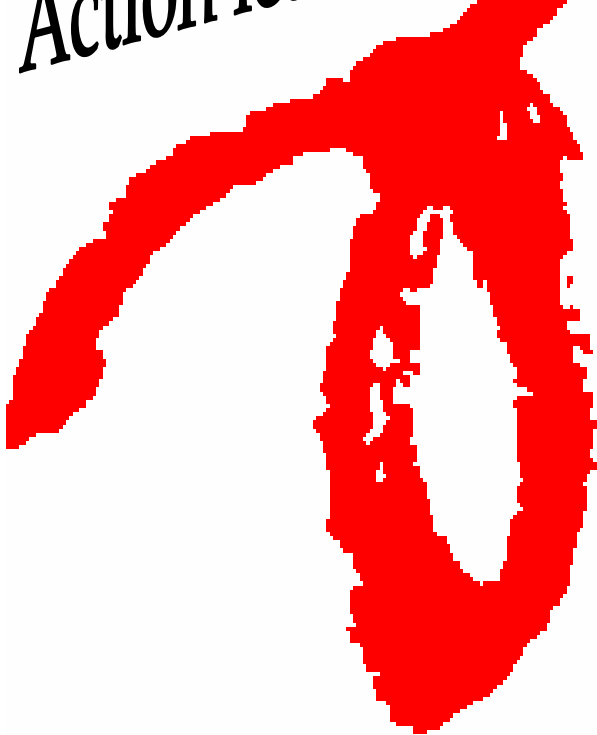


# ALAR

Action learning and action research journal



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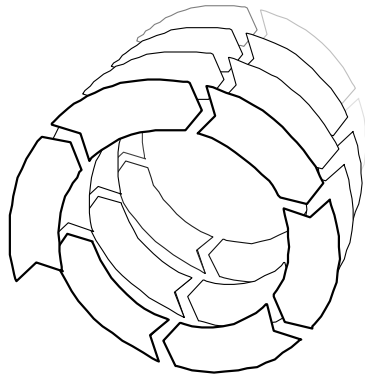
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# Editorial

Many a time it is true that when reading intentionally, one is often surprised by unintentionally finding a gem. It is my wish that every reader will have the same experience when reading this issue. The papers in this issue are globally representative of work done by different scholars working in different educational contexts – from South Africa and Australia in the South to Belgium in the North. In the first paper the value of action research for teacher professional development is investigated by means of a case study. In the second, an interesting view on using action research is given in the context of Parent Teacher Associations (PTA's) and policy development. The innovative idea of using article writing for obtaining a Master's qualification is scrutinised in the next paper. In the last paper the importance of developing scholarly education practitioners is promoted. Other tempting information on conferences is given – inviting you to participate!

This issue is the outcome of Lyn Cundy's hard work. Her unconditional input in terms of time and professional capacity in the past is much appreciated. Getting this very issue published was only possible by means of Lyn's willingness to facilitate the action learning process complementing the final outcome. In being prepared to do so, she demonstrates that she firmly believes in the principles of collaborative learning and that she acts as role model to all of us. I invite you all to contribute to our Journal. It is not only a journal for academics, but especially for AR, AL and PAR practitioners in the field and upcoming scholars. As missionary of AR, AL and PAR in your specific context I would like to urge you to convince your students, co-researchers and PAR communities to help voice the importance of what we believe by writing a paper for future issues. The Journal indeed is our voice – let's collaboratively make it a strong one!

# Using action research principles for professional development: The Waikiki School experience

Karen Murcia –

## Introduction

Action research principles were the methodological foundation of the Department of Education Science and Training funded and Murdoch University directed, numeracy research conducted at Waikiki Primary School, Perth, Western Australia. Action research projects were used to explore innovative teaching strategies for improving student numeracy outcomes.

The structured method for reflective practice used in this research acknowledged and built on the teachers' prior professional experiences and expertise. It provided the teachers with a way to learn from their actions by taking time to plan, implement ideas, observe, question and reflect. This process contributed to the development of a sense of critical reflection or questioning of existing perspectives of teaching and student learning. Combined the teachers' projects provided collective reflection, which lead to the identification of shared issues, challenges and concerns. As a result, possible ways forward in both teaching and student learning were developed.

The collegial nature of the action research approach enabled individuals to receive support from their colleagues in directing their own professional growth or development. It provided teachers with an opportunity to develop a broader and more critical view of their practice. As a result they had increased knowledge and potential for adapting to change.

This project recognised the role action research can take in the professional development of educators. It found that time needs to be given for new ideas to become incorporated into thinking and practice. Furthermore that teachers' development can be enhanced through professional reflection and opportunities for collegial sharing of learning experiences.

## **The background**

The Waikiki Numeracy Project was funded under the Commonwealth Government's *Literacy and Numeracy Innovative Projects Initiative* and was conducted in collaboration with Murdoch University. The project was a whole school initiative that used action research principles to explore strategies for developing student numeracy. The teachers selected and developed action research projects based on an aspect of their classroom practice that in at least some way included working with parents. The projects implemented by the teachers were focussed through a framework of numeracy and trialled a range of strategies to heighten students' and parents' awareness, and ability to respond appropriately to, opportunities for using numeracy in the classroom, integrated across the curriculum and in their everyday life.

The research built on a framework that viewed numeracy as a blend of mathematical, contextual and strategic knowledge, which cannot be developed solely within the mathematics lesson (Hogan 2000). Underlying this is the assumption that opportunities for students to encounter real numeracy situations occur across the curriculum and in school life generally. Here students can experience real and practical uses of mathematics. Taking the time to focus on numeracy demands in these situations could encourage students to engage meaningfully with the mathematical skills and concepts they are learning. This perspective of numeracy is consistent with Western Australia's Curriculum Framework (1998) that states, *being numerate is about having*

*the disposition and competence to use mathematics to solve practical problems outside mathematics and as a tool for learning beyond the mathematics classroom (p. 179).*

This project challenged the teachers' perspective of numeracy and teaching for numeracy as their initial focus was primarily on mathematical knowledge taught and practised in the mathematics lesson. The action research process facilitated engagement with and critical reflection on this view of numeracy and teaching for numeracy. Further more it provided the necessary structure and support for developing and implementing innovative teaching strategies for improving students' numeracy achievement.

## **Action research**

### *What is action research?*

The creation of an action research theory is generally attributed in the literature to Kurt Lewin, an American psychologist who in the mid 1940's suggested an approach involving a spiral of steps, each of which is composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action (Smith 2001). Action research has come to refer to processes that strive for two aims simultaneously. These aims focus on action in the form of change, and research in the form of understanding. It is a flexible and participatory process that is cyclic, alternating between planning, acting, describing and critically reflecting. Weinstein (1995) describes action research as *a way of learning from our actions and from what happens around us by taking the time to question and reflect on this in order to gain insights and consider how to act in the future.*

### *Why we chose action research?*

We utilised action research principles in the Waikiki Project, as it supported a constructivist approach to professional learning and facilitated real, practical action based on the

numeracy learning needs of students in the school. The teachers were able to undertake action research as a part of, not separate from, their classroom practice. It offered an approach to change and learning that could potentially empower the teachers, as they could own the process and the resulting solution. The approach allowed us to build a research partnership with the teachers in which their prior and diverse professional experiences, knowledge and classroom expertise could be recognised, drawn from and built on.

In addition to investigating innovative strategies for teaching numeracy, the project gave the teachers experience with principles and a process for conducting action research. Potentially, this could provide an approach for coping with future change as they experienced strategies for adopting something new, learning to take a few risks, initiating and then incorporating new ideas into practice.

### **The project team**

The project was actively supported by the schools' Administration and included teachers from Kindergarten to year seven. The action research team involved eight teachers, including the Physical Education teacher, and two Murdoch University Researchers who co-directed and facilitated the process. All teachers initially grouped themselves into project pairs resulting in four projects that separately investigated innovative strategies for supporting students' numeracy development. Each teacher's action research contributed to the whole school project as they came together at facilitated meetings and workshops to share experiences, ideas and issues. Together the teachers reflected on the whole school focus question and contributed to the identification of shared concerns, issues and emerging findings.

## **Project interventions and activities**

The projects timeline was negotiated with the schools' Administration to insure the projects interventions and activities were realistic within the school context, achieved the research objectives and fitted within the projects budget.

### *Workshop one*

Our first intervention was a whole school, full day workshop in which we aimed to share our project expectations, build a supportive learning environment, share prior knowledge and to develop a shared understanding of numeracy, numeracy across the curriculum and action research. We endeavoured to provide the teachers with sufficient information to understand the purpose, aim and intended focus of their action research projects.

In this, our first contact with the teachers it was important to motivate and inspire. We celebrated the achievement of winning funding and discussed the implications of the project for the students, the teachers, the school community and Nationally. The collegial nature of the project was highlighted and demonstrated by a variety of activities that gave time for teachers to talk, share experiences and ideas. We listened to the teachers, endeavouring to work from and built onto their ideas to create a shared understanding necessary for the project to begin. Time was given at the end of the day for teachers to complete a written reflection, which provided us with feedback and requests for support or clarification.

### *Time for reconnaissance*

The first term was a time for teachers to settle into their classrooms, think about their students' numeracy and their teaching for numeracy. This time was essential for getting to know their students and parents. The teachers needed to focus their attention upon their students' learning needs and

what change they could make in order to improve their numeracy development.

Project talk occurred incidentally during the term but was also required as teachers negotiated research partnerships and critical friendships in preparation for workshop two.

### *Workshop two*

In the second full day workshop we continued our aim of developing a positive learning environment that was collegial in nature. To begin we acknowledged the questions raised in the feedback from workshop one and outlined how these would be addressed in the day's program. Our responses lead to three interactive sessions. Firstly, strategies for supporting students' numeracy development with some examples of other numeracy projects, then guidelines for writing a project proposal and finally recognising and valuing the struggle in learning.

Throughout these sessions we acknowledged the learning journey we were, as a team, taking together. As one teacher later reflected,

*You don't necessarily see it at the beginning, it's a process, you set off on a journey. If you know the answer you don't set out to find it.*

Setting out on this journey, moving beyond existing practices, created uncertainty and some anxiety as the teachers struggled with the learning involved. A teacher explained,

*Doing a project that requires me to teach mathematics from a different viewpoint, away from my standard style of teaching makes me feel vulnerable and uncertain.*

Sharing these feelings normalised and valued the struggle involved in learning as it assisted the group to see that moving to a new level of understanding required dissatisfaction or questioning of existing knowledge.

Struggling with the uncertainty and questioning our ideas and assumptions could lead to seeing new possibilities.

We required the teachers to formalise their thinking and seeing of new possibilities by writing a project proposal. Guidelines were provided to assist them build a plan that not only considered what they would do, but how they would collect evidence of what was going on, in order to make judgements about what occurred and support any inferences they may wish to make.

### *Implementing the plan*

The teachers implemented their project plan at the beginning of term two. Throughout the process they were encouraged to write regularly in a learning journal. This journal was presented as a tool to assist in recording their planning, acting, observing and reflecting experiences. It was anticipated their journal would be a source from which they could at the conclusion of the project develop a reflective case study to share with the other participants and the broader community.

The teachers were asked to collect evidence of what happened when they carried out their planned action. They were encouraged to reflect on this evidence in order to make inferences about the impact of their action on the students' learning experience and any improvement that may have resulted. The collecting of evidence was essential to the research dimension of the schools project as it would have been insufficient to judge the effectiveness of innovative strategies for teaching numeracy based purely on perception.

The teachers found their plans were not set in concrete or to be followed like a recipe. They need to be flexible, adapting and responding to their students' experiences, learning needs and level of engagement. A teacher commented,



*The process of action research was messy, involved trial and error. I tried new things, open-ended tasks and student-negotiated curriculum.*

### ***Facilitated action team meetings***

Each teacher research pair joined with my co-director and me approximately twice a term for a facilitated action team meeting. These meetings helped keep the project a priority for the teachers. They were an important feature of the action research cycle as they provided the time, support and structure for critical reflection. It was an opportunity for the teachers to share their teaching for numeracy and their observations and evidence of its impact on their students. As a group we would critically reflect on what was shared. This was a positive questioning and exploring of different perspectives and ideas. We would challenge assumptions and encourage alternative thinking about teaching and learning. We would critique ideas and raise questions in order to push the thinking and reflection to a deeper level. The teachers found this to be a valuable aspect of the action research process. For example,

*They (facilitators) ask the questions, dig a little deeper and make us think beyond the initial thought. If you don't reflect you don't take the next step. Reflecting with someone's help. Facilitators force a deeper reflection.*

While facilitating we would use our knowledge about numeracy to build on what the teachers were bringing to the meeting. When appropriate we would share past experiences, give advice and make suggestions. Reference materials and resources were provided when necessary to support the teachers' development and progress.

These meetings demonstrated the need for improvement or change to take place as part of an on-going cycle of action rather than as the consequence of a one-off activity. The critical reflection provided the stimulus and direction for the next cycle of planning, acting, describing and reflecting. We

aimed to support teachers in finding a way to progress their project or in the words of my co-director, *a means by which to go forward, supporting and assisting individuals in identifying personal relevance in the learning experience* (Holden 2003). Our achievement of this aim is demonstrated in the following teacher's comment:

*The next facilitated team meeting helped me to find clarity. These meetings are important because it is helpful to gain insight from someone on the outside. They are a part of my action learning cycle and help in finding direction.*

In addition, regular facilitated meetings contributed to maintaining the momentum of the teachers' learning and assisted in keeping the project on track. They provided an opportunity for clarifying problems and issues. We found ourselves at times working through attitudes and feelings of *this is the way I've always done it, why change, too busy or too difficult*. In our responses we strived to be encouraging, stimulating and motivating. Mostly the positive energy flowed easily as we found the teachers' experiences and insights into their classrooms exciting and inspiring. It was important to recognize and appreciate the teachers' efforts and to congratulate their achievement.

### ***Project progress presentation***

We required the teachers to make a presentation of their progress to their colleagues at the third full day workshop held at a halfway point in the project. They were provided with a guiding framework to assist their preparation. The presentation facilitated the teachers' reflection and required them to draw together their thinking and working on the project to date. All the presentations were supported with evidence from the students' learning experience. For example video, digital photos, numeracy posters, students' numeracy journals, work samples and student quotes.

In this forum the teachers shared their ideas and engaged in whole school reflection. As a group we synthesised ideas

and identified common emerging issues across all the projects. The teachers were encouraged to draw knowledge and ideas from the experience that could inform their own work. In addition they were provided with a guide for reflection to assist them in moving forward with their project.

### *Writing and presenting a case study*

The writing and presenting of an action research case study drew to a conclusion the teachers' investigation of student numeracy and innovative strategies for supporting their development. The writing process required the teachers to reflect on their experiences over the whole project. They needed to plan their case study so that their inferences about teaching for numeracy and student learning were clear and supported with evidence. Time was taken in a facilitated meeting to discuss writing the case study and a framework was provided to guide them in the process.

Writing about their action research project helped the teachers to clarify and express their ideas. Tripp (1998) explains it as helping, *to find your way to places you wouldn't otherwise go and to see things you wouldn't otherwise see*. The case study was a vehicle for sharing both the process and the outcomes of their project with their colleagues. It demonstrated their commitment to the school's numeracy research and showed excellence in their professional learning. Presenting the case study in the final workshop was not only a sharing of the learning but also a celebration of the achievement.

### *Debriefing the experience*

The final facilitated action team meeting occurred after the teachers' presentation of their case studies and was used as a project debriefing. The teachers were provided with the tentative findings emerging out of the initial analysis of the project materials. These were discussed and verified.

In addition, teachers were asked to complete a Stepping Stone activity that assisted them in reflecting back over their experiences in the project. This activity was used as a stimulus for discussion and as a data source capturing the teachers' experiences of the action research process. Participating with the teachers in this activity was valuable for reflecting on our facilitation of the project and our own learning journey.

## **Reflecting on our learning journey**

The following key issues emerged out of this reflection.

### *Change takes time*

At the first workshop the teachers appeared to have taken on board the project's broad and integrated perspective of numeracy. They could 'talk the talk' having learnt to use the 'language'. However, implementing the concepts proved more difficult. Transferring the learning into new and innovative teaching strategies occurred more slowly and revealed at times the struggle they had with broadening their personal perspective of numeracy and teaching for numeracy. A teacher explained,

*It was challenging putting my very general ideas into some sort of a formal way for a project action plan.*

Moving forward required time for the teachers to think, question and find relevance in what they were learning. Powell as quoted by Holden (2003) said, *professional development often comes to an end before questions can be addressed or before teachers and others involved are at a stage of being able to come to terms with new issues. The complexity can swamp the tentative hold we have on our new knowing.*

This year long project provided the time necessary for the teachers to engage fully with the issues and ideas. They had time to think, engage in collegial talk and try out new ideas. The process provided time for critical, professional reflection

at a depth beyond what is possible in the busy daily practice of a classroom teacher.

### *Building a safe learning environment*

An important principle underlying all aspects of the process was the need for participants to be heard, valued and safe, so thinking and feelings could be shared openly and honestly. The teachers were required to 'open up' and share what had typically been relatively 'private' classroom practice and thinking about teaching and learning.

At all times we aimed to include everyone and value equally all participants. We would listen actively and empathetically during workshops and meetings, attempting to clarify and address problems and issues as they arose.

It also appeared having the schools' deputy and principal actively involved in the workshops and joining equally with the teachers in the learning journey contributed to developing an environment in which teachers could be open and critically reflect.

A teacher explained,

*There is a huge difference in professional development when the whole school is involved and Admin supports us. We can be open and professional about our practice so we can share and learn.*

### *Working with a critical friend*

Collegial interaction and support offered by critical friends was important to the learning process. We were all engaged in a continuous process of learning, sharing and reflecting supported by colleagues who shared an interest and understanding about the project's process and aims. A teacher explained,

*I learned that we all share common concerns, goals and can help each other achieve our specific targets.*

Together we were taking time to discuss and reflect on what it is we were doing and why we were doing it. Professional talk of this nature required us all to clarify our thinking and created opportunities for seeing different perspectives and interpretations of experiences and evidence. Grundy (2002) explains, *while we might need the support of others to act; we also need the critical eyes of (trusted) others to test our interpretations and understandings with and against.*

By working in pairs the teachers not only had a research partner but also a critical friend. Working together in this way allowed a sharing of the load and enriched their looking as one may see an aspect of the experience not focussed on by the other. The importance of working with a critical friend is captured in the following teacher's reflection:

*Working with someone is the best way to go as you have someone to talk to about your students. You can flounder on your own. Working together involved making ideas happen, considering alternative ideas and reflecting. We would let ideas settle, take time to think and then come back together, talk, share and decide.*

Project direction also involved being a critical friend to each project team and each individual teacher. Acting as a critical friend required an interest in the person and the way they think, react and make sense of their experiences. It involved providing a safe place in which the teachers could think out loud, share their classroom practice and their own struggle with learning.

As project co-directors my colleague and I acted as research partners and perhaps more importantly, critical friends. We would critically reflect after each meeting with a project pair and then later, extensively about each project's contribution to the whole school research focus. We too brought different perspectives, experiences and views to the project and hence challenged and enriched each other's thinking. This increased the depth of our reflection and our ability to effectively facilitate the research process.

## Conclusion

Through this project we identified key factors to the effectiveness of action research for professional learning. We found that time needs to be given for new ideas to become incorporated into thinking and practice. Furthermore we found that the teachers' development was enhanced through critical reflection and opportunities for collegial sharing of learning experiences. This essential reflection and debating of alternative perspectives and ideas was only possible when trust existed and the teachers felt free to speak their mind and share their feelings.

As such, at the core of this action research project was a group of professional teachers who were committed to improve numeracy outcomes for their students. They were motivated risk takers who were prepared to struggle with the questions and uncertainty of the learning outcome. They opened up their practice and engaged in collegial reflection in order to assess what happens when they initiated change.

The success of the teachers' projects was evident in their students' learning:

*I was very excited to see the enthusiasm of the students. I felt gratified and enthusiastic as I saw the students' improvement. It made a difference to the kids.*

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*There are many communities around the world involved in action learning and action research, some of them are isolated from like minded colleagues by their different disciplines.*

*In the interests of bringing these communities closer together, we invite you to tell us about your local action learning/action research network*



# Action research for national policy development: Parent Teacher Associations in East Timor

– Ernie Stringer

## Introduction

This paper describes the application of participatory approaches to action research to the development and implementation of a national strategy for developing Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) in East Timor. It describes the way that cycles of research were used to formulate a policy, then plan and implement a process to improve education in schools by using the resources of parents and the community. The PTA project is one of a series of projects funded by UNICEF with the express intention of assisting the nation to redevelop its educational system.

As consultant to UNICEF and the East Timor Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports, I facilitated participatory developmental processes that incorporated the views of all major stakeholding groups, including the government, educational administrators, teachers, parents and the broader community. Documentary information from national development strategies, largely produced by various United Nations missions in East Timor and NGO's, together with extensive interviews of a broad range of stakeholders, provided the immediate basis for plans for policy development. Further work with parents, teachers and administrators in regional schools was used to test initial assumptions and to formulate a series of pilot projects to test the efficacy of the policy recommendations. Finally, pilot

projects were evaluated and the outcomes used as the basis for implementing national PTA policy.

### **The context: An account of a PTA workshop**

The worn, crumbling, bare concrete floor is framed by cracked, corroded and unpainted walls. The spaces for windows are likewise bare, not a pane of glass to be seen in the school, and window openings have no coverings except for remnants of rusted link fencing wire. A new corrugated iron roof has been inexpertly attached to the classroom walls, and lack of any ceiling means that heat from the tropical sun is radiated directly into the room. There are no doors, no furnishing, except for children's wooden desks and chairs, and a 'blackboard' consisting of a square of black paint on the concrete wall at the front of the room. There is no wiring for electricity and, I am told, no running water in the school. The room contained no shelving, books, charts, pictures, learning materials, and was devoid of anything resembling teaching materials.

The heart of the school is not in its physical resources, but reflected in the faces of the people in the room – parents, teachers, community leaders and some educational administrators. Eager, concerned, interested, impassioned, their foreheads wrinkle in concentration as they listen as each speaker reports to the meeting, reporting back on the outcomes of their small group discussions. The apparent poverty of the bare surroundings and the heat from the tin roof are forgotten as they focus on the issues at hand – how can we ensure an adequate education for our children at a time when the new nation has so few resources.

The last speaker completes his oration and the written record of his presentation is read back to the assembled group, proof that their words have been heard and note taken of their thoughts and ideas. During a break for refreshments the team leader writes down the key issue from each presentation on small charts and fastens each to the wall,

then the meeting re-commences. Parents gaze in awe at the sight of the words as they are re-presented. They talk animatedly about the possibilities emerging and their intention to help teachers develop a better school for their children. An excited buzz emerges as the final comments from the principal and district superintendent thank people for their participation, pointing out that these processes represent the new ways of a democracy – the people’s voice has been heard and will be acted upon.

As people disperse there is jubilation among the visiting facilitators and the administrators. Here is a process of working with the people, of building their capacity to participate in the reconstruction of the school system, of mobilizing their energies to fashion a new institution for a new nation. It gives lie to the often heard sentiment “The parents aren’t interested in their children’s education.” Given the right context and the right processes they have come out in force and demonstrate both their interest and willingness. A community of action is in the process of formation.

## **Building a new nation**

East Timor is in the process of rebuilding its social, political and economic structure and introducing a democratic form of government. After nearly twenty five years of often repressive action by Indonesian military authorities, and widespread social disruption following Indonesian withdrawal, the East Timor government, with the assistance of a number of UN missions, commenced instituting widespread reforms to the social and political system. The Constitution of the Democratic Republic of East Timor asserts that the people of East Timor *Solemnly affirm their determination to fight all forms of tyranny, oppression, social, cultural or religious domination and segregation, to defend national independence, to respect and guarantee human rights and the fundamental rights of the citizen ... with a view to building a*

*just and prosperous nation and developing a society of solidarity and fraternity.*

This continues to be a difficult task, as the violence and destruction accompanying Indonesian departure and the lack of any governmental infrastructure left an already poor nation with few resources to maintain services and institute needed developments. The East Timor State of the Nation Report (Planning Commission 2001b) records, for instance, that in 1999, 95% of East Timor's schools were destroyed, requiring major inputs of resources from the nation and international donors. According to a UNDP Human Development Report (UNDP 2002) East Timor faces major challenges in health, education, food security, income, sustainable livelihoods, gender equity, natural resources, human security and freedom, and participation (UNDP 2002).

This state of affairs was continually highlighted during project team visits to schools and discussions with parents and school staff. Not only were many of the buildings in poor states of repair or reconstruction, but many schools lacked basic teaching resources. As one parent noted, *Many people [in our community] are poor and we need money to be able to help the people send their children to school* (Maloa School 2002). A group of parents at another school commented *Many parents have no jobs, and can't afford schooling for their children* (Maumeto School 2002). These types of comments from parents, teachers and principals emphasize the impact of poverty on the life of East Timorese people, and indicate the impact on children's schooling.

One of the greatest challenges facing the new republic is economic development. With the national economy generating few funds, the East Timor National Development Plan (Planning Commission 2001a) notes that in the short term, demands for services far outweigh the Government's ability to supply them. This creates a paradoxical situation where national development needs focus heavily on the

development of the education system at a time when resources are scarce and few systems are in place.

As the Human Development report notes (UNDP 2002), East Timor is building a new administration from the ground up in an ethos inherited from its colonial past. Indonesian organizational structures, which have been instituted throughout the nation, were authoritarian, leaving staff with little confidence to do anything but 'wait for orders', and closing off opportunities for public participation. This ethos of 'waiting for orders' tended to permeate many of the project meetings with parents and teachers, and comments such as *the government needs to decide whether there should be uniforms for children and teachers* were common. It is apparent that many people, parents and teachers alike, perceive 'the government' to be the source of all decision-making. This attitude is one of the greatest challenges facing the development of PTA's, as the Ministry seeks to provide greater decision-making powers to parents and the community.

## **Schools in East Timor**

Visits to schools in East Timor provided clear indications of the challenges facing the nation's education system. The best schools are poor by world standards, and poorer schools provide barely adequate facilities for children and staff alike. Teaching in these conditions is a major challenge, even for experienced and dedicated teachers. The inadequacy of school facilities, recorded in official reports from government and international agencies (e.g., East Timor National Development Plan 2002; Voice of the Teachers, UNICEF 2001) was apparent throughout project team visits to schools. Parents and teachers identified inadequacies that were endemic in almost all schools visited:

- The cost of school fees is difficult for parents, especially poor parents, or those with a number of children at school

- Lack of books, pens, rulers, etc.
- Lack of library facilities
- Lack of typewriters, sewing equipment, sports equipment, music equipment
- Lack of teaching materials
- No curriculum to guide teaching
- No training for teachers
- Insufficient classrooms — one school visited had only 6 classrooms for 470 children
- Lack of electricity in the school
- Lack of water in the school
- Inadequate sanitation, putting children's health at risk
- The poor condition of school buildings
- Lack of security, leaving the school open to vandalism
- Lack of fencing, leaving children in danger of wandering onto nearby busy roads
- Insufficient teachers
- Need for teacher housing to accommodate those who live long distances from the school.

The poverty of the people of East Timor therefore is reflected in the poverty of their children's schools. The physical facilities, however, are only part of the story. The State of the Nation Report (East Timor Planning Commission 2002) indicates that East Timor has low levels of literacy and low levels of school enrolment. Of the present population, 46% have never attended school and only an estimated 75% of children of the relevant age group are enrolled in primary schools. This figure is exacerbated by the fact that many children who are registered in school — perhaps as high as 20% according to the State of the Nation Report — do not actually attend. Further, there is a substantial shortage of

adequately trained teachers, many having had only very limited training. This situation is made worse by a curriculum viewed by East Timorese students and teachers as outmoded and largely irrelevant to their situation.

In consequence, the challenges facing schools are considerable. As the State of the Nation Report (Planning Commission 2002) notes:

*A key question for educational development during the coming transitional period ... is how to meet the formidable demands for the provision of basic education and training with substantially fewer resources than are currently available. This is a major constraint on all proposals for policies, programmes and projects in the education sector.*

The need for development of schools is accompanied by a desire to change the nature of the way schools are managed to reflect the desire to democratize the nation's institutions. The State of the Nation Report points to the need to identify who is to be involved in managing education, and the respective roles of different Ministries, the Church, NGO's and local communities. The report also highlights the increased importance of involving local communities to provide the means of participating in and monitoring school management and other developments.

### **Parent-Teacher Associations in East Timor**

A key objective of the East Timor Development Plan is to *Strengthen the community ownership of education through inclusion of parent, community, student and teacher groups, involving them in the development of appropriate quality educational provision in local areas* (Planning Commission 2002). The development of Parent-Teacher Associations, therefore was a priority of the Ministry of Education, a point underlined by comments by the Minister of Education, and the Director General of Education at Roundtable Meetings on Parent-Teacher Associations (Minutes for Roundtable Meetings 2002).

Although East Timor had a history of parental involvement in schools, the system introduced by Indonesian authorities was seen as inappropriate for the needs of the new nation. In 1992 authorities had introduced Badan Penyelenggara Pelaksanaan Pendidikan (BP3's) that were ostensibly comprised of parents, teachers, and community members. Evidence from school consultations and other reports, however, suggest that BP3's had very limited functions and provided little opportunity for participation by parents in school decision-making. A recent survey (Nomura 2002) indicated that schools used BP3's largely to collect school fees, to distribute report cards, and to ask parents to assist with their children's behaviour or learning problems. Comments from parents, teachers and principals consulted in the current study indicated that school parent organizations still tended largely to follow formats developed in Indonesian times. This observation is reinforced by an Oxfam/UNICEF study (2002) indicating that parents had little input into parent/teacher associations, which focused largely on school fees and tests, rather than discussing issues related to quality of education, curricula, ways that parents can assist their children to learn, or other educational issues. In addition, the study found, participation in Parent-Teacher Associations was limited to a small group of parents, the majority of whom were men.

One of the most difficult challenges facing the development of PTA's in East Timor, therefore, was the history of experience of the people. Initial consultations with parents and teachers indicated that they saw PTA's as operating in ways very similar to BP3's, and few seem to envisage possibilities for extending parent participation in the management or operation of the schools. The study by Nomura (2002) indicated that a large percentage of schools still use the term BP3 to describe their parent-teacher organization, and that a large majority appeared to operate in the same way as BP3's. This ingrained history of experience continues to present a major obstacle to the



development of more comprehensive Parent-Teacher Associations.

## **PTA's: The Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sports**

Public statements by the Minister and Director General of Education indicate the importance placed by the Ministry on the need to develop parent and community participation. The extent of parent participation envisioned by the Ministry is suggested by a set of draft by-laws that sought to stimulate discussion on the issue of parent and community involvement in schools. As the Introduction to the by-laws suggests: *The need to involve the civil society in the education process is an indispensable act that combines the interests and the responsibility of the people with the activities of the Government.*

The draft by-laws provided an indication of the way the Ministry envisaged the relationship between parents and the school. They suggested that each school should form a Parents' Council as an independent, participative and responsible body elected by the parents of a school. Its major purpose was to provide advice and support to the principal and teachers, and to monitor and evaluate the quality of education provided by the school. The by-laws suggested that each Parent Council periodically report on its activities to the district education authorities.

The draft by-laws further suggested that Parent Councils should work cooperatively with teachers and the principal on any of the following areas of activity:

- School infrastructure
- Teaching materials
- The quality of teaching
- The professionalism and discipline of teachers
- Participation and presence of pupils in the school

- The development of good relationships with and greater participation of the community
- The behaviour of pupils
- Quarterly and annual reports on progress
- Plans to provide for the needs of the school
- Assisting in decision-making
- Planning the purchase of school materials
- Organizing school rules
- Learning processes in the school
- School maintenance and security.

In doing so, the by-laws envisage that the Parent Council shall plan a budget that stipulates the use of financial resources according to an agreed programme of priorities.

The Ministry's vision dramatically extended the possibilities for parent involvement in schools in East Timor. It implied not only a change in the way that schools were managed, but changes in the nature of the relationship between government, the school and the community. These were far-reaching cultural changes that required extended and systematic developments on a school-by-school basis. It would not have been possible merely to stipulate what must be done in the schools (thus reinforcing notions of centralized, authoritarian decision-making), but to assist and support parents, principals and teachers to develop a new vision of their schools.

### **Action research processes for policy development**

Action research processes depicted in Stringer (1999), Stringer (2004), Stringer and Genat (2004) and Stringer and Dwyer (2005) were used to commence formulation of a PTA policy for the Ministry (MECYS). The following steps were implemented cyclically, the information and analysis from

each phase being incorporated into a position paper that was eventually presented to the Ministry and other stakeholders. Each cycle of research includes:

- Framing and focusing of the issue
- Identification of stakeholders having an impact on the issue
- Gathering information from stakeholders and other relevant sources,
- Distilling the information to identify key issues, ideas and elements
- Reporting on what has been discovered
- Formulating next steps (planning the next research cycle).

The purpose of the process is to formulate joint and collective accounts that take into account the agendas and perspectives of each stakeholding group, incorporating that information into a report that clarifies the issues and agendas. The report seeks to identify points of commonality from which action might commence, and points of difference that will be subject to negotiation.

In the first phase of the research in November 2002, the consultant met with stakeholding agencies, including directors in the MECYS, and representatives of UN agencies and NGO's to clarify the various activities related to PTA's in which these groups were involved. He also gathered relevant documentation, including national development plans and a set of draft Parent Council By-laws formulated by the Deputy Director General.

Over a period of four weeks consultative workshops were held in six schools from a variety of regions in East Timor, from middle-class urban to poor rural environments. Workshops were held in school classrooms and participating parents and teachers were encouraged to express their views about the issues and problems experienced by the schools

since independence, whether a parent organization was needed, and what it might look like. The meetings were well attended, with large groups of parents demonstrating by their participation their concern about the education of their children.

Workshops included the following steps:

- Presentation to participants (parents, teachers, principals, superintendents)
  - The East Timor national development context
  - The need for parents and the community to participate in development of the schools
- Small group discussions, with separate groups for teachers, and male and female parents.
- Groups centred their discussion on defined focus questions:
  - What are the problems/issues in the school
  - What has the school accomplished since Independence
  - What should happen next for the school
  - Does the school need an organization that includes parents and community members
- Each group nominated a recorder who would present the groups issues
- Plenary session, in which group perspectives were read by the presenter, recorded and read back to all participants.

Many of the issues were quite contentious, and both parents and teachers sometimes became quite passionate in expressing their views about the needs of the schools, and the lack of available resources. Payment of school fees was particularly contentious, since political parties had promised a system of free education prior to the first national elections. The lack of national finances prevented this from becoming a reality and parents took some time to come to grips with the

fact that it would not happen for some years yet. In the end, though, many parents accepted the fact that in the immediate future they would need to take action if their children were to gain an adequate education. Such was the interest in these discussions that at a number of schools parents and teachers continued their meeting for some considerable time after the departure of the consultation team. In many cases they had creative ideas about the ways that parents could participate in the school, including teaching of traditional songs, dances and arts, assistance with maintenance of the school infrastructure, monitoring of the quality of teaching, and assistance with the behaviour and attendance of children.

On the basis of information gained from these consultations a draft Position Paper was formulated, outlining three possible options for the structure of a Parent Teacher Association. This paper formed the basis for a two-day workshop with MECYS directors and superintendents. The paper was also distributed to other agencies and NGO's and discussed in a Roundtable Meeting (formed as a policy coordinating body). The consultant briefed senior ministry directors and the Minister of MECYS before presenting the final position paper – Parent-Teacher Associations in East Timor – to a roundtable meeting late December 2002. The paper proved to be highly acceptable, providing needed clarity on the possibilities for the purposes, structure and operation of PTA's. The Minister asked the Director General to form a Technical Working Group, comprised of senior directors, to facilitate the implementation of the policy.

### **Next steps: Piloting policy implementation**

With few resources available, and many organizational systems in their first phases of operation, implementation of the policy stagnated for some months. The consultant was asked to return to formulate a policy implementation process and to write a 'manual' describing processes for developing a PTA in a school. Based on the information gained from the

previous consultation processes, the consultant constructed a draft manual for developing PTA's in schools in East Timor. One of the difficulties of developing an openly democratic organization that encouraged wide participation of parents and the community was the continuation of parent bodies that had been formed in Indonesian times and focused largely on extracting fees from parents. There was an evident need to find ways for people to think differently about parent participation, and to define a structure that would provide much wider sources of participation and power for parents and the community. The manual – Parent-Teacher Organizations in East Timor – was produced as a draft with the intention of using it as a resource in piloting the development of PTA's in a limited number of schools. The manual included the following sections:

- Introduction: From BP3 To PTA – A capacity building strategy
- Mobilizing families and the community
- Identifying PTA activities
- Planning a PTA
- Evaluating, monitoring and supporting.

The manual focused particularly on processes for mobilizing the community through individual and family consultations and parent workshops. On the basis of experience in consultation workshops, it also placed particular emphasis on the need to identify and organize parent activities, rather than on organizational structure. The latter was seen to emerge from the need support the various parent activities.

A pilot project was initiated in the following months, in which PTA development was initiated in seven core cluster primary schools in seven of the nations 13 school districts – Dili, Maliana, Manatuto, Same, Alieu, Liquica and Baucau. A UNICEF/MECYS team facilitated a planning workshop with parents, teachers, principals, and community leaders in each

of these schools, assisting participants to develop plans for initiating PTA activities.

Some months later a one day evaluation and planning workshop was run in each of the pilot schools providing an opportunity for participants to review the progress of their PTA developments and to plan their 'next steps'.

Workshops focused on:

- The purposes of PTA development
- Current PTA activities and structures
- Plans for future development.

Participants worked in small groups, discussing and summarizing issues, then presenting feedback to the assembled workshop. Comments and questions from other participants and the evaluation team clarified issues arising from presentations.

Again, the enthusiasm and dedication for participants was most evident. Under the most trying of conditions parents waited patiently for workshops to commence – sometimes waiting an hour or two when travel difficulties delayed the facilitators – and continuing to concentrate on the issues at hand in the tropical heat. My field-notes record the context in the following terms:

*The heat and humidity are oppressive. My face is wet with sweat and my drenched shirt clings to my body, and even the participants fan their faces and mop their brows. An occasional waft of breeze serves only to accentuate the heat of the day. But the people are active and interested. They focus on the issues at hand and continue to work, concentrating, thinking, discussing ... [They talk of] what they are doing, how they have organized themselves. The process gives them voice and seems very affirming to them. Being active seems very important to them. The term "ownership" comes to mind as I watch them work.*

## **Pilot project outcomes**

### *Processes for initiating/enhancing PTA development*

Evaluation workshops in the seven pilot schools indicated that the processes of development described in the Pilot Operation Manual had been very effective. Though schools differed in the degree and nature of their development of PTA's, pilot activity had generated high degrees of awareness of the need to increase parent participation and in most schools the enthusiasm of participating parents is very evident. They expressed great satisfaction with their achievements, and were keen to extend their activities to other aspects of school life. This mirrors the attitudes of principals who, although somewhat wary in some instances, expressed a desire to extend parent participation in the school and, with one exception, welcomed these developments.

Both principals and parents, however, expressed a need for training and support to assist them in continuing their efforts to develop PTA's in their schools. They recognized that both processes and structures associated with past practices (BP3) were not appropriate, but could not clearly see how to make appropriate changes. It is clear that these changes will take time. A change from highly authoritarian and directive management processes common in Indonesian times (and possibly common under traditional and Portuguese leadership) will require carefully articulated processes of monitoring, review and development. Some of the pilot schools were still locked into the rigid formats and directive operations of the BP3's and it was apparent they would need extended support to assist them to modify the standard activities of the BP3.

Most principals, parents and community leaders clearly understood the need for consulting parents and indicated the necessity for parent workshops to assist in PTA



developments. There was less enthusiasm, however, for individual or small group consultation in home and community contexts, despite the success of schools that had instituted this type of activity. It was apparent that training in interview techniques and home visits would need to be incorporated into ongoing support services related to PTA developments.

### *Parent activities and functions*

The increasing scope of parent activities was clearly evident in most of the pilot schools. Some schools had already instituted considerable activity amongst parents, and one of the poorest schools had been particularly successful engaging active parent committees (seciones) in the following areas: Discipline (students and teachers), Cleaning, Water and Sanitation, Finances, Income Generation, Handicrafts/Teaching Materials, and School Rehabilitation (buildings and furniture). Parents in this school were also teaching children local cultural activities, including song, dance and handicrafts.

Though this school was exceptional, it provided an example of the broad range of activities in which parents were starting to engage in other schools in East Timor. Though one or two pilot schools had clearly maintained the BP3 emphasis on school fees, most had extended their activities to other areas of school life. This trend would probably continue over time as parents, principals and community leaders became increasingly aware of the possibilities emerging from parent participation.

As yet, however, there is little indication that principals, community leaders or parents see the potential of using parents in advisory or managerial (planning, monitoring, etc) roles, as envisaged in the Ministry draft by-laws. In most situations parents were still seen in a support role, though there were indications that this would break down over time. Some principals already used school councils to assist in

solving problems within the school, and council committees on 'discipline' sometimes encompassed the professionalism of teachers as well as student behaviour.

### *PTA structures*

A feature of the evaluation was the identification of highly effective organizational structures that had emerged from PTA developmental processes. Some schools were using local organizational models that might well suit the purposes of other schools in East Timor. One model in particular, derived from parent activity committees (*secciones*), provided an effective organizational structure to support parent activities, each committee being represented on the school council. This model attracted considerable interest from workshop participants at other schools, who obviously saw its utility for organizing parent activities.

As one might expect, a number of the pilot schools were still locked into organizational formats used for BP3 activities. To some extent this derived not only from the desire to use known structures and processes, but also indicated confusion in some principals about the roles and responsibilities of the PTA, the School Council and Council committees. Most, however, were able to see the need to change the structure and/or operation of the Council to accommodate the expanded activities and responsibilities of parents.

There was continuing confusion, however, about the relationship between the PTA and the School Council and the activities of both. Although the latter is clearly described as an executive or representative body in preparatory workshops and in Ministry By-Laws, many principals, parents and community leaders were confused about the responsibilities and activities of the School (or Parent) Council. PTA's were still seen, by many, as a meeting of parents and teachers that delivers test results and resolves student disciplinary issues – as in the old BP3. Though

these activities would still be relevant to a PTA, there was an obvious need for principals to explore the possibilities for using parent-teacher meetings for other purposes – to extend the range of issues or activities that might be incorporated into PTA meetings. Likewise schools would need to continue to explore, clarify and develop the functions of the School Council to incorporate developmental agendas signalled in the Ministry By-Laws.

### *Future plans*

Almost all schools had developed rudimentary plans for future PTA developments that signalled an increase in the extent and type of parent activities in the school. Parents at one school, for instance, were working on three areas of activity – handicrafts, rice fields (for income generation), and a school cafeteria – but had identified four other areas they planned to engage – infrastructure, attendance, cultural activities (dancing) and security. Most schools had similar plans derived from meetings with parents. The ultimate success of these plans will depend, to a large extent, on the ways in which the school leadership institutes these developments. Where they are derived from parent identification of possible activity, as opposed to principal/teacher requests for activity, then greater participation is likely to occur.

### *Reporting and accountability*

A majority of principals commented on the need to ensure transparency in the use of school funds. Some announced their intention to provide parents with reports of the way that funds had been used in the schools, while others indicated that school councils or financial committees would provide parents with opportunities to make decisions about the use of funds or at least to be informed of the way they had been expended. Generally, however, there is little indication that schools had carefully articulated processes for monitoring and reporting on funds, or on other school

activities. Training in School Based Management that will be shortly instituted may provide the impetus for school authorities to institute regular monitoring and accountability procedures. These might be incorporated into regular school review and planning sessions associated with the development of school improvement plans.

### *PTA and School Council meetings and procedures*

In most schools there is little evidence of regular meetings of PTA's or school councils. Apart from end of term meetings with parents and teachers focusing on student reports and behavioural issues, few schools seem to have incorporated regular meetings of PTA's or school councils that focus on the broader issues of school life. Apart from continuing issues related to school fees, few schools use PTA/School Council meetings to deal with issues related to infrastructure, curriculum, teacher professionalism, administrative arrangements, school rules, etc. In general, PTA development appears to occur on an ad hoc basis, rather than through systematic arrangements emerging from regular, coherently structured meetings and organizational arrangements.

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

# Reaching the end sooner, later or wiser: Reflections on the article route of publishing a thesis or dissertation

- Gail Janse van Rensburg  
& Tienie Vermeulen

## Abstract

The researcher wrote her Master's dissertation in the article format and during the research process she submitted two articles to national and international accredited journals. The article format and the submission of articles before the publication of a dissertation or a theses is not common in all South African universities. Zuber-Skerritt and Perry identified two distinct Action Research (AR) projects, namely the core AR project involving a group of practitioners and the thesis AR project, which concerns a group of fellow candidates and supervisors. Following the principles of planning and writing a draft article, evaluating, revising and proof reading, final draft writing and submission for publication, the researcher added another dimension to this AR process.

The advantage of submitting articles for publication during candidature is that it trains a researcher for the publication phase through the integration of research, demonstration of originality and significance of the research during enrolment. Publication also provides external quality control through reviewers' comments and suggestions. If publish-ability is already proven, it enhances the quality and could increase the likelihood of satisfactory examiners' recommendations.

In this article the authors reflect on their experiences respectively as candidate and supervisor, as well as the information gathered from other researchers and mentors. The authors finally conclude that the benefits of the article route outnumber the disadvantages, which can be overcome by implementing article writing as part of all post-graduate programmes.

## **Introduction**

During the core Action Research (AR) project of her Master's study, which was conducted as a case study, the researcher formed part of a workgroup of institutional and international practitioners. The research team progressed through a series of planning/acting/observing/reflecting cycles of management practice with the thematic concern to determine to which degree modularisation of the discipline *End-user Computing* would develop competent learners.

The researcher has first reported on this project during 2002 (Janse van Rensburg 2002) in a fashion described by Zuber-Skerritt and Perry (2002) as a typical AR report, that is, written in the first person plural, in narrative form and making comparisons of the situation before and after each cycle of planning/acting/observing/reflecting. The reviewers report (Piggot-Irvine 2003: 79) described this as ... *an example of a finely written account of action learning.*

During the dissertation phase, the researcher also followed an AR approach while completing the fieldwork described above, through planning each article in collaboration with the supervisor, discussing ideas with fellow researchers and repeatedly evaluating ideas and conclusions against the research questions. In contrast to the core AR project, this phase concerns a workgroup akin to an action learning set of associates. In the researcher's case the Australia/South Africa Institutional LINKS project that was supported by workshops with fellow candidates and their supervisors aimed at fulfilling the conventional requirements of

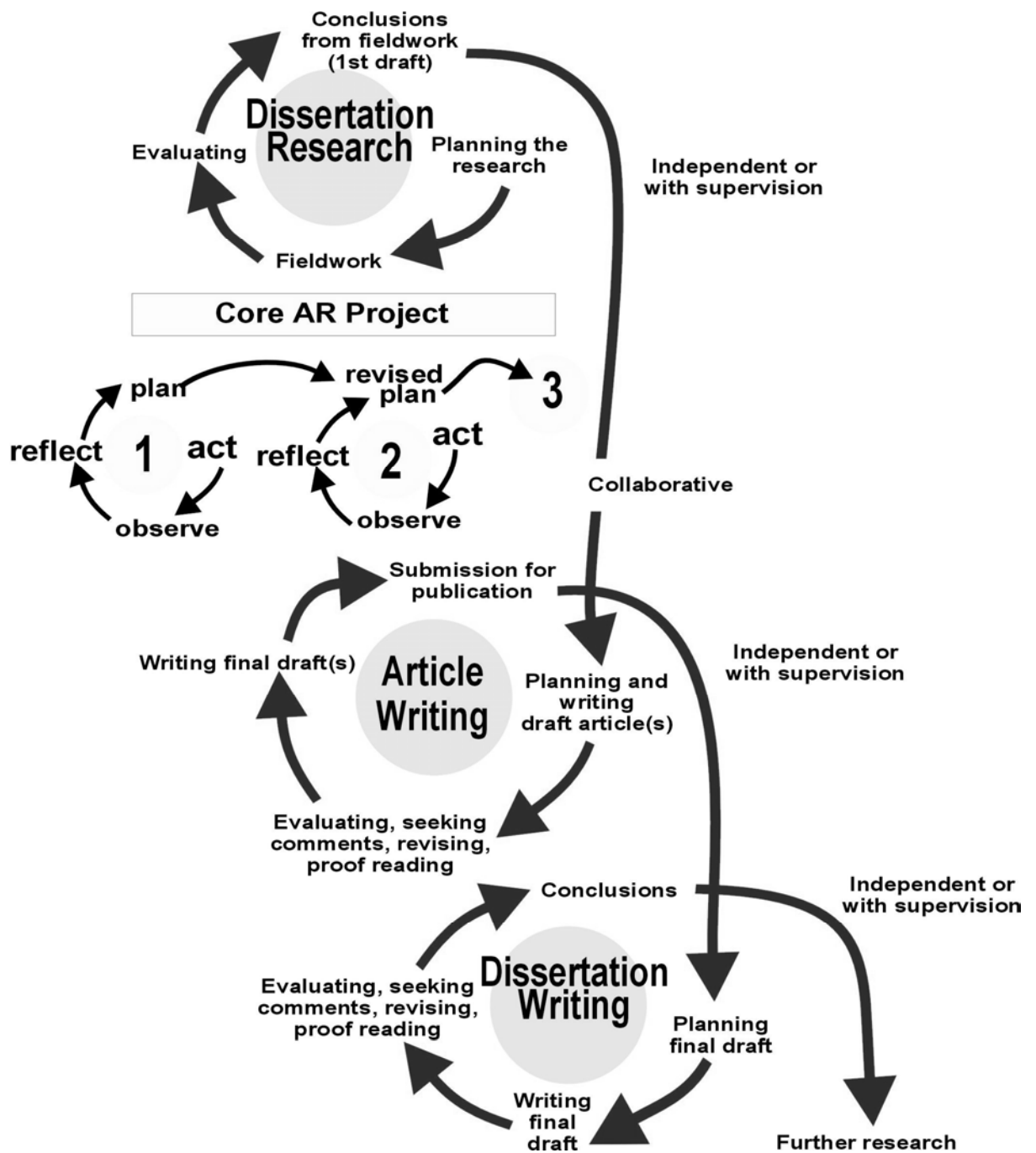
dissertations and theses. The LINKS project aimed to develop leadership and research skills of academic women from universities of technology (formerly known as technikons) in South Africa. This is being pursued through training, support and conducting collaborative action learning programmes within and across institutions. The dissertation phase added another dimension to research writing, in the sense that conclusions were submitted for publication before the final dissertation-writing phase.

Information from experienced researchers and mentors, who followed this route before, has been gathered as well as information from a workshop held at the 6<sup>th</sup> ALARPM World Congress in order to elicit on the researcher's and mentor's personal constructs of the 'article route' at both the individual and institutional levels. In this article, the authors reflect on their experiences, respectively as candidate and supervisor, and also summarise the information mentioned above, after obtaining the participants' confirmation of results, possible amendments and final approval. Although the article-writing phase is reflected on as part of a series of AR cycles, it may apply to dissertation and thesis writing within other research epistemologies as well.

### **Following a process of research cycles**

Zuber-Skerritt and Perry (2002) clearly distinguish between a core action research project (that is, field work integrated into the candidate's full-time work in an organisation or institution) and a thesis action research project. The researcher added another AR cycle, namely that of the article writing process which forms part of the thesis or dissertation writing phase (Janse van Rensburg 2003). Figure 1 shows the relationship between the core action research, article writing and dissertation writing as described above.





**Figure 1:** The relationship between core action research, dissertation research, and article writing for a dissertation (as adapted from Zuber-Skerritt & Perry 2002)

## Article writing and reviewing

The General Academic Rules of the North-West University (formerly the Potchefstroom University) (PU 2004) states that:

*In a case where a learner is allowed to submit a dissertation or mini-dissertation in the form of (a) published research article(s) or unpublished manuscript(s) in article format, the dissertation or mini-dissertation must be so planned that it will still in all respects comply with the requirements for such a document.*

The advantage of submitting articles for publication during candidature is that it trains a researcher for the publication phase through the integration of research, demonstration of originality and significance of the research during enrolment. According to Sadler (1998) publication also provides external quality control through reviewers' comments and suggestions. Submitting articles for peer reviewed publication before examination could enhance the quality of the dissertation and could increase the likelihood of satisfactory examiners' recommendations. Publication provides external quality control through reviewers' comments and suggestions, helping both the supervisor and the researcher. Furthermore, it increases the likelihood of satisfactory examiners' recommendation if publish-ability is already proven (Sadler 1998). To ensure the objectivity of the examiners' assessment the fact that one or more articles that form part of the dissertation have been published, are usually not conveyed to the examiners. Greenwood (2004) disagrees with the fact that quality control is provided by reviewers' comments. Peer review is less about quality than it is about the imposition of professional power and the actions of professional networks. Its link to the quality of the analysis and the results of the AR project seem tenuous at best and completely non-existent in many cases.

During candidature, the researcher submitted two articles to accredited journals and has received valuable reviewer comments and suggestions in time to improve the articles for publication in the dissertation. The qualification has however been awarded before the articles were re-submitted to the journals. These articles are currently being prepared for re-submission to the specific journals.

## **Dissertation writing and the structure of the research report**

The researcher investigated and reported on the research questions by means of three articles. In the first chapter of the dissertation the problem is stated, and the objectives and significance of the research are argued. The reader is introduced to the research methodology, as well as the structure of the research report. The subsequent three chapters contain the three articles. In the fifth and final chapter, the findings, conclusions and recommendations are presented with reference to each article, as well as a recapitulation of the findings for the complete research project.

In the dissertation, the reader is informed that each of the articles should form a distinct entity and should not overlap in context (Janse van Rensburg 2003), and that therefore, each individual article's bibliography forms part of the article and is placed at the end of each chapter. Similarly, the bibliography for the first and last chapters, are also placed at the end of those chapters. The articles do not logically link to each other like chapters in a book, and the reader is informed to see overlapping, repetition, lack of cross-references and the difference in argumentation between chapters, in the context of the structure of the research report. However, a logical connection between the objectives of the research project as stated in the first chapter, between each article (Chapters 2 - 4), and the conclusions, are made in the final chapter (Chapter 5). A complete bibliography is provided at the end of the dissertation.

Greenwood (2004) points out that there is a price to pay for this approach. The kind of integration and continuity of arguments and the full development of the major analytical threads that a reader (either supervisor or examiner) expects in a thesis is lost. Either the articles repeat much material; or the larger overall linking themes are not given the kind of development they would get in an integrated thesis. This is however, not a critique of the article route, since every system has its advantages and disadvantages and both should be mentioned and reflected on.

### **Views from other researchers and mentors**

Information was gathered during 2003 through an electronic discussion with a voluntary group of action researchers and mentors regarding the positive factors, benefits for candidates, institutional benefits and challenges of incorporating article writing as part of a graduate action research programme. It should be mentioned that, although the researcher engaged a community of action researchers in this conversation, peer review by professionals generally occur in disciplinary contexts under systems of professional control.

The following is a summary of their experiences, in no particular order, with recognition for their contributions.

A former candidate's viewpoint (Rutengwe 2003):

- It was easier for him to write the thesis in the form of scientific articles.
- The mentor entrusted the researcher to choose his own style of presenting the thesis.
- Review articles provided him with international exposure: the review articles written during his Master's studies were presented at an international conference in Austria.
- Advantages/personal benefits:

- He was more focused on the research.
- Peer reviewed and accepted papers resulted in less stress.
- Six papers were presented within the thesis in a logical way so that there were no conflicts and repetitions.
- His Masters dissertation was upgraded into a Doctoral thesis.
- An improved CV and promotion opportunities.
- Institutional benefits include outputs in terms of publications. Institutions need to have a common understanding and clear vision of research outputs. It does not make sense if there are many theses at institutions if they cannot be used to benefit the public.
- Rutengwe suggests that masters and doctoral students should be encouraged to read a lot of scientific articles, in order for them to choose the easiest approach for them to write their dissertations/theses and to write objectively. This approach gives the candidates confidence, knowledge and skills in their research career.

The mentor's/institutional viewpoint (Kapp 2003):

- All graduate programmes should include article writing, as part of the programme and it should be an outcome of all Master's and PhD research. In their case (University of Stellenbosch), the article writing exercise takes place during a 10-module coursework part of the programme where candidates are required to write at least 10 articles during the course (over two years).
- Positive factors:
  - The candidate gets continuous feedback from tutors (and fellow students).

- They get numerous opportunities to read high-quality writing and in the process, to develop their own style.
- They get structured detailed comments, suggestions and quality improvement advice with extended references and sources.
- They develop confidence and are much more assertive in oral examination.
- It also gives credibility to their work and examiners are usually impressed by their work.
- Benefits for candidates:
  - Candidates become acclaimed at an early stage of their research.
  - They get exposed to critical reviewers, which helps to sharpen their own perspective and to improve the quality of their work.
  - They gain in confidence.
  - They can add the publications to their portfolio.
- Institutional benefits:
  - The publication output of the institution increases and the institution receives a financial reward from publications in accredited journals.
  - The research prestige and visibility of research activity and output is increased.
- The most important challenges for supervisors include keeping the students focused while they edit all the articles for potentially large numbers of postgraduate students like they have at Stellenbosch University. Furthermore, within the South African context there are limited accredited journals in the field of higher education although there are several discipline-based journals. Supporting students to develop their writing

skills is no easy task and specialised support from writing centres and in-house editors are essential, which costs money.

McMeniman (2003) refers to the following:

- Refereed conference papers are usually presented throughout a student's candidature.
- She prefers students to leave publication of articles until after successful examination. This means that the work will have been scrutinised in the examination process and thus have a stronger chance of being published.

Greenwood (2003) is of the following opinion:

- In supervising candidates from the U.S., Norway and Spain, the dominant modality of dissertations is the extended multi-chapter argument. Dissertations can, however be written as a set of articles aimed for publication, through which students gain in the immediate publish-ability of the results.
- Lecturers do realise that Action Research dissertations need to develop a reporting style and a structure based on the requirements of AR and not on positivistic research.
- In some cases, collaborators in the AR studies participated in the question and answer sessions of the defence; and in other cases addressed the audience regarding their experiences and conclusions from the project, prior to the defence. In a certain dissertation all chapters were reviewed by the collaborators and a chapter of their reflections was included as part of the dissertation.
- The best way to deal with these issues is to collect examples of such dissertations and gradually try to develop specifications that respect the contours of AR.

Zuber-Skerritt (2003) encourages publication during candidature, because it provides:

- quality writing from the start instead of reporting at the end;
- external quality control;
- access to expert reviewers' comments and suggestions; and
- likelihood of satisfactory examiners' recommendations, because the candidate has already proven that the quality of his/her work is of high, publishable standard.

She also lists two potential disadvantages, which can be avoided by an experienced supervisor who helps the candidate to plan, design and structure the thesis in such a way that certain chapters and sections can be published en route.

- Candidates may thus get distracted or sidetracked from the main topic and prolongs the period of their candidature.
- The articles may become too disparate and hard to integrate into the thesis.

If a degree is awarded on the merit of publications only, she recommends strongly that the candidate reflects on the individual publications and produces a written explication on the attached and bound published work, so that the thesis (i.e. the original contribution to knowledge in the field) is clearly stated and backed up with reference to the evidence provided in detail in the published work.

With regard to monetary and institutional benefits, Sankaran (2003) reports the following:

- A publication bonus is paid to use for academic purposes that provides the monetary incentive. They usually pay AU\$ 500 if the student is the sole author. Otherwise it is shared in proportion to the contribution.



- If a student presents a refereed paper (e.g., at the ALARPM World Congress) they will be encouraged to publish and a publication bonus will be paid. They will also bear some travel costs for the student if they present a refereed paper.
- Normally, students are encouraged to publish their literary review, methodology or conclusions from the research.
- An exception is to try and support publication of a thesis entirely using published papers, but with a research theme written around the thesis connecting the papers.
- The University gets some benefit from the government for refereed publications as it is counted as contributing to the institution's research performance.

### **Concerns from workshop attendants: What are the benefits?**

A workshop was held at the 6<sup>th</sup> ALARPM & 10<sup>th</sup> PAR World Congress, held at the Groenkloof Campus of the Pretoria University in September 2003, during which the researcher shared her experiences with the audience (Figure 2) and involved the participants in re-thinking the AR process as described in Figure 1. It was the expectation of the researcher to document the participants' experiences and thinking regarding this 'article route' in order to contribute to the reflection on the challenges as well as the construction of positive insights in the AR process by the end of the workshop. However, the attendants at the workshop proved to have a need to be informed about the 'article route' and none had any prior experience of the process. The discussion was mainly on the benefits for a candidate as well as the institutional benefits in monetary terms. The audience raised interesting and topical arguments on the accreditation of a candidate on terms of the articles that are published during candidature.



**Figure 2:** Workshop held at the 6<sup>th</sup> ALARPM & 10<sup>th</sup> PAR World Congress held at the Groenkloof Campus of the Pretoria University, South Africa, in September 2003, with 6 of the 10 participants

Vermeulen (2004) reacts on the opinions, arguments and questions raised by the audience as follows:

- The article route is only beneficiary if articles are peer reviewed during candidature.

I do not agree. The article route is beneficial for students because the post-graduate studies already prepare students for future publications. The examination or evaluation process is not dependent on the peer review and/or publication of articles during candidature.

- What is the task of an external examiner if editors approve articles? Can it happen that a dissertation be unsuccessful even if some of the articles have been published?

The evaluation/examination of the script or dissertation and the peer reviewing of articles should be seen as two different processes. Both the internal and external examiners should evaluate the script/dissertation objectively and would in most cases not even know that one or more articles that constitute the script/dissertation had been peer reviewed or published. In this regard the General Academic Rules of the North-West University (PU 2004) state as follows:

*11.5.3 If a learner is allowed to present a dissertation or mini-dissertation in the form of a published article(s) or (an) unpublished manuscript(s) in article format, and if more than one such manuscript or article is used, the dissertation or mini-dissertation must still be presented as a unit, supplemented by an overarching problem statement, a focussed literature analysis and integration, together with a summarised concluding discussion.*

*A.11.5.4 If any research article or manuscript involving more than one author is used in terms of A.11.2.5, the learner must obtain a written statement from each co-author stating that such co-author consents to the use of the research article or manuscript for the intended purpose and indicating the extent of each co-author's share in the research article or manuscript concerned.*

- The above-mentioned fact has litigation issues: What if an article gets published but the examiners don't approve of the quality of the candidates research?

As stated in the previous answer, the fact that an article or more had been published should have no influence on the examination of the script/dissertation. These are two different processes – the criteria for publication and the examination of a script/dissertation have two different sets of criteria.

- What is being assessed during the editorial process – the research or the article? Can an examiner get an in-depth picture of the quality of the research by examining chunks of the research in terms of 3 to 5 articles?

Every journal has its own set of criteria in terms of which article is peer reviewed and considered for publication. The internal and external examiners of a script/dissertation will evaluate the entire script/dissertation in terms of those criteria set by the university.

- What is the real purpose of publishing – to get funding?

The monetary benefits only serve as a way to motivate lecturers and students to publish. The main purpose of publishing is more academic. Universities are rated every year according to the number and quality of publications that they produced. This determines the academic status of not only the institution but also of the staff and students at the institution.

- Is our institutions' knowledge base shifted to journals?

Not at all. Most of the publications in journals originate from the universities and they remain the original or primary basis of knowledge.

- What are the institutional benefits?

Academic status in the first place, which relates to publication outputs.

From these arguments, questions, and answers it is clear that the 'article route' is still the beginning of long discussions and requires a great deal of thinking before all possible barriers have been removed.

## **Reflections and conclusions**

The obvious reasons of the 'article route' are to gain experience in article writing and for the institutions and the student to benefit in terms of bonuses and credibility from

publishing articles in accredited journals. A drawback that the researcher has experienced is that training in article writing was not part of the University's post-graduate training, although it formed part of her involvement in the Australia/South-Africa Institutional LINKS programme.

It is the authors' opinion that the 'article route' provides the following benefits.

- Although the articles were not published by the time of examination, the dissertation was already in a publishable format.
- The publication of the core AR project as well as numerous papers written (for presentation at conferences) prior to the articles, provided international exposure, feedback and a basis for the final articles.
- The dissertation is compact and more likely to be read, or referred to.
- Valuable feedback was received before the submission of the dissertation and corrections could be made.
- The researcher learned not to personalise referees' comments but to view her work critically and objectively.

Challenges and lessons learned:

- It is essential to use a database program to store references in order to apply the required format and changes for each journal, and by the University, each of which has its own rules for citations and references.
- The researcher was divided between 'What would the examiners want to see' and 'What would the editor want to see'. This caused the articles to be longer than the average pre-scribed 5000 words.
- The researcher's focus was also divided between the articles. She could not repeat information, but for the

sake of the readability of the dissertation, a thread had to be followed throughout.

- The researcher could have completed the qualification 6 months earlier if she had not taken this route, but conversely the quality of the dissertation was improved as a result of the peer reviewed articles.
- A drawback of publishing during Master's candidature is that there is not necessarily a contribution to new knowledge. Although the researcher has applied existing concepts in a new situation, a referee from a specific accredited journal replied that the article did not contribute to new knowledge.

It is clear that the benefits for both the institution and the student far outnumber the disadvantages. Challenges, such as candidate training and the prolonged duration of the writing process can be overcome by the implementation of article writing skills as part of the postgraduate training programmes.

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



# **Action research-driven learning: Creating a research culture in teacher education**

- Pieter du Toit  
& Peter van Petegem

## **Abstract**

To the background of the global imperative of innovation in teacher education, this paper reports a case study of a module in the teacher education programme at the University of Antwerp, Belgium. The focus is on creating a research culture. Developing scholarly thinking is viewed as an important aim of teacher education. Action research is used as a tool for student learning by which learning style flexibility is promoted. At the same time it is used as research strategy by us as lecturers to investigate our practice. The alignment between the way in which learning is facilitated and the use of portfolio assessment is investigated. A mix of research methods is used to obtain quantitative and qualitative data. The outcome of a qualitative study through which feedback was gathered by means of questionnaires, interviews and a group feedback session is reported.

## **Introduction**

Innovation in teacher education has recently become a nonnegotiable imperative and a worldwide phenomenon, since there is a global demand on innovation in higher education in general (University of Antwerp 2003; Council on Higher Education (CHE) 2003). Reports on teacher education in European countries (Viebahn 2003; Snoek 2003;

and Linde 2003) and beyond (Center for Educational Research 1989) confirm the radical changes that are made or envisaged. Scholars of higher education, such as Ramsden (1999), refer to the university's responsibility to be imaginative and thus innovative. The paradigmatic shift in education and training in general referred to by different authors (Brandes & Ginnis 1996; Van der Horst & McDonald 1997; Valcke 2000) is evidence that a radical shift has to be made especially in teacher education. These authors also refer to the importance of focusing on both the learning product and the learning process. Teacher education has to deliver scholarly practitioners as suggested by Viebahn (2003). Provision should be made for a learning climate conducive to developing such practitioners, which implies a greater focus on a research-driven learning process in teacher education.

A new paradigm in the first place expects scholars to rethink their ontological and epistemological viewpoints (Lewis-Beck, Bryman & Liao 2004) about the applicable reality they study. For scholarly practitioners in teacher education, one of the realities they should study is innovative learning in teacher education *per se*. Ontological determinants of learning in the new education paradigm, such as co-operative learning, learning styles, self-regulated learning, learning-centeredness, research-driven learning, and lifelong learning should be studied accountably. The epistemological techniques (Lewis-Beck, Bryan & Liam 2004) of studying the new reality should bring about a deeper understanding of that new reality.

In this paper we report our investigation of our teacher education practice from this new ontological and epistemological viewpoint. Our practice is exemplary of the new paradigm. In the design of the module that is used as a case study and unit of analysis (Yin 2004) we kept research-driven learning as innovative way of learning in mind during the process of curriculum design and development, our facilitating of learning and the assessment of our student

teachers. One of the aims of the innovative learning intervention is creating a research culture. The methodology used for investigating our practice also represents innovative research ideas. We view our implementation of action research (Zuber-Skerritt 2000) as innovative, since it complements learning style flexibility, it promotes a research culture and it is used as a tool for student teachers to learn. In combining these we are of the opinion that a learning style flexible culture of learning can be promoted through action research-driven learning that is also a learning style flexible research approach.

The principles of lifelong learning (Olivier 1998) should not only be lectured about, but should be experienced in teacher education. If student teachers were subjected to the principles underpinning lifelong learning in a positive way, they would most likely be willing to create a culture conducive to lifelong learning in their own classes. The principles promoting continuous learning are to be found in the principles of self-regulated learning and action research. Analogue to the views of Biggs (1985, 1999), Entwistle, McCune and Walker (2001), and Ramsden (1999) the strategies that should be employed in self-regulated learning and action research are planning, implementing, monitoring and assessing. Teachers who have mastered the skills needed for doing action research will most probably find it easier to translate these skills to action learning to be done by their own learners. They would most probably facilitate learning in such a way that they would challenge their learners to master the skills of self-regulated learning. Such teachers would be able to make use of thinking strategies, methods and skills needed for different kinds of problem solving in their practices. Moreover, such teachers would be able to monitor the extent to which they are flexible in terms of their own learning and teaching styles. Being able to do this suggests that one has a good understanding of the self (Ryan & Cooper 2000) and one's preferred style of learning. Teachers' learning styles have a direct impact on their

teaching styles (Van Petegem 2003) and therefore they should be intentionally aware of this factor.

In this paper we report part of the outcome of an overarching investigation of some realities we face in our teacher education practice. A case study of an education innovation is reported that serves as exemplar for teacher education programmes. The focus is on the students' learning styles that would impact their approach to doing research, and the need to continuously adapt our own styles to promoting research-driven learning. The group being investigated is student teachers at the University of Antwerp that had been put through a learning programme based on the principles of learning style flexibility and action research. The very same principles that are modelled to them in this way are the principles they have to study for the module: Promoting Learning and Thinking Processes. The essence of the theoretical content of this module is learning styles and learning to learn.

## **Research problem**

Fostering deep learning (Biggs 1999; Ramsden 1999) in teacher education is an imperative. Deep learning could be promoted through research-driven learning. In our view deep learning and learning style flexibility, as derived from the work of Vermunt (1994) and Herrmann (1995) go hand in hand. Designing a learning intervention that would promote deep learning, learning style flexibility and research-driven learning, was the practical problem confronting us. On a research level the challenge was to opt for a research design that would complement the notion of learning style flexibility and that would help student teachers developing scholarly skills.

An array of research questions has been formulated for the overarching research project. For the purpose of this report the focus is on the following research question:

- What innovative learning principles could be applied to a learning intervention that would be conducive to creating a research culture for our students?

Consequently a broad background to the entire project is sketched. This is followed by a focus on the above question.

## **Research methodology**

Our intention of doing the research is multifaceted. We mainly focus on our professional development from the viewpoint of Ramsden (1999:4): *It implies changing how we think about and experience teaching – it involves changes in our conceptions, in our common-sense theories of teaching as they are expressed in practice.* At the same time we model the interrelatedness between professional development, action research and learning style flexibility to our learners. To monitor this we need a dynamic process-driven design that could easily be adapted as needs arise. We therefore choose to work within the pragmatic paradigm (Greene & Caracelli 2003).

The overarching research design is visionary action research as adapted from Zuber-Skerritt (2000). A mix of research methods as proposed by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003) is used. Taking a combined pragmatic-dialectic position (Rocco, Bliss, Gallagher, Perez-Prado, Alacaci, Dwyer, Fine & Pappamihiel 2003) is therefore seen as accountable in our specific context. Case study research (Yin 2004) and evaluation research (Mouton 2001) are used, since the research is a small-scale investigation of the implementation of a learning intervention designed for the specific sample group. For the purpose of gathering data, Blaxter, Hughes and Tight's (2002) and Bazeley's (2003) views of combining quantitative and qualitative data are taken. Quantitative data is obtained by means of diagnostic learning style questionnaires by Vermunt (1994) and Herrmann (1995). Feedback questionnaires, text analyses and focus interviews provided both quantitative and qualitative data. During a

group report session qualitative feedback was also gathered and documented.

The case study under investigation comprises of a small group of 37 student teachers enrolled for a module on learning styles and learning to learn. Only 9 of them are currently active education practitioners. The module forms part of the teacher education program at the University of Antwerp. Our intention was to create a research climate conducive to self-regulated learning within the context of learning-centeredness.

### *Conceptualizing Action Research-driven learning (ARDL)*

Learning at university level should aim at developing scholarly thinking. As scholarly practitioners of teacher education we would like to see our learners develop into scholarly practitioners too, as Viebahn (2003) suggests. What other scholars would term deep learning (Biggs 1999), self-regulated learning (Singh 2004) or metalearning, based on Bigg's (1999) view on metacognition, we would like to call action research-driven learning (ARDL). Our conceptualising of ARDL is specifically conceptualised within teacher education.

We adapted the 3-P 'presage-process-product phase' model of Biggs (1999), used by different authors, such as Valcke (2000) into one that would include ARDL in the learning process. This is distinguished as the process phase. The learner needs to be subjected to a challenging metalearning experience, such as compiling a professional portfolio. The development of the portfolio is based on the principles of action research. In our case during the product phase student teachers are expected to submit a professional portfolio, as proposed by Costantino and Lorenzo (1998). The first phase or entry level consists of factors within the student teacher, such as abilities and learning style; and institutional factors such as the nature of the field of specialization, the facilitator, and learning climate. At entry

level the student teachers enrol for our module at different levels of scholarly thinking. Learning means growth and development. We would like our students to develop in such a way that they would enter at a higher scholarly level when enrolling for advanced studies in education. The learning climate that we create is one conducive to research and scholarly thinking.

The specific way we would like our student teachers to become scholarly practitioners is by means of action research. Action research is a small-scale investigation of a practice by the practitioner him-/herself (Zuber-Skerritt 1992). Action research is also emancipatory and is useful for intrapersonal development (Du Toit 2002). We would like our student teachers to develop intrapersonally since that correlates with the leadership role they have to fulfil (South Africa 1999; Gupton 2003).

In our conceptual framework of research-driven learning, learning styles are an indispensable, integral part. Being metacognitively challenged by a demanding assignment such as developing a professional portfolio implies awareness and knowledge of *inter alia* one's learning style preferences. Student teachers would have to keep their learning styles in mind when planning for learning, they have to monitor their style, and may have to adapt.

When student teachers have to execute an action research project, they also need to monitor their learning style, and may have to adapt, as part of becoming learning style flexible. Learning style flexibility would mean that a learner is able to adapt the style of learning in accordance with the nature and perceived demands of the task at hand (Entwistle, McCune & Walker 2001). We view action research as a user friendly and an adaptable, learning style flexible way of executing research.

An alignment of the learning style theories of Vermunt (1994) and Herrmann (1995) is possible (Van Petegem & Du Toit 2004). Vermunt's identification of learning styles in

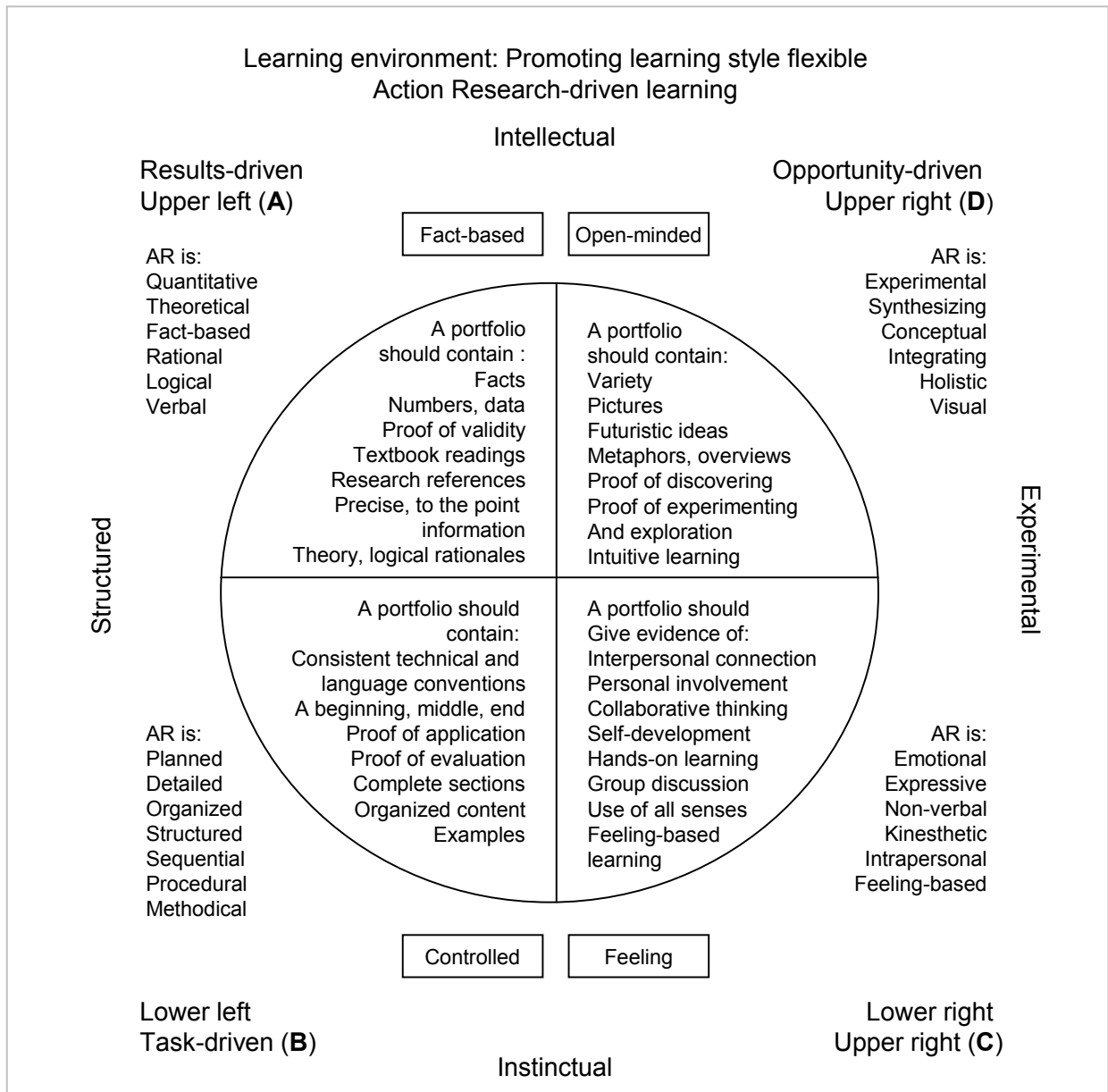
higher education by means of the Learning Style Inventory for Higher Education (LSI-HE) and the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI) could be combined as an integrated model for learning style flexibility. The determinants that are to be found in the Vermunt questionnaire are also represented in the Herrmann model.

For action research (AR) and professional portfolio development the most important sub-scales of the LSI-HE are Deep Processing, Stepwise processing; Concrete Processing, Self-regulation, Personally Interested, Vocation-directed, Construction of Knowledge, Intake of Knowledge and Use of Knowledge. These sub-scales represent the notion of learning style flexibility and could be linked to the Herrmann (1995) model (figure 1) in the following way:

- Stepwise processing and intake of knowledge are associated with intellectual learning as represented in the A quadrant and the sequential learning of the B quadrant.
- Concrete processing and use of knowledge are associated with application that is typical of the B quadrant.
- Self-regulation and personally interested could be linked to the feeling-based learning of the C quadrant.
- Vocation-directed, deep processing and construction of knowledge are typical of future-orientated and holistic learning as represented in the D quadrant.

The links between the Herrmann quadrants, and the link between action research and professional portfolio development could be illustrated as follows:





**Figure 1:** Learning style flexible action research as represented by a professional portfolio

Our constructing of a theory of learning style flexible ARDL is aligned with our redefined outcome of learning in higher education. We view scholarly thinking as an overarching outcome of teacher education. ARDL is seen as an essential part of learning-centeredness (Olivier 1998). Learning-centeredness necessitates that learners should become metacognitively (Biggs 1999; Van Geert 1997) aware of how they learn and how they manage their learning. Kolb (1984) suggests that learners should go through the process of experiential learning. In our practice Kolb's model is used in an adapted form after each study unit to promote collaborative deep learning in groups. It is also used to introduce the principles of action research to the learners. It is called a small-scale action research cycle (SARC) (Van Petegem 2003). The principles of co-operative learning are used, since action research always has a dimension of collaboration. It is also important that the learners are offered the opportunity of self- and peer assessment.

By employing the principles that are related to this conceptual framework a climate conducive to ARDL is created. We see that as aligned facilitating of learning, as adapted from 'aligned teaching' (Biggs 1999). In the discussion of some empirical data that follows, our aligned practice of facilitating learning is explained.

The extent to which our practice was aligned, was determined by means of critical reflection. Reflection entails reflection-in-action, on-action, for-action and inward (York-Barr, Sommers, Ghere & Montie 2001). We did some reflection during the event and monitored the course of the event by making the necessary adjustments. The reflection on our action takes the form of a text analysis and an analysis of feedback from learners obtained from questionnaires and interviews.

## Empirical study

The specific part of the empirical study reported here was done in the following way: Characteristics of the group of learners' preferred learning styles have been identified by means of the Learning Style Inventory for Higher Education (LSI-HE) of Vermunt (1994). Determining the learners' learning style preferences helps us in assessing our practice from the viewpoint of learners' perceived needs. The outcome of the inventory is used to inform our practice insofar the curriculum design, facilitating of learning and the assessment practice are concerned.

For ARDL concrete processing (one of the sub-scales of the LSI-HE), which includes practical application, is a much-needed aspect. Student teachers without practical experience raised their concerns regarding a greater emphasis on application issues during the interviews. Qualitative feedback such as the following was received:

- "I have expected more practical exercises."
- "You have to relate the theory and practice on your own, and not everyone has practical experience."
- "I have no practical experience but I am afraid and anxious that it will remain just here, and this is my last lecture."

The scoring on the sub-scale Self-regulation is a positive indication that our focus on ARDL and the complementing professional portfolio development matches the group's preference in this regard. The expectancy is that the group is still used to being dependent of the facilitator as with the old paradigm which most of them might be used to. Since this is indicated as one of the group's preferences in general, it is perceived as a comfort zone. We deliberately challenged them to work outside that comfort zone - more independently from us as facilitators. In the first place it is done to create an environment conducive to ARDL and their

becoming independent learners. Secondly it is done to demonstrate the role of facilitating learning they have. Coupled to this they are offered opportunities to collaboratively learn with their peers. By reflecting on their learning processes and their different experiences they are enabled to construct their own theories on innovative practice – a much needed process for ARDL. It is expected of them that evidence of the extent to which they are able to construct their own knowledge be reflected in their portfolios.

We realise there should be an intentional strong focus on the new role of the facilitator. Again, this is the very role that they have to fulfill in their practices and they should see it effectively modelled within their teacher education program. They should by means of experiential learning learn what it entails. The low score on the sub-scale Lack of Regulation shows an alignment with our style of facilitating learning, since it consists of items focussed on memorization, processing and mastering large amounts of subject matter, and falling back on others in case of difficulties.

From the scores within the domain of Learning Orientation it can be deduced that the entire group is not results-driven. They therefore do not perceive the end product as the ultimate goal. There is also a correlation between these scores and the qualitative feedback obtained. Not in one single qualitative comment is there reference to any concern regarding the end product, their achievements in the end or the end-results. There is a noticeable discrepancy between the quantitative feedback on the LSI-HE and the qualitative feedback regarding practical application. As indicated earlier, we need to place more emphasis on practical application and their career as teachers. They need to see the direct link between their action research, their professional development and learning style flexibility as a form of applying the theory into practice and a tool for lifelong learning.

According to the quantitative data it can be deduced that the learners have a preference for both the sub-scale Intake of Knowledge and Construction of Knowledge, which fits our strategy of ARDL. A lesser preference is indicated for the scale Use of Knowledge, which correlates with the score on the scale of Concrete Processing strategies. Our aim of creating an education environment that would promote ARDL, is used in a positive sense and implies a focus on self-directed learning opposed to being externally motivated, as implied by the sub-scale Stimulating Education. We do that by being innovative in our curriculum development, the way in which we facilitate learning and the way we approach assessment.

Our innovative ideas are communicated by means of a comprehensive study guide (Van Petegem 2003). In tandem with our expecting students to monitor their learning process by means of ARDL, we reflect on our practice. A text analysis of the study guide was done by means of ATLAS ti 4.2. The text analysis provides quantitized data (Bazeley 2003) since the qualitative analysis of the text is translated into qualitative data. The strengths and weaknesses of the study guide in terms of promoting ARDL could be detected in this way and the necessary improvements can be made for the next phase of our action research process.

During our facilitating of learning we deliberately conveyed the message that we see ourselves as co-ARDL's by acknowledging learner contributions and discussing some outcomes of our own action research with the learners. The facilitating of learning was a mix of lectures, co-operative learning, games, interactive sessions, critical reflection sessions, and feedback sessions. Relevant and stimulating education technology used by both the facilitators and the learners accompanied these. Critical thinking and critical reflection are, inter alia, mastered in collaboration with peers. From the qualitative feedback the following could be deduced regarding the co-operative learning and reflection

sessions that form an integral part of ARDL, as experienced by different groups:

- Group 1: The group atmosphere and group work were positive.
- Group 2: It is very important to do the practice and to do the reflection; an asset was the time for spontaneous reflection; another asset was the reflection on one's own learning style.
- Group 3: A positive outcome is that the learners have found answers to the central question in each phase; the group found the Small-scale Action Research Cycle (SARC) a useful way of doing.
- Group 4: Positive for this group was the reflections on the practice; this way of doing could be added value, provided that changes be made, for example by formulating the assignments more clearer.
- Group 6: The SARC was meaningful for reflecting on the lecture content; it was interesting to include the practical situation in the discussions; more variety in the way of doing would have been better.

All the groups, though, indicated that they did not know how to implement the different roles for group members as expected. We realise that we need to give more attention to the different roles members have to fulfil as they are not used to co-operative learning. They need to be experienced in co-operative learning since they will need to facilitate learning by means of co-operative learning groups in their own practices.

The module is also available online by means of the e-learning program Blackboard. The opportunity was created for students to engage in discussions by contributing to the online discussion forum. Unfortunately this learning tool was not adequately used as initially expected, although the assignment was given that they had to take part. During one

of the interviews one of the students had the following to say in this regard: *"I got the idea that there are some people that are a bit afraid of using Blackboard."* The very same student also remarked during an interview that he was under the impression that *"I would meet with people out of practice, but realised that it is only peer students that are trying to apply the theory."* It was exactly our intention to create a variety of opportunities during which students could construct their own knowledge by learning from especially their peers. The deduction can be made that the learners are not used to online learning and that we need to guide them more intentionally and on a continuous basis.

In the light of creating opportunities conducive to constructing meaning, learners were expected to generate ideas and experiment with these ideas in practical settings. Although most of the learners are not currently in teaching, they need to do some practicals at schools during the year of study in which they can apply their ideas. Coupled to our wish that they would try out some innovative ideas, is that we challenge them to have a holistic view of the entire practice by integrating all they learn in different modules. Evidence of their holistic thinking is expected in their portfolios.

Assessment should form an integral part of facilitating learning (Miller, Imrie & Cox 1998). The innovative idea of using portfolio assessment has as core the self-monitoring of the learning process in a continuous way. Learners in teacher education are not used to this new tendency in assessment. They are used to studying for a set test or examination at a given time. They are not used to taking responsibility for learning in a continuous way over an extended period. A professional portfolio as is used in teacher education (Costantino & Lorenzo 1998) expects the learner to give evidence of continuous professional growth. This cannot be accomplished within the last week of a module. All in all learners are expected to do 12 assignments. A selection of these are to be included in the

portfolio. From the interviews we deduced that more guidance could initially be given regarding self- and peer assessment as essential part of continuous assessment. Our entire strategy used for continuous assessment should be innovated and rigorously implemented. One of the learners suggested the following: “*I would include an assignment in every lecture,*” implying that they are still dependent on an external locus of control, and more structure.

As part of the final stage of the intervention the group of learners completed a feedback questionnaire. The questionnaire also serves a scholarly and didactic purpose. It generates data for our investigation. At the same time learners get an example of doing self-assessment, and how to assess other practitioners that is extremely valuable for deep learning. We completed a matching self-assessment questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 20 statements to which the respondent has to respond. A 5-point scale is used (1 representing a negative and 5 a positive). By this means quantitative feedback is generated. An open question *general comment* was added to generate qualitative feedback that would substantiate the quantitative feedback.

In summary the group of learners responded quantitatively in the following way: According to the data recorded the respondents are satisfied regarding most of the items they had to respond to, with a mean score of 69.5. For item two (Finds ways to help learners answer their questions), though, only 47% of the respondents indicated that they are satisfied (4 & 5 on scale collapsed), and 47% that they are neutral (3 on scale). The same is to be found with item 16 (Provide a user-friendly study guide) for which 47% indicated neutrality and 47% satisfaction. This low rating might be because of the fact that the learners did not use the time prior to the session to read the applicable section in the document. The item might be considered invalid in terms of content validity.



**Table 1: Qualitative feedback by respondents (n=11)**

<b>Resp No</b>	<b>Response</b>
1	<i>A lesson that I'll remember! I enjoyed the video, group-discussions, group tasks, visual aspect with the different hats. A very colourful session, straight to heart and mind!</i>
2	<i>I really enjoyed this "lesson"! Your enthusiasm and examples were inspiring.</i>
3	<i>The focus was on yellow and red, is this to compensate the regular blue/green combo? (It is significant to note that this remark is evidence that this respondent has a clear understanding of the application of the Herrmann theory.)</i>
4	<i>I really enjoyed the way you teach. It was very creative and easy to follow!</i>
5	<i>The introduction was well timed, I was just falling asleep when there was a sudden change in teaching method. (The introductory part was deliberately presented in a boring academic tone, as an icebreaker.)</i>
6	<i>Very nice and learning college.</i>
7	<i>Very good lesson, learned a lot. You really know how to keep your students interested.</i>
8	<i>This was a refreshing experience! Enlightening and tasty! Thanks so much!</i>
9	<i>It would have been even more outstanding when it was presented in Zuidafrikaans!</i>
10	<i>A nice change! Different as other classes; the different tasks could be explained more clearly.</i>
11	<i>OK</i>

For all of the following items a significant percentage of above 80 is indicated as positive responses:

- Item 3: Encourages learners to express themselves freely and openly (88%).
- Item 4: Shows enthusiasm about the subject matter (93%).
- Item 6: Speaks with expressiveness and variety in tone and voice (81%).
- Item 7: Demonstrates the importance and significance of the subject matter (86%).
- Item 8: Provides learning opportunities/presentations that are lively and encouraging (84%).
- Item 15: Creates a climate conducive to learning (84%).

See Table 1 for the qualitative feedback given by eleven respondents on one of the learning interventions done by the co-author of this paper who was involved in the program as guest lecturer.

## **Conclusion**

Evidence is reported that a group of student teachers has diverse learning preferences. Within a group each individual has specific preferences. These are to be accommodated by a facilitator with an own set of preferences. There is a definite need for matching one's ways of developing a curriculum, facilitating of learning and assessing learners with a group of learners' ways of learning. In addition they should be challenged to perform beyond their comfort zones, which calls for employing learning style flexibility and challenging them to become scholarly practitioners. In our case it is evident that the designed intervention to a large extent is aligned with the learners' learning style preferences. Where it is not aligned, the way in which we facilitate learning and assess them challenge them to develop their full potential in the sense that they

need to employ different learning styles to accomplish the end product – a professional portfolio.

The portfolio development is based on the principles of action research. Therefore a climate conducive to research-driven learning is cultivated. The specific research approach our student teachers have to master is action research. This approach refines the research culture we propagate as an Action Research-driven Learning (ARDL) climate.

If ARDL is used as underpinning strategy within a specific practice of facilitating learning, higher education practitioners should ensure that an intentional effort is made to facilitate the process of learning, enabling each learner to becoming competent in especially deep and stepwise processing, self-regulation, construction of knowledge, and constructive co-operation. Every facilitator involved in teacher education should be accountable for answering the imperative question of creating a research culture to promote scholarly thinking.

### *Acknowledgement*

*With much appreciation the funding by the Research Council, University of Antwerp of the research project is acknowledged. A postdoctoral scholarship was awarded for the overarching project, "An evaluative analysis of the implementation of the principles of learning style flexibility in facilitating learning in higher education," of which this paper is one of the outcomes.*

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*The following case study is the latest offering in the Action Research Case Study (ARCS) monograph series. The full text of the case study is published on the ALARPM website <http://www.alarpm.org.au>*

### **How can professionals help people to inquire using their own action research?**

Yoland Wadsworth -

#### **Abstract**

I want to re-visit the differences between research which is conducted by human services professionals *on, about* and *for* their primary and ultimate beneficiaries – clients, patients, or community members – in contrast to research which is more *for, by* and *with* primary and ultimate beneficiaries. I want to do this in light of the widespread continuation of a model of ‘professionalism’ that rests heavily on valuing *pre-existing* professional knowledge and evidence-bases. That is, the persistence of a model of professional expertise that *presumes* the applicability of prior knowledge developed from other professionals’ research, in contrast to seeing professional expertise as lying in knowing how to develop that knowledge more from and with intended beneficiaries, constantly testing it with those beneficiaries for continued relevance at each new application.

I give two case examples to illuminate these differences and affirm the value of approaching professional practice as the facilitation and resourcing of people’s own inquiries. The first is an instance where professional staff proceeded with the research they saw as needed to help low income women



(*for, about* and *on* the critical reference group). Meanwhile the low income women simultaneously proceeded to plan the research they saw as needed to help their situations (*with* and *by* the critical reference group). The second case example illuminates more deeply an extended effort that commenced with research done *for, about* and *on*, but moved to be research *with* and *by* the end-beneficiaries. This involved differing constellations of researcher/s, research facilitators, researched and researched-for as a responsive shift took place in the locus of power from professionals to beneficiaries – ultimately leading to greater success. I conclude by briefly summarising the conditions that seem to assist (or hinder) professionals researching more *with* and *by* their intended end-beneficiaries.

### **About the author**

Yoland Wadsworth has worked as a research sociologist practitioner, theorist, facilitator and consultant for 33 years. She has authored Australia's two best-selling introductory social research and evaluation texts (*Do It Yourself Social Research* and *Everyday Evaluation on the Run*), and is currently Vice-President (International) of the Action Learning Action Research and Process Management (ALARPM) Association. She is Convenor of an Action Research Program at Swinburne University of Technology, where she has been appointed as an Adjunct Professor.

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## Noticeboard

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

**"Telling our stories"  
ALARPM Annual Conference & Workshop  
30 September – 2 October, 2005  
University of Technology, Sydney**

### **Action research/action learning in our work**

Friends,

Across Australia and New Zealand and in many parts of South East Asia many people use action research and action learning to guide their work practices. Youth workers, social workers, health professionals, teachers, community development workers, and a host of others engage action research, action learning and associated processes to give life and vitality to their work practices.

The work is often demanding and there are times when people need to come together to "recharge their batteries" and to work through the problems and issues they confront in their day to day work. They need to have opportunities to tell stories of their challenges and triumphs, to learn new ways of thinking about their work, and to develop supportive relationships with others who are in similar situations.

The 2005 ALARPM conference is designed with these purposes in mind. I look forward to meeting with people from across the region, to listen to their stories and to provide opportunities for them to engage in the type of exciting dialogues that will nourish their professional and community working lives.

In the process my hope is that participants return to their communities energized and excited, with new ideas and an enhanced feeling of purpose. The end result will be interactions with their clients and fellow workers that are empowering and life enhancing.

I look forward to meeting you in Sydney in September.

Ernie Stringer, President, ALARPM

## **Call for presentations, workshops and papers**

**Presentations** – The conference committee encourages people to use a wide variety of methods and techniques to tell their stories and share their wisdom. These may include: Verbal presentations, theatre, poetry, song, art, dance or multimedia presentations (30 minutes).

**Workshops** – If you have experience facilitating workshops in the area of action research/action learning you are invited to submit an outline of the workshop to be run on the Friday.

**Papers** – A special edition of ALAR, the Association's journal, will enable interested participants to publish their stories. Other stories may be presented in the ALARPM Newsletter, or on the ALARPM website.

## **Schedule**

### **Workshops – Friday, 30 September, 2005**

A series of workshops from 2 ½ hours to a full day (5 hours) will enable participants to extend their understanding of action research and/or action learning processes, and to enhance their skills. Parallel sessions, led by experienced

facilitators, will enable people to engage in activities specifically relevant to their work or community situations.

### **Telling Stories – Saturday, 1 October, 2005**

Multiple format sessions (30 minutes) will provide opportunities for participants to “showcase” their work – through presentations and performances to tell stories of triumphs, struggles, and transformational moments in their work. Interactive sessions will provide opportunities for people to reflect on their experiences and learn from each other.

### **Linking and Organising – Sunday, 2 October, 2005**

Participants will work in groups to explore the relevance of conference activities for their work and to develop ongoing, supportive links with others. ALARPM will plan to make organizational arrangements to provide continuing support for conference participants.

### **For registration information**

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

#### **Donna Alleman, Conference Coordinator**

Email: [conference@alarpm.org.au](mailto:conference@alarpm.org.au)

Phone: 61-7-3342 1668

Fax: 61-7-3342 1669

#### **Margaret Fletcher, ALARPM Secretary**

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*ALARPM gratefully acknowledges the support of the Centre for Popular Education, University of Technology, Sydney.*

**ALARPM 7<sup>th</sup> & PAR 11<sup>th</sup> World Congress  
Participatory Research, Standards and Ethics  
*University of Groningen, The Netherlands*  
21 – 25 August, 2006**

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

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

So basically, those practices as processes of transaction have to meet the standards of direct democratic participation and critical reflection. Ideally, their results have to meet the standards of improving participatory democracy, empowerment and social justice. Participatory research practices have "ethics first" as their motto.

### **Registration**

Registration for the congress will open 1 September, 2005.

## **Provisional programme**

### **Participatory Action Research - 22 August, 2006**

With amongst others Peter Reason, Verkerk and key workshops by Coenen and Wadsworth

### **Action Learning/Developing Countries - 23 August, 2006**

With amongst others Inge Hutter and Jacques Zeelen

### **Process Management - 24 August, 2006**

With amongst others Schruijer, Schoemaker

### **And furthermore**

Øyvind Pålshaugen

### **Programme streams**

Education

Care & Social Work

Engineering, Economics & Management

Arts & Culture

Developing countries

The latest programme information will be published on:

<http://www.oprit.rug.nl/boog01/>

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

**Systems Thinking and Complexity Science:  
Insights for Action  
11th Annual ANZSYS Conference  
Managing the Complex V Conference  
Christchurch, New Zealand  
5-7 December 2005**

Following the success of previous ANZSYS conferences and 'Managing the Complex' events, it is a pleasure to announce the 11th Annual ANZSYS/Managing the Complex V Conference. The conference will be held in the city of Christchurch in New Zealand from 5-7 December 2005, and will be co-hosted by the Institute of Environmental Science and Research Limited (ESR), New Zealand, and the Institute for the Study of Coherence and Emergence (ISCE), USA.

A lively forum for discussion and debate will be provided for a wide range of academics and practitioners in the fields of systems thinking, complexity science and management. People from other disciplines who have an interest in the application of systems thinking and complexity approaches will also be invited to participate.

**Enquiries and registration information**

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**Spiral 2005 Calendar of Events**  
Victorian action Research network of people  
interested in Systemic – Participatory – Inquiry  
– Research – Action – Learning



Dear friends and associates,

Following two very interesting planning meetings, we are pleased to announce this year's series of action research seminars and events. We will be able to add any further ones that emerge during the year.

Jose Ramos will notify you of each seminar twice (some weeks and then some days) in advance.

RSVPing is always helpful so we can order food and negotiate the best-sized room. Any room fee is covered by a gold coin donation, and meals usually cost around \$10.

Please bring to the meetings any relevant information, recent books, journal issues, conference flyers, interesting news, etc. to circulate. We will also continue to email out news and information items.

Yoland Wadsworth & Jose Ramos

**Co-convenors for the organising group**

Jacques Boulet (Borderlands), Robbie Guevara (RMIT), Tricia Hiley (RMIT), Jon Kroschel (Alfred Hospital), Jose Ramos (Australian Foresight Institute & ARP, Swinburne), Jill Sanguinetti (Education, Victoria University), Yoland



Wadsworth (ARP, Swinburne) and Peter Waterhouse (Workplace Learning Initiatives).

## **2005 Full Program**

### **1. SPIRAL event #1 - March**

**Planning meeting and presentation and discussion led by Lea Jellinek regarding her Participatory Research work in Indonesia**

**Auspiced jointly by SPIRAL and the Borderlands Co-operative**

Date:	Friday, 12 March 2005
Venue:	Borderlands Library at the Augustine, 2 Minona Ave, Hawthorn
6.00 pm	Meet and eat (pre-ordered meals)
6.30-8.00pm	Planning discussion and round robin: <b>Where is the field 'at' this year?</b>
8.00-9.00pm	<b>Lea Jellinek's presentation</b> (including slides) and discussion
Facilitator:	Yoland Wadsworth, ARP Convenor, Swinburne

### **2. SPIRAL event #2 - April**

**'Action Research Across Cultures'**

**Auspiced jointly by SPIRAL and the Victoria University School of Education**

Date:	Tuesday, 26 April 2005
Venue:	'The Nicholson'

26 Nicholson, Street Footscray (near the junction of Ballarat and Geelong Roads)

Free parking is in the Victoria University car park in Ballarat Road or street parking around 'The Nicholson' which is a short walk from the Ballarat Road/Geelong Road junction. The best bike access is along Dynon Road from the city, or the Marybyrnong bike path (which is much longer). And closest railway station is Footscray (10 minute walk).

Time: 4.30 - 6.30pm

Seminar chair: Dr Robbie Guevara, Faculty of Education and Language Studies, RMIT

Please RSVP to Jill.Sanguinetti@vu.edu.au - for catering purposes. Thanks.

The School of Education will be contributing by funding wine, coffee, cheese, nibbles etc. Please RSVP so catering can be organised

*There will be two speakers/discussion-starters:*

Noel Keough, from Canada, who has been involved in a big 3 country action research projects, and Jacques Boulet, from Borderlands, who has had years of action research experience in Africa and elsewhere in the world.

*Dr Noel Keough* will be visiting Australia from the University of Calgary in Canada. Noel has been involved in the design, conduct and evaluation of the Creating Sustainable Communities course, one of the courses developed as part of the Canada Asia Partnership (CAP) project. The project was facilitated by the University of Calgary, Division of International Development's Centre of Excellence in Participatory Development. It was conceived within the liberatory education and participatory action research traditions. As social transformation is the desired

outcome of both liberatory education and PAR, a central question of the CAP is how transformative was it. Noel will share the outcomes of this study that was recently completed together with institutional partners in Thailand and the Philippines.

*Dr Jacques Boulet* is a researcher and activist with SPIRAL and the Borderlands Co-operative, an independent community action resource centre for Melbourne. Jacques has been involved in many participatory action research projects, especially in Latin America and French-speaking African countries. More recently he has carried out action research evaluations for World Vision's international projects. He is currently involved in a training and evaluation project called 'Fanning the Flames of Reconciliation' for ANTaR - the Victorian Branch of Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation.

### **3. SPIRAL event #3 - May Ethics Guidelines Workshop**

**Auspiced jointly by SPIRAL and the new OASES program  
(a Borderlands/Augustine initiative)**

Date: Friday, 20 May 2005

Venue: Borderlands Library at the Augustine,  
2 Minona Ave, Hawthorn

Time: Begin 1pm. Conclude by 8pm

Catering: Coffee and tea are available. We will  
include a walking break so people can get  
takeaway dinner from one of the many  
local restaurants

Workshop convenors: Tricia Hiley, SPIRAL/OASES and Ian Mills, OASES

This gathering emerged from a growing concern on the part of the SPIRAL planning meeting group for the way that ethics are currently discussed, incorporated and experienced in our academic programs and research. Our starting place will be that ethics is 'mutually beneficial relating' and we will proceed from there toward an understanding (and articulation) of what this means for us in policy and practice. Ian Mills will set the scene at the beginning of the afternoon and assist us through the process. A short document containing the program for the day and a one-page statement of "Ethics as mutually beneficial relating" to position our starting place will be circulated to those who registered to attend.

*Ian Mills* lived the first 12 years of his life in the outback of Australia; he was later a monk, a teacher, a broadcaster, a filmmaker. After living for sometime in a longhouse in Borneo, he completed his PhD at the University of Wisconsin. Dr. Mills held senior academic positions for 17 years in universities in Australia, America and China. He was General Manager of a company implementing technology transfer and low cost housing in Asia and the Pacific. He has spent the last 10 years researching and writing, and advising PhD students.

This is an active workshop that is taking the opportunity to work towards considering preparing a draft set of Guidelines for eventual use by Australian Institutional Ethics Committees. We anticipate a period of circulation of the workshop discussion notes and further comment and a possible follow-up SPIRAL meeting

Please RSVP: Dr. Tricia Hiley, PotentialSpace,  
[tricia@potentialspace.com](mailto:tricia@potentialspace.com)

p: +61(0)412 312 881 w: [www.potentialspace.com](http://www.potentialspace.com)

~ ~ ~ listeningbeyondwords ~ ~ ~

#### **4. SPIRAL event #4 - June**

##### **Action-research and action-learning strategies in workplaces**

##### **Auspiced jointly by SPIRAL and Workplace Learning Initiatives**

Date: Wednesday 15 June 2005  
Venue: 436 High Street, Northcote.  
Cost: \$10 (covers catering)  
Time: 6.30-8.00pm

Workshop convenor: Peter Waterhouse, Workplace Learning Initiatives

Peter Waterhouse of Workplace Learning Initiatives Pty Ltd. and colleagues will introduce discussion about the use of action-research/action-learning strategies in workplaces. One of the issues to be explored is the difficulty of negotiating/contracting for this type of work. Whilst we may be convinced of the value of these sorts of approaches, often the management of the enterprises with which we are engaged are aligned with different traditions and approaches to 'problem solving'. Often they are looking for a quick fix. Sometimes they are looking to us to provide the answer. Often 'the problem' has been defined in such a way that they are not part of it.

There will also be an opportunity to discuss the strategies and tools that SPIRAL members have used to address such questions and challenges. Peter will offer some 'starters', including a short video on their automotive industry-based work, and contribute some information on some projects where they have had some success.

They will highlight their current commissioned research project for the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, documenting (in case studies) the processes of community capacity building partnerships involving local government, industry/employers, education providers and community stakeholders.

A light meal and drinks will be provided. Please RSVP. For more details contact:

Dr.P.J.Waterhouse [pwhouse@wli.com.au](mailto:pwhouse@wli.com.au), Managing Director, Workplace Learning Initiatives Pty Ltd. Or email: [connie@wli.com.au](mailto:connie@wli.com.au) Tel: (03) 9486 8600 Fax:(03) 9486 8611 [www.wli.com.au](http://www.wli.com.au)

## **5. SPIRAL event #5 – July**

### **Three inspirational sessions auspiced jointly by SPIRAL and the Alfred Hospital**

Date: Monday 18th July (Half day and evening)  
Costs : \$10 (to cover catering)

#### **■ *Afternoon program, session 1:***

#### **'Participatory Action Research in Psychiatry'**

Times: 12.00 noon - 1.30pm  
Alfred Psychiatry Grand Round presentation  
(Lunch provided)  
Venue: AMREP Seminar Room, AMREP building, Alfred Hospital, off Commercial Road

■ *Afternoon program session 2:*

**'Participatory Action Research Projects within the Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre'**

Times: 3.00pm - 4.00pm

Presenter: Jon Kroschel

Venue: Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre,  
Level 1, Old Baker Building,  
Alfred Hospital, off Commercial Road

■ *Evening program:*

**'Getting from 'war stories' to critical mass'**

Times: 6.00pm Meet and eat (meals arrangement  
- see below)

6.30-7.00pm Round robin 1 - Experiences  
of the paradox

7.00-9.00pm Round robin 2 - How can  
we best sustain our work?

Discussion facilitators: Jon Kroschel PAR Director, Alfred Psychiatry and Yoland Wadsworth, Action Research Program

*The evening session arose from the question: If action research is so popular, why is it so hard for the practitioners? There is also a now a whole new generation of issues!*

However it also now seems in many other ways to be getting easier.

This will be a chance for us to reflect on our experiences of the varied faces of this paradox. We will focus on what

progress has been made, what helps sustain us as a methodological movement, to build and maintain continuously open, critical, inquiring, living social systems.

*Venue:* Waiora Community Mental Health Service, 600 Orrong Road, Armadale. (at front of old, large, yellow brick, Board of Works Building, opposite tennis court in Orrong Road, between Malvern Road and High Street). Near Toorak railway station, or the Malvern road tram 72, or High Street tram.

**RSVP attendance** sessions and meal preferences for the evening meal.

Please choose from sample meal types: Beef, chicken or vegetarian & and Rice or noodles & Vegetables. (We will endeavour to cater for everyone's preferences, but this can not be guaranteed)

*Please RSVP* by e-mail to [J.Kroschel@alfred.org.au](mailto:J.Kroschel@alfred.org.au) or message machine: (03) 9508 4734

By COB Wednesday 13th July 2005

**6. SPIRAL event #6 - PAR/community development in Indo-SouthEast Asia and community building/ participatory evaluation in Australia : What can we learn from the comparisons?**

**Auspiced by SPIRAL at its 'home' Action Research Program, Swinburne University**

Date: Wednesday, 24 August 2005

Venue: Centre for Collaborative Business  
Innovation, Ground Floor, 142 High Street,  
Prahran (near cnr High and Chapel Streets  
and both tram lines; close to Prahran  
railway station on the Sandringham train  
line. Please note finding car parking in the



vicinity can be challenging, and travel by public transport is highly recommended. Parking is available at the Kings multilevel car park on the corner of King and Little Chapel Streets, (Melways reference 2L J11).

- 6.00 pm Meet and eat (Catered)
- 7.00-8.00pm Five-minute discussion leaders: Ani Wierenga (Bhutan and Melbourne settings), Yoland Wadsworth (Bangladesh and Dandenong); Pat Armstrong, Gould League (India and Australian schools); TBA Thailand, Cambodia or the Phillipines; Liz Branigan (India and Federal government F&CS and Stronger Families)
- 8.00-9.00pm Group respondents, reflections and further thoughts

Convenors: Liz and Yoland, ARP, Swinburne University and Ani Wierenga, Australian Youth Research Centre, Melbourne University

When westerners are first invited to 'developing countries' they face an uncannily similar dilemma to those trying to promote community capacity-building as a matter of policy (and coming from outside local communities) back home e.g. in different settings in Australia. In a spirit of shared venture, we will explore a range of cross-cultural (in a wide sense) efforts to support communities in their own revitalising efforts.

RSVP: The room holds a maximum of 25 so please RSVP. Catering at cost of \$10 per head. Please indicate if vegetarian

RSVP to: [actionresearch@swin.edu.au](mailto:actionresearch@swin.edu.au) or phone message machine 9214 6015

## **7. Event #7 - September**

### **National Annual action research conference**

**Auspiced by ALARPM (Action Learning, Action Research & Process Management Association)**

Date: 30 September-2 October 2005

Venue: University of Technology Sydney CBD  
(near Central Station)

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

## **8. Event #8 - October**

This timeslot may potentially taken to revisit the Ethics Workshop findings and continue that important conversation (TBA)

Date: October 2005

Venue: TBA

Details: TBA

**Please note: The previously notified Symposium on New Social Research Methodologies - described below - will now be held in February 2006**

**To be auspiced jointly by SPIRAL and the Action Research Program, Swinburne University**

### **For February 2006:**

Many people are using AR, PAR, AL and other 'constructivist' (non positivist) methodologies across different faculties at Swinburne University. Last year ARP began discussions about the possibility of a half day to

'showcase' these, both internally to others interested at Swinburne, but also possibly offered to the public. Yoland Wadsworth of Swinburne's Action Research Program and Nita Cherry (who spoke to SPIRAL at our last meeting of 2004) are co-ordinating the discussions towards this possible 'smorgasbord'. So far there has been considerable interest by possible presenters.]

## **9. Event #9 - November**

### **End of year dinner and 'Scanning-and-Planning' of AR environment for 2006 SPIRAL program**

**Hosted by SPIRAL's host - the Swinburne Action Research Program (ARP)**

Date:	Thursday 24 November 2005
Venue:	ARP's new meeting space, PF Building, 142 High Street, Prahran
3.00-5.00pm	We meet, scan-and-plan for 2007
5.00-7.00pm	Please then join and contribute to the Action Research Program joint Program & Course Advisory Committees' annual review & planning meeting
7.00-9.00pm	We proceed to a celebratory dinner (nearby on-campus hospitality training restaurant: 'Meccanix')

Jose Ramos has done work combining environmental scanning with action learning, and will contribute to our scan-and-plan with a short presentation on how this could be used to improve the SPIRAL info network.

## Event #10 – December

### The 11th Annual ANZYS (systems) conference

Hosted by the ESR (Institute of Environmental Science & Research) and by ISCE (the USA Institute for the Study of Coherence & Emergence)

Date: 5-7 December 2005

Venue: Christchurch NZ

Details: [isce.edu/ISCE\\_Group\\_Site/web-content/ISCE%20Events/Christchurch\\_2005.html](http://isce.edu/ISCE_Group_Site/web-content/ISCE%20Events/Christchurch_2005.html)

Or contact by email: [anzys2005@isce.edu.nz](mailto:anzys2005@isce.edu.nz)

The directors of ESR are Gerald Midgely and Wendy Gregory, two of the world's leading systems thinkers, ex-UK Hull Centre for Systems Study.

**Also keep in mind...** the next ALARPM world congress of AR, AL, systems and participatory and process management etc. This will be in the Netherlands in August 2006. A number of us will be travelling to Europe for this. Again, keep a watch on the ALARPM website <http://www.alarpm.org.au>

# Guidelines for contributors

## Contributions to the ALAR Journal

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

We welcome contributions in the form of:

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

You are invited to base your writing style and approach on the material in this copy of the journal, and to keep all contributions brief. The journal is not a refereed publication, though submissions are subject to editorial review.

## Contributions to the Action Research Case Study (ARCS) monograph series

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

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

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

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

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

# Membership information and subscription forms

## ALARPM individual membership

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

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

## ALARPM organisational membership

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

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

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

## **Affiliate and associate organisations**

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

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



the ALARPM Affiliate or Associate organisation/network on their membership form).

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

## **ALAR Journal subscription**

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

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

ALARPM Association Inc  
PO Box 1748  
Toowong Qld 4066  
Australia

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

# INDIVIDUAL MEMBER SUBSCRIPTION FORM

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

## Personal Details

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

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

## Current Employment

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

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

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

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

*Yes*                                       *No*

***Please complete payment details overleaf***      ▲▲▲▲▲▲▲▲

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

## Payment Details

### Category of subscription (all rates include GST)

#### Mailing address within Australia

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

#### Mailing Address outside Australia

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

#### Concessional membership within or outside Australia

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

#### Method of payment:

- Cheque/Bank Draft     Money Order

- Visa/Bankcard/Mastercard (*please circle card type*)

Card No:

Cardholder's Name:

Cardholder's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date:    /    /

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

ALARPM ASSOCIATION INC.

PO Box 1748, Toowong Qld 4066, Australia

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

Fax: (61-7) 3342 1669

Email: [membership@alarpm.org.au](mailto:membership@alarpm.org.au)

# ORGANISATIONAL MEMBER SUBSCRIPTION FORM

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

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

## Organisational Details

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

**Contact person/Please send mail attention to** \_\_\_\_\_

## Nature of Organisation

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

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

### Your organisation's focus is:

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

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

- Yes  No

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

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

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

## Payment Details

**Category of subscription (all rates include GST)**

### Mailing address within Australia

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

### Mailing Address outside Australia

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

**Method of payment:**

Cheque/Bank Draft

Money Order

Visa/Bankcard/Mastercard (*please circle card type*)

Card No:

Cardholder's Name:

Cardholder's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date:    /    /

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

ALARPM ASSOCIATION INC.

PO Box 1748, Toowong Qld 4066, Australia

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

Fax: (61-7) 3342 1669

Email: [membership@alarpm.org.au](mailto:membership@alarpm.org.au)

# ALAR JOURNAL SUBSCRIPTION FORM

## Address Details

Mr/Ms/Mrs/Miss/Dr		
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<i>Address</i>		
		<i>Postcode</i>
<i>Town / City</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Nation</i>
<i>Contact numbers</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Fax</i>
<i>Email</i>		

## Payment Details

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

### **ALAR Journal Subscription rate for private individuals**

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

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

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

**Method of payment:**       Cheque/Bank Draft                       Money Order  
 Visa/Bankcard/Mastercard (*please circle card type*)

Card No:                     

Cardholder's Name:

Cardholder's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date:    /    /

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

ALARPM ASSOCIATION INC.  
 PO Box 1748, Toowong Qld 4066, Australia  
 Phone:    (27-12) 420 2817 (Pieter du Toit, Editor)  
 Fax:        (28-12) 420 3003  
 Email:     alar@alarpm.org.au