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**Action Research in Diverse Contexts:  
Contemporary Challenges**

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## Introduction

Tina Moules

At long last I have turned my attention to pulling together the Bulletin for the CARN Conference in Cambridge in November 2010. As I set to, I wonder whose idea it was to volunteer to edit the Bulletin? Ah yes, it seemed a really good idea at the time, but like all good intentions many things have sought to stand in my way; not least the fact that I have left work behind and found that life after Anglia Ruskin does actually exist! So.....it is time to reflect on our Conference, held at the University Arms Hotel in Cambridge on the 5<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> November, 2010.



Our conference title was ‘*Action Research in Diverse Contexts: Contemporary Challenges*’. We welcomed delegates from nineteen countries across all six continents, which certainly enabled us to explore the diverse challenges we all face in contemporary societies. In reflecting on our conference my enduring memory is one of tremendous enjoyment made more special by the friendship and collegiateness of all who attended. But other memories are also etched on my mind and I think will remain with me forever. First and foremost I remember the huge amount of time and effort put into organizing the conference by our team, led by Carol Munn-Giddings. As we celebrated together on the evening before the first day, we had no inkling of the scale of the challenges we were to face....who could have foreseen that the linen truck would break down meaning that the table clothes were late, meaning lunch was late meaning the start was late.....who could possibly have forecast a fire alarm that would see us all stream out on to the street on a miserable grey and damp day, leading to cancellation and swift reordering of sessions.....who was it who turned the heating up leading to so many complaints to our stoic administrator Jennie and requiring me to go and

buy a tee shirt as I was so hot!.....who made sure it rained on November 5<sup>th</sup> making for a very soggy trip to the Guy Fawkes Bonfire to watch the fireworks.....and then to top it all why did it have to be my lap top that disappeared from the break out room! However with the support of many other colleagues we pulled together and dealt with everything thrown at us. I can honestly say I have never worked with such a marvelous group of colleagues and friends.

Pulling together material for this Bulletin has also been a challenge but I think what is presented here will serve to remind you of some of the wonderful opportunities we had to meet like-minded colleagues and share some fascinating insights into work from across the world. The feedback from delegates was quite overwhelming and I share a few of their wonderful words with you here:

Richard Winter gave us his reflections:

*“Please could you pass on to all the CARN Conference organizers and administrators my appreciation and thanks for a wonderful event.....In spite of adverse circumstances (!) that you couldn't have possibly anticipated all the arrangements remained very efficient and I had a continuous sense of being ‘taken care of’ and that everything was in safe hands. This provided a comfortable and friendly context for a truly inspiring collection of people and projects from all round the world”.*

John Elliot wrote:

*“ I think it was the best CARN Conference I have attended for quite a few years ”.*

Jack Whitehead sent us his reflection:

*“ I'm still buzzing from the conversations and presentations at the CARN conference ”.*

Margaret Ledwith wrote:

*I want to send my sincere thanks to Carol Munn-Giddings and to everyone in the team for creating the context for such a wonderful CARN 2010. It created the ambience for people from all over the world to come together in a trusting critical space to share ideas, to connect and reconnect, and to go back into the world with new ideas on action. My feeling is that this is the beginning of a new chapter in CARN, a chapter that connects local people to global change. For me the experience was exhilarating, and I am harnessing that energy and enthusiasm, redirecting its inspiration towards my own practice in the world. I thoroughly enjoyed the wonderful music of the ceilidh band....Then the toe-tapping irresistible dance tunes not only got those of us who remember the fun of eightsome reels on our feet, but to see people from other cultures, so at ease doing the Gay Gordons was a delight”.*

The format of the Bulletin this year has changed slightly and so it consists not only of papers but also some reflections from participants. What follows serves as reminder of just a few of the exciting nuggets of knowledge we shared together during the many excellent papers and workshops. The first paper is by *Margaret Ledwith* who inspired us all with her keynote which focused on emancipatory research as a form of action research. Margaret's passion for community development and her commitment to striving for social justice shine through. Olav Eikeland has had his paper published so I was unable to include the whole paper in the Bulletin. However I have given you the reference so you can follow it up. We had 4 Committees of Inquiry and each one gave colleagues opportunities to explore ideas about 'What if? Questionings, Openings and Becomings'. *Cathie Pearce* led Committee of Inquiry 4 and she shares with us some notes on the direction their discussion took. The CoIs I have attended over recent years have always been stimulating, encouraging exciting, new ideas and they have always left me feeling re-invigorated towards my work. Perhaps the questions that Cathie asks might serve to create 'openings' for some new 'becomings' amongst us. *Ruth Balogh* follows with her thoughts on her round table in which she asked participants to join in some 'social dreaming'. *Karen Stuart* then reflects on two of the sessions she attended and how she has been inspired to move her work onwards by exploring the use of creative methods and metaphors to elicit meaning. Then *Dimitra Kontostavlaki*, *Efi Kontou*, *Filimon Diamantidis* and *Vasilis Dimopoulos* give us a brief reflection on how participating in the conference helped them with their project, which used the European Foundation for Quality Management model of excellence and its tools to raise awareness of their students to environmental issues. *Jack Whitehead* takes us back by recapping his presentation and providing us with an update of his research work since the Conference.

The next two papers presented both have a common theme around the use of digital media in education. The first is by *Antonio Bautista* and *German Bautista* who present the text of their presentation made on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> November with their colleague Beatriz Carraolino Arranz. Their study explored the use of photography and film - audio-visual narration - to enhance textual storytelling. They conclude that the use of the technological methods helped children to make more sense of things, ideas and life events than pure textual storytelling alone. *Joseph Shosh* follows with the text of his presentation about his study, which used action research to explore the construction of 'third space learning' opportunities for marginalized high school students. The study brought together teachers, student teachers and high school students in a project to digitally document the history of their changing city and its residents. In the next paper *Concepción Sánchez-Blanco* discusses the findings from her action research project study carried out in a primary school in A Coruña (Spain), which set out to explore

how teacher and pupils live with social conflicts and learn about democracy. She focuses here on just one of the problems identified, which was in relation to the children's behaviour in the classroom and the teacher's responses. The purpose of the action research was to help the teacher to be more reflexive and to create a more democratic environment.

The penultimate paper is presented by *E. Alana James* who shares with us the experience of her use of the 'networked hub and spoke' design to teach action research online to doctoral students. She used a three-step action research cycle (discovery, measurable action and reflection) as a teaching tool to enable the students to develop an understanding of the cycles of action research. Finally *Luis Ortiz Jimenez* gives us insight into his project, which aims to improve the guidance given to university students in the tutorial system. The need to provide appropriate guidance to students across all areas of their education and life is something all of us working in higher education grapple with and seek to enhance.

Our Conference was however tinged with sadness. In her keynote Margaret Ledwith started by honouring the life of *Pam Nason*, a longstanding friend and CARN colleague and I have included Margaret's words in the Bulletin. Then seeking items for the Bulletin I learned about the passing of our colleague *Christian Malus*, from the Department of Project Management at the University of Applied Sciences in Vienna, who died in an accident in June 2011. This news came as such a shock and moved me to reflect on how suddenly life can change for any of us. I had been in touch with Christian in November 2010 and again in April 2011 regarding the Bulletin. Christian was very keen for his work to appear in the Bulletin and he sent me two long papers. After contacting his colleague I have decided to include the abstracts from both his papers and I present them in the Bulletin in his memory.

I hope reading the Bulletin helps you to reflect on how the Conference was for you and reminds you of the wonderful knowledge generated and of the friendships forged.

Tina Moules

**In Memory of Pam Nason by Margaret Ledwith**

Here is a beautiful photo of Pam taken by Anne Hunt in Chelmsford, at the Anglia Ruskin conference earlier this year.



Shortly after this, Pam became critically ill, and she died, at home, as she wished. Many of you will know Pam from previous CARN conferences; she was in Athens with us just a year ago. She brought not only a warm generosity of spirit, but also a sharp, insightful analysis of social injustice. This was reflected in her work at University of New Brunswick, Canada, where she founded the Children's Centre in 1974. The Children's Centre offers a critical space in the form of a kindergarten classroom that has attracted many visiting educators to reflect on their role over the years. Promoting equality, it became the focus for collaborative partnerships with families from the Fredericton Family Resource Centre, giving voice to children, parents and practitioners. In these ways, Pam and her colleagues pioneered changes in policies and practice that have influenced not only the entire province of New Brunswick, but many places across Canada. Before she died, Pam received a prestigious presidential citation in honour of her work. Pam's commitment was to democratic practice, to 'naming social injustice and creating a more just and equitable society'. This is precisely the nature of my talk today, so, this one's for you, Pam!

**In Memory of** Christian Malus MBA, cPM.

**Increasing sustainability of project results through reflection and motivation.**

Motivation in projects can function as a driver to accomplish them more successfully than without. But how can this motivation be raised? Initiated by intrinsic or extrinsic factors and energized by reflection, motivation on the team performing a company's internal project impacts structural changes (and thus long term acceptance) of corporate processes. Reflection helps project team members to feel more accepted during project work because everybody is allowed to contribute to the project results by actively reflecting on project processes. For this reason the qualitative research approach 'Action Research' will be explained and combined with a valuable element of the person-centered approach called 'Active Listening'. This combination is introduced as the basis for better communication and motivation. The research project establishes how companies are dealing with 'Motivation in Projects' to sustainably shape long-term corporate processes. Without a structured process of communicating and reflecting, intrinsic motivation cannot be raised and project results cannot be achieved sustainably for the company.

**The integration of reflective interventions in projects as an evaluation model for increased liquidity.**

Action Research is used for the improvement of processes and helps researchers to learn from actions in defined situations. Design Research is important for designing information systems. Combined, these two are an addition for project managers who need both knowledge of reflection on project work and a bridge to reflective technical development in projects. By illustrating the project management discipline of the Unified Process, a software development framework, a better understanding for the proposed combined method will be achieved, leading to the improvement the Unified Process needs for more efficient project controlling. An example from project management, i.e. conducting the project sponsor meeting, will show the interventions of Action Research and Design Research on this defined project controlling sub-discipline of the enriched Unified Process as a combined intervention method for reflecting on project activities. Furthermore, the project controlling discipline will be applied to the methodology of the IPMA, one of the global organizations for standardizing project management. Despite the controversial discussion on similarities between Action Research and Design Research, an attempt will be made to illustrate that Design Research approach helps project managers to make their projects more time and cost-effective. Enriching project management with Action Research and Design Research interventions leads to higher quality in projects, and the modified interventions helps project managers to stay within financial boundaries in their projects, otherwise costs could exceed the surplus from a project's

business case because each reflection in a project costs more, which negatively impacts liquidity. After the successful end of a project the inflow of money will raise the value of the company and this margin is a positive development. This approach provides a more project-orientated definition of shareholder value and a decision-making basis for managers.

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## **Keynote: Community Development and Emancipatory Action Research**

Margaret Ledwith, University of Cumbria

### **My key themes**

There are three key themes that provide the substance for what I would like to talk about today:

- Ideas and experience influence the way we make sense of the world and the way we act in the world
- This calls for a critical approach to practice if we are to be relevant in these times of unprecedented world change
- It builds on an idea in the keynote given by Stephen Kemmis at the Athens conference, 2009, '*...action research should aim not just at achieving knowledge of the world, but achieving a better world*'.

### **From Classroom to Community**

I want to begin with a story that illustrates the way in which ideas and experience influence the way we act in the world. Many years ago, I was a newly qualified teacher standing before a large class of eight to ten year-olds. Over the sound of my knees knocking together with fright, I could hear a voice inside me telling me saying that all was not right. This was an intuitive feeling; I was equipped with no means of understanding what was happening. Three years of teacher education had emphasised that schools have nothing to do with politics. It was sometime later that I discovered that this was an untruth; schools are the context for some of the most profound political experiences we have. Now, I understand that what I could see acted out before me all those years ago was hegemony-in-action, a microcosm of wider society reinforcing superiority and inferiority according to 'race', class, gender and all other social differences. But, at the time, I was not equipped with an analysis of power to give me insight into schooling as hegemonic. Because of this lack of analysis, I fell into the trap of seeing educational underachievement as a personal rather than political issue, and concentrated my search in the direction of adult literacy and educational psychology.

I became involved in the national adult literacy campaign of the 1970s, and came into close contact with the impact of education failing some people more than others. Gladys told me how she spent decades forgetting her glasses in case she was asked to read something, and Bill spent two evenings every week in class with his arm encircling his paper, tensely copying from a book in the hope that he would eventually get the hang of reading. Both epitomise how the political becomes personalised.

Just after this, circumstances far too complex to explain to you here, led me to Montrose, working in a Home Office Vietnamese refugee project that was being set up locally for the ‘boat people’, people who had been abandoned on the South China Sea as they floated adrift on rusty old landing craft, escaping from tyranny in their own country only to find that the boats of other countries sailed on by. I listened to stories of life beyond my experience: stories of fear and survival, stories of giving birth on board an open boat where there was no room for everyone to lie down, where the men held up curtains to maintain some sort of human dignity, stories of tragedy, Bhi who wiped her eyes on her headscarf every time she talked about running from the safe house to board the boat, of getting separating from her husband and four of her seven children, now not knowing whether they were alive or dead. Then there was the sea captain, who spent years of his life learning English from comics he managed to get hold of in Vietnam, in preparation for transferring his skills to the captaincy of western boats. The realisation dawned on me that these people, with their courage and hope for a brave new world, would be last in the pecking order for homes and jobs. They taught me more about power in the world than I had so far discovered, and this caused me to change tack from pathologising educational failure to politicising education, from educational psychology to community development, and Edinburgh University, where David Alexander introduced me to the ideas of Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire with tears in his eyes as he applied analyses of power to his experience in Africa. As he explained Gramsci’s concept of *hegemony*, I discovered an analysis of power so obvious that I could not understand why I had not thought of it myself! This is the nature of *false consciousness*; critical consciousness does not erupt spontaneously without an intervention in the taken-for-grantedness of everyday life.

In these ways, I found the analyses of power that had proved so elusive in my early teaching days, and I found community development, a form of popular education that has analyses of power at the heart of its process. Community development, for these reasons, is not an occupation or a profession; it is a way of life. And so it came about that my life purpose began to make sense: to promote social justice and environmental sustainability through the theory and practice of community development and its commitment to social transformation.

### **Action research spawned radical community development**

1968 is widely acknowledged as a critical juncture in world history, described by Popple (1995:15) as a year of “*revolt, rebellion and reaction throughout the world*”. It was a year when civil disobedience erupted in the form of ‘race’ riots, student demonstrations, civil rights marches and anti-Vietnam protests, and which witnessed the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. The Urban Programme was a Labour Government

response to social unrest around unemployment, immigration and 'race' relations designed to defuse tension generated by Enoch Powell's 'rivers of blood' speech. The national Community Development Project was established the following year, 1969, and community development projects were established in twelve communities in poverty to generate theory from action research, based on an analysis of Keith Joseph's (1972) 'cycles of deprivation' theory (Rutter and Madge, 1976). The grassroots experience of the impact of poverty on people's lives led the project workers to reject this reactionary theory in favour of radical-structural analyses of discrimination. The translation of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* and Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* into English during this period had an immense impact on community development praxis (and subsequently on the canon of action research that emerged in the early 80s), as did Alinsky's *Reveille for Radicals*, well-thumbed copies of which poked out of the pockets of any community activist at the time. In these ways, the theory and practice of radical community work came together, and community development presented itself as a radical alternative to social work. Radical community development gets beyond symptoms to the root causes of discrimination, and builds theory in action from grassroots, moving collectively towards social movements for change.

### **Community Development Praxis**

Community development is predicated on principles of social justice and environmental justice, a sustainable world in balance, an ecosystem in which everyone and everything flourishes, a democracy based on participation and collective wellbeing. Its values are embedded in every aspect of its process; community development is a 'set of values embodied in an occupation' (CDF). An ideology of equality, embracing values of respect, dignity, trust, mutuality, reciprocity, informs every stage of our process, providing a framework of checks and balances that ensure that we are doing what we claim to be doing. Popular education for participatory democracy is woven through the plethora of often very practical local projects that we develop in partnership with local people. The process of *becoming critical* leads to collective action, reaching outwards from projects to campaigns, to networks, to alliances, and to movements for change. It is impossible for us to work with transformative concepts without analyses of the social, political and economic forces that shape everyday experience. For instance, how can we claim to work with *empowerment* without an analysis of power?

### **Emancipatory Action Research**

Emancipatory action research seeks to be participatory and collaborative, involving everyone in the process of change, demanding "*that the investigator be as open to change as the 'subjects' are encouraged to be - only they are now more like co-researchers than like*

*conventional subjects*” (Rowan, 1981:97). This is a model of research, which is based on collective action, with all participants acting in the interests of the whole. It begins as a response to the experience of the oppressed and is a mutual, reciprocal process of discovery “*where the researcher and the researched both contribute to the expansion of the other’s knowledge*” (Opie, 1992:66).

Emancipatory action research is that form of action research, which in line with our practice, is firmly grounded in an ideology of equality. It adopts a methodology and methods, which are collaborative, and in doing so commits to identifying and challenging unequal power relations within its process. It is rooted in *dialogue*, attempting to work *with*, not *on*, people, and intends that its process should be empowering for all involved. More than this, it is committed to collective action for social change as its outcome. My assertion is that not only is this approach to research consonant with the values, vision and principles of community development, but is an essential component of its critical praxis (Ledwith, 2011; Ledwith and Springett, 2010).

### **Freirean pedagogy brought a critical edge to community development and action research**

In the 1970s, practitioners became aware of the way that hegemony pathologises poverty by labeling it a personal failure. Paulo Freire, when his family was reduced to bare survival in Brazil during the Depression of the 1930s, was struck, as a boy at the time, by the way that people are silenced by their suffering and do not make a fuss about it. The experience stayed with him, and he coined the concept ‘culture of silence’ to capture the way that false consciousness creates acquiescence, that unquestioningly people accept their lot.

Community development begins in the everyday reality of people’s lives by “*extraordinarily re-experiencing the ordinary*” (Shor, 1992:122). It is a praxis, which locates the silenced stories of those who are marginalised and excluded at the heart of any theory of change for social justice. Their stories are the basis of our theory and our practice. In a process of action and reflection, theory builds from experience. Praxis is the synthesis of theory and practice to a point where they become a unity, where theory develops in action. The key to this process is problem-posing or *problematizing* (Freire, 1972). People are encouraged to ask thought-provoking questions and “*to question answers rather than merely to answer questions*” (Shor in McLaren and Leonard, 1993:26). This critical approach to community development exposes structures of power and the way these impact on personal lives. However, critical consciousness is not liberating until it becomes a collective process for change. Freire did not believe in self-liberation:

*“Liberating education is a social process of illumination ... Even when you individually feel yourself most free, if this feeling is not a social feeling, if you are not able to use your recent freedom to help others to be free by transforming the totality of society, then you are exercising only an individualist attitude towards empowerment or freedom”.* (Freire in Shor and Freire, 1987:109)

Identifying critical spaces for creating critical dissent dialogue, central to Freirean pedagogy (1972), is vital in emancipatory practice. Dialogue, in this sense, is a mutual, reciprocal relationship that equalises power between people and bridges the silencing or controlling of the powerful to the powerless. It begins with *problematizing*. This simply means that there is a focus to the initial debate that is relevant to the people involved, and it sends out signals that participation is expected and needed in the process (Shor and Freire, 1987). It often takes the form of a *codification*, or a way of capturing an aspect of life’s everyday reality and bringing it into the group in the form of a photograph, story, poem, cartoon, drama or music. This generates relevance, interest, debate and alternative perspectives as dialogue within the groups deepens and gradually shifts from the codification, assuming a more critical analysis of the issue. Through a process of questioning – *Who? What? Why? When? Where?* – the taken-for-grantedness of everyday life is dismantled, a new confidence emerges, new possibilities are explored and action for change is planned.

### **Collective action for change**

Collective action is the essence of community development. Freire was very clear that the process of conscientisation is not about personal gain, but collective transformation for a better world for all. In cycles of action/reflection, community development operates in many contexts on many levels. A local community project, such as Scholes Community Garden, which has created a critical space for this community in Wigan, can enhance the wellbeing of a community. This community garden nestles in the folds of gardenless, tightly packed miners’ houses. The garden was built on derelict land where a row of housing had disappeared down a subsiding mineshaft, leaving dereliction and decay. This collective community project has provided an oasis in an area where there is very little open space or sign of anything growing.

For action to be transformative, it has to move onto an increasingly collective level. The campaign on migrant work permits organised by the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland captures this process beautifully. Starting from personal contacts, groups were formed, from

community groups alliances were forged, until this campaign became increasingly collective and was successful in changing Irish policy on work permits in 2009.

Social movements for change offer transformative potential, and for this we have much to learn from Latin America. For example, the Bolivian social movement has transformed their country into a participatory democracy. Here you see an example of global action, the Beijing Conference of 1995 was the setting for 30,000 women of the world, some risking their lives, to come together to raise awareness of the violation of women's rights the world over, to form global alliances and to pressure individual governments into making a commitment to change.

### **Political context**

Being critical calls for an analysis of the political context of personal lives. As UNICEF says:

*“The true measure of a nation's standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued, and included in the families and societies into which they are born”.* (UNICEF, 2007)

Yet most people are not aware of the way that child poverty reduces life chances for children based on race, class and gender divisions. For example, during the Thatcher years in the UK, child poverty increased from 1:10 in 1979 to 1:3 by 1997. This level of child poverty persists today. In 2005, a UNICEF report on *the State of the World's Children: Childhood under threat* identified that one in every two of the world's children is growing up in poverty. Then, the UNICEF report of 2007 on child wellbeing in rich countries ranked the UK bottom of 21 in achieving childhood wellbeing! I feel ashamed to be part of a country where children's happiness is so disregarded.

In addition to this, looking globally we see a widening gap between poverty and prosperity both within and between countries, giving rise to that strange phenomenon of escalating divisions between rich and poor in wealthy countries. Globalisation escalated while we were not paying attention and transmitted its neoliberal free-trade principle to all corners of the globe, projecting the ideology of the market and its profit over people and planet imperative. The result has been that structures of oppression implicit in this ideology are now reproduced on a global level.

My argument at this point centres on the fact that we have unwittingly allowed ourselves to be distracted by an emphasis on skills, bureaucracy and managerialism to become unquestioning

deliverers of policy. Meanwhile, this has provided a smokescreen for the ideology of the market to permeate everything about life on earth, creating a western worldview that measures success according to some sort of strange profit and loss account, positioning us all according to our relevance as consumers and producers. As Giroux so powerfully puts it, we have created a 'politics of disposability'; those who are not central to the processes of production or consumption are dispensable. It is a world in which the poor, the Black, the female, the young, the old, the sick and the disabled are not key players in the game, and we saw this acted out on the world stage as Hurricane Katrina hit the largely Black communities of New Orleans in 2005. The images that remain with us are of dead and abandoned, mostly Black, mostly female, mostly poor and often young or elderly people in the floodwaters, as the ill-maintained levees gave way, while the rest of the USA, the most powerful country in the world, carried on with business as usual.

Our failure to critique what is going on in the world, to critique ourselves and the part we play in it, renders us uncritical and therefore more likely to be shoring up the *status quo* than working for social justice. Critique and dissent are fundamental to a healthy democracy; it is time for us to get critical. Our disenchantment with the world offers an intervention in what is, to discover what alternatives are possible. As Kemmis (2006) says, 'inadequate action research' is that which is decontextualised from political, social and economic structures. Fragmenting the context fragments our analysis.

### **Keeping it critical!**

Finally, my conclusion is that we are living through unprecedented times of change, in which, under neoliberal globalisation, the ideology of the market, with its profit imperative, is permeating everything about human being, measuring success according to some strange profit and loss account that has come to characterise the western worldview, permeated everything from personal relationships to education to health to community. In community development, a culture of managerialism and professionalism in which skills have been elevated over theory and analysis, we have allowed ourselves unwittingly to decontextualise our practice. In recent times, we have witnessed a world banking crisis threaten to bankrupt entire nations and recovery predicated on the poor of the world paying for the excesses of the rich. We see shifting boundaries between the state, civil society and the market, in which the little state gives rise to the Big Society, as public sector funding which maintains democracy's commitment to health, wellbeing and happiness become privatised before our very eyes.

I would like to leave you with a final thought and a challenge. Firstly, an idea that has the potential to change our worldview. In *The Spirit Level*, Wilkinson and Pickett emphasise that

*“ironically, further improvements in the quality of life no longer depend on further economic growth: the issue is now community and how we relate to each other”, and that*

*“large inequalities produce all the problems associated with social difference and the divisive class prejudices which go with them, but ... it also weakens community life, reduces trust and increases violence” (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009:45).*

Finally, my challenge: CARN offers a critical space in which to engage with these issues and develop its collective potential for change, a potential that places it at the cutting edge of co-creating a new worldview, one which aspires to human flourishing.

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**Keynote: Olav Eikeland**

A paper related to Olav's keynote lecture can be found in the EARJ as follows:

Eikeland, O. (2012). Action Research and Organisational Learning: a Norwegian approach to doing action research in complex organizations. **EARJ** 20(2), pp. 267 – 290.

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**The Committees of Inquiry asked us as groups to explore ‘what if? Questionings, openings and becomings’. Cathie Pearce.**

Maxine Greene once commented that to ask the question, what if? is to invite the possible from what sometimes seems impossible. It is also to “linger in places that are meant to be passed through” (Marc Auge). At the conference, this committee met three times to jointly explore and discuss the issues that arose from the keynotes, the parallel sessions as well as drawing from out of programme conversations. Below are some of the questions and openings that arose and which we spent time with.

Can CARN realize its potential collective power?

What if we are ‘afraid’ to try?

What if we write up conversation pieces as presentations?

What if we write more about our confusions? – short, not long!

What if we had a sense of action research cut loose from traditional academic writing and more open to its own construction and ways of knowing?

What is a coming to know?

How specific should our ‘what ifs’ be?

.....I want to explore ideas on ‘ends’ being part of any open inquiry (a point that arose from John Elliott’s key note).

.....affirmation from colleagues is really helpful. Being playful, I would say, is the overriding theme of today’s conference....

.....notice action researchers. How do we assist their becoming?

.....mobilising meaning is important....

.....becoming resilient through coming to know.....

.....I am fascinated by the possibilities of fusions that fuel creative opportunities....

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## **CARN Conference: dreams, and the gift of data.**

Ruth Balogh

Our annual Conference is a multiverse of communicative spaces; an intermingling of formal deliveries, structured discussions, informal interchanges, the ebb and flow of feelings and energies, glances, knowings – recalled, forgotten, re-awakened and re-constructed. It's my observation that we, as a collectivity, are increasingly recognising the way that experience outside of and beyond formal interchange – in different spaces, via different senses, and through different media – is meaningful for us. Yet there is a constant pull back into the conventions of practice and habits of discourse; bounded by the constraints of timing and spatial organisation it is always a challenge to find ways to open up new ways of relating.

I have been thinking about how interchanges, which take place at CARN Conferences, offer a form of praxis that may also be considered as data ('given'). To me, this has always been implied in the way we work, but less often explicitly practised' in a formal way. The new format for this Bulletin is such a practice; a clear example of how exchanges, learnings and new ways of knowing that emerge from Conference may be recognised and re-framed as text or data.

I wish to share a brief reflection on my attempt to turn my workshop spaces at the 2010 Conference into experimental areas where participants were invited to be co-researchers to work together to create data for mutual inquiry in a project initiated by me. The late Kath Green has for me been an enduring inspiration for this approach. Her contributions at CARN conferences and Study Days never failed to remind us of her lively curiosity and the depth of her confidence in the power of inquiry - so that she seemed perpetually poised to seek out opportunities for action research, self-study and reflective practice in any and every aspect of her life.

My round table discussion '*Reflecting on action research together through social dreaming*' was a chance to explore some questions I'd begun to write about (Balogh, 2010), and was scheduled for Friday evening – the last set of sessions on the first day. But thanks to a concatenation of circumstances this was not to be. Lunch started late and lasted longer than planned, and then a minor fire broke out somewhere in the hotel, sending us out into the damp November street to wait for order to be restored. The entire opening schedule had to be shifted forwards and there was simply no time left in the day for the last session. Some presenters graciously agreed to withdraw, but I managed to negotiate a pair of slots at

breakfast-time for Saturday and Sunday. By happy coincidence I had doubled the amount of time available to me, though I suspect I lost some potential participants at this early hour.

So it was that we came to share our dreams in two small groups in the early morning, my preferred time for recalling dreams. I introduced myself as an inexperienced facilitator of 'social dreaming' as described by Gordon Lawrence of the Tavistock Institute in his book '*Introduction to Social Dreaming*' (Lawrence, 2005) where the focus is on the dreamer not the dream, and meanings are taken as shared rather than private.

*One of my own questions about social dreaming related to how, as a practice, it differs from a 'dream group'. In the latter, dreams are explored collectively but still, according to psychoanalytic convention, taken to have private significance to the dreamer; while in social dreaming meanings are shared. It represented a particular issue within a broader question of how, in social dreaming, do we distinguish between the personal / private and the social / collective?*

I had many questions but this was not one that I shared with the group – there was too much else to share in introducing the very idea of dream material as a source for action research, let alone the novel idea of social dreaming. But it was this question that surfaced urgently in the first dream I had after the conference was over.

Once I had spent a few minutes introducing the Saturday group to the idea of social dreaming and inviting them to co-research the experience with me, I offered a set of photographs as a practice exercise in free association. As Lawrence describes it, the process of social dreaming involves participants voicing dreams (they can be from any point in the dreamer's life) to which others respond, either by contributing their own dream images or by free association. My previous experiments with social dreaming among action researchers had led me to observe that the practice of free association did not necessarily come naturally to participants and so I wanted to help people to practice it first. I had selected the photographs in something of a hurry the night before the conference. The photos belonged to a friend and were taken of holidays we had shared. I had tried to choose simple, emblematic images: the sea, a castle, a tree, a garden, a child opening a door, a soldier. The group successfully engaged with the exercise.

We moved into the realms of sharing dreams. I acted as participant-facilitator, and when the flow of images stalled I found myself using the technique of asking the dreamer to supply more detail. Details of the dream images merged into details of people's lives as the dreamers

sought to enrich and maybe explain the images they were contributing. There were occasions – at both sessions – when such details seemed very important for giving meaning to the dreams. And yet these were based in the contexts of individuals' lives. *So were these examples of social dreaming? Or were we operating as a dream group, helping each other to find private meanings?*

On returning from the conference the first waking dream I had went like this:

*Suddenly I receive a series of texts on my phone – more than I've ever had before. It's an avalanche. I open the final text and it's a dense list of words, lots and lots of them, all separated by punctuation marks. 'Echo' is one of them. I scroll through the texts from back to front, skimming through them. Words first, then images and finally a little movie. One of the images is a photo of my friend whose photos I'd used in my social dreaming session. It was all sunny and bright. I reach the beginning, it's a little home movie made by my partner a while ago. It started with some bees buzzing round my head. We are standing at the edge of a pool and I am batting them aside. Looking at it I immediately feel this as a real experience and begin batting them aside. But it's OK – in the movie I plunge into the pool and the bees are gone. I wake up.*

Many insights flowed (and continue to flow) from this dream, my mind / head buzzing with ideas from the conference; in working with social dreaming I am taking the plunge into the pool of reflection, the pool of ideas. The words of text move into images then into moving images and then I identify myself as both watcher and watched ..... but for this paper I want to identify a specific reference to my question. The photo of my friend in the dream connected me to the photos that we used in the first conference session and I realised that out of the 10 photos, 4 featured people but only one of these had been selected by the 7 participants, and that was of tiny distant figures, not identifiable.

I now observe that I had received a gift from my co-researchers of some very interesting data. They had avoided images with identifiable people, people with faces, people you might know. At a deep level embodied in their collective action they too appeared to be concerned about the issue of the interface between the personal / private and the social / collective. They were telling me that the appearance in dreams of known individuals with whom one has relationships is problematic for interpretation – both at the individual AND at the collective level. And so the tension between privately and co-constructed meanings, a tension that existed within my original question, has deepened to a new formulation:

*How do we deal collectively with contextual material associated with images of people known to the dreamer but not to the others? What level of contextual material is it legitimate to supply in social dreaming? How can we help each other resist the conventions that press us into private interpretations and successfully enter into a social realm, without neglecting the private entirely?*

Thank you, my co-researchers, for guiding me towards this new direction of inquiry.

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## CARN REFLECTIONS

Karen Stuart

When I looked through the CARN conference programme I was delighted to see a session by Sally Graham and Joy Jarvis; '*Revealing thinking in action research through alternative forms of representation*'. Of course I went along!

There was a buzz in the room as soon as we went in, something to do with the pots and jars of pipe cleaners, shapes, beads, fluff, feathers and glitz perhaps! I realise that some people may experience apprehension and fear at the prospect of entering a creative space, but equally many of us feel relief and excitement at the possibility of being released from the world of language and formality.

Sally gave an overview of some key theory, outlining Gisner's (2002) views that using different forms of representation allows us to see the unseen, that Leitch (2000) had described metaphors as surfacing tacit knowledge, and that Gauntlett (2007) used metaphor to reveal personal identities. Oh...other people use metaphors...oh, people use it for research...oh, it might be valid after all! How fabulous!!

There were links to many other conceptual areas that I had explored in my roles as a teacher, as a higher education lecturer, as a youth worker and educational consultant...3D concept maps, art work, physical team mapping, reflection, experiential learning...the links were multiple and very exciting!

Sally and Joy facilitated an activity where we represented an area of our learning in 3D. It was great to be able to think creatively about my PhD research using creative representations. Two things happened for me; firstly I managed to think through the impasse that I had reached in my PhD studies, and I also got inspiration for my new post as head of research in a national youth work organisation – Brathay Trust.

I was not able to attend Paul McIntosh's session, but I was able to contact him afterwards thanks to the conference delegate details. Paul kindly sent me a copy of the power point from his session on *Generative Metaphors: Action and Reflection Through Visual and Literary Media*. This also was inspirational from my research role perspective. I followed up by purchasing his book '*Action Research and Reflective Practice*', and really enjoyed reading about creative methods to generate the reflection that is all-important in action research. His power point was a really great introduction by working through an example of generative

metaphors. If such creative tools could be used in a health context (as Paul has)...then surely I could use them as a social researcher?

### **My experience of metaphors.**

I expect I grew up using metaphors as I made models, painted and developed a teenage hobby in textiles. I also know that I discounted them as ‘serious forms of representation’ as they were situated against the positivistic tradition that my engineer dad brought to the house. Unconsciously artistic endeavour, literary expression and the role of metaphor were discounted. In my professional life I found a ‘legitimate’ use of narratives and art in primary schools teaching, and used metaphors of journeying in outdoor instruction. As a youth development facilitator I broadened my use of metaphor and artifacts as I learned about experiential learning, but was aware of this type of education being discounted as ‘fluffy’. In youth development work I had trained first in a TA101 and then in organisational TA. I was struck by the concept of imago’s (Berne 1968). As an educational consultant at the University of Cumbria I realised that the concept of imago’s would help to map and then develop inter-professional teams.

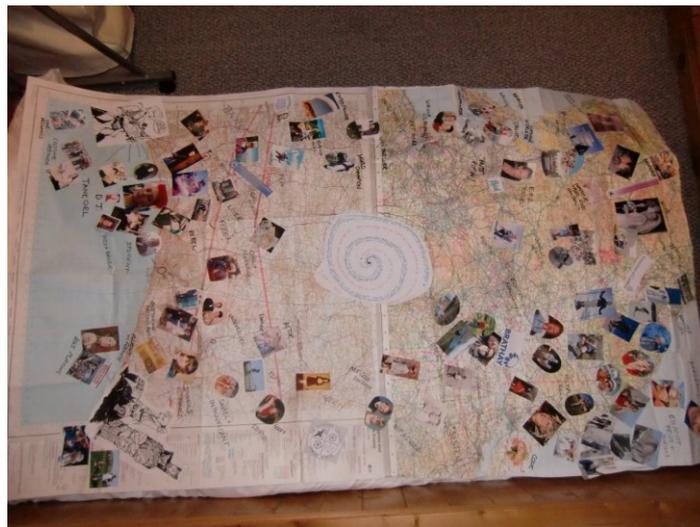
With some trepidation I asked team members to make a map of their teams (see two examples below) by drawing a line on a piece of paper, and filling it with objects that represented each member of their team.



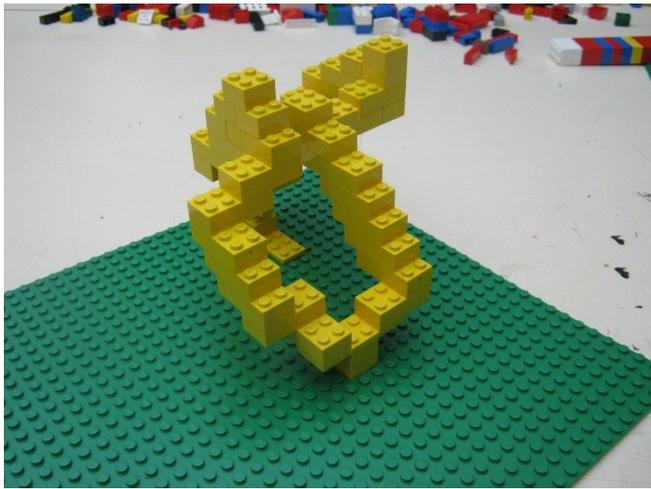
This process probably has links to family constellation work. The maps showed something of the psychological distance between the team members. It showed something of the perceptions that they held of each other (due to the characteristics of the objects chosen) and indicated the cohesiveness of the team. It did this anonymously – no one had disclosed an identity at this point for any of the objects. After exploring the meaning of each ‘map’ it was then possible to enter into developmental conversations with the maps – “where do you want those pieces to be?”, “what would you need to do to make them move over there?”.

The links to the conference sessions are clear. Cumulatively, Sally and Paul's sessions really had an impact on me as a PhD student – I suddenly felt liberated from 'traditional' research methods, and went out to pilot using 3D team modeling in an action research group, using it to capture some of the dynamics of inter-professional work in the children's workforce. I emerged from the shadow of positivistic ridicule and found my personal agency. The results were very interesting. Professional and personal barriers were evidenced by the objects and spatial composition of the work. And it surfaced much deeper dialogue and reflection than I think I would have gained from a 'straight' focus group.

One agency for example was variously presented as: a scorpion on the edge with a sting in its tail, a hard to reach nut to crack, an outside item, not within the boundary at all, a basket case, and an item that is large and could be the hub but isn't! I also started to value the metaphors that I could generate, and started to work metaphorically to express my reflexive thoughts as shown by the personal mapping exercise below.



I then started to reflect on how these creative tools could be employed by Brathay. I started to enhance the creative research tools that we used with new ideas such as natural sculptures, collage, mask making, 3D modeling (from Sally's session) and Lego (from David Gauntlett's book – Creative Explorations). I bought David's book following a reference in Sally's session – I really enjoyed reading how he used Lego to access constructs of personal identity. This was so relevant to Brathay's youth development work. I was so inspired by it that I even used it with my team to explore how we constituted our identities as 'researchers', as shown in the photos below.



*“I feel like Esher’s staircase, with so many areas, knowledge and skills all coming together in the research role”.*

*“My role is organic and could go in so many different directions, and it nurtures growth and links up to so many other people and areas”.*



*“I’m in the cosy area down here, sheltered and protected, it’s a nice place with sunshine. I’m not in that big academic ivory tower, but down here with the practitioners”.*



I had also attended a session at the conference by Yvonne Hill and Una Hanley called *‘Puppets to Promote Dialogue’*. This practical session demonstrated how choices about puppet type and puppet behaviour when re-enacting a story could reveal deeper meaning than the story alone. Yvonne and Una had a set of archetypal puppets, and different versions of stories emerged as these puppets enacted stereotypes and objectified it. After this session I decided to invest in puppets at Brathay and added them to the armoury of creative review and research tools. Research has gained a momentum of its own at Brathay, and practitioners are realising that good ‘reviewing’ or ‘learning’ tools are good research tools. They are now developing their own ideas of creative ways to elicit reflection from young people who are often ‘hard to reach’.

I have since been inspired to attend a metaphor analysis course at MMU Realities Centre – if I use metaphor to elicit meaning, then surely I should be using them as the analytical approach too .... and so my action research journey goes on, both learning about action research, and progressing through phases of action learning myself. Thanks to Sally, Joy, Paul, Yvonne and Una for stimulating personal, professional and academic development for me.

Can't wait for November!!

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### **Self-assessment and improvement plans through action research, according to the EFQM model of excellence.**

Dimitra Kontostavlaki, Efi Kontou, Filimon Diamantidis and Vasilis Dimopoulos - Secondary School Teachers at the Hellenic American Educational Foundation, HAEF-Psychico College.

In the academic year 2009-2010, we decided to assess and evaluate the environmental programs undertaken in our school. In order for this to be achieved, we scheduled an action research project using the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management) model of excellence and its tools (EFQM, 2009). Having in mind the stages of action research (Robson, 2002) we considered the EFQM model as the appropriate framework to accomplish our aim, which was to increase our student's environmental awareness and sensitivity.

We presented our project as a workshop at the CARN Conference in 2010. During the workshop we asked participants to apply the procedure we used to a given example and afterwards to comment on it. After a discussion, we asked them to write down their ideas and comments. We collected these in and after the conference we studied them and reflected on them. All the comments were sent to the participants and we received feedback from some of them. The participants pointed out weaknesses of our project (for example that the subject was too broad) and suggested ways to make it better. This was a great help to us since we identified areas for improvement and some ideas on how to continue effectively were generated. Finally, our involvement in this conference provided us with a great opportunity to come into contact with various people from the academic community and to not only expand and embellish our knowledge but also to experiment with new methods and techniques pertaining to our field of study. By and large we feel that our participation in this conference added to both our academic and personal development and growth.

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**How do I contribute to enhancing the flow of values that carry hope for humanity in personal, professional, local and global contexts and generate educational knowledge?**

Jack Whitehead, Liverpool Hope University.

In this presentation I explained that I have spent much of my professional life in education as an educational action researcher contributing to educational knowledge through the generation and testing of living educational theories. I take a living educational theory to be an individual's explanation of their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live, work and research. At the heart of these explanations are the value-laden practical principles that an individual uses to give meaning and purpose to their life. These explanatory principles become the standards of judgment for evaluating the validity of an individual's knowledge-claim in their living educational theories.

Just as the ideas of others are continuing to influence my own learning, so some original contributions from my research programme in living educational theories are influencing others. I presented four of these ideas:

1. Each individual can generate their own living educational theories as explanations for their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work in education enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'
2. The 'I' in the above question exists as a living contradiction in the sense of holding together the values that give meaning and purpose to their existence with their experience of their negation. I advocate the use of self-studies of videotapes of practice to reveal oneself one's existence as a living contradiction.
3. The use of action reflection cycles seeks to clarify and evolve the meanings of the embodied ontological values of practitioners as these emerge in the practice of the inquiry, 'how do I improve what I am doing?' The action reflection cycles include experiencing concerns when values are not being fully realized in practice; imagined possibilities for improving practice with the choice of one possibility in an action plan; action; gathering data to make a judgment on the effectiveness of the actions; evaluation of effectiveness; modification of concerns, ideas and actions in the light of the evaluations.
4. At the heart of the originality is the explication of an educational epistemology with living standards of judgment, that include the **energy-flowing values** that constitute explanatory principles for why individual educators do what they do. This explication includes the generation and use of a living theory methodology (Whitehead, 2008)

with methodological inventiveness (Dadds and Hart, 2001) within an awareness of natural inclusionality (Rayner, 2006; 2010). Inclusionality is a relationally dynamic awareness of space and boundaries as continuous, connective, reflexive and co-creative. In the course of clarifying and evolving the meanings of energy-flowing values as they emerge in practice, they are transformed into epistemological standards of judgment for evaluating the validity of the knowledge claims in the living educational theories.

The following presentations document the evolution of my research programme since the 2010 CARN conference [all sites accessed 1 February 2013].

*Accounting for Ourselves in our Living Educational Theories*. Foundation Hour Presentation at Liverpool Hope University on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2011.

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwlhufoundation120111.pdf>

*Notes for a keynote to the 2011 Workshop on Alternative Research Paradigms* at Covenant University, Nigeria, 14<sup>th</sup> February 2011.

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwnigeria110211.pdf>

*Relational dynamic framing for four presentations* at the American Educational Research Association Conference, New Orleans, 8-12 April 2011.

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera11/jwframingaera2011.pdf>

*Notes for a presentation to the 'Value and Virtue in Practice-based Research' Conference*, York University, 1-2 June 2011.

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwValuesandVirtue290511opt.pdf>

*Multi-media narratives for research into the influences of educational leadership and professional learning*. Bath Spa University, 7 June 2011.

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwbathspa070611opt.pdf>

*Research Workshop on the Transformative Education(al) Studies Project*

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/southafrica/TEsproposalopt.pdf> and the Mandela Day Lecture, 18 July 2011,

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwmandeladay2011.pdf>

Mandela Day is a call to action for people everywhere to take responsibility for making the world a better place. On Mandela Day, people are called to devote just 67 minutes of their time to changing the world for the better, in a small gesture of solidarity with humanity, and in a small step towards a continuous, global movement for good. The significance of 67 is that Nelson Mandela spent more than 67 years serving his community. The evolution of my

research programme into the development and influence of living educational theories is focused on enhancing the flow of values and understanding that carry hope for the future of humanity. I am fortunate that this research is consistent with a perspective of the Faculty of Education of Liverpool Hope University.

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Rayner, A. (2010). *Sustainability of the Fitting – bringing the philosophical principles of natural inclusion into the educational enrichment of our human neighbourhood*. 8<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Action Learning and Action Research. 6 September 2010. Melbourne, Australia.  
<http://actionresearch.net/writings/rayner/alanrayneralarakeynote0210opt.pdf> [accessed 1 February 2013].

Whitehead, J. (2008) *How are living educational theories being produced and legitimated in the boundaries of cultures in resistance?* Cultures in Resistance Conference. 18-20 March 2008. Manchester.  
<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwmanchester170308.htm> [accessed 1 February 2013].

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## **Collaborative action research network based on audio-visual narratives.**

Antonio Bautista and German Bautista, C.D.B-Complutense University of Madrid.

In this paper we describe work started in 2009 and carried out in two public schools of the Autonomous Community of Madrid. We wanted to analyse the possible contribution of narration that deals with photography and movie languages, to the mutual human knowledge and understanding of the events that surround the group knowledge that narrates. We think that this type of audio-visual narration is more adequate than texts alone to relate the effective and the rational in primary school children as they are a culturally diverse population and consequently not all of them are literate in the indigenous language. We envision storytelling as the base of the use of technical means to encourage mutual understanding among them.

### **Description of the Process**

To analyse and increase intercultural relations that occur in the processes of audio-visual narration of stories by the students, we have built a community of practice – COP (Wenger, 2001) using action research processes. The COP consisted of participating school teachers, the president of the Association of Parents of Students (AMPA), seven mothers, a worker from the Empresa Municipal de Transportes de Madrid (EMT) interested in the project, the inspector of the Department of Education of Madrid and members of the research team. This group committed to meet once a month in each school to watch video footage of the work done by students in classrooms and the playground. After the videos, a discussion took place and conclusions were drawn up to improve processes. After these cycles of action research in each school, faculty and members of the research group meetings in both schools maintained collaborative sessions to co-ordinate future work plans.

### **Story telling with languages of photography and film.**

We believe that audio-visual languages are intuitive because they represent reality and so facilitate the imagination of children from 3-12 years. The multi-representation of reality promotes cultural interactions because such a diverse range of views facilitates understanding and communication between different sections of the population by characteristics of their place of origin (e.g. language, customs, traditions, value). Storytelling with languages of cinema and photography provides intellectual opportunities (e.g. analysis, representation, reflection, reasoning) and social opportunities (e.g. exchange, debate) on issues relevant to the community because, in large part, this production includes the need for communicative actions that lead to agreements, that is audio-visual production tasks (scripting, directing, lighting, dramatic, interpretation, location scouting, sound management, recording, costumes, editing ) which are only possible by group discussion.

### **Contents of audio-visual narratives**

We see a dual nature in the content of the stories: of situations, experiences or events offered by members of the schools, linked to the community (own or internal issues), and distant issues of social and cultural environment (external issues) proposed by individuals or the media outside the group. We understand that the different and varied content of the stories combine a dual role of the narrator; the internal cohesion of the group and open relationship with others outside the community.

#### *Own or internal dimension of the content of the stories.*

The purpose of storytelling is to have sensations and emotions, to denounce unjust situations or events occurring in those contexts, to respond to contentious issues raised by group members. Issues will be more important and meaningful to them when they are closer to their own lives and traditions of the school, district or town. Some examples of such issues are those related to the lives of their families in their countries of origins, 'TV' games preferences, culinary tastes. Others are those related to the environment of the school for example 'beautiful things, ugly, sad and cheerful in the neighbourhood of the school' or 'on the sounds, typical and atypical' or 'the tones of light in a school collected over a day' and so on.

We understand, therefore, that the internal dimension of the audio-visual content of the stories constructed among members of the group, is a sense of belonging to it and provides some insurance against the loss of certainties caused by economic globalization, for, as Bauman (2003) raises:

*“They are stories that we tell ourselves we are, where we come from, what we are now and where we go. There is an urgent need for such stories to restore security, build confidence and enable interaction with other that makes sense” (p.117-118).*

So the stories are contributing content belonging to lasting relationships within a diverse group of people. Thus, in our opinion, the narratives of their own stories with visual languages, such as relationships, help in day-to-day life, fighting against, among other things, meanings and stereotypes that ridicule, degrade and reject what is different.

#### *The external dimension to the community for the contents of the stories.*

Being culturally diverse groups helps these communities of practice as they are open, meaning that members can choose freely to participate in choosing their destiny. To paraphrase the subtitle of the book by Bauman (2003), the community's role is to provide

security to its members in a hostile world, but there is a danger that excessive seeking of protection by its members, leads to a gated community, self-affirming and exclusive.

In this sense, one of the goals of communities of practice is the development of its members, to help them have confidence in themselves and build their independence and autonomy. This is achieved when participation in the group opens the door to other beliefs, values, social and cultural references, telling stories about relevant topics related to situations outside the educational community. Knowledge of these other worlds allows participants to question and to submit themselves to critical assessment. That is when the members of the community of practice can choose what to use.

### **Final thoughts**

In our view, the essence of intercultural relations in education is beautiful storytelling with photographic and cinematographic language, expressing stories through an individual's own and others issues with poetic audio-visual force. Therefore, the audio-visual content of these stories must address both domestic matters and issues in a near and distant context. The processes of audio-visual narrative and cycles of collaborative action research are relevant to students because they give living situations more depth and meaning by the stories being imbued with autobiographical content, memories, ideas and emotions of each participant.

In turn students and parents of such a community occupy the best position to participate, to enter the public arena of politics. For example working issues related to the transformation of the neighbourhood in the last fifty years have changed how health-related institutions and education work. Therefore collaborative audio-visual narration of stories in action research cycles generates an atmosphere of social and political analysis that gives storytellers options for well-informed choices. We see the possibilities for responsible participation giving the participants of a community a role as political actors and consequently the ability to exercise citizenship in a culturally diverse society.

We conclude by pointing out that teaching situations mediated by the use of technology help participants to make sense of things, ideas, relationships and life events that are dispersed as well as to build interpersonal meanings and mutual understanding. Then, through these methods, the protagonists of the audio-visual narrations are able to use the dialogue and the negotiation of meaning as the best way to develop projects in common and they also encourage more democratic, egalitarian and just practices.

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## Constructing third space multiliteracies in the shadow of the blast furnace

Dr. Joseph M. Shosh, USA

### Introduction

With funding support from the National Council of Teachers of English, the National Writing Project, and the Moravian College Leadership Center, pre-service teachers within the College's secondary education program partnered with business, civic, and local government leaders to construct a series of third space learning opportunities for tenth grade (15 and 16 year old) students scoring basic and below basic on Pennsylvania's system of school assessment examination. Since these students had largely not found success within the traditional classroom, the pre-service teachers opted to create a series of third spaces for authentic learning at the intersection of often competing and conflicting discourses, where teacher talk and student talk meet, where personal interests intersect with the needs of the local community, and where what students know and are able to do is extended and supported by a more knowledgeable other, who learns as well as teaches. The curriculum they developed served to provide a "*space of regulated confrontation*" (Bourdieu, 1991: 374), "*in between space*" (Bhabha, 1994: 38), "*contact zone*" (Pratt as reported in Bizzell, 1997: 738), and meaningful instruction within each student's "*zone of proximal development*" (Vygotsky, 1978: 86). Gutiérrez, Rymes, and Larson explain,

*"The only space where a true interaction or communication between teacher and student can occur... is in the middle ground, or 'third space,' in which a Bakhtinian social heteroglossia is possible"* (1995: 447).

Developing meaningful dialogue between teachers, students, pre-service teachers, and teacher educators within a third space took on an added sense of urgency in an urban community where the public high schools are in 'corrective action' for not having met annual yearly progress under America's No Child Left Behind Act. In the last century, the residents of the Bethlehem community forged the steel that built America. From the skyline of New York City to San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge, Bethlehem Steel forms the skeleton of much of urban America. Today the students who participated in this inquiry project live in the shadow of the now dormant blast furnace, which serves as a constant reminder to us that traditional educational practices designed for a bygone era are insufficient to meet the needs of today's learners.

### **Building bridges between discourse communities**

In her construction of a third space curriculum for ‘the Bethlehem Project’, lead pre-service teacher Kelly Steward sought to

*“build bridges from knowledges and discourses often marginalized in school settings to the learning of conventional academic knowledges and Discourses”* (Moje, et al., 2004: 43).

Students began by viewing and critiquing digital documentaries produced by student members of the San Fernando Education Technology Team in California for their ‘I-Can’ film festival (Kist, 2005: 62). They analyzed how fellow high school students had effectively made an argument and communicated that argument to a specific target audience through the interplay of multimedia tools. Students examined how

*“digital video composing is a quintessential multimodal literacy that allows orchestration of visual, aural, kinetic, and verbal modes electronically”* (Miller, 2007: 66).

As they concurrently read and discussed Laurie Halse Anderson’s young adult novel Speak, they gave voice to their own concerns about redevelopment plans for the former Bethlehem Steel site, which at the time was America’s largest brown field. To learn more, they read local newspaper and on-line accounts of the Steel, its history, and new construction options that included a community arts center, a Smithsonian affiliated Museum of Industrial History, a Public Broadcasting System studio, and a Sands Casino resort and hotel. The more students read and viewed, the more they wrote, sharing their own excitement of new uses for land lying along the Lehigh River and adjacent to many of their homes in South Bethlehem. They also shared their fears of rising real estate prices forcing them out of the homes some of their families rented in turn-of-the-century tenements on the periphery of the Bethlehem Steel property.

When Steward invited Bethlehem’s Southside Film Festival Director Graham Stanford to share film clips with the class after watching and critiquing the San Fernando clips, he asked the students to tell him about the films they would make. The class had not yet contemplated this question together, and breaking an uncomfortable silence, one student exclaimed, *“Yo mister, we don’t make films. We watch them. That’s why you’re here. What are you gonna show us?”*

Helping students to construct their own digital narratives would not be accomplished through canned textbook lessons on the conventions of so-called standard English, but rather through an experiential curriculum that connected students directly to the unfolding events in their own changing urban community. Students used the newspaper and on-line research they had conducted to participate in one of two drama-in-education scenarios; either a formal debate, siding for or against the construction of a Casino on the Bethlehem Steel site, or participating in a mock city council meeting taking place five years in the future in which students took on the role of community members explaining how they had been affected both for better and for worse by the re-development of the site.

Students needed to think about their own positions on community economic redevelopment and determine through their role-play how different members of the community would most likely be affected now and in the future. In preparing to dramatize the role of Bethlehem Mayor John Callahan, for example, Orlando not only read on-line newspaper articles but also downloaded video clips of the mayor promoting redevelopment, including the proposed Casino project. Students also had to imagine not only how the lives of different members of our community would be transformed, but also how they would share their thoughts publicly in ways that would be considered appropriate at a City Council meeting. [For a digital video clip of Orlando and his partner Xavier interviewing the Mayor at Bethlehem City Hall, see the digital version of this article available at:

[http:// www.moravian.edu/default.aspx?pageid=2639](http://www.moravian.edu/default.aspx?pageid=2639)]

Students began to see a future for themselves in the community as realtors, florists, medical professionals, college students, community leaders, and artists. Classroom instruction, whether focused on writing a letter of invitation for a filmed interview or analyzing camera angles, mattered to students only in terms of helping them meet their own goals and objectives. It was the conversations that emerged about their own interests that classroom discourse patterns most resembled authentic conversation, for

*“it is in this unscripted third space that student and teacher cultural interests, or internal dialogizations, become available to each other, where actual cross-cultural communication is possible, and where public artifacts...are available for critique and contestation”* (Gutiérrez, 1995: 465).

### **Going public to learn more about others and our own possibilities**

Students wrote letters to local business owners and civic leaders requesting the opportunity to conduct digitally filmed interviews. Because students were writing to a self-selected audience

for an authentic purpose, they *wanted* their letters to follow the conventions of standard written English expected in formal or business settings, and they eagerly anticipated a response. Bringing a sanctioned school project into students' home community mattered a great deal to them. Michelle Fine (2000) and her colleagues helped pre-service teachers to realize that the construction of third spaces within the classroom also invites

*“the study of meaningful spaces [outside the classroom], geographically centralized or dispersed over time and space, historically constituted or currently created, in which people, potentially across all ages, come together to critique what is, shelter themselves from what has been, redesign what might be, and/or imagine what could be” (133).*

Most interviews were scheduled and filmed on a single production day, where teams of students, joined by a Moravian College pre-service teaching volunteers, traversed the South Bethlehem community contiguous to the Steel complex. As groups reviewed their storyboards and interview questions, they debated how best to set up their shots and tested microphones by filming one another before meeting their official contacts at their respective sites. College junior Katie Uhas, who coordinated her fellow pre-service teaching volunteers, commented:

*“I worked with a group of students who were labeled as being underachievers, strugglers, and behavior problems, and I was able to watch them excel. Intrinsically motivated by such a thoughtful, interactive project, they became overachievers, asking those they interviewed complex questions and going beyond the assignment in every way. The value of engaging students in academic work that can be applied to the real world and has a real world audience became obvious to me. The students I worked with were and had always been capable but chose to apply themselves to this project in particular because it had meaning for them and for others”.*

Here Uhas and her fellow pre-service teachers had the opportunity to walk through the neighborhoods of South Bethlehem, the students' turf—not their own—and learn what it means to be a teacher in dialogue with their students. *“Finally,”* Moje (2004) points out,

*“third space can be viewed as a space of cultural, social, and epistemological change in which the competing knowledges and Discourses of different spaces are brought into ‘conversation’ to challenge and reshape both academic content literacy practices and the knowledges and Discourses of youths' everyday lives” (44).*

After a morning spent shooting film footage on location, students returned to the Moravian College campus for lunch in a college dining hall and a workshop on digital documentary production by college art and design majors. College students shared excerpts of their own footage, discussed some of their editing techniques, and were invited to continue their film production work in college. Moshe Barak (2005) points out in his examination of school and university partnerships designed to benefit traditionally under-represented populations in Israeli higher education,

*“Cooperation with the university is significant to a school not only from the perspective of improving learning design, but also by imparting to pupils, teachers and parents the notion that university study is not beyond the scope of their pupils”* (55).

### **Reflecting in the shadow of the blast furnace**

As students celebrated the success of production day and pondered just how they’d actually edited what they’d shot on location, we turned the camera on the students and their teachers to discover what they had learned as a result of participating in the Bethlehem Project. Here the printed words are not nearly as powerful as the video clips available in the Bethlehem Project Digital Archive, underscoring Kathy Mills’ point that

*“To continue to teach to a narrow band of print-based genres, grammars and skills is to ignore the reality of textual practices outside of schools. Students must be free to engage in new and multimodal textual practices, rather than simply reproduce a tightly confined set of linguistic conventions”* (108).

As students and teachers ate, drank, smiled, and laughed together, they also reflected. [These clips available within the digital version of this article available at:

<http://www.moravian.edu/default.aspx?pageid=2639>>.]

LaShawn: *It was pretty amazing because I actually got to know another side of the business. I had never been to Touchstone Theatre before. It also gave me a heads up on how to talk to people and how to do interviews. It even helped me to be calm on camera.*

Orlando: *The mayor said everything I expected. He’s a hard-working guy, and I got to hang out on his balcony.*

Joey: *I interviewed my cousin. He works at Century 21 Pinnacle, and the Casinos really will affect our city. Real estate will make a lot more money, so he’s in favor of the Casinos coming to Bethlehem.*

- Henry: *It was interesting meeting a person who owned his own business. Since I want to be a chef one day, maybe I can own my own business too.*
- Ms. Steward: *My involvement in the project inspired me to one day be a leader in using new technology, even when that task seems quite daunting. The project also demonstrated the value of stepping outside the boundaries of a school building and involving the rich resources of one's unique community. Finally, participating in the Bethlehem Project challenged me to view teaching and assessment in a different way: in short, the more authentic the learning activities, the better. We should not limit ourselves to having our students writing or creating things for hypothetical situations; why not ask students to actually produce something personally meaningful for a real audience?*
- Ms. Wescoe: *We learned to expect logistical and technological challenges. Our cameras weren't compatible with our software. Despite our best efforts, not everyone could conduct interviews today. Some of our footage was lost by taping over it. BUT...Students read. They wrote. They role-played. They thought critically as they interviewed community leaders, and they engaged in a process that mattered a great deal to them.*

Students reported that they liked participating in the Bethlehem Project far more than most school projects, especially role-playing a city council meeting, critiquing student-produced video clips, conducting interviews, exploring the city's Southside, being 'on their own' with college students, watching film festival and college student video clips, and visiting the Moravian College campus. They reported not liking the research writing activities, being on camera, listening to lectures, or doing 'regular' class work. By the start of the next academic year, two students had moved, two had dropped out of school, and sixteen had entered heterogeneously grouped eleventh grade American literature survey courses, hopefully more confident in themselves and their abilities.

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## **Living conflicts in early childhood education and learning about democracy**

Concepción Sánchez-Blanco, Spain

### **The research focus and context**

Our study is an action-research project (Elliott, 2007, Someck and Zeichner, 2009), which took place in a school belonging to the public network of schools in the Region of Galicia. The school is located in the province of A Coruña (Spain) and was opened in 1975. It serves infant and primary education levels. Our focus was on the infant education level and was carried out with a teacher from one of the classrooms of four-year olds. We set out to explore how teacher and pupils live with the social conflicts and learn about democracy. They are in need of reinventing new ways to fight in order to succeed in being heard in their demands for equality (Freire, 2006; Sen, 2007). Children are starting to be unclear about their rights and duties in the classroom with major difficulties appearing to shape their actions in relation to them. The teacher said of me that I was very optimistic because she believed that social change was impossible in a social institution as hard as this school where she works.

### **The fives areas of the research**

With this action-research I tried to provide answers to several problems in a number of areas.

The problems were with:

- The classroom and the teacher (Lucía).
- A school peppered with change.
- I needed to investigate my internship as thesis director through my work with Sara.
- Improvement of the Infant Education Conferences: action-research and educational innovation, a task I have been carrying out for seven years ago. It also improved my work in the Research and Educational Guidance Master's Degree organised by the Faculty of Science of Education in which I work.

In this paper I will discuss the first of these.

#### *The classroom and the teacher*

The deliberative project with Lucía aimed to help make her practices more reflective and critical. The discussions were intended to encourage the transformation of the participants' actions in a more liberating direction, as much for the teacher as for the school pupils in the classroom, the families and for myself as facilitator of this research. I sought to transform the life of the classroom making this a fairer space where all participants were subjects of education. I therefore propose to discuss the actions of all participants. The interventions of myself as a facilitator of the research will equally be discussed. I reveal the present injustices

in the classroom and to the extent to which such injustices were related to decisions and practices that had developed in this school.

### *The problem*

The students were starting to be unclear about their rights and duties in the classroom with major difficulties appearing to shape their actions in relation to them. The situation was particularly bad for those living in problematic family environments where there were no clear rules, and contradictory messages and consequences in relation to the non-compliance of rules within the family, if they exist at all, often occurred. On one hand the emotional instability in families and on the other, the short time they spent educating their sons and daughters due to endless workdays, excessive domestic work, or for not feeling the obligation and the need to educate their offspring, all aggravated these situations.

Lucía saw the problem in a very limited way. She was convinced that the cause of the problem was the arrival of two new children into the group halfway through the course. Luis in December and Saúl in February who had both been previously enrolled in other schools. In fact, the information offered by the schools about the two children reaffirmed this idea in both cases. She was unaware that the problem went beyond life in her classroom and that this was connected to the school culture itself that had been building and establishing itself in the school.

### *The spirals of reflection in the action research with Lucía*

The spirals of reflection in the action research with Lucía revolved mainly around:

- The avoidance of reality that classroom proposals can produce and their transformation into critical proposals.
- Commitment to social justice, rights and duties in the classroom and the consequences of violating these rights and duties.
- The construction of democratic identities since childhood; the identity of friend versus enemy in the classroom, the identity of citizen versus foreigner.

The key moments in the life of the classroom in our study were: the lessons, the play corners, the development of classroom projects, the morning snack and the playground.

### *The students*

The class had nineteen students (9 girls and 10 boys) from four to five years of age. Heterogeneous socio-economic levels were present, so that there were families with high purchasing power, families that had to work hard to cover all their costs and managed to do

so, and families with economic problems, some very serious. There were four families receiving public social assistance and support from an NGO (Caritas), which regularly offered them food and clothing. There was one child with significant mobility problems receiving support in the classroom.

### *Themes*

We found the follow themes:

1. The lessons and the democratic ethos: the escape from reality to the commitment to social justice.
2. Foreign and enemy: a difficult start.
3. Deliberation, awareness and social change in the classroom.
4. Being outside versus being inside.
5. From badness to possibility.

#### *1: The lessons and the democratic ethos: the escape from reality to the commitment to social justice*

When we arrived we came across some lessons lost in a welter of questions that Lucía was asking the children with the aim of making them think and that only a small minority were following and responding to. While some talked, others interrupted, others did not stop moving, others took items to entertain themselves. The lessons initially consisted of each child telling of a situation that had happened to them. The teacher, as the children were talking, was questioning them about it. Lucia wanted, she said, to teach them to think. While she was worried about the cognitive development of her students, she forgot the emotions and values related to knowledge and the need to develop critical thinking capable of liberating minds. The problem was that even using the experiences of children initially, the conversations ended up drifting into an academisation of them (Gaile, 2004), where they only imported concepts and which only a few students achieved.

#### *2: Foreign and enemy: a difficult start*

The class had begun to dangerously split into two worlds, friends and enemies of the classroom. It was necessary to stop Saúl and Luis, and all those who followed them emulating their behaviour, from acquiring the label of the bad kids in the classroom and perceiving themselves as enemies of the same (MacNaughton, 2005). One had to understand that the children, through their disruptive behaviour, were doing nothing other than demanding an educational intervention that would take them out from the state of confusion and chaos that existed in their lives. Several children who were overwhelmed by the chaos even expressed themselves saying that they did not want more new children arriving to the classroom.

### *3: Deliberation, awareness and social change in the classroom*

Teacher and students had to rescue the rules of classroom behaviour from obscurity, reviewing them, talking about them, agreeing upon them again and making them visible in a specific space. The presence of explicit rules that were discussed, reviewed daily and made visible would help children become subjects with rights and duties. Even though the rules were written down in a book that remained in the classroom library from the previous year, Lucia realised that the rules did not really belong to this academic year. For the current year these rules were only something of the past that had become discourse but had not been put into practice. The new rules were recreated and rewritten by everybody in the classroom (Sánchez-Blanco, 2009). They made a poster of them that they put up on the classroom wall so they could remember them when necessary.

### *4: Being outside versus being inside.*

Lucía's decision to work with Luis and Saúl, two children with important social behaviour problems, inside the classroom represented a total break with the line of work that the school counselling service followed and which argued for work on special needs cases outside the regular classroom. Lucia's option put into question this way of working and showed the counsellor that it was possible to work with the children inside the classroom. The behaviour problems had to be perceived as inclusion problems in need of resources inside the classroom. The children had to learn that everyone is subject to the same rights and duties (Brown, 1998). In addition, these children started to be perceived in terms of the opportunities they were offering to their classmates and the learning processes they were promoting in the classroom.

### *5: From badness to possibility*

The economic problems in some families made teacher and student think and discuss about the culture of waste and overconsumption. Lucía realised that there were an excessive number of commercial toys in the classroom and started introducing materials other than these into the play corners. She had great success with a box containing stones. It also became commonplace that children would take down the plastic containers from the recycle drawer to play with in the playground. She would question the wasteful usage of baby wipes used for personal hygiene and for cleaning the table and/or shoes, throwing away a piece of a roll that was leftover at snack time, wasting water, not switching off the light or the computer. She promoted the importance of taking care of the children's clothes and making sure they were hanging them up instead of leaving them on the floor.

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## **Employing a Networked Hub and Spoke Design for Teaching Action Research to Doctoral Students in an Online Environment.**

E Alana James

### **Introduction and context for the study**

Networked participatory action research (NPAR) is relatively new on the action research horizon. Incredibly useful, the facilitator creates a hub of activity from which diverse and often geographically separated individuals or teams come and go. You can picture this as a central circle surrounded by smaller circles that sometimes are at a great distance from, and sometimes cluster around, the hub. Networked communication may often go from the smaller circles to the hub and back and forth, or may skip the hub altogether as when the smaller local groups or individuals communicate directly with each other. I have employed this networked hub and spoke design several times, the biggest project being a longitudinal study in the United States where Head Teachers and teachers improved their educational practice for students in their schools who were experiencing homelessness (James, 2006). It should probably be noted here that my ideal practice for action research (AR) is emancipatory and that I am highly pragmatic. Therefore in my classes I stress AR as a means to get something done, to solve an issue and as a tool for complex times.

The context for this study is a series of three terms of an online course for doctoral students in management at Colorado Technical University in the US. The University attracts students from all over the world who are intrigued by the course design, which employs a mix of approximately 80% exclusivity online courses with twice a year residentials. The *Practice of Action Research* course is taught online to students who work full time in business, nonprofits and public administration.

My reflective practice consisted of regular note taking in the same format used by the students on the course (to be discussed later). One of the advantages of online education to a researcher is the abundance of archival records and I used these to test my ideas and to drive my reflection on key issues. In this case, those records included e-mails, proposals and IRB (internal review board) submissions, final reports, and most importantly, weekly action research reflective protocol reports and student discussions in forums. In the class I asked students to employ a three-step action research cycle; discovery, measurable action and reflection. I have found that merging the action and measurement stages, which are apparent in the more typical four-part cycle, is very useful, especially for students as it forces them to both act and measure. In my prior teaching experience I found that one or the other was often missing in early studies and this change has alleviated much of that challenge.

In the three semesters encompassed by this study, students came to ‘class’ (meaning the online space) and were expected to write an action research proposal in the first week, prepare an acceptable IRB proposal in the second week and then to complete an eight week action research project composed of a cycle or two of research. Prior to writing the final report I required that they read and critically analysed three published action research studies. The reflective work led me to three levels of findings - about the design of the course, about ways and means to bridge the tension between the seven concepts of positivistic research (purpose, scope, methodology, findings, conclusions, limitations and contributions with AR for students), and the quality of their projects.

### **Networked hub and spoke**

A hub and spoke design will seem familiar to anyone who works in a classroom setting. It feels ‘normal’ to an educator to put together some kind of facilitated process and to have people join together to take part in that process. If focused on problem based learning, our students then go back to the regular setting to carry out their work. I use the same format when I am facilitating networks of individuals who implement action research in their local setting. They work in communities while coming together on a regular basis for the facilitation and critical reflection as community members or professionals focused on the same issue. Because the US is so large and travel so expensive, my efforts using this model quickly evolved to using an online environment.

Graduate cohorts function as networks for students, offering interaction, communication, a greater understanding of their situation, new ideas and collegiality. As with Wenger’s (cited by McDermott and Snyder, 2002) writings on communities of practice, networks help create knowledge because “*knowledge lives in the human of knowing...is tacit as well as explicit...is social as well as individual...and is dynamic*” (p. 8-10). The purpose for drawing out this design in such detail, when it seems usual and obvious, is that upon reflection it becomes clear that the learning that happens in the spoke becomes equal to or potentially more critical than that which happens in the hub. To the extent that as a teacher it is incumbent on me to connect with my students during moments of key learning, I then need to develop ways to enhance that connection even when they are out in their local communities doing their work.

My first finding is that reflective protocols, reporting on activities as the research progresses, became a critical part of how I meet that obligation. I came to require a three part, weekly reflective protocol in which the student wrote out what they had discovered, what measurable

actions they had taken and what they had reflected upon. This forced them to consider what had happened with respect to all three parts of the cycle. I enjoyed writing personalised comments back to students when they turned in their weekly reports and this allowed me to point out the positive attributes of AR to the students, to offer suggestions on mid course corrections and to suggest AR's relationship to their long-term academic success, perhaps as a methodology for their dissertations.

Data confirm the importance of these discussions, as they are commonly referred to in the next week's forum conversation from the students to each other:

*“Dr James drew me up short last week when she asked me where were the actions that were moving towards my purpose? I have learned that there are many incremental actions that can be taken to engage students, actions which can be implemented with little cost but which will take the involvement of more people in the organization to accomplish”.*

Action research is infrequently published in journals that are not explicitly based on the methodology. At the very least there is a disconnection in quantity between the numbers of AR papers and presentations and the numbers that are acknowledged in mainstream publications. I have always thought that this held researchers back from using AR (especially in the United States) or caused action researchers to write up their findings as sequential exploratory mixed-methods. Being a pragmatist, the best thing as I see it, is for our work to be widely publicized. In the US, that means ‘playing both sides of the field’ because the US is a particularly positivistic research environment. I coach students to be able to ‘walk the talk’ in their research and write about both the seven concepts of research (purpose, scope, methodology, findings, conclusions, limitations and contributions) as well as to discuss the three step cycle and sometimes the chronology of how their research progressed. I throw them into this tension between the linear progression of most research and the holistic or cyclical world of AR from the beginning of class when they write their proposal and IRB documentation, through the abstracts and critiques where they read and write about the seven concepts as seen in AR publications through to their own final report.

I find that students either understand AR or it remains theoretically difficult for them. Sometimes they assume that studying how something works is enough, not understanding the requirement to base their proposal on what do they want to DO about what they are studying. It seems foreign to them to have me ask questions such as “What is the situation you want to change?”, “What actions do you think will be helpful?”, “What positive outcomes are you

searching for?”. Writing questions under each section of the proposal template steers most of them on the right path, yet only 85% will catch this distinction. Others have to rewrite their proposal and some (usually one student each term) never completely demonstrate success.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, many students know exactly what they want to change. As an example, one student who (because he could not get the necessary permissions from the City of New York to do his original study) fell back on using participatory action research (PAR) to ask whether his adult children living at home would be willing to take on some of the family finance. He reported huge success, and remains to this day amazed that his son was delighted to help pay for the mobile phone bill as it quantified his contribution to the family as an adult.

The University requires an IRB review all research done, even research done for class work. This necessitates some quick writing. It also means getting a permission letter from the heads of their businesses and organizations in which they will do their research, writing up informed consent document for signature, and working the process through the process by which they will recruit and select human participants. The stumbling blocks are getting the permissions, understanding what really makes for benefits and risks, and working through confidentiality or power issues, especially when students are employed at a high level in the company where they want to do the research. From the teacher’s point of view, this process slows down the opportunity for students to actually do AR, however from the students point of view it is a valuable and interesting learning experience as is seen in the following:

*“The thing that taught me the most about this course was the IRB application. That by far was the most difficult and rewarding part of the process. The worst part of the class was the initial rejection I got when I submitted the first IRB docs. I’ve never been in a position like that before, and it enlightened me as to how collaborative participatory action research really is”.*

Finally, the reflection protocol that separated their reflections each week into discovery, measurable action and reflection once again proved very useful. At the end of the term – as they were writing their report they read these data across the weeks per item – for instance a term full of discovery and measurable actions led to their findings, while reflections usually shaping their conclusions.

### **Doing action research for the first time: project findings and conclusions.**

There is no question that these students were doing very good work according to my ideals as an emancipatory and pragmatic action researcher. Projects ranged in size from those focused on their families, their churches or their intimate relationships in their communities to changing corporate culture, investigating new biofuel sources, or other potentially long range and interesting projects. One of the biggest challenges taken on had to do with a team in the state of Oregon who focused on creating change in the legal status and the way that policy dealt with human trafficking and their victims. The following sums up the work they were able to do in eight weeks:

*“This team obtained valuable education and information in our quest to partner in a way that helped us to develop creative suggestions for transferring immediate accountability from victims to perpetrators of human trafficking in Marion County, Oregon. We identified limitations and barriers that can be remedied with initial start up funding for intensive training and education for a team of intervention providers. Once trained, these providers will be able to provide offender intervention services designed for immediate financial and behavioural accountability. Our team suggests polygraph examinations as an intervention too. Further that all perpetrators be held financially responsible for their services and that any revenue be shared with victim services to expand support and law enforcement services to extend funding for ongoing sting operations” (Barb Carter, 2010).*

In looking back over comments made during the course I find that the daily immersion in research is transformational as is exemplified in comments such as this one from a man who really wrestled with the process at the beginning:

*“My advice to a group just beginning with PAR in a corporate setting is that this may not be a comfortable exercise for many. It can seem too ‘touchy feely’ for some. This has to be discussed ahead of time and perhaps some of the participants need to be walked through the value of the journalizing as data” (Rossi, D. 2009).*

There is also a consistent ethical element in what many people find, as is exemplified in comments such as this:

*“On reflection the PAR team explained that after the project, having heard what Participative Management was and having had the words humility, justness, generosity, kindness, moderation, loyalty, flexibility and reliability in their face and*

*not reading electronic communications for 3 weeks, their trust factor had risen a good bit. The PAR team agreed to quantify a 15% increase in trust and participation to average a new trust level of 31% overall. The desire to participate in their work beyond their required duties had begun. Success!” (Rose, J., 2009).*

Finally, it was clear that in the eight weeks of research, students got into the heart of some of the more tricky aspects of individual and team processes. This is exemplified in the following student’s comment on his PAR progress:

*“One aspect of this project that I am finding a bit of a challenge is to manage ‘scope creep’. It seems to be easy to want to expand this to more people and to include other concepts like active listening. I have had to politely remind certain PAR team members that we need to stay focused on the goal to improve intra-team communications” (Rossi, D. 2009).*

While I reflected that it seemed everyone was engaged in learning it is still gratifying when data confirm that this is so. At the end of the class 100% show significant growth in their understanding and ability to implement action research. During a pre/post self report survey the average starting place is 2.5 and they ended at 4.5. As one student said:

*“I strongly believe that I am at a 4.5 on a scale of 5 for both being better prepared and driven to complete action research processes. I found time to be a primary limitation. This in itself was a learning process as I now recognize that there is little lag time between discovery, action and most importantly, reflection. Reflection must be immediate for my continued PAR/AR success”.*

In conclusion, it is easy to extrapolate that these students, at least for the period of time of this class, would agree with the following:

*“I do not separate my scientific inquiry from my life. For me it is really a quest for life, to understand life and to create what I call living knowledge – knowledge, which is valid for the people with whom I work and for myself”. Marja-Liisa Swantz.*

## **Development of guidance and action plan in the University tutorial through supported collaborative strategies: An action research process.**

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### **Introduction.**

It would be fair to say that current university students present with a wide range of guidance needs in different areas: academic, professional, and administrative procedures: registrations, applications, scholarships (Salmeron, Ortiz and Rodriguez, 2005). While all universities have had experiences in this regard, it is also true that we could say they have only been able to implement partial and isolated measures. In order to answer the needs of university students, orientation could begin to define or clarify the role of guidance and measures that would be appropriate to implement. It is necessary to adopt a methodological change that comes from the hand of the collaborative philosophy and therefore also inspires action in support tutorials, cooperative strategies as well as technological means to facilitate the relationship between teacher and student and among the students themselves. With the experience we have put in place since the innovation of group teaching and supporting using a methodological perspective based in action research, we have tried to implement a series of actions aimed at both the joint work of teachers and their teams. The improvement of university tutorials leads to a significant improvement in teaching and the quality of services provided by the universities in three dimensions: for students, for the faculty and for the university itself.

### **The orientation throughout the person's schooling**

The Spanish education system sees educational counseling as an important element of the education system. With a focus on an introduction to further study, it is understood as one of the factors that effectively contributes to the quality of the system and an essential part of the teaching. Repetto (1997) states that the fields that are now subject to the performance of European counselor (and elsewhere) range from intervention in academic and vocational programs to career education, career guidance, help for the unemployed and the retired or use of leisure and personal development. For Rodriguez (1989) guidance combines the concepts of guidance, management, government, so that for people applying for help, guidance would be one action that directs them toward certain goals or educational purposes. It follows from these ideas that counseling should be carried on throughout life, with different characteristics in each stage as well as different agents determined for each. All these aspects seem to be perfectly reasonable. Unfortunately the development or implementation of the ideology that inspires these actions does not correlate with expectations. That is, the reality does not meet the real needs.

The counseling intervention model that we propose would be determined by the following features:

- Preventive
- Contextualizing, ecological, situational
- Intervention program.
- Flexible.
- Integrated, encouraging participation and culture of collaboration.
- Evolutionary. That is, taking into account the characteristics of the age of the individuals to be targeted.
- Generalized. Addressed to all members of the educational community.
- Consideration of guidance as a continuous and systematic process.

Consequently, and in broad strokes, the objectives that can be pursued are:

- A personalized and comprehensive education
- Prepare for life. Here we are connecting with the guiding vision of a social change agent (Sanz, 1997). That is, to prepare citizens for tomorrow's society.
- Prepare for learning to learn. Learning to be (Delors, 1997).
- Encourage personal maturity.
- Attention to the educational needs of students.
- Prevention of possible learning difficulties.

### **Tutoring in college.**

A university teaching element that has seldom been questioned, claimed over and defended (Bricall, 2000) is the tutorial in college. Among others, the benefits that could be excelled are:

- A clear indicator of the quality of the institution. The tutorial functions as a preventive factor for delays and dropouts through adequate information, training and guidance.
- The scope of supply of the University and the complexity of some curricula require gave broad actions while specific to the student.

For Rodriguez Espinar (2004) the roles and functions of the tutor begin with having motivation and preparation for teaching and an interest in the development of the student as a person. One component of this is the tutorial action, and to develop it, requires the performance of certain roles and functions:

- Academic tutor: that facilitates academic information to students and monitors their learning processes.

- Degree tutor: to give information and guidance on aspects of professional type and the working world.
- Personal counseling tutor: providing individualized attention to some students who request help and mediation aspects, with their personal, educational and professional problems.

The relationship established between tutor and student means giving greater importance to the communication process: empathy, breaking the barriers of two-way communication, making the process more accessible, understanding the student, the sincerity of the relationship as well as the availability of time and space and ability to listen. However this pattern breaks when the communication is poor, leaving insufficient time for both parties, resulting in attrition in some cases, lack of understanding, apathy, and saturation. Increase demand on time for the academic tutors is another cause that has generated more impact in the last four years due to the growth of the student population. These are some causes that make a climate of indifference that leads to the research process.

### **The Tutorial Action Plan (TAP).**

We understand the Tutorial Action Plan (TAP) as a document of institutional management structured around a set of actions and processes that give support and advice for students, responding to the features already mentioned such as flexibility and consideration for the holistic needs of the student. Planning, as in any action or educational activity, is essential and so must have a well-defined phases:

- First the identification of needs and creation of working groups (distribution of tasks).
- Second, the design of actions, time allocation.
- Third the implementation of the provisions, and any amendments or adaptations that arise.
- Finally, a phase that would coincide with the first phase of reflection or evaluation and decision making process of maintenance, modification, extension and restarting.

### **The participants**

a) Students.

As recipients of the actions they cannot play a passive role. They are not just recipients but active agents in the process and therefore they have to be involved in the smooth running of the proceedings to ensure that the same remain faithful to their needs.

b) Tutors.

Tutors are in charge of providing support to students in a course or subject to develop their potential to the fullest, just TO ORIENT. So they should satisfy certain conditions:

- On a personal level (TO BE): self-acceptance as a person and as a professional, emotional stability, self-confidence, acceptance of limitations, respect to the value and dignity of each person and empathy for students.
- A cognitive (TO KNOW) includes technical knowledge to use in the tutorial: effective communication skills, ability to confront opinions, reflective thinking skills, develop settings made, keeping contacts with the counseling service and with others colleges, supervisory strategies.
- At the technical level (TO DO): a good knowledge of the studies, extensive knowledge of the degree of curricular pathways, areas of professional services offered by the campus, with access to information, also active experience in the life of the institution.
- A social level (TO POISE): present behaviors of calm and courage in difficult circumstances, knowing when to laugh, to take the most appropriate mood for each circumstance.

### **Process and methodology of the work performed.**

Aim of the project:

*"To develop an action and orientation tutorial plan to guide cooperative learning strategies"*

This aim is based on achieving the following specific objectives:

1. Improving the integration of students into university life in the academic, organizational, professional, cultural and personal.
2. Assessing the difficulties and problems that students have throughout their studies in Teacher degree and Psychology degree.
3. Identifying and meeting a wide range of needs regarding career paths for future employment.
4. Guiding in making decisions about future professional job and creating in students' positive attitudes towards their professional development.

### **Methodological Justification**

As we noted earlier, we have relied on a methodology supported by action research approaches. To identify the action research and its applicability is not easy because of the wide range of definitions and approaches. However there are some fundamental features of our action research approach. It is:

- a qualitative research
- guided and supported in practice.
- a cooperative process

- seeks improvement from a change or transformation climate.
- systematic because it integrates knowledge and action.
- done by the actors themselves, therefore ecological situation

From a social and critical perspective Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) claim that action research is a form of collective introspective inquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their social or educational practices, as well as an understanding of these practices and the situations in which they occur. Also Eisner (1998) considers it as a mechanism for professional development from the processes of reflection and understanding. So we might conclude that this approach to action research is a cooperative process basically supported by analysis and reflection seeking to transform educational practice from the practice, promoting the improvement of both teaching and learning and professional development. Following Carr and Kemmis (1988) we can identify three modes of action research: technical, practical and emancipatory-critical.

- Technical: Search for efficiency in educational practice, although it is put into practice by those responsible of the classroom, is designed by external subjects.
- Practice: It looks for educational change by educational agents themselves through their own classrooms, as a training process agent itself. So there is more autonomy for the teacher. The external researcher becomes a consultant. It is like an echo (Carr and Kemmis, 1988) in which the teacher can find answers about the reasons for his own action.
- Review: Cutting much broader as it tries to act not only in the classroom but also in a social environment, trying to transform the social forms that influence practice.

As for the phases or sequencing of actions we will build on the approach of Kemmis (1988) and Elliot (1986) establishing a process with a spiral phases that are: initial reflection-recognition, planning, implementation and monitoring, to finish with a new reflection. We are using a cyclical process in which, starting from a previous reflection, fostering a design that will be implemented, ending with a new reflexive action. This cycle can be repeated as often as necessary. We deliberately do not use the word evaluation substituting appropriate reflection as an epistemological feature of action research.

### Work schedule.

The action has been taken according to the following schedule:

<i>Session</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Session type</i>	<i>Duration</i>	<i>Description of tasks undertaken</i>
1.	14/01/09	Face to face	90 min.	Constitution working group and identifying needs, defining specific actions and tasks and creation of the BSCW and NING
2.	11/02/09	On-line	60 min	First contact after the first performances through NING Connect and share experiences
3.	11/03/09	On-line	60 min.	Share experiences and answer questions of operation. Contributions and changes
4.	15/04/09	Face to face	90 min	Share information and difficulties encountered. Changes and / or alterations
5.	13/05/09	On-line	60 min.	Share information and difficulties encountered. Contributions and changes
6.	24/06/09	On-line	60 min.	Sharing experiences. Level of reflection / evaluation
7.	16/09/09	Face to face	90	Provide information to memory and appreciation of the action.

### Action Development Tutorial Plan (DTP)

Selection of students

At first, the DTP was offered to all students involved in our groups, these were:

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Course</i>	<i>Degree</i>	<i>Students involved</i>
1. Organización del Centro Escolar	1º	Magisterio E. Física	240
2. Organización del Centro Escolar	1º	Magisterio L. Extranjera	120
3. Bases Pedagógicas E. Especial	3º	Magisterio E. Física	90
4. Bases Pedagógicas E. Especial	3º	Magisterio. L. Extranjera	90
5. Educación Especial	4º	Lic. Psicopedagogía	80
6. Diseño y Estrategias para la Elaboración de ACIs	4º	Lic Psicopedagogía	140
7. Didáctica de la E. Infantil	2º	Magisterio E. Infantil	150
8. Estrategias de intervención educativa en contextos interculturales		Master oficial Migraciones	15
9. La vida en las aulas: problemas de relación y clima educativo	Optiona l	Magisterio	80

### **Planning and tutorial actions**

To carry out the actions tutorials three meetings were held:

- Each tutor meets with his group of students
- Each tutor meets individually with the student
- Meeting of all tutors.

*Meetings of each tutor with the students under his tutelage.*

There were three sessions of 50 minutes throughout the course: one at the beginning of the course, another before the start of second semester, and the third at the end of the course. The first meeting with the group was considered essential because the tutor directly explained how the whole process of tutorial action worked, besides trying to address academic concerns raised by students regarding their university studies.

The other meetings were devoted to discussing the level of satisfaction with services requested, difficulties encountered, services requested and not used, setbacks, and doubts that have arisen to the students during the time period between each session.

*Individual meetings tutor with the students.*

These meetings were fifteen or twenty minutes long per student every two weeks. The students referred to the tutor all the concerns that had been taking in relation to both academic and personal level.

*Follow-up meeting between all tutors.*

These meetings were held according to the schedule and were at the centre of the action research process. In the meetings everyone commented on the problems, concerns, developments, changes, etc. that had been made. The purpose was to exchange information between tutors and to coordinate the information given to the students so that it was as up to date as possible and finally to take steps to improve processes.

### **Assessment and conclusions.**

- The first conclusion was that students and teachers involved in the project had a high level of satisfaction with the process.
- The processes were effective and there was a high level of commitment. There was mutual accountability regarding goals and scope of common goals.
- The collaborative process was good and there was complementarity of the same from parameters of action research.

- The process is just getting started, you need continuity and see how it continues to advance and deepen the achievements.

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