, administrators can support innovative and effective instructional practices through funding acquisition and allocation.

Teachers can increase student engagement and achievement in literacy by collaborating with other educators to identify new curricular practices, acquiring new knowledge and skills through PD, and sharing knowledge gained with others. Teachers and parent partnerships can provide support for teachers and students in the classroom, strengthen communication between stakeholders, and increase understanding of how to help engage students and advance skills.

Strong literacy and digital skills are keys to success. Integrating literacy and technology can empower and improve authentic learning opportunities for students. Additionally, Kindles provide increased access to texts, potentially reducing the access gap between students who have exposure to texts at home and those who do not. With increased access to texts, students may gain literacy skills reducing the achievement gap and other consequences related to a lack of literacy skills.

Most *parents and families* realize the need to be literate in society today and understand that this is a focus in school. However, methods and materials used to engage students and help them acquire literacy skills may be less understood, especially when approaches differ from parents' own educational experiences. Improved and more frequent communication can increase the quality of school-home partnerships.

While teacher education programs provide courses on technology integration into subjects, many teacher candidates lack the ability to integrate technology and how to do so with minimal resources and large classes. Even though our newest future educators are of the digital generation, using technology personally does not often translate well to technology integration in the classroom. Teacher candidates need training on how to effectively integrate

technology in instruction and how to apply for grants that support technology integration in curriculum.

43.10 CONCLUSION

We discovered that when using Kindles, students read for longer periods of time, literacy learning outcomes were met, and behavioral issues decreased. We also discovered that e-books helped students connect socially with peers, enabled anonymity when reading, and empowered students. It has been inspiring to watch students be engaged, motivated, and developing.

However, we learned that integrating new technology takes time to learn and that sometimes students just like holding a paper book. We also realized that for greater impact to occur, adoption of technology and new pedagogical practices should occur within a grade level and not as a solo endeavor. Additionally, we discovered that a smaller ratio of device to student is desirable and that as students' reading levels increase and interests develop, classroom libraries must grow to support these changes.

Technology alone will not solve literacy challenges and student engagement issues. Purposeful inclusion of the right technology for the task, and for the audience, will enable teachers to help students meet learning outcomes and in ways that motivate students to participate in the process. Further, though additional support systems are necessary to maximize the Kindles' potential as instructional tools, we found that most stakeholders interviewed responded positively to using e-readers in a literacy class and hope to see the inclusion of technology in future years and in other content areas and grade levels. While our original questions were answered, several new questions emerged:

- Will more technology and money make a bigger difference in students' learning experiences?
- Will appropriate PD be supported, paid for, and incorporated as needed, and will it support teachers' and students' needs?
- How can we interest more teachers in technology engagement and collaboration?
- In what other ways are Kindles integrated into literacy programs?

While our project explored ways to impact student achievement and behavior, this action research project benefited us as well. Action research enabled us to participate in an iterative reflective cycle balancing reflection with action and data analysis (Baum, MacDougall, & Smith, 2006). We felt that the time we spent taking an accurate before and after "picture" of students' academic performance was a huge motivator by the end of the project, when we were actually able to see students' actual growth. Implementing an action research base for this project gave legitimacy to our results and a framework to ask questions, reflect on strategies used, and freedom to adapt as our project unfolded. Action research was a powerful and effective tool for all of us. Baum et al. (2006) describe action research outcomes in this way:

At its heart is collective, self-reflective inquiry that researchers and participants undertake, so they can understand and improve upon the practices in which they participate and the situations in which they find themselves ... The process of participatory action research should be empowering and lead to people having increased control over their lives. (p. 4)

We feel empowered and motivated because of this process with an increased sense of control as professional educators over our environments and pedagogy. We believe this collaborative venture contributed to our students' well-being and the field of education. We are ready to tackle future projects that might change the world (or our little part of it).

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Commentary on the Action Research Laboratory: A US School-based Action Research Program

Joseph C. Senese

44.1 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSES

Born of an idea to help teachers study their own teaching practice, the Action Research Laboratory (ARL) was founded in 1995 at Highland Park High School (IL), a mid-sized (1600 students) suburban secondary school located 25 miles north of Chicago. Because this effort was a local attempt to improve student learning by providing teachers with the opportunity and support to conduct classroom action research, the ARL was an evolutionary initiative. The high school in 1995 had a staff of 150; the program started small in its year of inception, involving only three teachers and me, an assistant principal, but as the program established itself in the culture of the school, more teachers joined.

At that time, I was in my third year as an assistant principal at Highland Park High School. Before that, I had been a full-time English teacher at another school in the district. Based on my own teaching experiences, I sensed a need for teachers to explore ways to expand their teaching repertoire and provide innovative learning practices for students. Part of this sense was derived from the success that the high school had attained as reflected in above-average standardized test scores and student acceptance into highly competitive universities. Because the accomplishments of some gifted students made us look good, the school may have been unconsciously overlooking the majority of “average” students.

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44.1.1 *Putting Theory into Practice*

By integrating the principles of constructivism and the new sciences into the practice of collaborative action research, the ARL demonstrated how, over time, a small group of committed teachers could be the catalyst for school-wide change. The combination of the following powerful ideas propels the ARL, makes it adaptable to changing situations, and helps it to sustain change efforts by small teams of teachers:

- The concept of self-organization in which the larger system through the process of self-reference must adapt to even a minor disturbance in the system (Senge, Ross, Smith, & Roberts, 1994; Wheatley, 1992; Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1996);
- Sustained, job-embedded professional development that consists of multiple, complex, and authentic experiences (Caine & Caine, 1997); and
- Constructivism and the active processing of experience to make meaning (Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Lambert, 1998; Lambert, Walker, Zimmerman, & Cooper, 1995).

Each participating teacher in the ARL applies an inventive educational practice in at least one regularly assigned, standard level class. ARL teams have developed classes that have supplemented instruction with projects and experiential learning; investigated how to design classes in which no number or letter grades are assigned in order to emphasize learning by de-emphasizing grades; researched ways to improve a sense of community in the classroom; discovered ways to engage grade 12 students in their final year of secondary school; and worked to instill in students a sense of belonging. Their stories are the legacy of the ARL. Each area of inquiry chosen by a team challenges teachers to devise new and creative ways to structure learning, assessment, and organizational systems. From their experiences, these teachers have developed their thinking and skills related to effective educational practices, affected the thinking and practices of other teachers, and have become a force for systemic change within the school because “If a lot of people across a system are engaged in constructing solutions, then there is a critical mass which will support their sustainability” (Burns, 2014, p. 16).

Members of the ARL have shared their work with the high school community while extending their influence to other schools and districts. The hope, in the end, is that the ARL offers other schools a model for change that can enrich student learning through the professional development efforts of a committed group of teachers, the critical unit of change within school systems (Stringer, 2014, p. 63).

44.1.2 *Creating a Local and Sustainable Program*

Although “Collaborative research has long been understood as an insider-outsider partnership between a research consultant (often university-based)

and class-room teachers (Smith & Geoffrey, 1968)” (as quoted in Schaenen, et al., 2012, p. 92), the ARL was developed at a secondary school by those who worked there. Teachers in this program created a unique living laboratory in which to study their own research questions; no university or other outside source provided structure or resources. The program was truly homegrown and self-sufficient. Teachers in the ARL did not receive any remuneration or credit for their action research; they joined and stayed because they wanted to improve their teaching practices. As one member stated:

By far, the most rewarding part of working on an ARL team was the opportunity to learn and grow with a small group of teachers; [they] were just as committed to my learning and growth as I was to theirs. This feeling of mutual commitment provided a wonderful staff development experience; by working with these colleagues on a consistent basis throughout the year, I was able to explore new ideas and take risks in the classroom, with a type of “safety net” in place.

Because the program is a laboratory, ARL teachers are expected to share a working model of these educational applications so that the entire staff of the high school can benefit from the action research. The ultimate goal of the ARL lies in a strong belief that this program will improve teaching, foster student learning, and further the development of each department to such an extent that the high school, over time, will transform into a learning community.

44.2 CONCEPTUAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE ACTION RESEARCH LABORATORY

The structure of the ARL married classroom innovations with constructivist principles:

Learning is an Active, Social Process In the ARL, each teacher chooses the topic of study and becomes a student of his or her own practice. ARL teachers have created interventions or variations in their teaching practices in order to study the effects on student learning. In addition, every teacher works on a team. Sometimes, teams are assembled with like-minded teachers; other times (less often), teachers propose their own team. Either way, the journey is never taken alone.

Learning is the Responsibility of the Participant In the ARL, each teacher is responsible for his or her own research. Because each teacher is on a team, though, there is ample support for this. In one memorable instance, a teacher in her second year of ARL participation decided to withdraw. Her teammates met with her at lunch, and, by the end of the day, she had renewed her commitment and her loyalty.

Collaboration Supports Shared Understanding Although each team member has a research question unique to his or her classroom practice (and subject

matter), an umbrella research topic unifies the work of the team. This not only solidifies collaboration among team members but also provides an entry point into teammates' research questions.

Context Shapes the Research Action research is dependent on context (Creswell, 2008; Mertler, 2014; Mills, 2011). The research is about a particular teacher, in a particular school, with these particular students, at this particular time. Teachers understand (usually, after they have shared their research) that others can still learn from their individual research. They grow to learn that the very same research project, undertaken at another time or in another place, may very well provide alternate answers. Teaching itself is context-laden, so the research about it has to be as well.

Teacher as Learner Becomes Engaged and Committed to Improvement More often than not, a teacher develops an action research question because of perceived problems. Teachers who join the ARL decide to do something about these problems. This becomes their challenge and goal. Because the issues that arise are personally significant, the ARL teachers are committed to improvement.

44.3 FEATURES OF THE ACTION RESEARCH LABORATORY

44.3.1 *Mixed Disciplines with a Sustained Focus*

One significant feature of the ARL is that teams are comprised of teachers from different disciplines. I strongly believed that one way to affect the culture of the high school was to form a team of teachers who previously had not worked closely with each other (Lambert, 1998; Lambert, Walker, Zimmerman, & Cooper, 1995; Wheatley, 1992; Wheatley & Kellner-Rogers, 1996). I surmised that teachers would conduct their research without being encumbered by long-held departmental assumptions such as what to teach and how to teach it. We began with a team of three simply because I found through my classroom teaching that an individual cannot hide in a group that small. In addition, I asked each team of teachers to make a two-year commitment to the team. I felt (and later demonstrated) that it takes about a year for a team to learn the process of action research and to own their projects. A program that was a revolving door could not sustain itself. Many teachers remained with the program for more than two years.

One way to make this venture real to the faculty of the high school was to make a formal proposal and invite any teacher on staff to join the ARL. A distributed flyer did not muster much interest in the spring of 1995. Some teachers may have been wary of an endeavor initiated by the school administration, but I felt strongly about the prospects that action research could offer a school that had been satisfied with its academic success for years, so I embarked on a recruitment campaign in May. My instincts told me that I had to choose those

who were already strong teachers and respected in their departments if the program was going to succeed and gain a foothold in the school. Eventually, I formed a team, and we briefly met in June before the school year ended for the summer with the goal of preparing a launch the following semester in September. These three teachers knew of each other but did not know each other. They had each taught at Highland Park High School for between five and seven years.

44.3.2 Research Conducted in Classes for Average Students

Another guiding feature was that the classes in which any teacher in the ARL conducted research had to be intended for students of average ability. The school already had a culture of providing additional resources to honors students and to those with special needs. Administrative energies often overlook the average-performing students who comprise the population in “mainstream” classes. Therefore, I chose to focus our efforts on improving teaching and learning for the majority of students, and the participating teachers agreed.

44.3.3 Personal Choice and Professional Time

When September arrived and a new academic school year began, the first ARL team met to talk about what the teachers might be interested in studying. I did not expect that they would want to conduct research on exactly the same things, but I did assume that there would be an umbrella topic that would unite their interests. I was surprised to discover that they wanted me to determine their research topic, but I knew that they had to take ownership for this idea to work and to be of value to them. So, we worked through a few exercises that I had read about (Sagor, 1993) and had drawn from a National Staff Development Council workshop that I had attended. This involved exploring questions such as what do you like the most about your course? What gets on your nerves? What nagging questions do you have but never seem to get answers to? Each of the ARL teachers began to form an idea of what to study. Over the years, I have developed more sophisticated ways to help teachers determine a research topic (Burnaford, Fischer, & Hobson, 2001; Hubbard & Power, 2003; Mills, 2011; Sagor, 1993; Stringer, 2014), but in general, in-depth conversations about teaching problems often revealed areas of interest.

Extended time for these three teachers (known as ARL Team #1) would allow them to reflect on their practice and to develop ideas of how to create interventions and to study those effects. I suggested that we take a full day off-campus to work on this. All of them were aghast. As a teacher, I can understand the ramifications of being absent and leaving students with a substitute teacher. So, I persuaded them to take only a morning for our work. I had received a small grant from the State of Illinois to support the ARL (and pay for substitutes); I wanted to provide the ARL team with professional development time and not just add to their workload.

Team #1 developed an umbrella idea to involve students in their own learning through in-class activities. The mathematics teacher had students apply geometry to design buildings and golf courses; the science teacher had students create their own experiments and interact with various adults; and the social studies teacher had students take on roles of an African tribe including the builders of a hut in a school courtyard. Each of these research projects garnered attention because they involved the larger school community.

44.3.4 *Establishing Program Operation Goals*

While ARL Team #1 was working on their action research, I worked on my own. I decided to test out my beliefs about the ARL with these teachers. The result of my two-year research was to define the goals of the program. After a full year of facilitating the program, I was able to determine these goals:

- To collaborate;
- To experiment;
- To put research into practice and to research our practice; and
- To empower teachers as change agents.

These goals only surfaced as the ARL established its identity. That meant that rather than being explicitly determined in advance, the objectives of the program grew organically from the work that the teachers and I were doing. We let the program goals bubble up and establish themselves as our work produced them. Teachers in conversations and in writing expressed what was important for them to achieve through their research and what they valued and found useful in the features of the ARL. Those desires were connected to an analysis of the research the teachers were doing as well as to the results of interviews with the participants and thus became our shared goals. The attainment of each of these goals has been documented elsewhere (Senese, 1998, 2000, 2002b) and is briefly addressed below.

44.4 FINDINGS AND OUTCOMES BASED ON EXPERIENCES

44.4.1 *Personally Meaningful Exchanges*

ARL teachers' monthly all-day sessions took on their own character depending on the team members and their particular needs at the time. Some sessions consisted mostly of talking and reporting out; others were working sessions. Teachers often commented on how refreshing (and simultaneously tiring!) it was to spend an entire day talking about their practice. It was a luxury to be able to concentrate on investigating personally meaningful concerns about teaching and learning with committed colleagues.

44.4.2 *Off-Campus Sessions*

These sessions had to occur away from school. Just as some people nowadays have found it useful to disconnect themselves from constantly being in touch through digital devices, teachers found it helpful to distance themselves from thinking about what was going on back in their classrooms. We could spend hours of uninterrupted time concentrating on the matter at hand without being pulled back to mundane school matters. ARL teachers appreciated this professional time to hone their practice. One commented, “The opportunity that the Action Research Lab provides for regularly scheduled, uninterrupted professional talk is, without question, the most significant factor in my growth as an educator this year.”

44.4.3 *Varied Perspectives*

The mix of disciplines on a team offered teachers perspectives different from their own and balanced the need for content expertise and experimentation. For example, if an English teacher talked about teaching students *Romeo and Juliet*, a mathematics or science teacher could ask pertinent questions about the timing, teaching methods, or even the reasoning behind teaching this work without threatening the English teacher’s content expertise. This was a key component in helping teachers to understand the systemic nature of school. It also removed threat by encouraging team members to ask what I called “naïve questions,” questions based on unfamiliarity and a real need to know (Senese, 2007a, p. 53). Each ARL team became a close-knit, collaborative group as evidenced by this social studies teacher commenting on two teachers who were outside of his department: “I am conscious, and thankful, of the fact that those of my colleagues conducting action research have become my best resource for learning what I need to continue to improve my classes.”

44.4.4 *Producer and Consumer of Research*

Research is the foundation of action research. This took on a dual meaning for ARL teachers. Of course, they produced their own research and shared it with others. But once teachers had chosen a topic of study, they wanted to know what others had to say about it. This seemed a perfect role for the facilitator: to unearth readings that could inform teachers about their research questions (Table 44.1).

Teachers were motivated to review the existing literature on their research question because that informed the work that they were producing. This also provided teachers with the knowledge that their research could add to existing literature, which sometimes prompted them to write pieces for publication.

Table 44.1 Examples of ARL teams and research questions

Team 1	Mathematics, Science, Social Studies	How does project-based learning affect content and skill acquisition?
Team 2	English, Health, Social Studies	How does the elimination of number and letter grades (except for final grades) affect student attitudes and self-assessment?
Team 3	Science, Social Studies, Spanish	What instructional methods and activities increase a sense of community in the classroom?
Team 4	Physical Education, Science, Social Studies	What instructional methods best increase student motivation for learning?
Team 5	English, French, Science	To what extent does allowing students to develop a customized reading process that recognizes individual strengths and weaknesses improve comprehension of difficult texts in French, English, and Science classes?
Team 6	English, Science	How can students develop an inter-disciplinary and/or transdisciplinary perspective while still developing discipline-specific skills?

44.4.5 *Time as Resource*

The most important feature of the ARL was providing teachers with time to develop and carry out action research. Teachers did not only work on their action research on assigned meeting days. They initiated ways in which to make their action research a part of their day-to-day teaching. This was both the greatest challenge and the greatest benefit of the ARL. By making action research part of who they were, teachers discovered that how they thought about teaching and learning deepened. Developing a unit or lesson became more than just finding materials or content. One participant explained:

A final aspect of the ARL that makes it successful is the *time* it gives teachers to engage in meaningful activity...This time is like gold; its value is unsurpassed when it comes to teacher development... Time to do these things is what teachers need to become better teachers, and, in turn, to make their students better learners.

44.4.6 *Public Sharing of Results*

The ARL offered teachers structures in which to share their progress with others because “An important part of the action research process is sharing artifacts of the inquiry to enable the action researcher to continually reflect on practice so that peers may contribute feedback and support” (Riel, 2010, n.p.). This always began at the end of the first year of participation. Invited staff attended catered lunches to hear about a team’s research. At first, ARL teachers invariably proffered three reasons why sharing with the staff was not a good idea: (1) I don’t have enough to share. I’m not far enough along; (2) No one will be interested in something that is so personal to my own practice; and (3) I’m not ready to share. Give me another year.

But following the reactions they received at the lunchtime sessions, the attitudes of the presenting teachers completely transformed. They were excited, encouraged, and eager to share again. By the end of their research cycle, they understood more about their topic than most, and sharing what they knew with others was the best way to demonstrate that.

44.4.7 *Expanding and Extending Teacher Networks*

The very structure of the ARL necessitated collaboration among team members. Relationships among team members were strong because

Action research is done in the workplace with others. It is a collaborative process. But, also, the doing of action research is more effective when action researchers can benefit from the help of a community of action researchers.... Combining this collaborative structure with the action research process is an effective way to provide high levels of support for action researchers (Riel, 2010, n.p.).

I encouraged various teams to meet with each other once a year, and those cross-team gatherings offered fresh perspectives while stimulating the development of new webs of relationships, and, as a result, these teachers saw themselves as part of something bigger.

A very necessary outcome of these structures was a sense of support. ARL members could see that I, an administrator, supported what they were doing and allowed them to go as fast or as slow as they wanted in their research. They supported each other. Opportunities to share their research with the school community provided another source of support. Outside of school, the ARL found interest coming from the education community and beyond. Teachers' research was featured in the Chicago Tribune, on WTTW (the local public broadcasting station), and in the Christian Science Monitor among others. There was a sense of something important happening, and they were at the center of it.

Teachers in the ARL consistently mentioned that being on a team of fellow teachers gave them the support they needed to thrive in their research. Especially in the first five years of the ARL's existence, though, some department colleagues did not always embrace ARL teachers' research. For example, a fellow department member told one ARL teacher that it was fine to play games in her classes, but the students who came out of those classes had better not lag behind. That experience only reinforced the need for inter-disciplinary teaming because having an extended professional family provided extra support.

44.4.8 *Teacher Decision-Making Authority to Increase Agency*

In the ARL, trust was embedded in the model so that teachers made personally meaningful choices with support from administration. As Clausen stated:

Without warmth from administration, without time to do anything but prepare for the next day, without professional development from anybody outside their classroom, and with little encouragement from any corner of the educational world these days, this poor creature [teacher] can no longer evolve beyond transmitter to become a researcher as well. (Clausen, 2010, n.p.)

Some administrators are surprised that teachers have the ability (and the right) to choose their own research question, but any teacher conducting action research in a classroom has to, by the very nature of the process, involve the students because while collecting data, a teacher must eventually consult with the students in front of him or her. Involving informants in a teacher's research expands and transforms the research arena into a learning community. "Teacher-researchers have decision-making authority to study an educational practice as part of their own ongoing professional development" (Creswell, 2008, p. 600), and acknowledging that teachers have legitimate personal and professional interests and concerns is critical to the success of action research.

44.4.9 Authenticity: Classroom-Embedded Professional Learning

The immediacy of action research provides teachers with authentic learning (Creswell, 2008). In preparation for and right after an ARL meeting, teachers experienced with their students the very things they were studying in their research. Since "Teachers seek to research problems in their own classrooms so that they can improve their students' learning and their own professional performance" (p. 599), those who are open to investigating some element of that practice experience the results soon if not immediately.

44.4.10 Applying Both Qualitative and Quantitative Measures

Although much teacher action research relies on qualitative data sources, in the ARL, we included both qualitative and quantitative data. Because teachers oftentimes do not have experience applying quantitative or descriptive statistics, I would sometimes suggest ways to look at the data and even manipulate them myself. Together, teachers (and I include myself) would grapple with ways to analyze and interpret data and even with ways to collect meaningful data; consequently, we discovered new (to us) analytic methods.

One team, for example, given a data set with three variables learned to use the graphing function of Excel to display all the data in a meaningful way. Another team discovered the value of using a Q-sort to encourage students in focus groups to participate as well as to produce far more data than they originally had intended to collect. Other teams used data derived from standardized tests and school attendance records (often unavailable to or unused by teachers) to measure student growth in their classes.

44.5 FINDINGS AND OUTCOMES

44.5.1 *Teacher Learning and Satisfaction*

Pre- and post-interviews were conducted with ARL participants during the first three years (1995–1998). All 12 teachers made many references to the goals of the program and to their own growth. The professionalism they exhibited in the interviews spoke to their dedication and commitment to these goals. And by their own words, they emphasized the difference that the ARL had made in their professional growth. The experience level of the teachers in the ARL at the time of these interviews ranged from 1 to over 20 years, so the positive effects of their participation cut across all stages of experience.

In general, the comments by teachers in one-on-one interviews before their participation in the ARL were imprecise and vague. The comments in the exit interviews were in contrast rich, detailed, and substantive. One teacher commented in a closing interview:

Everyone that I come in close contact with knows that I do action research because I feel really strongly about it. I feel it's changed my teaching. I think before I was always focused on the teaching and now I feel I have something else outside of my teaching. Now I feel like a professional. I'm definitely more introspective about my teaching. I feel I have my data collection. I have to be synthesizing, summarizing what I've found and reflecting on my experience.

Another teacher began the year by saying, "I don't know what I'm getting myself into. It feels overwhelming." By May, she had this to say: "I think [the ARL] is probably up there with the top five things that I've ever done [for professional growth]."

Because each teacher conducted personally meaningful research, what the data revealed varied, but some consistent findings were increased student attendance, higher grades, and improved teacher satisfaction for participating teachers.

44.5.2 *Student and Parent Responses*

In written surveys completed by all students in ARL teachers' classes in one school semester in 1998, over 80 % of 250 students in 14 classes reported that they "enjoyed how the course was taught," 71 % said they "would seek out this teacher again for another course," and 76 % said they "would recommend this teacher to other students." Individual student interviews and focus groups produced confirming evidence of these results.

Another indicator of the ways in which student growth had been impacted by ARL teachers came from approximately 240 telephone interviews over a two-year period that were conducted with the parents of students who had been in ARL teachers' classes. Interviewers were teachers (not in the ARL),

teacher aides, clerical staff, and interns who were trained and paid for their services. The interview was structured around six questions and ended with an open-ended invitation to add any other thoughts. In those surveys, 52 % of parents agreed that the teachers “should continue to use the innovative teaching technique” that the ARL teachers had tested out. That percent may have been depressed because some parents commented that, until the phone interview, they were unaware of the action research work that teachers were conducting. One effect of these interviews was that subsequent ARL teachers early in the school year made sure to explain to parents and students how they were trying to improve their practice by conducting action research. In fact, in the next year’s survey, 85 % of the parents recommended that teachers continue these practices.

44.5.3 *The Evolution of the Role of the Facilitator*

My role as facilitator consisted of tending to the business of organizing sessions and setting up meetings. Since the methods and routines of the ARL had not been firmly established at the start, the teachers’ feedback had a strong influence on how the program developed. In 2002, I wrote:

My strong belief in teacher self-direction and autonomy allows me to step back and to take the role of facilitator in the ARL. I make a conscious effort not to direct teachers in their action research. When appropriate or when asked, I will offer an opinion, make an observation, summarize a conversation, or ask a question, but the teachers truly control the process. (Senese, 2002a, p. 51)

After several meetings with ARL Team #1, I realized that these teachers had not been in a classroom outside of their own for a long time, so I simply asked the teachers to visit each other’s classroom for one period over the course of a month. At our next session, a rich and inspiring discussion ensued. Teachers had not been given any direction about what to observe, but they noted the differences among their disciplines, developed an appreciation of each other’s teaching style and challenges, and even noted how some students they shared in common acted differently in other classes. Subsequently, this became an established practice in the ARL. In retrospect, I believe that this development contributed to teachers seeing school as something beyond their classrooms. It also provided them with an idea of what a student’s day might look like.

As the ARL grew, my role as facilitator began to drain the time I spent at school. I could not keep taking full days off-campus to work with teams. I asked some veteran ARL teachers if they would be interested in facilitating other teams and they agreed. So, the practice of teachers leading other teachers began. In general, the facilitators did not work on the same research as those on the teams they led, but they could offer support and organize the sessions. I would try to visit each team for an hour or so every year to keep in contact with them all and offer my support. As the program established itself, I still

facilitated some teams, but my role expanded to being an organizing force and the holder of the big picture.

44.6 CONCLUSION

At the 20-year anniversary of the establishment of the ARL at Highland Park High School, I reflect and offer some assessments. The ARL still exists, but since I retired from public school teaching in 2007, it has been a self-organizing system. Teachers are able to form their own teams and without facilitation choose what they would like to study. I do not know how many current participants are original team members. Some have retired, some have moved on, but some remain. The school webpage (Senese, 2007b) created to promote and validate the work of the teachers' research still exists on the district website, but nothing has been added to it since 2007. It is also incomplete because many of the original research projects done at the start of the ARL were not in digital form. What is on the website stands as a tribute to what a small group of teachers were able to do to improve their practice and change the system. It is the first webpage to appear when one queries ARL on Google.

44.6.1 *Lessons Learned*

Ever since I wrote about my educational and pedagogical beliefs in axioms that contained a sense of tension, I often express my philosophies as adages (Senese, 2002a). I can report that the following axioms have been borne out by my experiences with the ARL. I also think that they are applicable to many teaching and learning situations or organizational challenges.

Act First; Plan Later The first word in action research is action. Because action research is an iterative (and not a sequential) research process (Creswell, 2008; Mertler, 2014; Mills, 2011), the teacher researcher needs to act immediately. Any test of a belief no matter how small will help a researcher determine the next steps. Too often, teachers and schools experience paralysis by analysis. Taking action early and often breaks that pattern.

Start Small to Grow Big Programs have to grow. I believe that a small disturbance in a system can affect the entire system (Burns, 2014; Wheatley & Frieze, 2007). Change happens slowly as systems adapt. Patience is important. The ARL grew quickly after three years of operation and continued to grow over the years (as evidenced in Table 44.2).

There were strategic moves to advertise and promote it and those communication strategies certainly contributed to its success. But the fact that it started small and grew itself with input from all those involved gave it staying power. Once the membership reached about 10 % of the faculty of

Table 44.2 Number of ARL teams by year

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of teams</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>
1995–1996	1	4
1996–1997	2	7
1997–1998	4	13
1998–1999	6	20
–	–	–
2004–2005	4	16
2005–2006	7	26

the high school (approximately 16 participants), it stayed steady. But that 10 % was instrumental in getting the entire teaching faculty on what we eventually called Learning Teams (Senese, 2001, p. 320). The entire teaching population of the school, at least for two years, was involved in action research.

Don't Prove; Improve I believe this axiom is key to freeing teachers to take risks with their learning. The goal is not to produce some undeniable truth about teaching and/or learning because action research is bound by context (Creswell, 2008; Mertler, 2014; Mills, 2011). Nonetheless, it can further understanding about how to improve teaching and learning not only for the researcher but also for others. That is why it was so important for teachers in the ARL to “get the word out” (Senese, 2001, p. 318).

Include the Excluded As action researchers, we invite others to look at our practice. We learn that we are not being judged or evaluated by them; we are being assisted. Over the years, we invited administrators, parents, students, fellow teachers, university professors, teacher aides, and local senior citizens into our classrooms. This strengthened our teaching because we had so many voices helping us to figure out the best ways to teach.

Believe to Achieve I wrote many years ago that it is important to trust the people and trust the process (Senese, 1998, p. 37) because I learned that I had to have an unshakable belief both in the worth of the process of action research and in the people in the ARL. I was never disappointed. All teachers who embark on an action research journey have to trust that the results will enlarge their understanding and improve their teaching. Because of that, “Shared learning, purpose, action, and responsibility demand the realignment of power and authority. Districts and principals need to explicitly release authority, and staff need to learn how to enhance personal power and informal authority” (Lambert, 1998, p. 9). Trust in the desire of every teacher to want to improve. The process will take care of itself.

In closing, my hope is that this recollection of how the ARL began and flourished might offer ideas, guidance, and even hope to others who believe in the power and inspiration that action research can generate in teacher growth, student achievement, and school improvement.

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Fostering a School-Community Partnership for Mutual Learning and Development: A Participatory Action Learning and Action Research Approach

Lesley Wood and Bruce Damons

45.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Appointed as Principal in 2000, with no prior managerial experience or qualifications, Bruce was faced with many challenges in trying to provide quality schooling. Learner numbers had dropped, threatening the positions of several teachers; the school was plagued by both vandalism and crime with few financial resources. Yet, 13 years later, this school is bursting at the seams and has become the preferred school of choice for many parents; the teaching staff are motivated and committed; vandalism and crime have dwindled considerably, and the school is lauded as exemplary by the National Department of Education who conferred the title of ‘Principal of the Year’ (2008) on Bruce. How did this dramatic turnabout happen? How did Bruce learn to lead the school to success?

This chapter tells the story of how he, at first unwittingly, adopted certain core principles of action research to inform his leadership—principles such as valuing the inherent worth of people in the educational process, rather than

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prioritizing the system itself. Respect, integrity, a strong work ethic and a love for people characterized his leadership style even before he partnered with academics who exposed him to theory that described what he was doing intuitively. Through his engagement with academia and particularly with action researchers, he came to understand how Participatory Action Learning and Action Research (PALAR) could be used as a strategic tool for improving the quality of education at this school.

We first explain what we mean by PALAR and how it can be applied to develop action leadership. We then theoretically justify the need for establishing a collaborative relationship with community members, to work hand-in-hand for school and community improvement. Empirical evidence is then provided to show how this partnership contributed to mutually beneficial outcomes. We conclude by reflecting on the significance of this story for improving school leadership through collaborative partnerships. We then pose questions that arose out of the study that will give direction for our ongoing study of how PALAR approach to school leadership can bring about positive social change for all concerned.

45.2 PARTICIPATORY ACTION LEARNING AND ACTION RESEARCH TO IMPROVE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Education in South Africa, as in many other parts of the world, is in crisis, particularly with regard to populations who cannot afford to buy quality education (Motshekga, 2010). Schools cannot rely on government to help them to improve—it is actually because of historical, political and governmental problems that education is in crisis (Kallaway, 2002). School leadership thus has to find alternative ways of improving their own circumstances.

PALAR is a term coined by Zuber-Skerritt (2011) to explain a transformative approach to learning and development. In terms of school leadership, it implies adopting a collaborative style to work with other stakeholders in the school system to reach mutually beneficial and democratically determined goals. Such leadership is underpinned by life-enhancing values such as respect, genuine care and belief in the potential of all to make worthwhile contributions. As Kearney, Wood, and Zuber-Skerritt (2013) explain:

People involved in PALAR projects are interested in participating (P) and working together on a complex issue (or issues) affecting their lives, learning from their experience and from one another (AL) and engaging in a systematic inquiry (AR) into how to address and resolve this issue/issues (p. 115)

From this standpoint, effective leadership involves working alongside others, involving them in setting goals and priorities and finding ways to attain them through systematic cycles of action and reflection. The collaborative working relationship becomes a learning process in itself, as stakeholders listen to each other, encouraging reflective dialectic (Winter, 1989) that welcomes dissent rather than trying to silence it.

Such an approach to school leadership does not necessarily call for a drastic change in administration processes of the school but rather a paradigm shift on the part of all concerned. The various committees and meetings that are common practice in schools still continue, but they change into action learning sets (Revens, 1982), spaces characterized by reflexive dialogue and democratic participation. Collaborative learning is enhanced in these action learning sets, as participants are able to combine their diverse skills and knowledge to address the various issues that impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Participants learn to think critically, to reason and listen and to hold themselves accountable to the values and principles that underpin PALAR. In so doing, they develop strong leadership skills, able to lead others to take action to make a positive difference within their respective sphere of influence. The role of the Principal is to guide and facilitate, motivating and leading by example, embodying the values that they expect others to adhere to. Such ‘action leadership’ (Zuber-Skerritt, 2011, p. 7) is a collaborative project, where the formally appointed leader creates space for others to practice leadership within their areas of operation. Action leaders are not afraid to delegate, to share power with others because they recognize that this will be to the benefit of all who are concerned about quality education.

The determining characteristics of the PALAR process, which school leaders should strive to embody and model, include symmetrical rather than hierarchic styles of communication; a collaborative approach to management; critical self-reflection and reflection on action taken to reach democratically agreed-on goals; coaching to facilitate competence in teaching, learning and managing and commitment to positive, sustainable change (Zuber-Skerritt, 2012, pp. 216–217). Each action learning team embodies these characteristics to engage in a systematic process of improvement in their specific area of interest: the identification of specific goals, the decision on how to pursue them, the evaluation of the team’s success and reflection on the significance of what has been learnt in the process. By making their knowledge public, through publications such as this, action leader Principals can have a wider influence than on their own school. They are also aware of the importance of leading the school as an integral part of the community in which it is situated.

45.3 THE CONCEPT OF THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

A PALAR approach to school leadership also entails acknowledging the value that the community can add to the school, irrespective of the level of formal education or socio-economic status of its members. What happens in the community affects the school (Wood & Zuber-Skerritt, 2013). This is particularly so in contexts of disadvantage—unemployment, conflict, gender inequality, poverty, HIV and AIDS and parental absence—all impact on the learning and development of the child. Rather than trying to ‘shut out’ the potential negative community influences, a PALAR approach invites community members to participate in improving education—not only the education of the chil-

dren but also to develop their own learning. When community members are helped to systematically identify the value they could add to the school and to act to make a positive and sustainable contribution, then they are more likely to take pride in the school and support its endeavours. We thus view community schools as ‘schools that are actively involved in building partnerships with parents, the broader community, and other education stakeholders to support the academic and social development of children and young people’ (see <http://ccs.nmmu.ac.za/>). It is just as important that involvement by community members allows them to improve their quality of life, therefore, we would add the development of adults as an important aim of the community school.

However, in poverty-stricken communities in South Africa, building such partnerships is a bit more problematic than in many other countries in the world. Parental involvement in the school helps to improve student success (Dantas & Manyak, 2010), but in many cases in South Africa, children are bussed to schools far from where their parents live. The school no longer serves the immediate community, and it is difficult for parents to travel to the school or to interact electronically, given their lack of financial resources. Other researchers have studied the beneficial effects of action teams for family and community involvement to improve schools (see Bryan & Henry, 2012; Epstein et al., 2002), but few schools in South Africa have actually been able to attain meaningful collaboration. On the contrary, literature informs us that community vandalism of schools is rife (Harber, 2001; Zulu, Urbani, Van der Merwe, & Van der Walt, 2006) and that parental involvement is a problematic process (Engelbrecht, Oswald, & Forlin, 2006; Lewis & Naidoo, 2004). It seems that a different approach is needed, one that focuses more on the geographic community surrounding the school, rather than the parent body as such. The school and community need to develop a mutually beneficial relationship that serves the needs of both. Community members without formal education may see the school as something that reinforces their sense of educational loss, leading to feelings of inferiority and lack of dignity; teachers may tend to label community members, focusing on the social problems, rather than on the social potential that surrounds the school. Crozier (2014) criticized the deficit model of viewing impoverished community members as not being able to contribute anything worthwhile to the school. After reviewing school-community involvement projects over nine countries and four continents, she concluded that they tended to reinforce the intellectual and class divide between parent and teacher in marginalized communities. We join her call for a more radical approach to setting up and sustaining partnerships that recognize the skills and indigenous knowledge inherent in community members in socio-economically challenged environments.

We thus propose that a PALAR approach can help to establish and maintain mutually beneficial relationships (Hands & Hubbard, 2011). Since PALAR begins with collaborative establishment of needs, it allows for both sets of partners to benefit, rather than the school ‘using’ the community for its own needs. The mandate of the school is to educate, and, in a country where many

adults have not been afforded the opportunity to obtain formal qualifications and/or steady employment, we believe the school also has a moral imperative to provide alternative educational pathways. In addition, unless the school addresses the needs of the wider community, the learning and development of the child in the school will be negatively affected by the ongoing social issues emanating from the immediate environment.

45.3.1 *The Case Study: A Principal's Story of Partnering for Change*

In 2012, I attended a five-day workshop organized by Lesley at the local university as part of a larger research project undertaken to develop capacity among higher education researchers to do meaningful and mutually beneficial community-based research. I immediately saw the potential of the PALAR process for leading and managing a school faced with so many socio-economic challenges:

Having gone through the workshop has made me very mindful on how I engage in my work because I now realize the dynamic nature of a community school does require action learning and action research at its core. There are so many things happening at the same time that to keep track of effectiveness and sustainability has always been an issue. (Reflective diary, BD, September 2012).

In 2005, the school governing body had adopted a policy to ensure that no child was excluded from the school because they could not pay school fees¹—this was a bold move, ahead of its time, that was only sanctioned by the Department of Education in 2010. This decision reflected my understanding that, to ensure holistic development of the child, the school has to impact on the families' socio-economic circumstances that could potentially threaten the children's wellbeing. This understanding led to the development of a strategic plan to create opportunity for community members to develop skills that would be beneficial to the individual, the school and the community in general.

Backed by my school management team, I used a PALAR approach to build a team of volunteers who work in the school on a daily basis. They work in teams that are tasked with duties such as security, office administration, toilet cleaning, vegetable growing, teaching assistance, maintenance, clinic assistance, orphan care and home-based care for HIV-positive caregivers of learners. The school librarian is also a volunteer. They meet regularly as teams and the elected leaders of these teams form an action learning set that comes together on a regular basis with school management. This is in line with our vision that the school should not only be a centre of academic excellence but also a catalyst for social and economic change. Debate exists among South African educationists about whether schools can fulfil such a mandate (Campbell, Nair, Maimane, & Sibiyi, 2008; Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2006; Hoadley, 2007), but from our point of view, unless the school works with the community to improve the education of all, then nothing will change to break the persistent cycle of poverty and its negative social and educational ramifications.

However, embarking on this grand plan was not without challenges. This is where the iterative cycles of participatory action research and action learning helped to ensure that the process was one of learning and continual development. With the help of my team, we designed templates to aid the various school committees to navigate the action research cycles as shown in Fig. 45.1:

As one of the Heads of Department commented:

With the templates that we designed we were able to put most of the processes of the school now through the AR processes, emerging with many loops but learning so many lessons (Head of Department, reflective diary, January 2013).

Using the 7c's (communication, collaboration, commitment, critical thinking, competence, coaching and compromise) and the 3r's (relationship building, reflection and recognition) identified by Zuber-Skerritt (2012) as a framework, I will now give examples of how a PALAR approach to school leadership enabled me to partner with community members for social and educational change.

Open, transparent and symmetric communication between the school and community members is a vital component to ensure authentic collaboration (Piggot-Irvine, 2012). Yet, this is not an easy task, given the different languages and levels of literacy. As I pointed out in one reflection:

The one challenge with cascading to the community is to design the indigenous script, a language that people who cannot read or write are able to interpret, understand and implement. When one's core business is running a multi-faceted school it takes a lot of time and energy to sit down and slowly guide persons through the process. However once they grasp the principles of the methodology it is amazing how they are able to mutate it to suit their own personal needs (September, 2012).

This calls for patience and understanding and a genuine desire to listen to the views of the community. This was a challenge to me, since, traditionally, my communication tended to be top-down. Now I am forced through critical reflection to be a more 'soulful' listener, listening beyond the words to get at the message, intentions and emotions of the speaker. I have to navigate through different scripts, depending on who I am addressing. With teachers, I assume a more professional script; with the learners, it could be anything from Principal to father, to caregiver, to defender. With parents, many times I have to take the tone of co-parent, since the actual parent is often too incapacitated by the harsh social conditions to be able to act on their own in the child's best interest. The role of leader of volunteers requires the script of Principal, mentor, motivator and even counsellor. I have had to learn to coach, rather than manage or direct. I can only balance these scripts through constant practice, making sure that I try to respect everyone for who they are and what they have to offer. It requires me to remain passionate about my desire to not only

Action learning set name:	Present:	Agenda/issues to be dealt with:
Date:		
Venue:		
Feedback on attainment of outcomes from last meeting:		
What new goals do we need to set:		
Action plans to be done by next meeting: What/Who/by When?		
What did we learn from this meeting?		

Fig. 45.1 Template used to record action learning set meetings

increase my own learning but also to be committed to the personal growth of those I lead. It also requires a kind of fearlessness—a willingness to admit that we will make mistakes but that we can learn from these instances, forgive each other and move on.

Another challenge is keeping everyone committed and motivated to work together to attain our vision. True to the PALAR principles of relationship-building and recognition, we acknowledge the volunteers as an integral part of the staff and include them in all staff development initiatives. For example, recently, we were faced with some serious discipline challenges from the learners, related in most part to the serious socio-economic challenges they face. I am struggling as a leader, and the teachers are feeling helpless to deal with the challenges. I approached a psychologist to volunteer to help us. In his analysis, he said that we (volunteers, educators, parents and learners) are too anxious and that we need to start a process of calming ourselves before we can calm our school. Our first step had to be to support each person to develop emotional intelligence to deal with the many challenging situations we are faced with on a daily basis. With his help, we initiated programmes to develop the non-anxious

leader (formal leadership of school), the non-anxious teacher, the non-anxious volunteer, the non-anxious parent and the non-anxious learner. This process is helping to reduce anxiety levels that preclude us really dialoguing with others, although it will take some time before we really see results.

To enhance critical and dialogical reflection, we set up various action learning groups for the different volunteer teams, including one comprising the leaders of the various groups and myself. Within the action learning sets, which meet monthly, the volunteers critically reflect on how they can improve their contributions to the running of the school, as well as what they are learning personally. A writing circle has emerged, the members of which record these stories which are then shared with all the volunteers and teaching staff to celebrate successes and increase collaborative learning. Some of these stories, I write up in a local newspaper to inspire other schools in the area. It took some time for volunteers to feel safe in doing this, especially in identifying ‘what we do not know,’ but being part of the one set has allowed me to share my own experiences as Principal, helping to increase trust and confidence. The members of the set are encouraged to identify challenges or areas of improvement, to develop a plan of action, to implement it and to evaluate its impact. Approaching development and learning from a research perspective has made people more confident to engage with change, since there is no personal blame attached.

Compromise, for a Principal who wishes to be an action leader, means letting go of the title. One day I will lead, but the next I may have to follow if someone else is able to provide better leadership. For example, when we set up a community garden at the school, the community volunteer leading this project had to ‘scold’ me a few times for not following instructions—and I could never have led the project as well as he did.

45.3.2 *So How has Everyone Benefitted from the Process?*

The work that the volunteers do benefits the school on many levels. Table 45.1 gives an overview of the kind of work they do to enable quality teaching and learning to take place. When the volunteers take care of the infrastructural and social issues, the teachers are free to teach and the learners are better able to learn.

Since Bruce has initiated these programmes, incidences of vandalism have been greatly reduced at the school to the level of being practically non-existent. Using unemployed parents to make bricks and build two houses on the school premises, two families have been given homes where they live rent-free in return for acting as security for the school after hours. In an area where unemployment is endemic, the school has trained more than 1000 people since 2000 in a range of skills such as welding, computer literacy, office administration, sewing and carpentry. In return for increasing their skill portfolio, these trainees maintain the school, make sports kits and help with administration. Two vegetable gardens have been established, the produce of which is used to run the school feeding scheme, feed the people who work in the garden and those cared for

Table 45.1 Overview of community teams at school

Volunteer projects	Tasks
Teacher Assistants (30)	General assistance to teachers, including: keeping classroom clean, helping with discipline, assisting teachers with language (translation), supervising classes when teacher goes out, assisting in extra mural programmes
Vegetable Gardeners (4)	Maintain two vegetable gardens, provide produce for school feeding scheme, sell produce to community to support volunteer programme at school, donate food to HIV infected/affected families
Clinic Volunteers (4)	Run advocacy programmes with local government clinic on HIV/AIDS, TB, contraception, drug abuse, immunization, general health promotion. First aid for minor injuries; referrals to volunteer doctor
Caregivers (3)	Work with orphans and vulnerable children at school: keep record and track OVC; do home visits; organize wellness programmes for OVC families; help with birth certificate/ID document applications for grants; assist with pension enquiries; skills development for children and families to deal with social impact of circumstances on life
General Handymen/ women and security (6)	Responsible for general maintenance of school premises: litter control, general repair, security during the day
Toilet Cleaners (8)	Clean toilets, ensure learners do not abuse toilets
Office Administrators (3)	Assist school secretary by: answering telephone, faxing, photocopying, receive visitors, keep school administrative programme up-to-date (data entry)
Librarian (1)	Manages mobile library: controls books in and out, assists teachers and learners with projects, runs a volunteer writing circle, runs a reading programme with certain learners
Project manager (1)	Manages volunteers: keeping daily attendance register, representing volunteers outside of school, monitoring of projects

by the HIV and AIDS home care team. The school also has a clinic built by the community members and staffed by ten parents and a supervising doctor. This clinic, in partnership with the local municipal clinic, has run community health campaigns such as measles immunization, TB and HIV testing and offers free general health check-ups to children and community members. The House of Hope, on the school premises, acts as a remedial education centre during the day and a place of safety for children who feel threatened in the community, by night. The volunteer psychologist makes use of the House of Hope on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and he is visited regularly by staff (paid and volunteers) and learners. The success of the volunteer programme has been recognized through various awards, both national and international.

45.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

By using a PALAR approach to school leadership, Bruce has been able to initiate, maintain and grow a successful team of community volunteers who add tremendous value to the quality of teaching and learning at the school. At the

same time, community members have learnt both social and practical skills that they would not have been able to access without the help of the school, as the voices below attest:

Volunteer (Administration, then teaching assistant and now project bursar). Volunteering here at school has taught me to look beyond myself ... I have learnt many skills since starting here at school including how to answer a telephone; photo copying and I have also learnt the values of respect, loyalty and reliability. My manners were also a challenge, and it was difficult to adapt to the discipline culture of a school. I also think volunteers lack self-discipline because many initially come hoping to get something and when they do not get it usually causes tension and division among the volunteers. For me, I have learnt that volunteering is not only about getting the material things but also means about growing inside. Volunteering has given us access to many resources. We are allowed to make curriculum vitae (CV) at the school and the Principal acts as a reference for us on our CVs and provides us with a testimonial. We are allowed to use the resources of the school like the computers, fax machines and telephones if we want to apply for jobs. I have developed a strong work ethic through volunteering.

Leader of the Volunteers and School Governing Body Chairperson (On her reflection on the Sapphire volunteer song that they composed at the beginning of the year). Sometimes, we cannot say what the school means to us but the song represents our feelings. The song says that Sapphire is like a white blanket that covers us. We all come to school broken, with our own challenges, fears and hurts. But when we enter the gate that all changes, we become one big community; parents, teachers and learners, and, through the work we do, we forget the hurt and pain and even we get healed when we walk in here.

Acting Deputy Principal Volunteers have definitely added great value to the school. They help with discipline, they help with translation (most teachers are not competent in Xhosa and over 80 % of our learners are from Xhosa homes) and they also help us understand the sensitivity around the cultural differences at the school. I have a teacher assistant, and, when I have tasks to perform around the office, I always have someone that can manage my class. I also use the teacher assistant to cover the books in class, handing out and collecting worksheets and she also assists with the slower learners in class. If there are terms that are difficult to understand, I use her to code switch. With the teacher assistant in class, I can therefore manage three languages. I do, however, observe frustration among the volunteers especially around the volunteer leadership because they feel they are not kept updated by the volunteer leadership team. We also had a few cases of dishonesty among a few volunteers, but these cases have always being sorted out by the volunteers themselves. However, the benefits far out way the challenges.

School Secretary (Manages six volunteers around the office as administrative assistants). It is really a great advantage having so many hands around the office, especially in a school like ours that is a community school, and we have to do so many things. The volunteers do photocopying, answer phones, receive visitors and do basically all the tasks that I have to do. They also remind me of the various tasks that I have to perform. They also do more complex task like the SASAMS, the computer administration programme of the Department of Education. When we get new volunteers, I start them off on small tasks, and, as they become more confident, I graduate them to the more complex tasks around the office. Language is a challenge, and I think some of them should at least have Grade 12 if they volunteer around the office, especially because of the nature of the job. It is also difficult sometimes to manage the many different personalities around the office. The school is also a very fast-paced school, and, sometimes, we have to slow down to accommodate the learning, especially the skill of multitasking. However, on a personal level, it is a blessing sharing my personal work space with my colleagues because there are days when I come to school feeling down, but when I look at the enthusiastic way in which they tackle their tasks, without getting paid, I am immediately motivated again.

As an action leader, Bruce has been able to counteract the criticism that action research has moved away from its activist roots (Hunter, Emerald, & Martin, 2012). Through adapting his school leadership according to PALAR principles, he has initiated a process that has allowed people to flourish despite adversity. Community members, educators and management have not only learnt skills but also new ways of working together and relating to each other that will have a lasting impact on their future interactions and life opportunities.

True to the tenets of action research, the process is continuing to evolve to respond to the needs of school and community. The school governing body is facilitating the volunteers to constitute a Not for Profit Organization (NPO), which will be based at the school. The members of this NPO will tender for government and other funding to run community projects that will bring about social and economic improvement. The school will employ the members for specific jobs, out of the school budget and will also receive volunteer services from them as part of their commitment to the school for creating this space for social and economic empowerment. This idea is still in its planning phase, but however it may evolve, no doubt it will contribute to the attainment of the volunteers' vision: 'liberating the mind from inferiority'. This choice of vision statement suggests strongly that the volunteers have adopted a new way of looking at life and their own potential to make a difference—through their volunteer experience, based on the PALAR imperatives of relationship building, critical reflection and recognition, they have been able to empower themselves to find ways to improve their circumstances through contributing to community wellbeing.

Of course, all of this has not been achieved overnight and has not been without its critics, both internal and external. However, such critique has

encouraged the process of personal and organizational reflection. It has been a long process of change which began before Bruce was able to recognize that he was leading his school according to the principles and values of action research. His collaboration with academic researchers, and now his own learning as a post-graduate student, has helped him to refine and structure the process over the past four years to create practical guidelines for others who might wish to adopt a PALAR process to become action leaders.

We are convinced that a PALAR approach to school leadership has helped Bruce to position his school as a force for change in the community and, by so doing, has helped to improve the quality of education for all stakeholders. As Brooke (2003) observes:

...if education is to become more relevant, to become a real force for improving societies in which we live, then it must become more closely linked to the local, to the spheres of action and influence which most of us experience (p. 5).

We hope that this case study has convinced you that this is indeed possible if school leadership embraces action research as its *modus operandi*.

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NOTE

1. No-fee schools were introduced in 2007 and are being expanded over the next few years to include the poorest 60 % of schools. Schools have been ranked into five categories. The schools in the lowest 40 % (quintiles 1 and 2) were deemed poor and allow learners to enrol without paying fees. In return, government funds expenses that were previously covered by fees (<http://www.etu.org.za/toolbox/docs/government/schoolfees.html>) However, these schools are still extremely under-resourced.

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Looking Ahead

Introduction to Looking Ahead

Joseph M. Shosh and Lonnie L. Rowell

The January 18, 1999, cover of *Time* Magazine featured a barefoot Angel turned away from the reader in an urban Armageddon asking if the end of the world was approaching and promising a guide to millennium madness. Our collective Y2K fears failed to come to pass, only to be replaced by even greater fears of global terrorism on September 11, 2001. As the *New York Times* opined a decade later, “Detentions at Guantánamo Bay, extraordinary renditions and brutal interrogations all tested the limits of the appropriate exercise of government power in wartime” (Liptak, 2011, F14). Today, American citizens have their images captured on surveillance cameras on average more than 200 times daily (Boghosian, 2013), and “the nonprofit group Privacy International ranks the U.K. as the worst of the Western democracies at protecting privacy, with a record only slightly better than Russia’s” (Healey, 2010, np).

Throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century, action researchers, though, proclaimed much optimism for this new century. In the UK, Marion Dadds (1998) asserted that “a sea change is happening, I believe, which is shaping a new climate. Now, ironically, against the contrary tide of increased central control, there is a growing swell of interest in practitioner involvement in research” (p. 50). From the global South, Júlio Emílio Diniz-Pereira (2002) agreed and proffered a bit cautiously, “the teacher research movement is not a counter-hegemonic global movement yet. However, it does hold strong potentialities that could lead it to this qualitative leap, moving from a disconnected

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international phenomenon to a truly interwoven counter-hegemonic global movement” (pp. 392–393).

In the USA, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2009) concluded in the second edition of their seminal action research text *Inside/Outside*, “Despite all of the forces working against it, teacher research and the larger practitioner inquiry movement continue to flourish in the United States and many parts of the world. Across myriad contexts, practitioner research initiatives are proliferating ... and pushing back against constraining policies and mandated practices” (p. 6). Perhaps now, more than ever, coordinated global action is needed to offer an alternative to a neoliberal agenda under which income inequality has increased in both developing and developed nations (International Labour Organization, 2015). As Cambridge University economics professor Ha-Joon Chang (2008) explains, “neo-liberal globalization has failed to deliver on all fronts of economic life—growth, equality, and stability. Despite this, we are constantly told how neo-liberal globalization has brought unprecedented benefits” (p. 28).

How can action research live up to its promise in the years and decades to come? In this section of the Handbook, University of Pennsylvania professor Sharon Ravitch and her colleagues in Nicaragua, *Universidad Pedagógica Nacional* Professor César Osorio Sánchez, futurist José Ramos in Australia, and leaders associated with five global action research networks offer their respective thoughts on current actions that might be taken in support of a future where action research helps to create a more equitable and just society.

Ravitch, Tarditi, Montenegro, Baltodano, and Estrada share the story of their *Semillas Digitales* initiative to cultivate “a holistic, stakeholder-driven, assets-based capacity-building model of educational innovation and school improvement focused on professional development and practitioner inquiry, pedagogical and curricular enrichment, technology integration and digital literacy, and relational learning” (p. 791) within a community–school partnership focused on active collaboration and respect. With a theoretical framework informed by postcolonial theory, constructivist learning, critical ethnography, and participatory action research, the *Semillas Digitales* team has developed a procedural equity among its members to empower Nicaraguan teachers to push against a dominant neoliberal educational policy and to develop local knowledge with other community stakeholders. As they explain, “In conversation and action, we seek to resist the expert-learner binary that undergirds much of the development world by co-building capacity in strengths-based ways within and across partners” (p. 803). The efforts of the Penn team members here are clearly in alignment with Barnett’s (2011) vision that replaces a meta-physical university standing apart from society with an ecological university “aware of its interconnectedness with society and putting its resources towards the development of societal and personal well-being” (p. 453).

In an effort to support south–north learning and dialogue, teachers from the *Semillas Digitales* program shared their work through a live Skype panel session at the 2014 Action Research Network of the Americas conference at Moravian

College in which Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Susan Lytle (2014) delivered an English-language keynote address calling for the reinvention of teacher professionalism. For the editorial team, the *Semillas Digitales* project answers the call Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2014) made for alignment with organized resistance (Lipman, 2011); the nurturing of activist identities (Anyon, 2014); the cultivation of activist pedagogies (Morrell, 2007); questioning circuits of dispossession/resistance (Fine & Ruglis, 2009); supporting advocacy of immigrant families in faith-based communities (Campano, Ghiso, Yee, & Pantoja, 2013); asserting the right to research (Appadurai, 2006); and responding to the call for an engaged university (Oakes, Rogers, & Lipton, 2006).

César Osorio Sánchez delivered the Spanish keynote address “*La IAP, Los Sentidos y Fuentes de la Memoria Histórica*” at the ARNA 2014 conference that appears translated into English in this Handbook as Chap. 47. Heavily influenced by Orlando Fals Borda and Paulo Freire, Sánchez takes a dialogic approach to knowledge creation that engages communities in the analysis and critique of their lived experience in an effort to recover their individual and collective memories of injustices suffered as a result of war. Sánchez explores the need for recovery of local knowledge when the memory of life projects, cultures, and ways of knowing has been destroyed through epistemicide, documenting the multiple methods for recovering historic memory in Colombia, including time lines, social community cartography, recovering life histories, visualizing alternative solutions, and facing the effects of armed conflicts through symbols. He explains, “One of the most noticeable challenges in the Colombian context, is the need to generate PAR processes that support the design and implementation of public policies, particularly those affecting communities impacted by violence, who are working on symbolic repairs” (p. 817).

Sánchez’s work responds directly to Fals Borda’s (2006) call when he notes that “we have the political, objective and non-neutral duty of fostering the democratic and spiritual dimensions through more satisfying life systems. To this end, northern and southern scholars can converge as colleagues and soul fellows, for the quest of meaning” (p. 357). For those of us living in the global North, we are reminded of the state of war that has engaged the USA and coalition forces at least since the September 11 attacks and note a popular discourse in many Western democracies vilifying the poor rather than poverty and the global economic policies that sustain it.

Must we continue to live in a world of surveillance, war, and poverty, or do we have the power, through our action research efforts, to claim a different future? John Dewey (1938/1998) explains:

The ideal of using the present simply to get ready for the future contradicts itself. It omits, and even shuts out, the very conditions by which a person can be prepared for his future. We always live at the time we live and not at some other time, and only by extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future. This is the only preparation which in the long run amounts to anything. (p. 49)

Similarly, José Ramos explains, that the future is created only through our present choice of action, adding that “this embodied and constructivist concept of the future points toward the need to build ethnographic and sociological understandings for how various communities cognize time differently, and how human consciousness and culture mediate decisions and action” (p. 824). He articulates clear implications here for policy, strategy, innovation, and design through a futures action research (FAR).

Ramos argues that the field of future studies has gone through five major stages, moving from predictive to systemic before becoming critical, then participatory, and finally, action-oriented. Taking a FAR approach, we must expand our methodological repertoire to include trans-media storytelling, psychodrama and socio drama, among others, in an action research action learning cycle that includes anticipation, design, connection, and evolution.

Zuber-Skerritt (2015) envisions a future where participatory action learning action research (PALAR) becomes “the dominant non-positivist paradigm in R&D in higher education, community development and other fields that are concerned with addressing complex human, social and ecological problems for a better world where all people on this earth can live dignified, financially independent and self-sustained lives” (p. 127). In the Handbook’s final chapter, leaders from several of the world’s major action research networks (ALARA, ARNA, CARN, and PEP) articulate their respective visions for the future of action research, building upon one another’s ideas in a dialogic circular letter format. The contributors to this final chapter exhibit much hope for the future. Although mindful of the challenges faced by the developing global action research community, they see ways ahead that build on existing networks and establish new forms and contexts for collaboration. In seeking the “full meaning” of the present, they find commonalities across global regions and varying cultural and historical contexts. The judgments they invoke favor participatory values and epistemological diversity. This stance has been in evidence throughout the chapters of the Handbook, and in the concluding chapter we see the close alignment of this orientation toward practice with the judgment of those in positions of leadership within the networks providing the infrastructure for the global action research community. When becoming fully involved in fundamental transformations for the future, Fals Borda (2006) suggests, “The Greeks have given us a good rule for this: direct praxis should be complemented by ethical phronesis. That is, simple activism is not enough: it needs to be guided by good judgment in seeking progress for all” (p. 358).

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Learning Together: Dialogue, Collaboration, and Reciprocal Transformation in a Nicaraguan Educational Program

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46.1 INTRODUCTION: PROJECT OVERVIEW AND CONTEXT

Semillas Digitales (Digital Seeds) is a collaboration between the Seeds for Progress Foundation (SfPF), the Mercon Coffee Group and CISA Group (*Agro* and *Exportadora*) in Nicaragua, and the University of Pennsylvania's Graduate School of Education (PennGSE) in the USA. A school and community-based action research program, *Semillas Digitales* cultivates a holistic, stakeholder-driven, assets-based capacity-building model of educational innovation and school improvement focused on professional development and practitioner inquiry, pedagogical and curricular enrichment, technology integration and digital literacy, and relational learning, all guided by and grounded in a model of community-school partnership and an intentional focus on active collaboration and respect.

Central to *Semillas Digitales* is the long-term, active engagement among educational stakeholders (e.g., teachers, teacher supervisors, students and parents, community members, SfPF members, and farm staff) in the collaborative

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identification, construction, and facilitation of meaningful educational opportunities. This happens through the co-construction of expanded and supportive learning environments and pedagogical innovations such as the integration of constructivist, contextually relevant pedagogy, school- and community-based action research, learning models for critical thinking, and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) as pedagogical tools to drive innovation and improve the quality of schooling for coffee farm communities.

Our theoretical framework is informed by postcolonial theories of development (e.g., Kenway & Fahey, 2009; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999), constructivist theory (e.g., Dewey, 1938; Jonassen, 1995a, 1995b), critical ethnography (e.g., Escobar, 1995; Noblit, Flores, & Murillo, 2004), and participatory action research (e.g., Chilisa, 2012; Fals Borda & Rahman, 1991; Freire, 1970), and is guided by the following main principles, which together constitute the Program's Theory of Action and evaluation criteria:

1. School- and Community-Centered Model Grounded in Ongoing Ethnographic Engagement;
2. A *Funds of Knowledge*¹ Approach as Foundation for Customized Program Development and Innovation;
3. Action-Based, Mixed Methods Research and Monitoring and Evaluation;
4. Collective, Assets-Based Capacity Building for Organizational and Program Development within an Emergent Design Approach;
5. Learning Exchanges and Individualized Accompaniment: Teachers as Experts, Leaders, and Researchers;
6. Collaborative and Sustainable Organizational and Community Development;
7. Co-Constructed Curricular Enrichment and Pedagogical Innovation;
8. Sequential Knowledge and Skills Development within and across Stakeholders;
9. Technology Integration as Catalyst for Educational Innovation and Transformation;
10. Cultivation of Local, National, and International Partnerships.

Since its inception in July 2009, *Semillas Digitales* has been a catalyst for collaborative participation and innovation among teachers, teacher supervisors (facilitators), students, and a wide range of community members. Based on the idea that the primary goal of schooling is the integrated development of students through a holistic approach (Gallegos Nava, 2001), *Semillas* emphasizes the fostering of affective, respectful relationships and positive, engaged, rigorous, and creative classroom environments to optimize the possibilities for all stakeholders to engage, learn, and innovate within these supportive spaces. In this vision of education, teachers facilitate learning through the strategic design of constructivist modes of teaching that leverage students' experiences and engage them in the shared creation of dynamic learning environments. This is a significant departure from the norm of rote learning in which teachers are viewed and view themselves as simply imparting knowledge and deposit-

ing information (Freire, 1970, 1982). To support critically engaged teaching and learning, the structured, reflexive spaces for pedagogically focused dialogue, curricular enhancement, and professional exchanges become invaluable professional learning opportunities. In these spaces, which include structured and semi-structured peer mentoring groups and processes for teachers, co-constructed curriculum design sessions, and facilitated professional development workshops run by teacher supervisors who work closely with the teachers and schools and spend time in the respective communities of these schools, facilitators directly support and work alongside teachers (i.e., accompaniment) and students as the Program establishes roots, cultivates connections, and grows in communities in contextually relevant ways that are in epistemological, ontological, and pedagogical harmony with each school and the community contexts that shape it.

46.2 REFLECTIONS ON PAR IN ACTION

Semillas Digitales is guided by an ever-developing concept of co-constructed collaboration that is built upon an ethic of shared responsibility; open and critical dialogue; multilateral exchange; and authentic, process- as well as outcome-focused teamwork. In this chapter, we share our unfolding learnings and the connections we have made on the *Semillas* team and the 14 communities involved in the Program. To do so, we share written and spoken reflections, collected through informal interviews between team members, which speak to the Program's relational ethic and approach:

The relationships between participants are through teamwork, communication and the spirit of belonging to a community that is working to realize a transformation in the form of education. You observe among participants a different mystique that invigorates, excites and inspires them to overcome the difficulties that come with the development of *Semillas*. (Duilio Baltodano)

Semillas promotes collaboration as one of the core values along with reflection and open participation via horizontal relationships in which all are equal and important in the process, each person with his/her role. We are talking about the boys and girls, the parents, the teachers, in other words, the community in general. It is for this reason that we create professional networks and horizontal support that enables contributions based on the experiences of each individual, and considering these contributions to be most valuable. (Nayibe Montenegro)

The quotes woven throughout this chapter come from the authors, who represent four distinct groups within the *Semillas Digitales* stakeholder network: a lead teacher and founding member of *Semillas* (Eveling Estrada), a *Semillas* educational facilitator (Nayibe Montenegro), a corporate executive who founded and actively works in *Semillas* (Duilio Baltodano), and two members of the PennGSE *Semillas* team (Matthew Tarditi and Sharon Ravitch). Within this chapter, we share what it means to collaboratively develop and operationalize notions of possibility in/through dialogue and action within and across

various relational and sociopolitical contexts. Further, we describe some of the ways that we co-construct capacity (individual, collective, and organizational) in non-deficit-oriented ways within and across various sets of partners as a means to resist the expert-learner binary that undergirds much of the developing world (Ravitch & Tillman, 2010; Valencia, 2010). A framing aspect of this work is that we have adopted an overall approach of taking an *inquiry stance on practice* (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) as a central individual and group ethic and foundational modus operandi of the Program. Taking an inquiry stance on our collaboration and the development of *Semillas* means that we actively seek to learn about (1) ourselves as individuals and as a team; (2) the communities and schools at the heart of *Semillas*; (3) contextually useful professional development; (4) sustainable individual and organizational capacity building; and (5) how to conduct contextualized and person-centered site-based research that grounds and drives improved practice (based on improvement goals articulated by multiple stakeholder groups). It also means that we work to cultivate an ethos in which we all explore and experiment with different ideas and approaches, give feedback on these in real time and in constructively critical ways, and work to develop professionally in ways that support and nurture us as we are challenged and transformed.

Working from a critical action research approach informed by Paulo Freire (1970, 1982) and Orlando Fals-Borda (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991), we seek to challenge traditional conceptions and enactments of development with their typically one-sided, impositional and often culturally inappropriate and disrespectful means of working in under-served communities (Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1990; Sen, 1999). The process of building *Semillas* has been dynamic and exciting, though at times fraught and challenging, since the processes of crossing borders and boundaries of country, place, social class, community, and culture require considerable thought and the willingness to take in others' perspectives and change oneself and one's practice. Our work seeks to complicate essentialized notions of 'local knowledge generation', which all too often use this term in ways that make the local a monolith. Participatory approaches are not immune to establishing or re-enforcing imposition, paternalism, or dependency, and as Cooke and Kothari (2001) remind us, espoused participatory methods can easily fall into the trap of imposing academic, Western-centric, privileged social class assumptions regarding the 'needs' of local communities and the resultant methods for appropriately fostering change. This risk of imposition does not necessarily only come from the US-based part of the team. It is alive and well within Nicaraguan society, fraught with economic and social class hierarchies and a history of outside intervention, aid, and internal ideological and political tensions. These contextual factors shape opportunities and constraints in ways we must identify and understand.

In our collaboration, we address existing inequalities and power differentials (of a variety of sorts) by working together to construct a respectful relational dynamic and model of dialogic engagement as a guiding framework of/for our research and participation in the Program. The relational focus of *Semillas*

directly influences the growth, scope, and clarity of the Program. As we enact a more horizontal mode of engagement, on the team and in communities, we cultivate an approach in which individual team and community members assume responsibility for various roles within and across the 14 communities. Related to this is that the research approach to *Semillas* involves a constant contextualizing and situating of written and spoken reflections from all stakeholder groups alongside more conventional data collection methods so that we can explore and understand the range of perspectives and collaboratively interpret their meanings.

One key learning is that integrating local knowledge(s) and expertise(s) requires intentionality and specific planning around flexibility and participation. Community members, teachers and teacher supervisors, and program facilitators are engaged in constant negotiation and co-construction of the Program in a variety of specific ways including through structured group processes such as open forums with educational stakeholders (regularly), school fairs (at least one per academic year), small and large group discussions in schools (at least monthly), team meetings (weekly), meetings with individual families at their homes (ongoing), and regional meetings with departmental representatives from the Ministry of Education (MINED) and SFPF (ongoing). These structures and the overall approach lead to tighter community-school relationships that help facilitate the conditions for more incremental and informal feedback to be heard, disseminated throughout the team, and, ultimately, integrated into the Program in real time. They also lead to school-specific plans that account for and actively incorporate local realities, contexts, and contributions that are rooted in the life experiences and knowledge(s) within each of the involved communities. These plans are thoughtfully co-constructed, which entails making sure our processes of program development are dialogic throughout every phase of its development and that they are vetted by local Ministry of Education representatives (i.e. school administrators) for feedback and transparency reasons. This kind of participatory approach and its attendant emergent design process enable the necessary flexibility of an organic, inductive, and capacity-building initiative in sustainable ways.

Semillas Digitales approaches school-wide innovation, curricular and pedagogical enhancement, and the integration of technology through collaborative customization and direct, individualized facilitation and accompaniment. The Program formally began in 2009, after Duilio approached Sharon with the idea of creating an innovative educational program in CISA's 16 adopted schools. After spending a half-year conceptualizing the Program, which included meeting with various local stakeholders, it was decided that it would be valuable to begin with a year-long ethnographically based PAR pilot study of one coffee farm community and school to collaboratively develop the initial iteration of the model with local stakeholders (i.e., teachers, educational facilitators, and farm staff, among others). For this pilot study, Tarditi moved to the Buenos Aires coffee farm for a full year to facilitate these early stages of the Program's development. We have continued this ethnographic approach during the scale

up to 14 schools (with plans for continued replication). The model is built upon what Ravitch conceptualizes and has termed *customized replication*. We seek to replicate core aspects of the Program across sites such as PAR-based measurement and evaluation, intensive co-constructed teacher professional development and peer mentoring, curricular and pedagogical re-alignment and enhancement, and outreach to and the building of community engagement, and we do so in ways that are systematically contextualized and customized within each community. Balancing consistency (replication) and flexibility (customization) has proven challenging. One example is our co-authored methodological guide for the facilitation of *Semillas* in which we struggled to provide a conceptual framework, structure, and process to replicate the essentials of *Semillas* while stressing the vital importance of contextualization, adaptation, and critical engagement in order to customize the Program within each particular school and community.

In *Semillas*, the introduction of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) serves as a catalyst (rather than as the focal point) to (1) innovate and enrich pedagogical practices, curricula, and learning; (2) enhance school organization and communication; (3) increase student engagement and community participation; (4) instill a positive, supportive learning environment; and (5) improve the quality of education. The Program focuses on the enrichment and expansion of students' skills in reading, writing, and mathematics as well as their overall character and moral development, digital literacy, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. By purposefully incorporating local *funds of knowledge* and expertise within an emerging blended-learning environment (Gonzalez et al., 2005; Kerres & De Witt, 2003), the Program cultivates educational innovation and technology integration by engaging teachers, students, and community members in the development and processes of the enriched curriculum. Overall, *Semillas* facilitates a stakeholder-driven approach to the development of teachers, students, administrators, and community members as critically engaged learners, leaders, and professionals within a growing, interconnected community. We do this by collaboratively engaging in the systematic review and supplementation of curriculum in collaboration with Nicaragua's Ministry of Education, building teacher education and professional development in a co-constructed way that supports the development and supervised enactment of new teaching modalities, and facilitating community integration into the educational process by engaging in ongoing outreach through Town Hall meetings, home visits, parent fairs and meetings at the school, and 1:1 interviews and focus groups for exploring parent perspectives on student learning and development more broadly. These data serve to guide the Program in real time as well as in summative ways to reflect biannually and make broader programmatic changes and innovations. We learned early on that we need diversified data for different stakeholders and audiences that were quantitative but contextualized through qualitative data. We therefore designed the data collection to include an integrated combination of qualitative and quantitative data, and developed longitudinal case studies of individual students, families,

and teachers to show impact both broadly and in deeper, holistic, group, and individual ways. While we need metrics to prove effectiveness and impact to various audiences (i.e. CISA's CSR division, funders, the MINED), these stories cannot be told through numbers alone. An example of our mixed-methods approach to data collection and analysis can be seen in the central theme of pedagogic innovation in teaching practice. From 2013 to 2014, there was an overall increase in pedagogic innovation (integrated use of ICT by teachers that engages broader pedagogic innovations) of 63 % across 17 schools and 223 teachers, along with a 32 % increase in ICT integration by students. Even though an increase of 63 % is significant, the progress is somewhat depersonalized and abstract because the numbers are only a piece of the puzzle, and must be contextualized by qualitative data. A prime example of the importance of contextualization is the story of one teacher who had no prior experience using technology in the classroom but created a program on her computer to record and organize matriculation, attendance, grades, and homework, and to administer multiple-choice exams to her students. The interview and observational data made clear that this learning and professional growth was directly related to (and enabled by) the dialogic relationships of support and mutual learning that exist between teachers and facilitators (and others), a central characteristic of the *Semillas* model. Classified as *Accompaniment*, facilitators are regularly present in the day-to-day lives of the teachers, working alongside them in the classroom; providing constructive feedback in the moment and during guided, reflexive exchanges after class; and informally exchanging ideas over lunch or during recess. Together with more focused *shared learning sessions*, commonly known as professional development, *Semillas* has provided support to 223 teachers for more than 18,500 hours in 2014 alone.

The *Semillas Digitales* program specifically measures reading, writing, and mathematics skills among students from 1st to 3rd grades across all 14 schools through the Early Grade Reading Assessment and Early Grade Math Assessment (EGRA and EGMA), (RTI International, 2015). To get a sense of the impact(s) on students, over the last year (2013–2014), there has been a reduction of between 2 and 18 % in students classified as high risk among 1st to 3rd graders across all participating schools. Regarding writing skills, there have been improvements ranging from 3 to 13% among the same population of students. Aside from reading and writing, mathematics skills have improved as a result of the Program. Specifically, the increase in math problem solving in 2nd and 3rd grades ranged from 16 to 34%. Evident from these statistics is the immediate impact of the Program on fundamental skills and competencies related to reading and writing (i.e., literacy) and mathematics (i.e., problem-solving, reasoning). As we continue to implement the current Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) metrics over time, these data will tell a more complete, longitudinal story of the influences and impacts of our intervention in schools and communities. In fact, the focused in-country development of the M&E component of the Program is a significant aspect of the overall development of *Semillas Digitales*.

46.2.1 *Pushing Against a Neo-liberal Grain: Teacher Expertise and Agency*

A central pillar of *Semillas* is the team of teachers, who are viewed and positioned, individually and collectively, as educational and community experts and liaisons between the Program, the school, and each community. Active teacher participation has been central since the early development of the Program as the teachers represent multiple local contexts and have deep connections with the communities they live in and serve. As team members have noted:

- The participation of teachers in the development of *Semillas* and their professional growth is essential; they possess the knowledge of their field of action (local context) and an understanding of the contexts of the students, school and community that are essential for the development of the initiative. (Nayibe Montenegro)
- Teachers are indispensable partners, practitioners, experts and creators of *Semillas*. They are the central pillars of any educational endeavor and their participation in *Semillas* continuously drives the Program in new directions based on their personal and professional experiences, knowledge and familiarity. Educators guide students and create learning environments to facilitate growth, discovery, socialization, introspection, and expansion. It is through their participation that we are able to establish interconnected roots in each community, contextualizing our efforts and establishing local partnerships to further expand the depth of the Program. (Matthew Tarditi)
- Since the onset, we started as protagonists leading what is the *Semillas Digitales* program because we are part of those that initiated, of the people that initiated this Program and we are the ones that have been working together alongside the team up to today's date to form the base of the current Program. (Eveling Estrada)
- *Semillas* has, from its initial conceptualization to this very moment, worked from a perspective that teaching and teachers must be professionalized and centralized as experts in the construction and enactment of education. We work from the Girouxian notion of teachers as transformative intellectuals. (Sharon Ravitch)
- The creation of a new transformative program requires the incorporation of new available concepts that can be adapted to the local context. As is the case with many technologies that exist outside the local frontiers in a developing country such as Nicaragua, in order to be able to adapt them requires the creation (formation) of a working team with local actors and foreigners that in addition to capabilities and capacities, have the work ethic, drive, and desire to share knowledge, the belief in the new model that is being developed and the awareness that transformation does not happen in the short-term but rather the medium or long-term. (Duilio Baltodano)

This approach of centralizing teachers was quite unfamiliar at the onset of the Program since the school system in Nicaragua, like in many countries, de-professionalizes teachers and relegates them to being receivers rather than generators of pedagogical content knowledge. This means that the Program creates the conditions for the teachers to empower themselves and build the agency they need to co-create and share various kinds of knowledge, including substantive/content, critical, and affective. Pushing against this normative grain of de-professionalizing teachers, especially with each new site, means engaging

in multiple discussions with a variety of stakeholders so that there is a shared understanding that this new approach is stakeholder-driven and supported. The role of Penn early on was to work directly with teachers as pioneers in the endeavor, which we did, as one of the Penn team members moved onto the pilot school coffee farm for a full year to work with the group of pioneer teachers to co-construct, develop, and begin to implement and engage in formative action research for/in the Program. From there, teacher supervisors were hired and the teachers from the pilot school became teacher leaders who guide, mentor, and share best practices with other teachers in each additional school.

The above efforts were/are guided and buoyed by the co-generation of data within each community and school. Teachers, teacher supervisors, Penn researchers, and farm staff all engage in data-related activities (collection, analysis, decision-making) within each community and school. New teachers learn about practitioner research, evaluation, data collection, and formative as well as summative data analysis from an action research-based and evaluation-based approach. This process of learning about evidence-based practice (in a non-neoliberal sense of that term) has become a centerpiece of the professional development, which is approached through an assets-based capacity-building approach framed by action research. This is vital to its success since the teachers and teacher supervisors see not only the importance of local data generation but also its fit and comparability with data that exist in the larger system (e.g., the international skills mastery assessments EGRA and EGMA). These processes are framed by Freirian approaches to Participatory Action Research or PAR. In fact, this entire process began with everyone involved reading a Spanish version of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as a way of building a common conceptual framework and lexicon.

These goals, characteristics, and processes of *Semillas* hinge on an active conceptualization of and approach to respect that requires an anti-hegemonic stance on this work and the world more broadly. Specifically, there is an active respect for local knowledge(s)—plural because there are multiple “locals” including multiple school sites and communities, multiple staff members within and across these communities, and the administrative and funding leadership of *Semillas*. Viewing each of these individuals and groups as engaged stakeholders with much to contribute has been a primary project ethic and fundamental aspect of our approach. Respect is viewed and approached as a core value to enable/facilitate true participation from everyone, and to value these multiple, intersecting engagements as the heart of our work. Since respect is culturally mediated and means different things to people, respectful participation must be co-conceptualized and engaged in as an active dialogic process, rather than as a static, de-contextualized idea. As multiple team members have noted:

- To achieve this participatory level requires another core value, that of respect; respect for the knowledge of others, the knowledge that goes well beyond academic knowledge. We are referring to the knowledge gained through life experiences, in the culture of the community, which we consider fundamental to the Program’s relevance and sustainability over time. This allows for transforming, adapting, and making the Program their own; we do not consider that we have a single, foolproof recipe, one that is applied to the different schools. Each school

- takes up, retakes, adapts, discards in consonance with their reality and the characteristics of the community including among the teacher staff. (Nayibe Montenegro)
- Each person can offer their knowledge and experiences and each individual receives respect from each and every other person that is participating and we take into account each idea that is contributed. We can express what we have discovered that also has importance for everyone and in one way or another we are gathering all of these ideas in order to form knowledge that will contribute to the entire group. In this aspect each person has the space to express oneself, to decide and to opine if we are or we aren't in agreement with the decisions being made. (Eveling Estrada)

46.3 CONSTRUCTING COUNTER-NARRATIVES, RE-IMAGINING DEVELOPMENT THROUGH A RELATIONAL APPROACH

Beginning with the re-conceptualization of relationships and partnerships through a lens of dialogic engagement and relational trust, *Semillas* actively rejects and pushes against normative approaches so that stakeholders re-imagine our roles in this development partnership. What emerges is a variety of benefits, challenges, and possibilities of constructing and implementing a more horizontal, collaborative, relationship-based approach. Therefore, the Program is not just conceptually or methodologically about equity, it seeks what Ravitch and Tarditi (2012) have termed '*procedural equity*' as a practical and operational method for equity to become instantiated into the very fabric and processes of *Semillas*. By procedural equity, we mean that the processes of communication, division of labor, and the ways that these decisions are made are equitable, not just on paper, but in the implementation and enactment of the Program's development, planning, and implementation. In order to achieve this kind of equity in everyday practice, team members engage in multiple weekly exchanges to collectively develop professional supports (i.e., professional development and accompaniment), curricular design and innovation, strategies to integrate technology into local contexts and schools, parental outreach, and community engagement. Team and community meetings are structured to enable a collaborative, democratic decision-making process and are an explicit part of each team discussion regardless of the specific topic or goal of the meeting.

Semillas is guided by an ethic of reciprocal transformation in applied development work (Nakkula & Ravitch, 1998). This means that we all work to listen, share, take in alternate and even conflicting perspectives, and to actually change—our views, approaches, biases, understandings of the Program, each other, and ourselves. Informed by an emergent design approach (Cavallo, 2000) we build team processes that allow room for a process-oriented approach that seeks out and attends to all stakeholder perspectives. The Program embodies the premise that people are experts of their own experiences (Jacoby & Gonzales, 1991; van Manen, 1990), and stresses the importance of working from a deep consideration of a range of insider perspectives as well as paying considerable attention to the generative tensions that are mediated by the

complexities of positionalities such as the ‘insider/outsider’ or ‘expert/learner’ binaries (Ravitch & Tillman, 2010).

Part of what we have learned, as we have moved more deeply into the work of building a comprehensive, multisite, community-based school initiative, is that true collaboration does not seek uniformity or even harmony between team members, but rather, sees and approaches difference—broadly and critically defined—as a vital source of generativity. We work in an ongoing way to co-create the conditions for multiple voices and ideas to be shared, discussed, and seriously considered, even when this creates tension or heated exchange. As two team members note:

- I believe that these differences have been the source of a dynamic richness in which everyone contributes from his/her own experiences and shares with the rest as contributions towards reaching the objectives and goals that are being proposed. (Nayibe Montenegro)
- If we think of difference as a part of all human being and interaction, appreciating every person’s uniqueness as well as that which is shared in ways that are non-essentializing, resource oriented, and open to infinite revision, while at the same time appreciating the micro and macro contexts that shape individual lives, then engaging difference, in this more critical sense, becomes a dynamic process of learning, understanding, and connection. For us in *Semillas*, this has been our guiding ethic all along; that all of us bring various life experiences, expertises, and wisdoms of practice and that we must ensure that macro politics and habits of hierarchy do not tempt us to fall into all sorts of hierarchy. (Sharon Ravitch)

This notion of collaboration as the sharing and harnessing of a variety of kinds of expertise (e.g., technical, contextual, pedagogical, relational, and experiential) and cross-hybridization of multiple voices, experiences, and perspectives has helped us to traverse many stages and phases of *Semillas* and the collaboration at its heart.

We believe in, and have observed, the strength and lasting benefits of having a deeply relational, community-oriented, dialogic approach. A cohesive, tight-knit group of colleagues and community members all dedicated to working together, is prepared, poised, and highly adaptable to understand and overcome emerging challenges in Nicaraguan education. Motivated by a drive to improve access to quality education, stakeholders work together to facilitate a paradigmatic shift. Starting from Nicaragua’s traditional approach to education—rote memorization of information, isolated subject areas, culturally irrelevant and de-contextualized content, teacher-centered pedagogy and authoritative knowledge production, and the overarching belief that education is about performing skills and knowledge—*Semillas* facilitates a comprehensive shift to a more constructivist and holistic approach by actively reviewing and critiquing real-time and longitudinal data that we collect on student performance, engagement, and the development of specific knowledge and skills for students and teachers as well as data on community perspectives. The development of the data collection tools as well as data analysis is collaborative as is the data collection itself, with significant professional development and exchange

for teachers and teacher supervisors so that they can independently engage in data collection and analysis. These mixed-methods data look holistically at student and teacher development alongside existing MINED quantitative metrics. The process of exploring the data and the action recommendations that emerge from careful analysis of the data are the basis of program (re-)design and improvement in real time. As part of this process, we co-construct creative and supportive spaces to stimulate learning and to transform students into protagonists of their own learning:

The objectives pursued in the development of Semillas are to encourage creative, participatory spaces that facilitate and stimulate student learning by transforming them into protagonists in the construction of their own knowledge. (Eveling Estrada)

Educational fairs have been an enriching aspect of Semillas Digitales, they provide students with a physical, creative space to share their ideas, perspectives, and specific projects with their fellow students, families, community members, facilitators, and other attendees. They provide a powerful forum to exchange knowledge and engage in dialogical explorations around the concepts, materials, and experiences that were previously limited to rote memorization and passive consumption. Now, students have dynamic and engaging environments to revitalize learning, make it alive and interactive, and contribute to their own and others' knowledge of topics and themes that are meaningful to them. (Matthew Tarditi)

Further, in *Semillas*, we are all learners in the joint construction and (re-)creation of knowledge:

My personal experience has been very rich, I participate even today, as a learner, one more member of a community of learners in the quest to contribute to the joint construction of a program focused on breaking traditional schemes in education, in a constant creative process in which the role of the teacher, the community are important, from the person as a whole being; the most important are the types of relationships that are being built equally among the teachers, parents and students. (Nayibe Montenegro)

According to Gallegos Nava (2001), a holistic view of education considers six essential elements: physical, emotional, intellectual, social, aesthetic, and spiritual. Students and teachers, along with facilitators and community members, engage in ongoing critical, public dialogue about how these elements are understood and cultivated in *Semillas* so that we can learn from one another, construct knowledge, support personal and collective growth, and re-imagine education in these school contexts. We view this as an outgrowth of the human development focus of *Semillas*—the Program facilitates and supports a holistic approach to education in which the individual is considered a complex, emotional, affective being and not simply a receptor of information (Freire, 1970). Since the Program is built upon the belief that education goes far beyond the intellectual pursuit of knowledge and information, it is about the individual and the collective in context. In *Semillas*, we are all learners in the co-construction,

collective development and development of the Program, and its foundational and attendant research.

Seeking to collapse hierarchical structures and power differentials common in development projects, *Semillas* facilitates shared, evidence-based decision-making between and among stakeholders, who all interact with and participate in the development of instruments, indicators, and data to analyze and understand what is happening and to make data-based decisions. Instead of centralizing information in the hands of a few, PAR facilitates a continuous, open dialogue of the processes, relationships, decisions, outcomes, results, and impacts of *Semillas*. We view this as one great success of *Semillas*, that is, the clear connections between research and daily practice of teachers in the classroom, all in alignment with Nicaragua's Ministry of Education standards and program goals:

- The success we have achieved is establishing the connections between research and our daily practice as teachers in the classroom without deviating from what the national education curriculum requires from us to develop and also accomplishing the purposes of the Program. (Eveling Estrada)
- To successfully achieve the empowerment of teachers in their role, *Semillas* is based on the continuous and systematic processes of accompaniment as a means to support their development as leaders capable of evaluating and reflecting on their own progress and the progress of their students. This mutual support among actors builds a genuine commitment in the development of their skills and capabilities that ensure program sustainability. (Nayibe Montenegro)

The role of accompaniment, a more democratic and mutual conceptualization of capacity building, speaks to true action research in which teachers and facilitators work together to monitor and evaluate aspects of teaching and learning and overall program progress through collaborative review of data on student performance and development in mathematics, reading, and writing among more socioemotional components of their growth. It is within this dialogical participatory research framework that each person engages with others for support, critique, and collaboration. This interconnected array of individuals and communities embraces the divergent and encourages the critical within the differences and diversity of cultures, perspectives, experiences, and understandings (Bhabha, 1990).

In conversation and action, we seek to resist the expert-learner binary that undergirds much of the development world by co-building capacity in strengths-based ways within and across partners (Ravitch & Tillman, 2010; Valencia, 2010). The challenges include sedimented hierarchies that need to be critically examined and dismantled, a difficult endeavor given how we internalize these kinds of hegemonic trappings. To change these hierarchies and structures, we must look within ourselves and among each other, and be guided by an ethic of reciprocal transformation (Nakkula & Ravitch, 1998). These processes require that we all raise our thresholds for confrontation and discomfort and that we remain critically introspective and reflexive about our own assumptions and contributions. This is all quite necessary to be able to

speak back to, resist, and build past the neoliberal accountability measures that emphasize uniformity in teaching and learning (for students and teachers).

We are thankful to contribute to the growth of a program that contributes to a larger social movement in Nicaragua. To be able to understand, from the lived experiences within and across stakeholder groups, the vision and goals of *Semillas* as it relates to individual and collective lives, and to be able to use these data to improve schooling, is a true honor. In that spirit, we end this chapter with words from Paulo Freire's (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*:

Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes 'the practice of freedom,' the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world (p. 16).

We have situated and grown *Semillas Digitales* as a practice of freedom; the Program seeks to achieve, through humanizing educational and community development processes and relationships, individual and collective growth. Only together—side-by-side, in dialogue and through a re-imagined approach to education—can we challenge the status quo. To that end, we share the story of *Semillas Digitales*, an example of respectful, relational, stakeholder-driven possibility development in Nicaraguan education.

NOTE

1. Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005.

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Participatory Action Research for Recovery of the Senses and Sources of Historic Memory

César Osorio Sánchez

We have to remember that we cannot speak about participatory action research (PAR) as a current action research structure without considering the thriving and prolific meetings between researchers and educators in the 1970s. These historic events—inspired by the indignation of problems of war, political authoritarianism, colonialism, and the expansion of the modernizing project—provoked a need to take on a critical position of the epistemic frames in which they had been formed, and that were the standard references for analysis. This time of change was putting an end to the culture and fiber of the indisputable power of privileged communities, and placing into perspective the need to (1) create a knowledge in favor of a positive transformation of reality, (2) develop diverse ways of explaining and understanding the world through dialogue, and (3) analyze and critique proposals, theories, and practices, as well as research and pedagogy (Fals Borda, 1999, pp. 70–80).

This chapter acts as a space, or an opportunity, for considering PAR as a critical position in relation to the knowledge and work of the distinguished Brazilian professor Paulo Freire. In particular, the ideas shared in this chapter

This chapter is developed from a Spanish keynote presentation at the 2014 Action Research Network of the Americas Conference, at Moravian College, USA. The keynote presentation was subsequently included in the 2014 conference proceedings (available at <https://sites.google.com/site/arnaproceedings/home/2014-proceedings>). I especially thank Professor Diana Osorio's collaborations and observations. Between 2005 and 2008 she worked very closely with Orlando Fals Borda in the systematization of his works and his projects to promote critical thinking in Latin America. I also want to acknowledge the translation assistance of Beatriz Lelevier of *Universidad Autónoma de Baja California*.

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have the main purpose of exploring the ways in which PAR can be understood as ethical and epistemic work, and can contribute to the recovery of the meanings and sources of Historic Memory in communities affected by war. In this chapter, I focus on knowledge of the Colombian experience and, specifically, the pedagogical-research strategy I coordinate at the Human Rights Archive (DDHH), of the National Center for Historic Memory (CNMH) in Colombia. CNMH has worked on the recovery of Historic Memory sources with social organizations and victims since 2013. The chapter is divided in four parts: in the first section, I discuss memory recovery in the context of PAR practices. In the second section, I explore the role that rebuilding processes of Historic Memory have in a PAR perspective. In the third section, I present some discoveries or knowledge production from research into pedagogical processes related to the senses of Historic Memory, including documental practices in local contexts. And finally, in the fourth section, I detail some challenges that could well be understood as homework or duties and hard work for those who promote and engage in PAR processes.

47.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

One of the last academic works initiated by Fals Borda, around 2008, was the re-edition of what is considered his first work in a developing path to his rich perspective on PAR (Rojas, 2010, p. xviii).¹ The document is titled *Subversion and Social Change in Colombia*: it is a book not so known compared to other later works (such as *Double History of La Costa*) but of great importance in locating the historic relevance of PAR in Colombia. The first edition of *Subversion and Social Change in Colombia* was published in 1969 by the Institute of Latin American Studies of Columbia University, and despite the passing of time, it stands today as current and applicable to the analysis of the latest decades of the Colombia experience. Fals Borda's three central ideas hold up (a) the violence phenomena in Latin America, and specifically in Colombia, has to be analyzed as a long-term historic phenomenon; (b) comprehension of this sociohistoric process requires an epistemic and methodological approach to make visible the social groups who have been traditionally made invisible, including Indigenous peoples, natives, peasants, African descendants, workers, and women who are aiming to recover their social practices, ways of understanding the world, and their collective efforts to recover from war; (c) comprehension of the realities of conflict have to be channeled into building useful knowledge that transcends the frame of neutral or *objectivist* evaluations—leading to an acknowledgment that these everyday practices in opposition of war have to be given credence in order to develop and build democratic social relations (Fals Borda, 2008, p. 17).

The text sits at the center of a paradoxical historic process in which the worship of war and peaceful social proposals coexisted—*peacebuilding* in the middle of the conflict. Most of this Fals Borda manuscript was concentrated on a final chapter in which the most recent period of national history is described

as the climax of accumulated violence. His main thesis is that the prolonged war in Colombia has been a negative spiral, leading to the exacerbation of problems in the first decade of the twentieth century. Four of these key problems are (a) *the development of an arms race*, in which most of the state efforts have been directed to deepening the armed confrontation; (b) *the extension of authoritarianism practices by public institutions*, which bares out in the precarious conditions of political participation of the social groups that have been historically subordinated; (c) *consolidation of a culture of silence and oblivion* in institutions called originally to propose exits to the national crisis, such as the church, the academies, and institutions of justice; and, perhaps the most critical, (d) *the entry of war values into everyday life*, involving the legitimization of violence from a wide population for addressing social, political, economic and cultural conflicts. The concept of a *climax of accumulated violence* suggests that these phenomena are not merely crossroads expressions, but rather a product of the historic accumulation of social contradictions in topics such as political participation, land access and distribution, and the participation of communities in the definition of development models.

As validation of the evaluations made by Fals Borda, it is important to point out that the most recent report from the National Center for Historic Memory, *Basta ya! Colombia: Memories of War and Dignity*, published in 2013, has some data that can help us map this complex process of violence in Colombia. According to the 2013 report, as a result of the armed conflict in Colombia 220,000 persons have been assassinated since 1958, with an estimate that eight out of ten of these victims have been non-combatant civilians. The same report reveals that the period from 1980 up to the present can be seen as an escalating and deepening time of violence. Between 1985 and 2012, for example, a total of 1982 massacres were committed in Colombia. And in this same time period, an estimated 5,700,000 people have been expelled from their communities due to violence. The situation was especially dramatic from 1996 to 2012, during which close to 4,700,000 people were expelled (CNMH, 2013, pp. 31–50; National Commission for Historic Memory). As we can deduce from these data, violence has been a main mechanism in territorial regulation and the uprooting of millions of people with the goal of land appropriation by a privileged few. According to the United Nations Program for Development, the dispossession of land now exceeds 6,500,000 hectares (2011, p. 45).

Given this context, it is relevant to point out first of all, that, as stated by one of the most distinguished scholars on conflict and peace studies, Johan Galtung (2003), armed confrontations require complex readings of reality, as they engender an articulation and exacerbation of diverse modalities of direct, cultural, and structural violence. Besides direct human consequences of conflict such as genocide, mass destruction, and exile, war brings along political impacts such as the demonization of opponents, the cloaking of pain and suffering, and the generation of economic and legal structures that exclude citizens from political participation. Further, authors such as Ramon Grosfoguel (2013, p. 34) explain that the frames of organized and systematic violence not

only lead to the denigration of existing conditions of the people, but also foster an undermining and silencing of their cultural expressions; hence, they destroy ways of knowing, ways of understanding, and ways of transforming reality. This elimination of life projects, culture, and ways of knowing is called *epistemicide*.²

These realities emphasize the need to pursue and propose epistemic references that will allow the identification of (i) relations between phenomena like violence and sociopolitical exclusion, (ii) dispossession and psychosocial effects of the conflict, and (iii) alternatives that have been developed by social actors to oppose these difficulties. There is also a need for recovery of knowledge, ways of knowing, perception, and action eclipsed by the predominant narratives of history. From Fals Borda's perspective, this invitation is not merely romanticism, it assumes an epistemic perspective from which the actors' value is recovered as architects of their own reality, recognizing the norms, values, institutions, and forms of relationships to nature that have been shaped in conflict relations—a recovery of their own concrete cultural-historic structure. Violence and resistance have to be evaluated, not as abstract situations, but as social material realities, like relations and social practices in which the agents unfold an *ethos*³ that in some cases confirms relations of power from the present, and in others, leads to its transformation.

On the subject of war, Fals Borda asks some questions that could be understood as provocative to research: “Have we gone to such cultural depths, to feel that war and violence are so frequently accepted things that they have become normal expressions of collective life? Are there any chances of social orders in which cooperation, altruism, constructing, love, respect for life can still be recovered and activated?” (2008, p. 230). Facing this question, PAR allows us to describe how communities in the middle of a conflict have tried to preserve their cultural-historic legacy.

One of the interesting aspects of internal armed conflict is that despite the voracity of violence, its diverse organizational expressions, and the social groups historically subordinated, there has been a promotion of a universe of social, political, educational, and cultural structures that are oriented to making visible their understandings of the dignity of life, and as such, demand the materialization of Human Rights. From a community perspective, the claim of Human Rights does not end in a judicial practice. On the contrary, it can be understood as a social process oriented to eliminating or reducing the diverse manifestations of violence in its contexts. In these specific strategies we can outline (a) the legal or judicial demand for answers from public institutions; (b) the creation of centers for thinking oriented to register, demand, and follow up on cases of Human Rights' violations; (c) the implementation of educational processes oriented to strengthening community abilities for citizen participation and the non-violent treatment of conflicts in its territories; (d) the implementation of spaces for peaceful resolution of community conflicts as resistance spaces when facing violence and social control mechanisms promoted by armed actors; (e) the promotion of cultural and artistic initiatives that question the

values extended by violence, and (f) the development of processes of Historic Memory.

47.2 CENTRAL IMPORTANCE OF PAR PRACTICES IN RECOVERING HISTORIC MEMORY

One issue worth outlining from the Latin American experience, which can be observed in Colombia and Guatemala,⁴ is that these strategies for claiming rights, in particular Recovery of Historic Memory, are developed in the community despite the adversities implied in violent conditions. Recovery of Historic Memory is created not as a consequence of the culmination of armed confrontations or of institutional transformations in transit to peace, but precisely as a social and community answer to confronting the realities that infringe Rights due to the negative effects of war. One key strategy for addressing these Human Rights issues is through the design and creation of educational community processes and PAR as a cross-curricular strategy that allows for the generation of a new knowledge of reality. It is not only about spontaneous actions related to the conflict's context, on the contrary, participatory action researchers highlight that the individuals affected by war are reflective actors, that they are creating a reading of reality in order to transform it. In the words of Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2003, p. 107) we learn that in these pedagogical and research practices, communities are confirmed as knowledge creation sources and power production—they are rewriting from a new emancipatory knowledge to develop “new and richer forms of individual or collective citizenship.”

Besides the theoretical or conceptual dimension, PAR as well as the popular pedagogical and community processes that come along with action research, demand that Rights are historical realities, which acquire diverse meanings according to the contexts in which they get created and the actors who promote them. In the Colombian experience, the action research and education processes can be evaluated, on one hand, as a starting point and as part of the experience of organized communities, and on the other hand, as an epistemic and methodological commitment that is in constant development and that enables the creation of a contrasting knowledge close to local realities. The social, political, and cultural diversity context makes it impossible to establish a unique, sole definition regarding what PAR is in Historic Memory processes. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify some common characteristics (Torres, 2000, p. 23) of this PAR activity:

- (a) These are knowledge production processes that take as reference social groups that are politically, culturally, and historically excluded.
- (b) PAR involves the pursuit of a critical reading of the social and political context that questions the origins, development, and effects of violence.
- (c) PAR uses research-pedagogical methodologies based on community participation and victimized social groups for the reconstruction of history.

- (d) PAR considers community actors and their organizations as architects of their changing processes, as agents overcoming memories, traces, and psychological-social trauma brought on by the war.
- (e) There are systematic return mechanisms. In other words, there are ways of communicating the findings and learning of the pedagogical-research processes to the social actors who aspire to the reconstruction of their life projects.

Based on these elements, the development of the PAR processes linked to recovery of Historic Memory has contributed to (a) the ethical and moral positioning of the academic-researcher and (b) the methodologies implemented for the recovery of history.

Regarding the ethical and pedagogical position of the researcher, the diverse processes of PAR demand, first of all, that facilitators consider themselves not as individuals who are going to the communities in search of information, but as someone who is in consolidation and generation of a new knowledge of reality, which is necessary to overcome a painful past. This implies a solid commitment to Human Rights culture with respect to cultural diversity, and with the goal of no repetition of this kind of event. Second, these processes demand an acknowledgment that the communities affected by the conflict are not merely “objects of study.” Rather, the participants are individuals who have knowledge that, even though it is not systematized as used in the predominant paradigms of social and human sciences, it has its own rationality and a valid foundation in the ability to explain or solve contextual problems. Third, this knowledge implies a disposition to promote dialogues and create new concepts and theoretical clues according to findings and learnings from the pedagogical-research process.

In sum, a reflexive and anti-dogmatic position questions not only the local or popular knowledge but also the researcher’s knowledge. One of the challenges for PAR in Historic Memory is that the systematic knowledge created within a research-educational process shall return to the community that helped in creating a new reading of reality. This implies a disposition of the researcher to design and settle on tools for researching, but also, to design pedagogical spaces for the restitution of knowledge (Fals Borda, 2012, p. 273).

47.2.1 *Methods of PAR in Historic Memory Research*

Regarding the methods implemented in PAR processes for recovery of Historic Memory, there is a wide methodological and educational repertoire that eases the lingering effects of conflict, as well as acknowledges realities, people, significant times, and community in the face of war. These strategies are conceived of as pedagogical resources that must enable the community to visualize and systematize its own knowledge of reality, and to update and replace this knowledge, according to local needs. There is a wide range of pedagogical and research resources created in PAR Colombia efforts, including (a) the creation

of time lines in which historic periods of interest are placed, milestones, collective actions not registered in the hegemonic history, and mechanisms with which communities are sharing and leaving a historic legacy of their experience; (b) social community cartography exercises that allow citizens to locate the effects of the conflict in the territory, including places with special significance in their collective action when facing the armed conflict, and in which the transformation they want to empower in their territories is visualized; (c) recovering life histories through relating the experience of survivors and social leaders, reconstructing oral history, and activating the knowledge and feelings related to the struggles brought on by war; and (d) visualizing solution alternatives and facing the effects of the armed conflict through symbols (Osorio, 2014, p. 25).

47.2.2 *Recovery of Historic Memory Senses Versus De-Subjectivation of the Victims*

One of the main contributions of PAR linked to these processes is visibility of communities and violence-victims as epistemic, political, social subjects, like agents with knowledge, rights, and social commitments oriented to overcoming violence. This dimension is of great relevance in contexts that have suffered the realities of war, of authoritarianism, or repressive regimes, because, one of the most noticeable problems in these contexts is the “assimilation of victims to pathological,” in other words, to be observed like a person who incarnates unthinking and unreasonable ideas that do not transcend (such as feelings of resentment and revenge) the passion or the “obsession of the past” (Gómez Muller, 2008, p. 33). Altogether, with this prejudice comes the idea that Historic Memory can constitute a harmful practice for society’s health, because it would not help heal the wounds of the past, or because it promotes in society knowing realities that most citizens “are not ready to deal with.” Facing these myths, PAR, based on the recovery of local happening, has contributed to deciphering meanings and recognizing the social importance of recovering Historic Memory from the victim’s perspective, both of which transcend the range of an unthinking, unreflective emotive nature.

Through PAR, we have been able to visualize that the recovery of Historic Memory can be understood as a set of practices through which actors of a very different nature—as social organizations, ethnic people, victims, thinking centers, and public institutions—recover a painful past and resistance to facing violence with the purpose of positively transforming its impacts and overcoming all traces left by war. Not only recovering the memory of painful acts, but of significant community moments, of representative persons and life projects broken by war, constitutes an essential social process for the recovery of broken identities imposed by the collective human disintegration induced by war. Recovery of Historic Memory can be taken as a strategy for cultural transformation that has the main purpose of helping society break with psychosocial and political phenomena such as impunity, indifference provoked by

absence of knowledge, fear, silence, oblivion, and reproduction of violence itself as resource to face social conflicts. It is worthwhile remembering, as Carlos Beristain explains (2000, p. 9):

In contexts of war and repression the victimized population have not had the opportunity to point out who are the guilty ones, to have a social recognition of the facts and their suffering, and neither a social repair based on justice. Besides, memory is frequently tied by fear, social devaluation, or even the criminalization of affected populations. All this takes to very negative effects in the individual and social identity of the affected people, as well as the more wide effects derived from impunity.

This is why there are multiple methods for encouraging the recovery of Historic Memory.⁵

First, exercises to remember significant moments related to the armed conflict can be articulated as the need to demonstrate that the violence did occur, and in that sense, it constitutes an answer to invisibility mechanisms of the conflict, such as the media covering over facts, and the explicit negation of facts by those responsible for victimizing the people. In this sense, The Historic Memory processes are conceived of as social practices oriented to confronting and overcoming the denial of violent events, their consequences, and the systematic minimizing of the social effects and community impacts. This recovery of Historic Memory is especially important in relation to facts involving the participation of public servants and institutions, where tracks and registries have disappeared. In the context of social and institutional impunity, such as that evidenced in the “disappearance” of records, it is critical that communities and organizations of victims promote public knowledge⁶ of violations of Human Rights.

Second, Historic Memory exercises also support the rebuilding of life and communities that were broken by violence and, in these rebuilding projects, are focused on renewing the social, community or organizational commitments through reparation of the place they held in history. This is necessary because war conditions have caused the physical elimination of social leaders, forced exile, and fear, and have led to a disarticulation of organizational processes that enabled Human Rights and community well-being and improved conditions for political participation. Facing this fracture of the social community tissue and organizations, the processes for recovering Historic Memory are conceived of as an opportunity to renew the importance of Human Rights, confirm the validity of social struggle, and resist violence. For example, in the processes for recovery of Historic Memory in peasant organizations where there are still fights and claims of land distribution, collective social and political actions are essential.⁷

A third outcome of Historical Memory projects involves healing of emotional wounds caused by war, in such a way that the act of recall becomes an opportunity for the treatment of psychosocial impacts of the conflict. This

includes fear and persistent terror of the population. In community contexts scourged by war, one of the most notable features of social control by the armed groups involves the prohibition of ways to dress, of musical and local artistic expressions, and “exemplary punishment” based on public ridicule, cruel and humiliating treatment of the people. In these emotionally scarring circumstances, recovering Historic Memory offers the possibility of breaking the silence. Telling the facts in these contexts helps reduce feelings of impotence, frustration, and fear that governed their lives in the cruelest times of violence. Narrating the facts has a healing power as it makes visible—and public—the individual and collective suffering, acting as a symbolic repair (Afonso & Beristain, 2013, p. 18).⁸

Fourth, recovery of Historic Memory is a strategy that can help to recover and reconstruct a communities’ habitat. Phenomena such as forced exile or massacres, killings, or confrontation between the armed groups in public spaces leave traces in the communities in such a way that territories are deemed places of horror that should be left or forgotten. Historic Memory projects help to rescue the positive significance the territories held before the violent events. Walks, celebrations, rituals, artistic and theater presentations, and the creation of memorials, galleries, and community museums allow communities to restore their presence and reoccupation of the territories. To live again in the territory is considered a first step of local life projects.⁹

47.3 PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO A CULTURE OF SILENCE

Besides the recovery of social senses of Historic Memory, one of the contributions of PAR is the questioning of the myth of silence and oblivion. According to this idea, all sectors of society would be equally responsible as accomplices of war and its effects, because they have preferred to be silent in the face of terrible violations of Human Rights, or to forget what happened. However, the pedagogical experience in local communities and the wide range of experiences in Historic Memory demonstrate that there is not a culture of silence; rather, there are mechanisms of invisibility that work against the communities’ documentation of experiences associated with the war. Some of the “silencing” mechanisms have been (a) invisibility of realities and experiences of ethnic people, peasants, women, popular urban sectors, and the writing of a hegemonic story of national history; (b) superficial media coverage of national events that concentrate on political rhetoric and that damage regional and community realities; (c) censure mechanisms or restricted circulation of literature, artistic productions, history works that portray war, the people responsible and the methods of terror that scattered the population¹⁰; and (d) persistence of Eurocentric and formalist models at the core of educational institutions, by which the analysis of local realities still has a marginal place in pedagogical-research activities. One of the greatest assets of the PAR process is that, despite

these mechanisms for silencing, there is a rich documentary tradition forged from the PAR community efforts to break the imposed anonymity and leave proof of historic war experiences.

When we focus on local experiences, the practice of documentation can be understood as the sociocultural practice of registering facts, people, and significant moments, and of capturing and making visible the feelings and reality of the local people. This practice of documentation has led to (a) legal demands for Human Rights and fights against impunity; (b) integral repair; (c) consolidation of educational material for curriculum and pedagogy exercises; and (d) development of local history research. The diverse motivations that inspire documentation reveal the meaning of life experiences, and enable present and future generations to deeply understand reality.

The multiple ways communities have documented and registered their experiences of war across diverse regions of the country have resulted in a wide range of social and technological resources that preserve Memory. Community work in PAR has allowed us to see the value of multiple methods for documentation practice. In some native communities, for example, experiences are mainly documented orally, leading to increasing adoption of audiovisual digital documents for Historic Memory initiatives. This includes wall journals, sculptures, paintings, songs, and theater pieces; oral traditions in the form of verses and testimonies; monuments, museums, and memory galleries, as well as commemoration rituals. This wide documentation repertoire has highlighted the lack of visibility of these cultural expressions in the scope of predominant knowledge academies and mass media.

These documentation repertoires also put into question the conventional definition of what constitutes a Human Rights Archive. Traditionally, these have been understood as a compilation of documents that come from public institutions, from society or individuals, and that provide information concerning serious violations of Human Rights that have taken place in times of violence. From the documented community experience, however, the Human Rights Archives and Historic Memory can be understood as the set of tracks and traces of History that help to explain, understand, and remember related aspects of armed conflict, pain and suffering, the impact of violence, as well as the demise of social, political, and community projects. These tracks and traces of history can be found in written, audiovisual, photographic, oral, and graphic artifacts that are created by the communities participating in their own processes of Historic Memory. At this point, it is worth noting that the very documents and materials, such as time lines and cartography exercises, developed during the PAR in Historic Memory, are archives of Historic Memory and Human Rights testimonials.¹¹

Furthermore, Historic Memory and Human Rights Archives can be understood as places of Memory. In this way, the Archives can be appreciated as social and community spaces of documents, testimonies, and other traces of history that serve as sources for Historic Memory to serve the community. For example, Memory galleries in which, personal letters, photos, press releases,

and testimonials are combined to recall past events, are increasing in presence and value.

Based on these experiences, we can say that the experience of PAR for Historic Memory projects demonstrates that, even though there have been systematic efforts to make realities disappear or remain invisible or silent, there is a much wider spectrum of cultural and documentary expressions created by communities to depict and express their reality, and in particular, to tell of the living personal and collective experiences faced during conflict. This puts into question classical views of documentary practice, and emphasizes an approach that is not external to community contexts.

47.4 CHALLENGES, PERSPECTIVES, AND CONCLUSIONS

PAR is an ethical, epistemic, pedagogical, and research approach that has proven to be an excellent process for remembering after violence and war because it enables the social actors to build a complex knowledge of reality, which articulates structural dimensions within a subjective frame of reference. The characterization of different social meanings that Historic Memory allows and the diverse documentary expressions that people have made when faced with the impacts of war are examples of the power of PAR pedagogic-research practices. Nevertheless, in PAR, there still are challenges that are important to highlight for the future, in order to increase knowledge creation and contribute to building more democratic social relations, in the political context as well as the academic one.

One of the most noticeable challenges in the Colombian context is the need to generate PAR processes that support the design and implementation of public policies, particularly those affecting communities impacted by violence, which are working on symbolic repairs. A consequence of barriers to political participation is that the voices of historically excluded groups do not yet have sufficient prominence in the formulation of political repairs. In other words, a gap between state policies and community needs still exists. In contrast, the experience for recovery of Historic Memory in Guatemala, with the leadership of Monsignor Juan Gerardi of *Guatemala Never Again*, is an extraordinary example of how PAR can be a rigorous research process, attached to community needs, that establishes a theoretical-practical foundation for the work of Historic Memory recovery. In the case of Guatemala, the Commission for Historical Clarification was created in order to evaluate the effects of the armed conflict. The rigorous experience of *Guatemala Never Again* was an important reference for this commission of inquiry.

A second challenge related to PAR processes and reconstruction of Historic Memory is that there is still a need to encourage knowledge building between academic leaders, the larger social sector and local communities, with the goal of making these difficult issues visible in the agendas of educational institutions. Although recently there has been an interest in Historic Memory projects as evidenced in the rising number of university publications, the truth

is that some issues have been overlooked: some social groups' problems are typically marginalized or made invisible in research and educational university programs, and there is a persistent colonial practice of objectifying participants rather than working with them as collaborative partners and individuals who can work together for knowledge creation. The rising number of publications on the armed conflict, and particularly about victims, cannot be explained as a signal of major ethical or political commitment from universities to the overcoming of war and its effects.¹²

Even though communities are the place of origin for the intimate knowledge of the realities of war, education institutions have not shaken the elitist views of disdain for these ways of knowing, which they merely treat as "folkloric" acts. In fact, one of the most recurrent requests by communities, social organizations, and victims is that scholars go to communities, become accepted as one of their own, and develop activities such as workshops, interviews, and acknowledgment of territories and life stories. Instead, the documentation repertoires and life experiences recovered are read as academic research material, and not as a social experience that should be mobilized. There is a dangerous appropriation of participative methodologies of PAR without the ethical and educational commitment from the researcher through which one has to start with the idea that there is a creation of knowledge, in a collective way, and that such knowledge should be placed at the service of the communities that helped in the research process. In the case of Historic Memory, this issue becomes especially sensitive since the practice of recalling events, people, and collective actions can be liberating, but it can also create a revictimization if the work does not contribute to solving problems of the victimized groups. In short, if the overall PAR methodological project does not have an ethical and educational imperative, what can be created is a process of implementation in which individual and community Historic Memory, and the overall community knowledge, is expropriated.

A third, and related, challenge is an urgent need for the systematization of PAR experiences linked to Historic Memory. This challenge involves careful documentation of PAR methods within and beyond the field of Historic Memory. There exist already a number of theoretical documents, in which the conceptual and methodological premises of PAR are described, and there are scattered works that document concrete experiences. However, these findings need to be collated to strengthen the lessons learned both conceptually and methodologically (Zamosc, 1985, p. 22).

Thus, one of the duties for committed researchers and scholars promoting PAR is to precisely recover the value of systematization as a process of reflection on social practices, research, and education, in order to critically read the experiences and enlighten the action research pathways these leading communities are following. This process of systematization is of great importance for acknowledging and amassing the methodological and educational tools that enable the success of PAR, improve the dialogue among communities and researchers, and warn about the risks and difficulties that could affect the research process. Through systematization, the researcher can play a lead-

ing role as an experienced storyteller, like the *jongleurs* (a traveling minstrel) who, throughout their lives, are recovering lived experiences and sharing them through stories as they journey from town to town.

The ideas and experiences above are only a very small part of the findings and learning that is blossoming day-by-day in the building of knowledge about Historic Memory and PAR. A colossal history in which horror has been confronted by a utopian view of life waits to be uncovered through memory. Increasingly, we see the evidence that PAR, oriented to transforming action, offers a path to recognizing signals of hope that have bloomed through the creative force of the community in their unsurpassed battle between life and death. These experiences confirm that PAR, more than a method of knowledge production, is an ethical and epistemic commitment that allows us to believe that reality can be transformed and that those who have been excluded from the great moments of history can be made visible. We can grow to understand that the past, history, has been the field of pain, but it is also the fertile space in which dreams are blooming.

In words of Garcia Márquez (1982, p. 3):

Facing this overwhelming reality, us, storytellers that believe in everything, feel the right to have faith that it is not too late to start building the opposite utopia. A new and powerful utopia of life, where no one can decide for others even the way they die, where love can be certain and happiness possible, and where the lineages condemned to a hundred years of solitude will finally and forever have a second chance on earth.

NOTES

1. Researchers and specialists on Fals Borda's works, such as Jose Maria Rojas, have pointed out that the main period in developing his PAR perspective starts in 1967, when he first published *Subversion and social change in Colombia*, to 1977, when *The Double History of La Costa* was published in four books. The first text expresses the basis of the so-called teletical, or teleological research, which would later become known as Participatory Action Research. Fals Borda emphasized that a clear acknowledgment of conflict required an eye on the social senses that often give viability and validity to the reproduction of violence and war.
2. This is the reason why authors like Grosfoguel and Sousa Santos have called attention to the concept of Cognitive Justice, understood as the possibility to acknowledge and overcome "epistemicide practices," that come from the consideration of superiority of occidental knowledge and its pretention of centralizing the harsh validity of scientific knowledge within the parameters defined from the Global North.
3. In Fals' perspective, the concept of ethos is explained as something that gives sense to individual and collective practices. In war contexts, this ethos expresses the tension between the ideas that reinforce/confirm the current order, and those that would like to outpace it, the contradiction between ideology and

utopia. From the author, one of the PAR contributions is that proximity with communities allows the recovery of an ethos of resistance, of the way of living that opposes and proposes a horizon of a diverse sense than that of lethality and the elimination of the other.

4. One of the paradigmatic experiences of recovery of Historic Memory in the middle of an armed conflict is the creation of the report, *Guatemala: ¡Nunca Más!* (Guatemala, Never Again). This process was coordinated by Archbishop Monsignor Juan Gerardi serving as coordinator for the Human Rights Office for the Archbishopric of Guatemala (ODHAG), in which there are about 6494 testimonies recovered, most of them from victims of the armed actors. As stated in the report, Action Research was applied to this exercise, which permitted, on one hand, the recovery of local realities through testimonials and life histories, and on the other hand, the training of the community and social leaders as researchers in their own community contexts.
5. To approach the Memory senses, the findings from the process of training consultants for Human Rights Arcades and Historic Memory (between 2013 and 2014), as well as the text from the National Commission for Historic Memory, *Memory in war times*, have been taken into consideration.
6. Some examples of Historic Memories can be found in the associations for victims of Forced Missing Persons.
7. A significant example can be found in the process of reconstruction of Historic Memory developed by the National Association of Peasant Users (ANUC) in Bolivar and Sucre of the Colombian Caribbean Zone. The land conflict has determined the peasant communities to be one of the leading actors most victimized within the Internal Armed Conflict, and because of this reality, the ANUC is developing a process for recovery of legacy documentation.
8. This fact is especially evident in the design and implementation process of the “Commission of Truth from Women to Colombia,” promoted by the Women’s Pacific Route of Colombia.
9. An illustrative case is the territory recovery of the Bojaya community, Department of Choco, Colombia. There, the death of over 70 persons sheltered in a church, together with destruction of places of cultural and religious significance, were addressed through Memory Recovery, including walks and rituals. This community has fought for a resignification of community spaces in order to reclaim the territory.
10. We shall not forget that the precise study of violence in Colombia, research that studied the origins and development of violence in the 1st decades of the twentieth century in Colombia, in which Fals Borda participated, was a victim of limitations of circulation in wide areas of the country.
11. Sometimes, these activities are evaluated as spaces where social and community leaders feel free and with social conditions to tell facts about the armed conflict, recall collective actions opposing the armed groups, or the peace initiatives built from the community.
12. According to researchers Maria Lucia Giraldo and Jaime Alberto Gomez, there were nearly 230 scholarly works published on Collective Memories of the Conflict between 2000 and 2010. Source: University of Antioquia. *Studies on collective memories of the conflict, 2000–2010*. Medellin, pp. 1–15.

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Linking Foresight and Action: Toward a Futures Action Research

José Ramos

48.1 INTRODUCTION

For over a decade I have been involved in a unique enterprise, to explore, document, and integrate Action Research (AR) approaches with Futures Studies. This rather obscure endeavor, which from the outside may seem arcane, for me is core to addressing the great social and ecological challenges we face today. Because of this inner direction, I continue to develop this confluence into hybrid approaches to human and social development.

After a degree in comparative literature and on the back of the experience of globalization living in Japan, Taiwan, and Spain, I entered a master's degree in "strategic foresight." What excited me was the emphasis on systems analysis, visioning, and social change. I was attracted to the idea that a group of people could envision a future they desired and then potentially create it. I entered the Futures Studies field with a desire for transformational change.

Futures studies gave me critical thinking, tools and frameworks for exploring the long term; however, a "discrepancy" emerged. Futures Studies clarified the sharp challenges faced by our planetary civilization over the long term. The challenges we addressed were large scale and historical in dimensions, what Slaughter (2002) referred to as a "civilizational crisis": long-term climate change, casino capitalism and rising inequality, profound shifts in technology, and other issues. The gap for me related to a question of empowerment. Where and how do we discover agency in creating the world we want? Futures Studies gave me knowledge for forecasting, deconstructing, analyzing, and envisioning our futures. But I needed to know how to create change.

Intuitively, I began looking for approaches that would address this gap. When I found AR, I was immediately inspired by the diversity of thinking,

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approaches, and case studies and began playing with the potential overlaps and fusion between the two areas (Ramos, 2002). I also interned with Dr. Yoland Wadsworth, involved myself in the AR community in Melbourne and began to find synergies and opportunities to express the logic of foresight coupled with action through a variety of projects. This work has continued to guide a wide variety of current projects. This chapter details this journey.

48.2 THE FUTURE AS A PRINCIPLE OF PRESENT ACTION

Slaughter (1995) put forward the idea of “foresight” as a human capacity and quality, in contradistinction to the widespread notion that the “future” is somehow outside us. In sharp contrast to a future state independent of human consciousness, Slaughter located the future in human consciousness, in our human capacity to cognize consequence, change, difference, and temporality. The future, he argued, is therefore a principle of present action (Slaughter, 2004). The images we hold of our futures can and should inform wise action in the present.

This simple idea represents a radical departure from previous epistemologies of time, from a fixed and unitary notion of the future to one where the future is a projection of consciousness and culture. This embodied and constructivist concept of the future points toward the need to build ethnographic and sociological understandings for how various communities cognize time differently, and how human consciousness and culture mediate decisions and action.

In a number of professional settings, foresight informs action in a variety of ways.

- In the area of policy, governments at various scales are engaged in a variety of decisions, many which will have enduring effects over decades and may be difficult to undo. Policy foresight helps regions to understand long-term social and ecological changes and challenges, to develop adequate responses.
- In the area of strategy, businesses require an understanding of how market, technology, and policy shifts may create changes in their operating and transactional environments. Strategy foresight helps businesses discover opportunities, address the challenges of fast-changing markets, and develop a social and ethical context for business decisions.
- In the area of innovation and design, foresight can inspire design concepts, social and technical innovations that have a future-fit, rather than only a present-fit. Design and innovation provide the “seeds of change” interventions that can, over many years, grow to become significant change factors, leveraged for desirable long-term social change.

The broader and arguably highest role for foresight is to inform and inspire social transformation toward ethical goals (e.g., ecological stewardship and social justice). In this regard, social foresight can play a major role in informing and inspiring social movements and community-based social action. Citizens

and people from many walks of life have the power to plant the seeds of change and create social innovations, alternatives, and experiments that provide new pathways and strategies that can lead to alternative and desirable futures. Foresight can inspire a sense of social responsibility and impetus for social action, at both political and personal levels. In my own life, I have found that as I have cognized various social and ecological challenges, I am compelled to act differently in the present. This has been as simple as using a heater less, changing to low-energy light bulbs, and installing solar panels, to more entailed commitments like attending climate change and anti-war marches, organizing social alternative events, and even co-founding businesses. The link between foresight and action is at once social, political, organizational, and personal, and uniquely different for each person.

48.3 FUTURES STUDIES' ROAD TO A PARTICIPATORY ACTION

Like any field, Futures Studies has undergone major shifts over its 50-year history. From my perspective as an action researcher, and building on the work of Inayatullah (1990) and social development perspectives (Ramos, 2004), I argue that the field has gone through five major stages: Predictive, Systemic, Critical, Participatory, and Action oriented. From the 1950s to the 1960s, the field was concerned with prediction, in particular macro-economic forecasting, where change was envisaged as linear (Bell, 1997). From the 1970s to the 1980s, the field used various systems perspectives that incorporated more complexity and indeterminacy into its inquiry and scenarios and alternative futures emerged (Moll, 2005). From the 1980s and 1990s, interpretive and critical perspectives emerged that incorporated post-modern, post-structural, and critical theory influences, where change was seen related to discursive power (Slaughter, 1999). From the 1990s to the present, participatory approaches have flourished. The most recent shift puts an emphasis on action-oriented

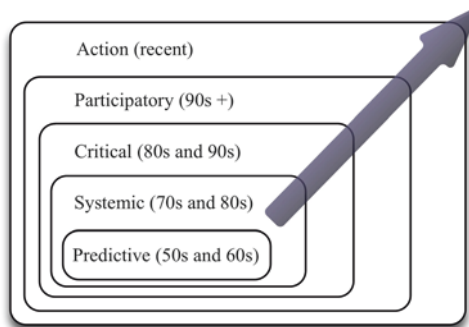


Fig. 48.1 Five modalities of futures studies

inquiry, associated with design, enterprise creation, innovation, and embodied and experiential processes (Ramos, 2006) (Fig. 48.1).

To understand these shifts, it is important to understand the epistemological assumptions that underpin these modalities. In the linear modality, forecasters believed that the future could actually be predicted. Without a relationship to subjectivity or inter-subjectivity, the future was “out-there” and could be known like a “substance” or thing. There were problems with prediction, however, as many were wrong (Schnaars, 1989), and this perspective could not account for human agency or the “paradox of prediction”—once having made a prediction, other people may decide to work toward an alternative future. It could also not account for complexity, that is, that a variety of variables, factors, and forces interact in complex and difficult to understand ways. Hence the systemic modality was born.

In the systemic modality, instead of attempting to predict a single future, systems analysts created complex models that examined the interactions between a number of variables. Trends and forecasts were still used, but instead of assuming a single future, the ideas and practices for creating scenarios emerged. A number of World Models, including Limits to Growth (Meadows, 1972), took this perspective, providing a number of scenarios relying on the prominence of particular variables, and their interactions. A challenge to this arose when World Models and other systemically informed studies emerged that were inconsistent or which contradicted each other (e.g., Hughes, 1985). Research institutes from different parts of the world produced radically different perspectives on the future. This is where the critical modality brings such contradictions into perspective.

In the critical mode, models or systems for future change have their basis in different cultures, perspectives, discourses, and interests, as well depending on whether they were from a “developing” or “developed” world perspective. Variables seen as essential aspects of a system, from a critical view, were an expression of discourse and culture, rather than universal *truths* (Inayatullah, 1998; Slaughter, 1999). This is seen in how gendered power dynamics are expressed in images of the future (Milojevic, 1999), or when people are caught in someone else’s discourse on the future, and are in effect holding a “used future” (Inayatullah, 2008). The critical mode questions default futures and develops alternative and authentic futures. The critical mode affirms the importance of questioning the role of perspective, deepened through engagement in participatory approaches.

Whereas critical futures posits that the future is different based on discourse, culture, and disposition, in the participatory mode or process, contrasting perspectives on the future will be present in the same room or group process. The exercise becomes much less abstract and far more dialogical. The challenge shifts to how people can have useful, enriching, and intelligent conversations about the future, while still honoring (indeed leveraging) differing perspectives. The participatory mode uses workshop tools and methods that include previous approaches: identification of trends and emerging issues (predictive),

scenario development (systems), and deconstructive approaches (critical). Participation forms the basis for generative conversations about our futures, and is a pathway toward transformative action.

An action modality is what emerges from embodied participation. When people come from systemically different backgrounds, the potential for conflict and miscommunication exists, but likewise a group-based inter-systemic understanding can emerge, and this embodied and emergent “alliance” is critical in developing the potential to create change. When participants can co-develop new narratives, authentic visions, and intelligent strategies, people can feel a sense of natural ownership and commitment. Group-based inquiry that leads to collective foresight with an understating of shared challenges and a common ground vision for change, can call forth commitment and action.

Each stage in the process relies on previous stages. The systems modality relies on statistically rigorous trends and data to construct scenarios. The critical modality relies on scenarios as objects of deconstruction. The participatory modality relies on all previous modes to be enacted in workshop environments. The action mode relies on participants to come together to create shared meaning and commitment.

48.4 SITUATING FORESIGHT WORK IN THE ACTION RESEARCH TRADITION

The distinction between 1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd-person AR, originally developed by Reason and Bradbury (2001a) and Torbert (2001), and now widely adopted in the AR field, is used here to explain the nature of the synthesis of AR and futures studies and helps provide outlines for a proposed Futures Action Research (FAR).¹

According to Reason (2001), 1st-person AR concerns a person’s self-inquiry, self-understanding, and self-awareness in a research process “to foster an inquiring approach to his or her own life ...” (p. 4) and by extension, practice. Second-person AR involves inter-personal inquiry, where people create learning with each other, and is “concerned with how to create communities of inquiry” (p. 4). Third-person AR engages in processes for developing co-inquiry at proximate scales which may be “geographically dispersed” (p. 5) and impersonal.

48.4.1 *First-Person Futures Action Research*

A 1st-person AR approach to futures research entails questioning and transforming one’s own assumptions about the future, as well as one’s practice. As researchers, we hold assumptions about the future that, when we engage in fieldwork with others, are likely to change. “Data” here entails documenting and explicating one’s assumptions, intentions, and experiences. This can be done for oneself to facilitate self-learning, but also for a project reference group

as an aspect of double- and triple-loop learning (Torbert & Cook-Greuter, 2004). Documenting the revolutions in our own thinking about the future is a critical aspect of any futures research. And, as practitioners engaging in social change experiments with others, we can learn what worked well, not so well, and how we might improve our own practices.

Developmental psychology is employed by Slaughter (2008) and by Hayward (2003) as a way of shedding light on practitioner disposition, and to help practitioners to engage more effectively with the breadth of developmental orientations. Inayatullah (2008) uses the Jungian-inspired work of Stone and Stone (1989) to shed light on the critical factors driving the behavior and psychology of practitioners. Kelly (2005) developed one-on-one reflective processes using student journaling with 1st-year engineering students to facilitate sustainability consciousness and global citizenship (Kelly, 2006). Inayatullah (2006) has been exemplary in generating self-understanding within futures studies.

48.4.2 *Second-Person Futures Action Research*

The 2nd-person dimension is the inter-personal experience of a group of people inquiring into and questioning the future together, in a process that leads to actions/experiments that drive further learning and knowledge. Groups will inquire into the nature of the social changes (trends and emerging issues) that may impact them, create shared visions for change, and develop strategies and plans to enact this. When visions, plans, and strategies are enacted, effects can be observed and documented (what happened, whether they worked or didn't, etc.), the experience of which is leveraged to generate new understandings and new actions. Data here include what people express together (e.g., workshop notes) when questioning the future, as well as the documentation of plans, actions, and effects that arise from such inquiry.

There are a number of foresight practitioners who have worked with organizations engaging in "full cycle" processes of research.² Some of the best examples include the work of Inayatullah (2008), List (2006), Stevenson (2006), Kelleher (2005), and Gould and Daffara (2007).

48.4.3 *Third-Person Futures Action Research*

The 3rd-person dimension reflects the dynamics of a larger community of co-inquiry. Large-scale processes are used to facilitate and capacitate co-inquiry and action for communities or networks that can involve hundreds or even thousands in inquiry into the future that leads to various types of actions (e.g., innovation, policy making, art, design, and media).

The Anticipatory Democracy projects in the 1970s, which engaged citizens in large-scale futures exploration and political/policy change processes across a number of US states (Bezold, 1978) provided early examples of the 3rd-person dimension. More recently, select governments have invested

heavily in inter-departmental foresight systems that link hundreds of people in foresight-informed policy development (Habegger, 2010). Transition Management is exemplary in bringing together long-term sustainability thinking with innovation-oriented alliance building across government, business, and community. The iteration cycles described in transition management are similar to cycles of AR (Fig. 48.2).

Most recent are web-based/network form approaches to facilitating large-scale participatory futures inquiry (Ramos, Mansfield, & Priday, 2012). These are newer and hold promise in their ability to create large-scale social conversations and interactions concerning our shared futures and challenges. The vision for a *Global Foresight Commons* is another example, where a planet-wide conversation about our shared challenges and issues is created that fosters globally networked collaborative projects for change (Ramos, 2014).

48.4.4 *Integrating First-, Second- and Third-Person Modes*

According to Reason, these distinctions should not be seen simply as ways to categorize AR practices, but rather as interacting dimensions of these practices that, when used together, make it holistic (Reason & McArdle, 2004). There are two main avenues for integration. First, we can use the distinctions when making sense of research data, as a method of triangulation. Second, the three categories provide a generative dynamic for AR projects to evolve and develop (Reason, 2001) (Fig. 48.3).

Triangulating futures research across these three domains of experience entails observing and noting patterns, connections, synergies, and contradictions in the data between the distinctions. As action researchers, we should not just be looking for 2nd- and 3rd-person support for ideas and assumptions by ignoring contradictory empirical or testimonial evidence. This requires critical subjectivity and self-questioning, looking for how 2nd- and 3rd-person dimensions may contradict our 1st-person assumptions, imaginings, and intuitions about the future, not just support them. This type of research then allows

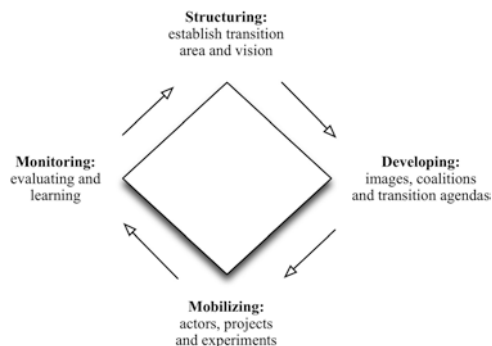


Fig. 48.2 Transition management cycle, from Loorbach & Rotmans (2010)

transformation, opening the structural (long term and global) to the question and indeed praxis of participatory action and agency (Fig. 48.4).

For Inayatullah (2006), AAL is described as originating from three influences:

1. Development-oriented participatory AR
2. The work of Reg Revans (2011)
3. Futures Studies

Inayatullah modified Reg Revans' formula of learning from "programmed knowledge + questioning" to a future-oriented "programmed knowledge + questioning the future and ways of knowing" (Burke, 2002, p. 138).

Questioning the future entails unpacking and deconstructing the default future, or what has been described in this chapter as a *used future*, our unquestioned image or assumption of the future, whether for our world, organization, or ourselves. Challenging this default future, we are then able to imagine and articulate alternative and desired futures. Questioning the future entails a variety of categories—possible, probable, and preferred futures—and lays the foundations for discovering collective agency, the future people choose to create. Agency also means that expert knowledge and categories for the future are not automatically privileged; participants can draw from experts, but equally use their indigenous/endogenous epistemologies/ways of knowing as pathways toward creating authentic futures (Inayatullah, 2006, p. 658).

AAL represents an evolving and mature theory and practice, with a growing body of practitioners. One of the most important expressions of AAL has been through the development of the *Six Pillars* methodology, a structured yet participatory format for exploring the future. Its strength lies in its simplicity. It features easy-to-use tools that the non-initiated can easily grasp, and follows a logical sequence that moves participants through various stages: "mapping, anticipation, timing, deepening, creating alternatives and transforming" (Inayatullah, 2008, p. 7). Participants can decide to reorder the tools, even modify them. However, the basic tools provide a scaffold for what is otherwise a complex and challenging undertaking. Making the exploration of change both enjoyable and empowering should be seen as a significant achievement. Six Pillars can be seen as a "practitioner AR" project where Inayatullah and colleagues experimented and developed approaches over several decades with thousands of people, looking for and discovering what works with groups (Ramos, 2003).

48.5.1 *Anticipatory Action Learning's Disruptive Role*

One of the key features of AAL is the importance of post-structural and critical theory in the practice of "questioning the future." One of the central principles is that "the future" is often the site of a hegemonic discourse, that is, "the future" may be an instrument or artifact of power. Thus, one of the critical questions asked in conversations is "Who is privileged and who is marginalized

in a discourse on the future,” or “who wins and who loses in that future” (Inayatullah, 1998). This follows an argument made by Sardar (1999) that the future has already been colonized, by which he meant that most people’s image of the future has already been set and shaped by powerful interests. These “used futures” maintain their power by virtue of never being questioned. Discovering agency therefore begins with a decolonization process, where the constructs of the future people unconsciously hold can be questioned and people can generate new, more relevant, intelligent, and more authentic visions that empower and inspire. Good futures studies therefore follow what Singer (1993) described as philosophy’s central role: *challenging the critical assumptions of the age*.

48.6 CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN THE CONFLUENCE OF ACTION RESEARCH AND FUTURE STUDIES

In writing this chapter I have consulted with some of the practitioners and networks in the field combining AR and future studies.³ The following is not a comprehensive list; however, here are some of the critical issues emerging among those at the crossroad of these approaches.

48.6.1 *Foresight Tribes*

As described in this chapter, the shift from the future as “out there” (the positivist/post-positivist notion of temporality) to the future as “in here” (a constructivist idea of foresight) is a foundational shift in epistemological orientation. Participatory workshops and engagements that begin with questioning the “used future” and exploring peoples’ not-so-conscious assumptions embark us on a new path of exploring and understanding the embodied and associational dimensions of how we collectively hold visions of change. In my research, I have identified distinct *foresight tribes*. Foresight tribes are features of a network society dynamic, where ideas and images of the future are held transgeographically and asynchronously (Castells, 1997; Ronfeldt, 1996). Contemporary popular visions are associated with globally distributed communities, where language emerges into patterns for cognizing change. Foresight tribes are both embodied and virtual communities that produce and reproduce particular outlooks, language, and images of the futures. Some, like “re-localists,” approach the future through the lens of peak oil, an unsustainable global financial system and the looming threat of environmental collapse. They argue we need to begin to build resilience into our locales, relocalize economic processes, governance, and culture. Other tribes like “transhumanists” believe we are on the cusp of transforming the very definition of humanity, as artificial intelligence, biotechnological enhancements, and cybernetic augmentation become prevalent. Through my research I have studied and documented over a dozen such “tribes,” and have come to appreciate how what is conventionally understood as “the future,” is rather an image of the future held by a com-

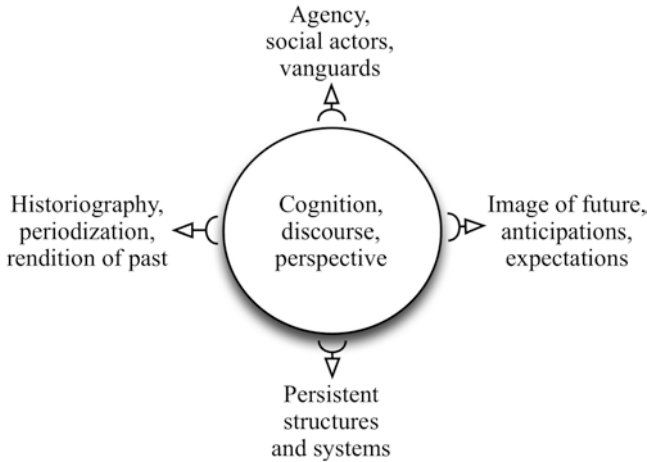


Fig. 48.5 Five elements to decode foresight tribes

munity and an expression of associational embodiment and cultural dynamics (Ramos, 2010) (Fig. 48.5).

Actor Network Theory (Latour, 2005), which has strong resonance with AR, has been an important methodology I've used in decoding discourse within tribes. Discourses can hold notions of temporality, both of the past (how we got here) and future (where we are going). A discourse also holds key notions of structure (what is real and enduring) and agency (who/what has the power to create change). Underpinning both is an epistemological dimension, who and what is legitimate in respect to knowledge of social change. These different discourses give rise to distinct notions of strategic action. Thus, theories and discourses for change do not necessarily explain reality; they explain what ideas are held by people that guide their notions of correct action—why they act in particular ways. As Van der Laan, October 2014, “personal communication” remarked ironically, “Action is based on deep assumptions which create systems of the future”—rather than explaining the future, these discourses generate modes of strategic action that help to shape the future.

48.6.2 Narrative Foresight

People's experience of reality is mediated through myth, metaphor, story, and narrative (Inayatullah, 2004; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Thompson, 1974). In this regard, supporting change requires helping organizations and communities to generate new narratives. For Inayatullah, it is an essential step, where participants use *causal layered analysis* to deconstruct existing (static) narratives and develop new (empowering) narratives for themselves. Some are using the new field of “trans-media storytelling” to engage participants in co-creating narratives within a developed story space for many types of contemporary

media (von Stackelberg & Jones, 2014). Other practitioners have been inspired by the archetypal work of Joseph Campbell in developing participatory foresight processes and workshops (e.g., Schultz, Crews, & Lum, 2012). Another emerging practice in the field is called *experiential foresight* and *design futures*, where practitioners provide living and embodied narrative contexts, complete with stage craft, actors, and scripts, that participants inhabit for a period of time and which provoke them into questioning the future(s) (Candy, 2010; Dator, 2013). Milojevic (2014) combines narrative therapy and foresight approaches.

48.6.3 *Drama and Gaming*

Drama is one of the oldest forms of storytelling and narrative, with myriad traditions across many civilizations and cultures. In the AR tradition, Jacob Moreno's foundational work in developing psychodrama, and Augusto Boal's (1998) development of socio-drama have inspired many around the world. Following suit, in futures studies new approaches have emerged which draw participants into dramaturgical situations and games. Head (2011) developed an approach called "Forward Theatre," a method for exploring alternative futures through drama, to encourage debate and dialog on hypothetical possibilities embodied through well-crafted narratives and performances. For education purposes in the context of foresight and leadership, Hayward and Voros (2006) developed the "Sarkar Game." Based on a critique of the Indian *varna* (caste) system, participants embody one of four roles: Worker, Warrior, Intellectual, and Merchant, interacting using the macro-social cycle framework developed by P.R. Sarkar. Inayatullah uses the game in workshops to deepen participants' understanding of social dynamics, and the potentially progressive and regressive aspects of each archetype. The Sarkar game is "intended to embody the concepts being discussed ... to move participants to other ways of knowing so that they may ... gain a deeper and more personal understanding and appreciation of alternatives futures" (Inayatullah, 2013, p.1).

Experiential foresight in the *design futures* tradition also combines drama and gaming in innovative ways. Interrogating the power dynamics inherent in communications technologies, in 2012, PhD students and faculty of the Hawaii Research Center for Futures Studies (HRCFS) (Dator, Sweeney, Yee, & Rosa, 2013) employed a live gaming platform involving over 40 participants from around the world, interacting in a geo-spatial game-world twining virtual and physical interactions:

At the heart of the game's content were four alternative futures ... using the Mānoa School scenario modeling method. Utilizing four 'generic' futures from which to construct scenarios that 'have equal probabilities of happening, and thus all need to be considered in equal measure and sincerity,' the content for Gaming Futures evolved into a creative exercise in how to apply gaming dynamics ... which required building complex, yet accessible, scenarios within a plastic gaming platform. (Dator et al., 2013, p. 121)

Gaming futures was preceded by work in experiential foresight, within which participants can inhabit and interact within artistically rich yet sociologically plausible alternative futures (Candy, 2010). The scenario sets are created to be subtle, subversive, and fundamentally disruptive of participant assumptions, and they act as provocations for further questioning and action. Rosa has developed *Geo-spatially Contextualized Futures Research*, dramaturgical games which twine ubiquitous/ambient computing/augmented reality with physical interaction. He sees alternative futures as a collaborative resource:

The PAR [participatory action research] framework lends credence to the idea that participants are co-researchers, actively engaged in the adaptation of the research itself. As our foundational medium of futures research is the alternative scenario (experiential, interactive, immersive), we must design systems that can be changed, taught, and augmented. (Rosa, October 2014, “personal communication”)

48.6.4 *Dialogue of Selves*

Narrative, drama, and role-playing, arguably, engage ancient aspects of the human psyche. We respond to particular roles played unwittingly by those around us and by those actors with greater skill. One approach with Jungian origins has strong and useful connections with archetypal notions of temporal consciousness. The first is the work of Hal and Sidra Stone, who have developed a psychological system called “voice dialogue.” The central proposition in their work is that the psyche expresses a multi-vocality of being. Different “selves” have different roles and functions, and depending on the context, some are dominant and some are disowned. Their work is employed by practitioners in visioning processes to deepen and provide more holistic approaches (Stone, 1989). Inayatullah (2008) finds that some groups, when conducting visioning processes, disown key elements, making visions less robust and tenable. For example, a group may envision a strategically robust but pragmatic future, but disown what authentically inspires people—the vision makes rational sense but will not motivate. Alternatively, a vision may be deeply inspiring, but if it disowns the planning, control and financial dimensions of a community or organization, it may be un-operable. The goal then is to create visions that integrate multiple selves: the planner, the artist, the servant, the dreamer, the manager ... toward the development of holistic visions that are operable—that is, fulfill needs at multiple levels. In this line of thinking the facilitator invariably invokes or provokes what they disown, “the Other,” and it is the challenge of the facilitator to embrace the Otherness of the moment, as an invitation to learn and develop more fully (Inayatullah, 2006).

48.7 ANTICIPATORY DESIGN AND CO-CREATION

In my work, I have been guided by a passion and vision to link strategic foresight and AR. In the past, this was conceptualized through the idea of “anticipatory innovation,” and use of existing AR approaches (Ramos, 2002; Ramos & Hillis, 2004; Ramos & O’Connor, 2004). Later, activism and ethnographic foresight became important manifestations to critically question and revision discourse and strategy (Ramos, 2010). Most recently, the link between design thinking and foresight has become prominent.

A new generation of design thinking is emerging—trans-disciplinary; engaging across art, science, and technology; commons-oriented; deeply collaborative; and participatory. Service design thinking has become an important approach in the interface between creative industries, enterprise creation, and social innovation. Service design both incorporates the use of foresight as leverage in conceptualizing services and innovations in the context of social change, and incorporates a participatory and (design) ethnography orientation so that design is tightly coupled with the needs of end users (Stickdorn & Schneider, 2012).

48.7.1 *The Futures Action Model*

I created the Futures Action Model (FAM) over a ten-year period (2003–2013). It was a product of my passion to link present-day action with foresight, and of the many conversations, collaborations, and opportunities I’ve had with colleagues and clients/students (Ramos, 2013). FAM was created as a scaffold to facilitate social innovation and enterprise creation in the context of our awareness of social change and alternative futures. It emerged from the realization that problem-solving was not linear, and that a non-linear but logical approach that coupled action and foresight was needed. I wanted to clarify the link between foresight and action, but more importantly facilitate an approach by which people could do both simultaneously, and where one activity complemented the other. I also wanted to demystify the process of foresight-informed innovation and make it easier to generate breakthrough ideas.

FAM is a nested system that posits four interrelated aspects in the foresight-action nexus (Fig. 48.6).

The largest (sociological) context is called “emerging futures.” This is the space of social change (emerging issues, trends, scenarios), and from a progressive/activist perspective, the challenges we face. Within this, the next layer down, are the various proactive responses from around the world to that challenge. Thus, if rising economic inequality is the challenge and emerging issue at the top layer, approaches that create economic opportunity for the dis-enfranchised would go in the next layer. The key metaphor here is that we now live in what can be called a “global learning laboratory.” Whereas in the past, both the problems people faced and the solutions created may have seemed disconnected, suddenly, in a matter of decades, we are interconnected

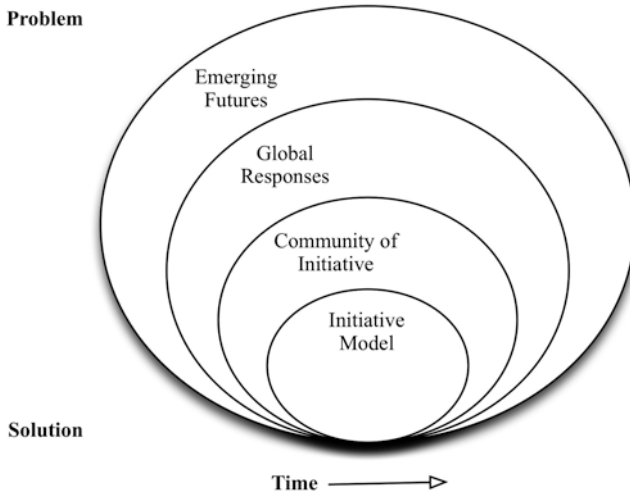


Fig. 48.6 The Futures Action Model

by problems that look similar or have strong thematic overlaps underlying the processes of globalization.

In the third layer down is the “community of the initiative,” which includes the people, organizations, projects, and so on, that participants using the FAM can potentially partner with. They are real people and organizations that may have something to offer the start-up.

The final layer contains the core model of the initiative, this is a solution space where participants can explore the purpose, resource strategy, and governance system of an initiative that can effectively address the issue or problem. This is the “DNA” of the idea. An initiative will also reflect a new “value exchange system” between stakeholders that may not have been connected before. This is the ecosystem of partners that makes an initiative viable. The new relationships are facilitated by the initiative—as the initiative pioneers have a “systems”-level mental map and understanding—they can see how different organizations and people might connect and exchange value in new ways—or they have an intuition about what relationships might be generative—even though they may not know the exact outcomes.

FAM has been used in facilitating youth/student empowerment and enterprise programs, for scaffolding anticipatory policy development processes, personal postgraduate coaching of project development, facilitating enterprise development, and facilitating community-based social innovations.

48.7.2 *Co-creation Cycle for Anticipatory Design*

In addition to the FAM, the most recent manifestation of my thinking to link design and foresight is a conceptualization of an AR cycle that is specifically

tailored to a new generation of social innovators, social entrepreneurs, and participatory designers. Reflecting on the often-confusing cacophony of my own projects and work, both paid and unpaid, as well as those of colleagues, I began to search for commonalities and elements. This led to the development of an AR/action learning cycle similar to the fast cycle development process of agile software development (SCRUM). The context for this finding included a number of factors: the emergence of the network form that amplifies idea exchange and opportunities for peer-to-peer collaboration; the experimental dynamics of colliding/integrating fields in science, art, and technology, which produce hybrid and often chimeric innovations; and the need to seed ideas even while maintaining a pragmatic stance toward earning an income. In this iterative process, ideas foment quickly and furiously, prototypes are developed and tested, connected with potential users who are expected to teach and lead innovators, so that ideas can be adapted and evolved or discarded for better ones (Fig. 48.7).

Anticipate is about the great idea, the what if and what is possible. It is not necessarily about anticipating the big future (futures of society) through scenarios. It is more about what would be great, possible, and socially needed now and in the emerging futures (future-fit), what can be done with existing and emerging resources technology, and the kind of future people want to live in (preferred future and values/ethics based).

This leads to the *Design*, conceptual or physical, of an artifact or model. For example, if dealing with a product, it can be conceptual design, graphic or technical design, or an actual physical prototype. Or if concerning a business, it can be the conceptual business model, or it can be the basic minimum scale of the business in actual form (the Minimum Viable Product offer).

The next phase is *Connect*, where the design, in whatever its stage, is shared and connected with intended and unintended users. Critical issues focus on usability, value, utility, inspiration, and interest by the people who would use the design. Do people like it, want to share it, how well does it work? Connect

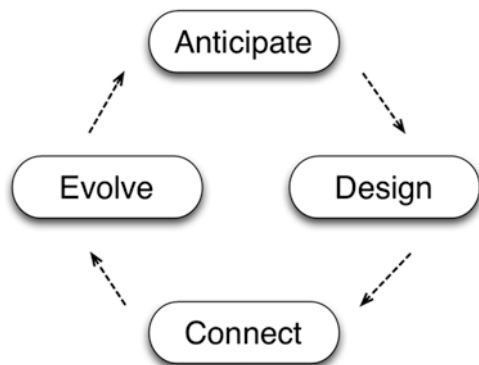


Fig. 48.7 Co-creation Cycle for Anticipatory Design

is similar to David Kolb's stage of "experience" where the planned experiment is applied and experienced/observed. Because of network society dynamics, however, connect takes on much more meaning, as an idea, design, or model can be distributed within a much more dynamic and complex space of engagement. A crowdfunding campaign, for example, is a typical mode of "connect" in this Anticipatory Design space.

Evolve is the impetus to change the design and offer, try something new, or make adaptations to the existing design. It stems from the experience of connecting, what users of the design (program, project, product, or model) want and need. Depending on the nature of the connecting, the innovators may or may not know what is the best way to change, improve, or adapt it. Learning is critical here—ways that connect the innovator and user—and bring them together into a virtuous cycle of co-creation.

48.8 CONCLUSION: TOWARD A FUTURES ACTION RESEARCH

It is in the interest of our many communities and humanity as a whole to develop effective AR and participatory AR approaches to engage in empowering inquiries into our futures. As can be seen from this overview, the outline of such a FAR is still emerging. What we have at the moment are strong overlaps, with a handful of more exemplary and coherent approaches.

Addressing the great challenges we collectively face will require more than just piecemeal innovations. We need to foster a whole-scale social reorientation, whereby taking response-ability for our futures at personal, organizational, and planetary scales becomes commonplace. This chapter, hopefully, is a small step in this direction, toward a more coherent and resourced understanding of a FAR approach that offers effective means of transformation in many domains.

NOTES

1. Kind thanks to Margaret Riel for offering FAR as a potential name.
2. I conducted a survey of practitioners in the field in two major foresight networks (the World Futures Studies Federation and the Association of Professional Futurists), asking for survey responses from those who explicitly work across the action research cycle and incorporate various elements of action research. Responses came from Luke van der Laan, Ruben Nelson, Anita Kelliher, Tanja Hichert, Robert Burke, Mike McCallum, Aaron Rosa, and Steven Gould.
3. This chapter was enhanced from responses to a survey I sent practitioner colleagues in September of 2014.

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Toward a Strategic Agenda for Global Action Research: Reflections on Alternative Globalization

*Lonnie L. Rowell, Ruth Balogh, Christine Edwards-Groves,
Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt, Doris Santos, and Joseph M. Shosh*

This chapter has been written and shared in the form of *Rundbriefe* (“round letter”) circulated among a group of people currently active in the leadership of some of the networks included in this Handbook. The use of the *Rundbriefe* as a kind of underground communication among “political Freudians” is discussed at length in Russell Jacoby’s (1983) *The Repression of Psychoanalysis*. Although all the authors of this concluding chapter have contributed to at least one other chapter in the *Handbook*, none of us had, at the time of the writing of this conclusion, read every chapter.

(cont.)

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49.1 THE FIRST ROUND OF WRITING

49.1.1 *Lonnie Rowell (ARNA) Wrote*

What most excites me about action research at this time is the clear evidence that forms of action research and participatory research are alive and well in all corners of the world. As can be seen across the chapters in this Handbook, the forms are varied, evolving, and have taken root in a large number of social domains (e.g. education, health, social services, community development, ecological awareness, etc.). In addition, a significant infrastructure is in place across the globe for preparing entry-level professionals in various fields, and citizens in general (including youth), to engage in practitioner-led action research and community-based participatory research. Last, exciting new forms of dissemination for the work of action researchers and participatory researchers have taken shape over the past several decades, and these forms are evolving and growing in visibility and impact.

At present, three concerns dominate my thinking about the current state of action research. Although we do have significant infrastructure in place for training and education in action research, much of this infrastructure, in North America at least, involves university training tied to requirements for educator preparation programs (including teachers, counselors, and principals). Very little is known at this time regarding how much of this training is carried forward into professional practice. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the pressures associated with working in educational systems under the current regime of “Conservative Restoration” (Shor, 1992, p. 3) saps the energies of educators and dulls the senses associated with critical thinking. Thus, pre-service educators gain their initial action research experience in the context of coursework for credentials and/or master’s degrees. The drop off from completed university-based projects to completed practitioner-research projects appears to be quite steep, at least in the USA.

Another area of concern for me is the gap between participatory research in community settings and action research tied to formal educational institutions. I believe there is much to be gained from a ‘Big Tent’ approach to action research in which all forms of action research and participatory research are recognized, valued, and respected as important contributors to knowledge regarding social change and social progress in the twenty-first century.

(*cont. from p. 843*). We simply took up the challenge of reflecting concisely on the present state and the future of global action research and sharing our thoughts with a circle of colleagues, inviting response and further deliberation, which we all will hopefully take with us in our ongoing individual and organizational action research and participatory research journeys. What you see in this chapter are our shared thoughts written in response to questions I posed as lead editor of the *Handbook*. The questions were (1) What most excites you about the current global state of action research and participatory research? (2) What is most concerning to you regarding the current global state of action research and participatory research? (3) What direction would you most like to see action research and participatory research heading in regards to future global connectedness? L.L. Rowell

At present, however, the silo effect of university-based and corporate-driven knowledge production systems promotes the retention of hard and soft barriers between “schools of thought” and traditions of practice in the action research communities found around the world. I think we need to look critically at how to break down these barriers and infuse the work of action research with a capacity to “look both ways” and to share knowledge across specializations and sacred cow orientations. In addition, the presence of so much of the action research education infrastructure on university campuses carries a cautionary note. As the site of so much professional-jealousy-based political maneuvering and often petty intellectual hairsplitting, university-based action research infrastructures are often at-risk of elimination and are frequently constrained by the power of the traditionalist knowledge orientation of those advocating evidence-based practice, research impact and the like. More open intellectual spaces associated with such initiatives as Highlander Center (Bell, Gaventa, & Peters, 1990) are few and far between at this time, unfortunately. At Highlander, according to former director Myles Horton, “We all agreed that we had to start learning from the people we were working with, and that we had to learn from each other” (Horton, as quoted in Bell et al., p. 41). Contrast this with the view of many academics who do not like action research because they say they value “expertise,” and you begin to grasp the difficult relationships between knowledge production, action research education and training, and universities.

This concern is strongly related to my 3rd issue, namely, the need for a refined spirit of global awareness and action in action research. At present, the challenge for action researchers is to embrace a process of updating. As Michel Thiollent and Maria Elena Colette put it in their *Handbook* chapter (see Chap. 10) on action research and participatory research in Brazil, this:

renewal of action research and participatory research would be based, on the one hand, on the legacies of Paulo Freire, Orlando Fals Borda and the whole Brazilian and Latin American school, the parallel influences of English and French-speaking schools of thought and the studies devoted to retrieving the works of other significant authors. And, on the other hand, on new international interlocution arrangements that have already been initiated with Europe and are being activated with the Americas, in addition to potential articulations with the Asian world and different kinds of African experiences.

What might such “international interlocution arrangements” look like? To me, this is one of the most important questions that global action research networks will need to address in the coming years. Not only are there arrangements to be forged among action research networks around the world but collaborations with other groups that share many of our interests, such as the Global University Network for Innovation (GUNI) and the Global Alliance on Community Engaged Research (GACER), also should be pursued. As we begin to articulate how we will collaborate in up-dating our understandings

of action research in the twenty-first century we will simultaneously, I believe, open ourselves to imagining a revitalized vision of the potential of action research to contribute to a more just and sustainable world.

49.1.2 *To Which Ruth Balogh (CARN) Replied*

I am personally excited by the existence of places where curiosity is being aroused among action researchers about traditions and approaches they are less familiar with, in explorations of difference in Lonnie's "Big Tent." I see richness in the action research family as it continues to grow and to open up new kinds of inquiry, as is evident in this handbook. This variety exists not just among our different "schools" but also within and across cultures, and in different practice settings. This issue of diversity and difference has been, and continues to be, a defining thread for the Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN) network. The common ground where we all can meet lies in understanding that we are all practitioners and learners.

On the other hand, I also share Lonnie's concerns about apparent barriers. In an intriguing footnote to an *Educational Action Research* paper about the Norwegian approach to action research in complex organizations, Eiklund notes the lack of communication between his own work, deriving from the Norwegian industrial democracy movement, and educational action research in Norway. "For inexplicable reasons," he reports, "the silence is mutual" (Eiklund, 2012, p. 283). I find "inexplicable silences" too, across different traditions of action research in the UK, and in CARN. I myself try to work across the boundaries of educational action research and the psychoanalytic approach at the UK Tavistock Institute (which Lewin worked with), but other such connections are few. Likewise, community development approaches have not figured prominently in CARN, although we hope the development of a Special Interest Group (SIG) will move us along. On the other hand, a discussion to develop a CARN SIG for "health," concluded this area was already sufficiently well embedded in the network. Eiklund's observation as a footnote makes it doubly interesting, giving it the quality of a "backstage" comment. Elsewhere in the paper he offers deeper analysis of the way that "backstage spaces" or "reflective backstage fora" may operate as productive "counter-public spaces," which enable communication for action research to occur outside work routine constraints (p. 280).

Our ability to connect with action researchers in different settings, professional contexts, and cultures is evidence of confidence in the power of our paradigm. However, such connections are unlikely to occur in official "front stage" spaces, which are being more tightly controlled and managed through the synergy between computer-mediated communications, "austerity" policies, and the competitive individualism and instrumentality of widespread public service privatization (Ball, 2007). We have only to consider the way that PISA (Program for International Student Assessment) leagues can shape and even drive curricula through standardized testing in schools worldwide, ignoring

the vitality of local conditions and practices, to understand how actual experiences of learning and teaching can become subsumed in an environment where test scores mediate fear over institutional survival.

The situation in UK higher education is perhaps even more concerning. The ability of universities to provide a forum for freedom of speech has become compromised through the silencing of many forms of dissent. Marina Warner describes how, from 2006 to 2009, the UK academy spent more than £11 million on severance settlements (£4.4 m) and associated legal fees (£7.1 m) to ensure that 5,528 former academics are legally prevented from discussing in public their former university lives (Warner, 2015). Such silences, officially enacted on behalf of citizens by the institutions of democratic government, must be named and discussed, even when they remain circumscribed.

The task for action researchers as I see it is both to explore the nature of hegemony at work, and to uncover and open up new reflective spaces. As Eiklund (2012) points out, the “backstage” and the “on stage” are necessarily highly and systematically interactive (p. 282). Networks and scholarly associations have a particular role to play in this regard, being connected to academia but not so subject to its restrictions. As critical nodes for academic discourse in action research, our communities and networks already do important work. One feature of this work is the way we support examining and supervisory infrastructures for doctoral study by thesis, thus fostering future generations of action research practitioners. Within higher education, our definitions of new knowledge in terms of practice and process are always at-risk from bureaucratic understandings framed around content and topic, and we actively counter this.

Finding ways to make better connections and foster a deeper appreciation of differing traditions of action research should enable some of the inexplicable silences that we ourselves observe, to become new objects of inquiry. Such inquiry could also usefully form the basis for interlocution between existing international networks. Other initiatives must also be on our agendas: creating virtual spaces consistent with our values, supporting cross- and within-cultural dialogues between action researchers, and demonstrating the power of reflective spaces in other ways. Spanish colleagues argued recently in a CARN Bulletin that once some time had been invested in starting an action research process, it became “*difficult to work without it,*” such were its benefits (Requies, Martinez, Jorin-Abellan, & Navarro, 2011). Our practice remains the most convincing means of demonstrating our arguments.

49.1.3 *To Which Christine Edwards-Groves (PEP) Responded*

More than any other period in human history, the twenty-first century is marked by the intensification of globalization. This is demonstrated by the growing interconnectedness of the world due to technologization, transnational exchanges of knowledge and capital, shared ecological concerns as well as cross-border movements of people. So, within this landscape what excites me is that at a time in history in which the aspirations for transforming the conditions

for education are being pressured by a “performative audit culture” (Comber & Nixon, 2011), educators and other practitioners across the globe are finding spaces for reviving and restoring the moral, social, and political commitments that have held educational work together for centuries. Added to this, what impresses me are the many “grassroots” locally developed action research projects seeking site-based education development (Kemmis et al., 2014) to improve practices for the world’s most vulnerable (the marginalized and disadvantaged members of society, including refugees, indigenous, the poor).

For me, another one of the most significant and exciting things about the field of action research and practitioner research in contemporary times is that individuals and networks of researchers from across the globe are finding ways to speak to one another. In one way, they are seeking to progress educational practice and understandings by *learning to learn* from and with different intellectual, educational, cultural, and social traditions. As a counter to the bureaucratization and de-professionalization of education occurring across the globe, they are seeking to redress the erosion of the moral, social, and political commitments informing educational work (research and practice); examples of this are clearly articulated and explicated in the chapters of this Handbook. Through a shared concern about both local and national and wider global affairs in education, these networks have endeavored to come together in a range of forums (including annual conferences, network research meetings, social media, asynchronous, and synchronous technologies) to find consensus and mutual comprehensibility about the ways forward for dealing with issues influencing their work. It seems that, in many ways, these networks have created for themselves increasingly permeable professional and research boundaries around and across the globe to enter new communicative spaces to discuss, debate, and interrogate the subjectivities and intersubjectivities between different traditions.

Against this backdrop, a more serious concern for the future sustainability of action research as a viable and more widely accepted approach to professional learning and change emerges. The issue lies within itself, as there has been its propensity to tell the *Pollyanna* stories that emphasize the celebration of achievements. By predominantly projecting that participating in action research (even within a community of supportive colleagues) leads to a seamless journey toward new ways of doing things, we manifest a somewhat happy story, a one-dimensional picture of the realities of practitioner change. This limited narrative pushes a skewed view of educational and professional change into the political media, suggesting that learning is comfortable and tidy, rather than risky and uncertain (and so, what emerges are formulaic and prescriptive responses to educational work and change). In my view, the propensity for taking such a “celebratory stance” (as pointed out by Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015) not only limits and negates the robustness and richness of action research as it is experienced by practitioners in the field but it feeds into the “backstaging” of action research in the broader domain of educational research, as suggested in Ruth’s reflections.

This issue unfairly positions action research as a “soft” approach to researching and improving practice. To counter this, perhaps those responsible for researching, writing, and publishing studies of action research or participatory research need to heed the call from Mockler and Groundwater-Smith (2015) who urge the field to reveal or even welcome “unwelcome truths.” To do this would push the more limited narrative toward making transparent the constraints, tensions, and contestations experienced in professional learning, yielding a more genuine critique, reflection, and description of work and change. In line with Ruth’s comments, I see this as a productive way forward for us in the academy to both “break the silences” and “break into the silences” about professional work and gain some traction into the political mire of performativity, managerialism, and accountability pervading the working lives of both practitioners and researchers. It would offer an honest, morally balanced account of research that may indeed return to a *praxis* orientation to counter the “professional-jealousy-based political manoeuvring and often petty intellectual hair-splitting” raised earlier by Lonnie.

In the spirit of moving action research and practitioner research toward a sustainable future we need to find ways to re-inscribe the inherent value of the “practitioner-as-researcher” movement (after Carr & Kemmis, 1986). By having voices from the field activated in the political sphere we may arm action research against reticence and criticism to promote future progress. In fact, projecting the significance of practitioner-academic co-inquiry for sustainable change through the practitioner’s voice may defy the eclipse on the capacity for practitioners to confront political and intransigent issues of performativity. This move toward activist professionalism (Sachs, 2003) may indeed reilluminate Lawrence Stenhouse’s (1975) strongly contested vision that the work of teachers, for instance, should be as “extended professionals” who are autonomous and responsible for responding to their site and circumstances, never succumbing to becoming actors who do no more than follow a curriculum developer’s script or toe the political line.

49.1.4 To Which Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt (ALARA) Wrote...

What excites me most are the above reflections by three action researchers from three different continents. I have never met any of them, and I agree with them totally, as if I had written their text myself. I am also excited about the composition, structure, and content of this book—in the same way I have appreciated the *Sage Handbooks of Action Research* (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, 2006, 2008, 2013) and the *Sage Encyclopedia of Action Research* (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Books like these are artifacts that strengthen the paradigm, culture, and values of action research. The expansion and diversity of approaches, processes, and methods provided in these books contribute to a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of knowledge creation in collaborative, participatory research.

Apart from the concerns I share with my co-authors above, I recognize an additional issue of our network organizations continuing to remain somewhat distant from each other, perhaps concerned about losing their distinct identity and autonomy. On the other hand, some of us who are members of both Action Learning, Action Research Association (ALARA) and CARN have collaborated and indirectly influenced one another. For example, we have had some “CARN Study Days” in Australia and South Africa, organized by ALARA members. We need to extend this type of collaboration to encourage a range of opportunities that benefit all, irrespective of our specific affiliation with a particular network.

In response to an ALARA e-mail survey by Zuber-Skerritt and Passfield (2015) discussed in Chap. 26 (this volume), on the question “How do you envisage the future of action research and ALARA?” a respondent advised that ALARA’s focus from the outset on all the “strands, streams and variants” means it can make a valuable contribution to a global network, requiring renewal of some of the contacts it forged in the 1990s to the mid-2000s with all the national groups worldwide. Many connections are still in place. Another issue raised was that while the pioneer generation is ageing, the next generations are generally not “doing” organizations—taking them for granted, seeing them as constraining, and preferring spontaneous pop-ups, or organizing more fluidly through social media. Since then, Colin Bradley, ALARA’s current president since 2010, has conducted serious negotiations with Lonnie and representatives from the other networks, discussing how to collaborate more closely in the spirit of action research and how to avoid competition and duplication of international conferences. For example, after reading our chapter (Chap. 26) and recommendation of “a new international network-of-networks,” Lonnie wrote of his fruitful discussions with Ruth Balogh (CARN), Joe Shosh (Action Research Network of the Americas [ARNA]), Christine Edwards-Groves and Doris Santos (Pedagogy, Education, Praxis Network [P.E.P]), and Colin Bradley (ALARA). In an e-mail to me (3 July 2015) he concluded that “ARNA’s 2017 Conference in Cartagena, Colombia, ... will be designated as a World Congress of Action Research and that arrangements can be made so that the leading four networks now active in the global action research community—ALARA, ARNA, CARN, and PEP—all share in the organizing, endorsement and sponsorship of the gathering.”

Paradoxically, in this turbulent global world in the twenty-first century, I think that to be competitive we have to be collaborative. Successful multinational companies offer the useful lesson to collaborate and forge relationships globally. Their reasons are largely to maximize corporate profit and power, while ours are to achieve a more sustainable and socially just world for all, including the poor, disadvantaged, and marginalized, especially youth in developing and developed countries (Kearney, Wood, & Teare, 2015). An excellent example of a map of collaborative international networks of action researchers is a poster by Jack Whitehead and his associates, presented at the 2015 ARNA Conference in Toronto (<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/arna/arna->

[posters270415.pdf](#)). It is in this spirit that Ron Passfield and I proposed in our *Handbook* chapter (Chap. 26) that all our networks and especially ARNA, CARN, ALARA, and PEP should combine their international conferences into annual or bi-annual World Congresses with rotating or collaborative convenorship. I hope that the World Congress in Cartagena in 2017 will become that reality.

Another concerning issue relates to universities and the problem Lonnie alluded to, that “the drop-off from completed university-based projects to completed practitioner-research projects appears to be quite steep, at least in the US,” and elsewhere too. That is why some universities and business schools have introduced whole programs of work-applied, professional doctorate, and master’s degrees by action learning and action research based on non-positivist epistemological assumptions. These institutions understand that knowledge can be created through reflecting on concrete, professional experience, formulating generalizations and abstract concepts, and applying this practical theory to new situations, thus enabling further learning through new concrete experience in the next and continuing cycles of reflection, experiential learning, and knowledge creation (Kolb, 1984; Schön, 1983). For example, Middlesex University in the UK accredits senior managers and executives on the basis of “prior knowledge and experience” and reflection on their previously written papers and reports toward their degree. Participants then are encouraged to engage in reflective practice and in action research projects directly related to their work with employees in their organization, with support of their CEO. In this way, action (i.e., organizational change and development) is integrated with research (i.e., participatory inquiry).

However, in such instances, academic (university) supervisors have to (1) forge closer links with industry and business to understand the issues candidates address in their action research, and (2) engage in collaborative action research projects themselves to understand the paradigm, qualitative methodologies, and methods, and be able to take a “Big Tent” approach to action research, rather than expecting candidates to comply with the rigid standards and requirements of traditional academic research. This is why professional development of academic staff is so essential for enabling them to introduce and facilitate processes of creative, critical thinking in their students, as future citizens and as leaders in a more just and sustainable global society.

As academics, we ourselves need to practice what we preach. We need to be honest and ethical in our work and publications, aiming to extend practical action research (i.e., improving practice and understanding) to emancipatory, critical action research (i.e., changing the conditions and boundaries that impede positive change), in the contemporary sense of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory (Carr & Kemmis, 1986) and especially Adorno’s (1973) negative dialectic that calls for the self-reflection of thinking. So if thinking is to be true, it must also be a thinking against itself. In action research, we can never be certain about reaching a final truth, but in our paradigm we always have

“provisional resting places” (Barber, 1992, p. 110). In particular, we need to admit there is no guaranteed “happy ending” (Holloway, 2009), for all action research is a struggle because of the nature of the problems we engage with, which make it “messy” and “wicked.” I conclude on an optimistic note in Zuber-Skerritt, Fletcher, and Kearney (2015):

we need not fear the deep challenges of complexity for we learn from trial and error and from making mistakes. We need to consider failure or making mistakes as normal and as stepping-stones for success (Maxwell, 2000). As Nelson Mandela (1995) put it with the wisdom of extraordinary experience, courage is not the absence of fear but the triumph over it. (p. 268)

49.1.5 To Which Doris Santos (PEP) Replied...

I have been especially excited about the growing number of creative ways that practitioners and advocates of action research and participatory research have found to shorten distances in order to tackle common concerns in the twenty-first century. The increasing number of diverse international, national, and local publishing projects, collaborative research experiences, networks, as well as events, is evidence of this creative power. These creative ways have been critical to promote and achieve the convergence of academics from all over the world (Fals Borda, 2006). From this perspective, what excites me the most in the current state of action research and participatory research is the challenge we have to construct cross-cultural communicative spaces aimed at creating new sociopolitical realities.

Coming from different educational traditions within particular sociocultural-political “glocal” realities, practitioners of action research and participatory research are called to learn how to speak and listen to each other in ways that can challenge the orders of epistemologies the global traditional academic life has put in place throughout history (Walsh, 2007). To do it, it is necessary to consider both Lonnie’s idea of a “Big Tent” approach to action research, understood as a more inclusive way of understanding action research and participatory research, and Ruth’s claim to promote the sort of curiosity that can lead each one of us to explore traditions and approaches outside our own “academic comfort zone.” In this sense, we need to unlearn and relearn together how to speak and listen to each other in order to learn how to act collectively for the common good. If we can achieve this through creative and meaningful ways of meeting in books, research projects, networks, events, and so on, we will be constructing a necessary condition for practitioners of action research and participatory research to contribute to getting more socially just societies: to contest orders of epistemologies and discourse from within.

Though more attempts to do international and national collaborative research work are taking place in the current global state of action research and participatory research, I’m especially concerned, as are my colleagues, with the

effects of competitive practices on the advance to more democratic societies. Ranking tables of all sorts (schools, universities, researchers, research groups, journals, etc.) have been undermining the coherence between our discourse and our daily life practices as researchers. I would say that Lonnie's concern about "the gap between participatory research in community settings and action research tied to formal educational institutions" is closely related to this socioeconomic-political trend, which positions educational institutions over other types of communities (academic knowledge has been considered more important than popular knowledge). In this respect, these competitive practices come along with a belief in a world inhabited by winners and losers, which applies to the positioning of practitioners of action research and participatory research in the sociopolitical space.

In Latin America, practitioners of participatory action research have learned, many times painfully, what is compromised when they decide not to be silent. The "inexplicable silences" Ruth is concerned about are certainly well understood in this latitude; there is always a lot at stake. This is something we have to talk about, need to tell in our research stories, since this is an important part of the construction of the political space we deal with, and need to learn about from each other (Santos, 2012). One of the powerful ways to contest these competitive practices is by networking networks. Ortrun's concern about action research network organizations being "somewhat distant from each other" is sound, as is Ruth's about action researchers' connections not occurring in official "front stage" spaces. If we can get action research network organizations to become closer and work together, we can become stronger in official "front stage" spaces.

Finally, aligned again to Ortrun's claim, I would like to see action research and participatory research heading to more coherent and collaborative discourses and practices. We need to figure out new international interlocution arrangements, as Lonnie says, which allow us to achieve what Ruth calls "a deeper appreciation of different traditions" of action research and participatory research. To make this happen, it is necessary we research the communicative spaces we have been constructing to move toward the creation of the political space communities want to participate in. Furthermore, future global connectedness among practitioners and advocates of action research and participatory research will also rely on what is implicated in the notion of the "feeling-thinker" coined by Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda after a learning stage outside the academy in the northern region of Colombia (Bassi & Britton, 2008). Learned from the fishermen of this region, the notion of a "feeling-thinker" refers to a person who acts based on what he or she feels *and* on what he or she thinks. From this perspective, global connectedness can only be achieved among practitioners of action research and participatory research when we can be connected in our collective actions based on the knowledge we as researchers construct but especially on our empathy and solidarity with global and local communities. I think we are doing well; however, much more needs to be done. An African proverb can summarize well the direction of prac-

titioners of action research and participatory research I have been making reference to: “*If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.*” We need to keep on learning as a research community how to speak and listen to each other in new cross-cultural scenarios aimed at learning from one another. Only this way can we go far together.

49.1.6 *To Which Joseph Shosh (ARNA) Answered...*

This concluding chapter, itself a microcosm of the larger *Handbook*, written across four continents and 18 time zones, by authors speaking at least three different native languages and representing four major international action research networks, makes abundantly clear to me the great promise for action research as we seek to collaborate globally in important new ways. In fact the Action Research Network of the Americas, the newest international network committed to the support of practitioner inquiry and participatory research, came into existence in 2012 largely through the grassroots efforts of action researchers who had never met one another in person prior to arriving at the inaugural conference in San Francisco, with planning done almost entirely online by organizers throughout the Americas.

At ARNA’s 2nd annual conference in Pennsylvania’s historic Moravian Bethlehem National Landmark District, digital technology allowed a predominately English-speaking North American and European audience to use cell phones, iPads, and other personal electronic devices to experience live English translation of *Universidad Pedagógica Nacional* Professor César Osorio Sánchez’s keynote address (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqIFGLF2U3k>) (see also, Sánchez, 2014), providing many in the audience with their first exposure to the concept of *historic memory* and its importance in participatory action research.

Because all sessions in this venue, not just the keynote, were translated and simulcast live using Ustream technology, traditional North/South language divides began to break down and English-speaking teachers were able to learn from their Spanish-speaking colleagues as was evidenced when participants from the *Semillas Digitales* Project (See Ravitch, Tarditi, Montenegro, Baltodano, & Estrada, Chap. 46, this volume) shared their action research experiences firsthand live from Nicaragua. For me and so many other action researchers in attendance, this was a prime opportunity to follow Doris’s advice “to unlearn and re-learn together how to speak and listen to each other in order to learn how to act collectively for the common good” in alignment with the vision laid out so powerfully by Orlando Fals Borda (1998, 2006a, 2006b).

New epistemological uses of the multiplicity of technological tools at our disposal must arise from our practice as we conduct and share the results of our inquiries. When Ruth reminds us that, “Our practice remains the most convincing means of demonstrating our arguments,” we now have the ability to go

public with that practice like never before in history. As part of ARNA's living history project, for example, digital video interviews with conference participants and responses to each year's conference theme from action researchers around the world are screened at each conference, archived on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/user/actionresearchna>), and made accessible from an organizational website (www.arnacconnect.org) that has made more than 13,000 visitors in its 1st two years. In terms of knowledge democracy, there is perhaps no greater "front stage" in our popular culture than YouTube, but how do we use this medium most thoughtfully to support a critical action research process? As Christine points out, we must both embrace new technological opportunities, while not yielding ground to those who would dismiss action research as a "soft" approach.

To what extent, though, has action research yet achieved its potential in demonstrating the importance of what we have learned through the construction of new knowledge while engaged in our professional practice? As researchers, what truths have we come closer to uncovering, and how have we applied what we have learned in one professional context to other, similar contexts? John Elliott (2015) reminds us that in the case of educational action research, "The creation of sustainable spaces for virtuous action will need to be supported by the systematic presentation of findings across different action contexts, in the form of practical hypotheses to test, and the use of learning theory to inform the quest for virtuous action through action research" (p. 14).

As we gather together under Lonnie's "Big Tent" within Ortrun's "network-of-networks" to work through the "inexplicable silences" to become "feeling-thinkers" as Ruth and Doris exhort, how do we best follow Christine's advice to return to a *praxis* orientation in the *post postmodern* world in which we now find ourselves living? After all, in the USA, the term *praxis* itself has been co-opted by the Educational Testing Service to refer to a series of required teacher licensure examinations that have been shown to have no correlation whatsoever to teacher effectiveness and yet still allegedly answer the call for accountability. How will we individually and collectively draw upon "the Aristotelian concepts of *praxis*—morally informed action aimed at achieving some ethical 'good'—and *phronesis*—the mode of practical reasoning appropriate to deciding what, in any particular concrete situation, would constitute an appropriate expression of the 'good'" (Carr & Kemmis, 2005, p. 352) as we stay critical, as we must, in a new era still dominated by technical rationality? How will the new world network of action research envisioned here take on what has become an education-industrial complex (Picciano & Spring, 2013) and engage in what Torres and Reyes (2011) call research as *praxis*?

Alan Kirby (2006) has branded our *post postmodern* age, *digimodern*, noting that we have become so immersed in texting, tweeting, surfing, skypeing, uploading, and downloading, that, far from dialogically engaging in a multiplicity of ideologies or worldviews, we have rather somnolently allowed our-

selves to be immersed within a capitalist grand narrative “of globalised market economics raised to the level of the sole and over-powering regulator of all social activity—monopolistic, all-engulfing, all-explaining, all-structuring, as every academic must disagreeably recognize” (np.) Only through our conscious, collective, and critical actions, perhaps now including participatory action research projects that meet local needs connected more directly to communities confronting similar challenges worldwide, can we shed light on “unwelcome truths” not likely to be reported on network news, including the fact that the World Economic Forum identifies deepening income inequality in both developed and developing nations as its most worrisome trend of the year (Mohammed, 2015).

As we expand upon our dialogue in Pretoria, Braga, and Knoxville in 2016 and prepare to gather together for the 40th anniversary of the 1st World Symposium of Participatory Action Research in Cartagena, Colombia, in 2017, it is crucial for us not to lose our own historical memory in this instance by recalling Paulo Freire’s request to those attending the 20th anniversary of the 1st World Symposium:

I hope we can meet in another opportunity to reminisce and to think about how to continue with our struggles. Above all we must fight against the power of the dominant neoliberal ideology that keeps on offending and attacking the human nature while reproducing itself socially and historically, threatening dreams, utopias and hopes. (Published as a Posthumous Message and cited in Fals Borda, 1998, p. xvii)

What is most exciting to me about the current state of global action and participatory research is also that which is potentially most disconcerting and that which must form the basis of our continued *praxis* in an uncertain but promising new era of international collaboration.

49.2 COMMENTS/REFLEXIÓN

Following the first round of writing, all the contributions were put into a single document that was then shared with all six contributors. Each person was asked to write a brief reply to the collective statement that had emerged. Here are those replies.

49.2.1 *Ruth’s Reply*

The preceding discussion usefully problematizes the question of how to develop “international interlocution arrangements.” I suggest we take this forward in the spirit of action research and using its tools. I found that using action research with and among action researchers in our recent CARN on the MOVE! consultation was an exhilarating process as people grasped the chance for dialogue. The strength of such mutual understanding and support is powerful. I offer an image from a recent dream (see Balogh, 2015) to illustrate:

I needed to get to the CARN Conference. It involved descending a number of levels going down narrow staircases and ladders, one like a rope ladder, but the rungs irregular, barely recognizable and it's a struggle to know where to put my feet—they're made of some flexible and stretchy material, with twisted skeins of different colors, not something you'd want to put your weight on, but it held.

On waking, I realized the dream was telling me to “get down” to work on conference arrangements, but afterward I thought further: about the stretchy ladder being like our network—irregular, varying in size, shape, color, texture, sometimes unpromising as a means of support—but nonetheless holding me if I trod carefully, studying the nature of each step.

Constructing “cross-cultural communicative spaces” will depend on our ability to draw on the full repertoire of our existing resources, including the already fruitful dialogues between our networks, and our ability to tread with “care” in its widest sense.

49.2.2 *Christine's Reply*

Threaded through the words in this chapter, and indeed across the chapters in this *Handbook*, is an “intellectual kinship” (Freire, 1985) that holds together action research and action researchers across the globe.

On this larger canvas, each of us, as educators [and researchers], participates in education because we share a common fate: to be bound up with one another in a world we share. (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 217).

Typically, but not uniformly, we conduct our empirical work in particular sites, about particular practices with particular practitioners under particular conditions enabled and constrained by the practice architectures that exist in these sites of practice (Kemmis et al., 2014).

Action research, as site-based education development, offers both a generative and a durable message for our times and circumstances that sensitizes our research to focus acutely on what matters in education and in educational change: that is, practices. In such ways, site-based education development provides a critical-theoretical frame of reference, which allows teachers, researchers, and teachers-as-researchers to interrogate and transcend the limitations of their inherited traditions. At the same time, it allows these practitioners an educative freedom to design morally and culturally appropriate educational practices that matter to those in the site, practices not subsumed under indelible regimes of political power and administrative pressure. Against this pressure, Kemmis and colleagues (2014) suggest that site-based education development

is not just an idea, it is a living practice: a way for people to enact hope [for a better future]. [It] might also be a rallying cry for a social movement—an educational movement—in our times. [It] is a way to revitalise education in our times—a way, that is, to revitalise education in an era of schooling. (p. 217)

49.2.3 *Doris's Reply*

Anyone who has the opportunity to read this book will witness the strengthening of an international movement aimed at creating a better world through action research and participatory research. Action research advocates and practitioners have put creative ideas and politically committed actions into motion in a century full of challenges. They have achieved creating action research and participatory research initiatives that transcend country borders and individual interests to make social justice a common cause. Though the first decades of the twenty-first century have revealed new forms of already-existing social injustice to practitioners of action research and participatory research, these practitioners have faced the new challenges with hope and courage, resorting to new means and scenarios that the new times themselves offer. Shared feelings, collective thinking, and collaborative writing about global problems, as well as worthy efforts to find feasible solutions, are possible now thanks to the networking of networks. This book, and particularly this concluding chapter, is an effort toward this goal. Weaving empirically based thoughts through collaborative writing creates a new scenario to reflect upon, that is, the potential of our acting together as social scientists and citizens of the world. I hope authors and readers find creative and timely ways to keep on promoting the achievement of more democratic societies through strengthening our global ties.

49.2.4 *Ortrun's Reply*

In this concluding chapter we have practiced what we preach. As Ruth put it: "Our practice remains the most convincing means of demonstrating our arguments." In the 1st *Rundbrief*, we demonstrated and reflected on our and our associations' *praxis*, that is, according to Joe's reference to Aristotle, "morally informed action aimed at achieving some ethical 'good,' ... as we stay critical, as we must, in a new era dominated by technical rationality." In our reflections we have both appreciated the positive development of action research to date and for the future, and recognized critically its limitations and other shortcomings.

Two insights in particular stand out. First, all six co-authors agree on the vital importance of collaboration, not only among the main action research network organizations but also among other groups that share many of our interests. As Lonnie predicts, "As we begin to articulate how we will collaborate in updating our understandings of action research in the twenty-first century we will simultaneously, I believe, open ourselves to imaging a revitalized vision of the potential of action research to contribute to a more just and sustainable world."

Second, as Doris reaffirmed, is Orlando Fals Borda's call for "feeling-thinkers," where we take a holistic "affective-sociocognitive" approach to learning and knowledge creation (Zuber-Skerritt et al., 2015). This requires a more comprehensive, inclusive view of knowledge, not only as cognitive (theoretical/propositional) but also as affective (intuitive, tacit, experiential, and spiritual) and as social (relational, local, and indigenous).

In conclusion, our vision of action research for the twenty-first century entails a collaborative, participatory paradigm of learning, creating knowledge and developing action leadership for personal, professional, team, organization, and community development, as we work mindfully to create a better world without entrenched poverty and with social inclusion, justice, and peace.

49.2.5 *Joe's Reply*

The hard work to build upon the promise laid out here for new international collaboration and co-operation in action research must now begin in earnest, and we must work together to take new action that affirms our stand against injustice in a globalized world. All too often, even in our own professional organizations, research is used by the powerful to maintain the status quo, and yet challenge we must. As an educational action researcher, I never cease to be amazed by how similar educational structures are worldwide for those in the same or a similar socioeconomic class. What worries me most right now is the educational apartheid that is being enacted worldwide in the name of accountability and efficiency, ensuring that the rich receive a world-class education and that the poor learn to accept their lot as workers—not thinkers—in what is supposed to be a free and democratic society.

Action research is dangerous precisely because in its commitment to social justice it must and does challenge the status quo. This volume documents the strengths of a worldwide movement that is making life better for so many, and together we will go forward, as we must, united in the struggle. Invariably, we will differ on what's most important or even what counts as action research and what does not, but, most crucially, we understand that the knowledge democracy in which we so passionately believe is fragile and thrives only through our collective action.

As we and our colleagues meet soon in Braga, Pretoria, and Knoxville, I ask us to articulate clearly during and after our meetings how the world is a better place because we had the opportunity to come together, and then when we convene for the 40th anniversary of the 1st World Congress of Participatory Action Research in Cartagena, Colombia in 2017, we must share with the world what we have learned through our collective action that has improved the lives of many more from all corners of the globe.

49.2.6 *Lonnie's Concluding Comment*

The digital-dialogical interactions reflected in this concluding chapter are, I believe, the beginnings of a process that will lead to changes in the structure and practices of the global action research community. There is no way to predict what these changes will yield in terms of action research *praxis*. But that is not the point. What we have engaged in through this brief dialogue is an experience of co-creating a certain attitude of hope and determination. With many shared points of reference—Paulo Freire, Orlando Fals Borda, Stephen

Kemmis, Wilfred Carr, John Elliott, and others—we have shown our respect for the heritage of action research as well as our willingness to contribute to carrying that heritage forward into the future. The many localities and specificities of action research are coming together in relation to something happening on a larger, and both more frightening and more empowering plain, namely the perilous state of the planet.

The “intercultural translation” called for by Boaventura do Sousa Santos (2014) proceeds from a deep recognition that “the aim of translation between knowledges is to create cognitive justice. The aim of translation between practices and their agents is to create the conditions for global social justice from the standpoint of the democratic imagination” (p. 234). I believe it is this imagination that our work seeks to nurture and invigorate. Our work in action research is thus entwined with what Santos calls “the new nonconformity [that] results from the verification that it would be possible to live in a much better world today” (p. 234). In his view, our present time is infused with “suppressed emergences and actively and invisibly produced absences” and the global rallying now emerging marks a path to a future “set loose and made available for cathartic imaginations of a better society” (p. 234). This is where international action research now stands. As you see in the dialogue shared through this chapter, the absences associated with education research, and social science research in general, are being made visible and the emergence of a new global consciousness among action researchers is far from being suppressed, even at this early stage of its development. There is a certain cathartic feeling attached to setting the imagination free and nurturing collaboration in seeking creative solutions to the problems we face as a planetary community, and many of us are sharing that feeling. In a dialogue 30 years ago, Paulo Freire was asked how we can talk about “the critical appropriation of the dominant culture by the dominated people” (Freire, 1985, p. 191). In responding, Freire addressed “what happens to the dominated culture when it strives for liberation” (p. 193). I conclude with his further articulation of this historical process:

When it was merely the dominated culture, it was subject to indoctrination, and it was domesticated. But now, though still dominated, it wants to liberate itself. And in this process of wanting to liberate itself, it also discovers that the dominant culture, precisely because it is dominant, was forced to develop a series of analytical, and scientific strategies to achieve its own purpose. ... When the dominated culture perceives the need to liberate itself, it discovers that it has to take the initiative and develop its own strategies, as well as use those of the dominant culture. (p. 193).

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ERRATUM: THE PALGRAVE INTERNATIONAL HANDBOOK OF ACTION RESEARCH

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