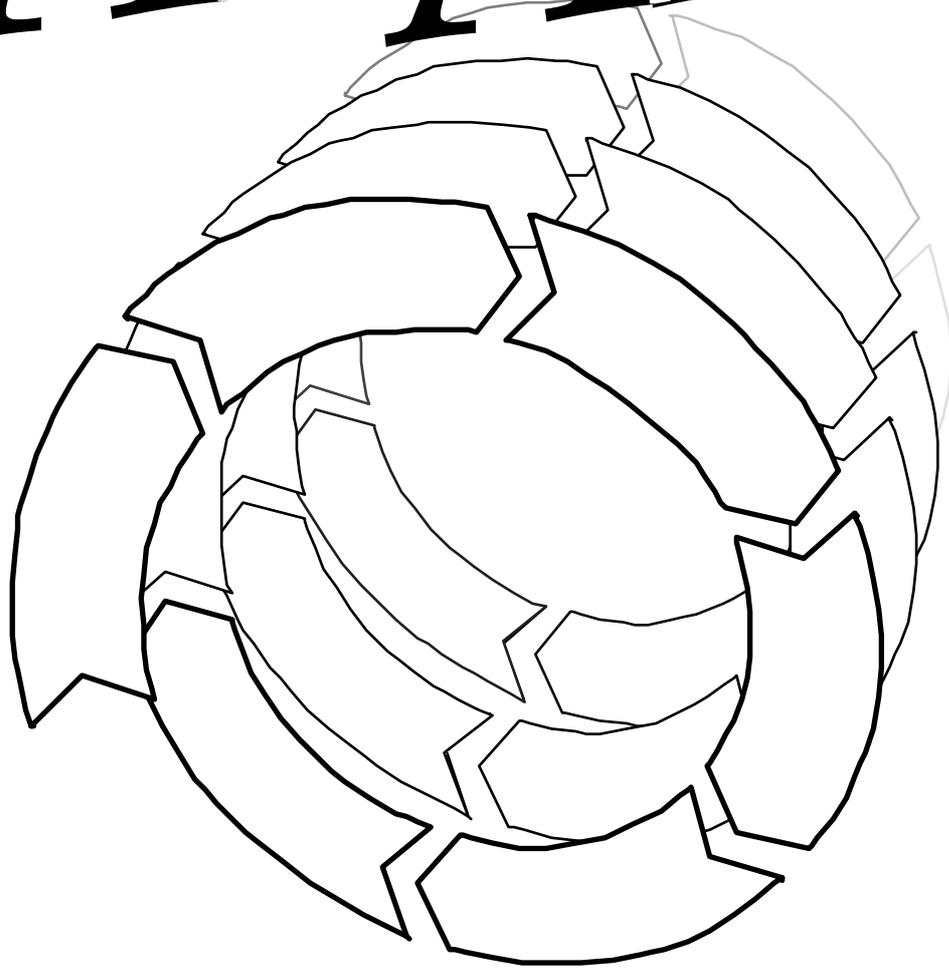


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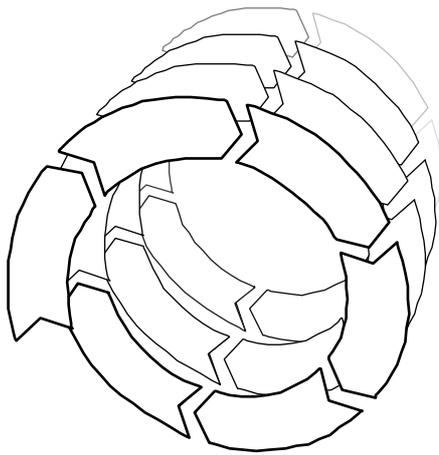
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Senior Editor: Ron Passfield
Editors: Bob Dick and Paul Wildman
Associate Editor: Barry Manion

Editorial inquiries should be addressed to the editor ALAR Journal,

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

Subscription inquiries should be addressed to ALARPM Assoc. Inc. at the above address.



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Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of the ALAR Journal, an international journal focused on exploring issues and developments in action learning and action research. The journal incorporates the ALARPM Newsletter and the ARCS Newsletter. Action Research Case Studies (ARCS) monographs will continue as a separate, publication series.

In this issue, Leonie Jennings explores the convergence of action learning and action research in her discourse analysis. Marilyn Childs discusses the potential downside of action research when it is used to pursue the interests of managerialism. Tony Nolan presents his action philosophy model as a way of capturing the underlying similarities between action learning and action research.

In "People" we introduce Susan Hall, Barry Manion and Richard Watson. "Projects" provides the opportunity for Colin Fletcher, Dave Ebbutt and George Bramley to discuss their action research project on "institutional strengthening" in the Black Country in England.

We announce two new publications in "Bookshelf", the first being a book by Michael Schratz (Austria) and Rob Walker (Australia) that focuses on qualitative research as social change. The second is an edited book by Ben Boog and his colleagues from the Dutch Participatory Action Research Network who explore the theory and practice of action research with special reference to the Netherlands context. The "yearbook" of this group is discussed in "Networks".

In "Noticeboard" we provide information about the Singapore Conference (October 1996), the Brisbane Conference (July 1996), a new action learning MBA (Singapore Institute of Management) and a special journal issue on action learning (Journal of Workplace Learning, MCB Press).

Converging Discourses? Action Learning and Action Research - Leonie Jennings

Introduction

Discourses are ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing that are accepted as instantiations of particular roles by specific groups of people, whether families of a certain sort, lawyers of a certain sort, bikers of a certain sort, business people of a certain sort, churches of a certain sort, and so on through a very long list (Gee 1991, p. xix).

Both Action Learning and Action Research constitute each their own discourse - some might say as binary opposites. Action Learning and Action Research have been defined within their discourses as forms of learning and action oriented. Zuber-Skerritt (1993:45) describes Action Learning as:

...learning from concrete experience and critical reflection on that experience, through group discussion, trial and error, discovery and learning from one another. It is a process by which groups of people (whether managers, academics, teachers, students or "learners" generally) work on real issues or problems, carrying real responsibility in real conditions.

Further, Zuber-Skerritt (1993:46) conceives of Action Research

...in a similar way of planning an experience or action (including problem analysis and a strategic plan); implementing the strategic plan; observing the action (including an evaluation of the action by appropriate methods

and techniques); and reflecting on the results of the evaluation and on the whole action and research process...

If these two definitions are reasonably representative of Action Learning and Action Research then we can examine how they are defined within their respective discourses. Discourse is language that 'makes sense' to some community of people who use that language. But what 'makes sense' to one community of people may not make sense to another. Consider the discourse of basketball. It makes little sense to those who play bridge. Action Learning discourse makes sense to practitioners of Action Learning, while the discourse of Action Research makes sense to practitioners of Action Research. The question that this paper addresses is whether the discourses converge. The debate could be taken even further to include differences between action science, participatory Action Research and process management.

Over the last decade, action researchers and action learners who operate within the world of organisational change have helped to reproduce discourses about their practices. That is they have engaged in a dialogue about organisational change that has been driven by a perceived need for educational interventions within organisations. However it must not be forgotten that these two discourses derive out of earlier traditions. Dominant discourses about Action Research and Action Learning have emerged through the social practices in which these change agents continue to operate. Scholarly articles as well as practitioner case studies, notes, conferences, forums and scribblings have all played their part in attempting to colonise their commitment to Action Learning or Action Research.

The Nature of Discourses

Discourse is not only determined by community, but it is also embedded in the larger framework of social relationships and social institutions. A discourse reveals the common values and viewpoints reflected in the dominant ways of thinking, talking and writing about some practice. It

is highly political, because a discourse implies a political apparatus, a community, and the power to assign legitimacy. Discourse sets conditions about what kind of talk occurs and which speakers speak.

Most discourses, by their very nature, are unconscious, unreflective and uncritical. Discourses protect themselves as 'right', 'natural', 'obvious' or 'normal'. In this regard, all discourses are false as none of them has, in fact, a monopoly on truth.

Action Research and Action Learning themselves are constituted by instances of discursive practice, that is, they constitute their own discourses. This means they have their own particular narrative or story, with their rules and metaphors. Their narratives are underpinned by certain political and ideological assumptions. Hence the concepts of 'action', 'research', 'learning', and so forth have to be understood as 'discourse' rather than descriptions of 'what is'. That is, these practices are named in the discourse and are confined through language. These concepts (along with many others) constitute the discursive practices of Action Research and Action Learning. It is important to note that they are not direct representations of the practices of Action Research and Action Learning - but are merely the constituted discourse.

Both Action Research and Action Learning borrow from other discourses. This means that the storylines, metaphors and objects of these constituting discourses are marked and constrained by the frames (or ideological positions) of those discourses. Hence there are only certain objects and certain questions that can be asked - questions that are askable in the constituting discourses. Hence to penetrate and critique the discourses of Action Research and Action Learning demands that we position ourselves both within and outside those frames.

Through the process of discourse analysis we can unpack or deconstruct any of the discourses within Action Research

and Action Learning by asking questions such as ‘how is the action research agenda tied to change processes?’ or ‘how do learning sets cope with dissonance?’ and so on.

Notions of Action Research and Action Learning are culturally and historically mediated. In fact Action Research and Action Learning can become culturally colonising if we fail to position ourselves as speakers/readers within a particular cultural location/discourse. The discursive practices of Action Research and Action Learning must be understood as a cultural terrain which is easily contested.

In this paper, a framework provided by Gee (1991:144) can be used. His work argues that discourses are organised around five key principles. Using his framework, Action Learning and Action Research can be examined as discourses with possible spaces for convergence.

- **Principle 1: Discourses are ideological in that they involve a set of values and viewpoints about people in their relationship to the distribution of social goods (money, power, status) in society.**

Action Learning and Action Research are both ideological positions deriving from their respective proponents. Many of the followers of Action Learning are management consultants or managers of organisations. Much of the Action Learning discourse derives from their change management ideas. Given this context it is likely that the action-oriented focus of Action Learning is more consistent with the production-oriented goals of an organisation. Action Learning is likely to be constrained to some degree by an instrumental focus in a production-oriented organisation.

Organisations are often attracted to Action Learning because it is action and work-based, coupled with flexibility. Organisations see Action Learning as a means of ensuring that clearly observable and measurable benefits of the organisation can be demonstrated. As well, team building

and cultural change are currently prized outcomes of Action Learning.

Many of the followers of Action Research are change agents in schools and communities, or from hallowed sanctuaries of academia, hence much of the Action Research discourse derives from educational contexts. Educational ideologies are usually focused on issues such as equity, access, the curriculum and social betterment, not production.

In terms of 'who' participates in the process, adherents of the Action Learning process argue for 'groups' experiencing the process of learning and that the problems must be 'real' in the workplace. This concept of groups easily fits with the management literature about 'teams'. But in Action Learning, groups do not necessarily 'own' the same problem. The group is usually called an Action Learning 'set'. A 'set' is read as a grouping of individuals working on individual projects but who gain support, critique and advice from others. However this critique is carried out within the confines of the organisation's values and goals. The problem defined is only a problem in terms of the values of the organisation. The emphasis is on sharing 'learning from experience', but not really critique or 'beyond experience'.

Many have pointed to the difficulty of forming ideal Action Learning sets where people from different organisations or workplaces share ideas together. The question of talking with potential competitors remains problematic for some. Recently a number of Action Learning sets have been formed in workplaces as 'team focused' with a common project which resembles more an Action Research approach than an Action Learning approach.

Action Research is usually carried out by groups of people focusing on a specific problem in a shared context. Together they share the problem and work through a process to gain a better understanding. Action Research groups come together to improve a situation. Usually the 'planning' phase assesses future actions to be undertaken, while the

'action' phase enables the plan to be implemented. The 'observation' phase collects the data associated with the activities of the 'action' phase, while the 'reflection' phase constitutes a process of evaluating and interpreting the observations.

Action Research forms its discourse around ideas such as problem posing, puzzling moments and question raising. It relies on the practitioners to do a reconnaissance of some improvement they want to make in a particular local context. Practitioners then theorise or state their beliefs about why the current situation is occurring and what can be done to improve it. Action Research relies on practitioners taking some form of 'action' which can be read as 'intervention', then documenting the outcomes of the action through data collection strategies. The action step is pivotal in the change strategy.

■ **Principle 2: Discourses are resistant to self-analysis and define what counts as acceptable criticism, which of course is constituted by another discourse.**

Action Learning and Action Research communities often reflect an implicit acceptance of many of the assumptions underlying their discourses. These include assumptions about the need for change and that change will be worthwhile. Such acceptance has led to universalising discourses such as notions of oppression, subordination and victimisation. These implicit assumptions have often led to a neglect of the possibilities for contradictions, challenge and reversal.

The real question is whether in both Action Learning and Action Research, participants are self-critical and reflective about the discourse or only the issue being investigated. Do they reflect on the processes themselves? In Action Learning do they question programmed instruction (P) as well as questioning insight (Q)? Proponents get locked into the process without consideration of other ways of knowing.

In some cases 'set' members undergo a reflective reconceptualisation phase that can result in a complete reorientation of their thinking. For example, they start to see their own position and behaviour through the eyes of others and by linking their own activities with organisational objectives, they begin to think more strategically.

In both the discourses of Action Research and Action Learning, a whole new vocabulary has sprung up around these notions of change. Many practitioners see no difference in the two discourses while others suggest one may be a subset of the other. For example, Bawden and Zuber-Skerritt (1991) argue that people involved in an Action Learning project can contribute to an overall Action Research process. The ALARPM Newsletter (No. 7, 1993) suggests that Action Learning practices, such as learning sets, can be incorporated into Action Research.

■ **Principle 3: Discourses are defined positions in relation to other, ultimately opposing discourses.**

Both discourses have long histories that constantly attempt to remind any new proponents that the ideas derive from specific traditions that give each discourse its uniqueness. The derivation Action Learning's is usually attributed to the guru Reg Revans (1984) although Action Learning was first referenced as early as 1945 in a report on the British coal mining industry. This report recommended the establishment of a staff college for the industry in which managers would be encouraged to learn with and from each other using group review to find solutions to immediate problems.

It was Revans, however, who argued the formula for Action Learning. He suggested that Learning (L) consists of two parts: programmed instruction (P) and questioning (Q) where $L=P+Q$. The use of the term P itself derives from a managerialist perspective - a technical rationality that assumes there are 'ways of doing things' that are standardised and prescriptive. The P is the programmed

knowledge already set out in books or known to expert authorities. The Q part of the equation makes for context specific issues. The Q is the questioning insight and is the capacity to identify useful and fresh lines of inquiry. Revans further suggests that Q is the ability to map one's own ignorance so as to see more clearly what P is called for and how it ought to be deployed.

Revans stressed the importance of action. He argued that there could be no learning without action, and no action without learning. Revans suggested the idea that the aspects of knowing and doing or reflecting and acting are inextricable. It is a symbiotic process where people learn from one another.

The original derivation of Action Research causes much debate in the literature and helps to fuel the fire on who first coined the phrase. However the debate adds to its self-importance. It is usually attributed to Kurt Lewin (1946) but historical accounts remain divided. In general, there has emerged a British School of Action Research deriving from the early work of John Elliott. In Australia, the Deakin University Group have developed their own localised version that has tended to be more theoretical than that of the British. Opposing sub-discourses have emerged within Action Research communities which help to reflect their respective positionings. One group use the technicist language of 'testing', 'hypothesis generation', 'variables', 'experiments', 'validity' and the like. Other discourses stress 'empowerment', 'knowledge creation', 'improvement', 'working with' and the like.

Useful discourses have emerged within Action Research which help to provide theoretical typologies for understanding some of the positions that many proponents of Action Research often take. Grundy's (1982) paper clearly argues the case for distinguishing between technical, practical and emancipatory Action Research. These ideas have then been diffused through the later literature and

hence embraced by the AR community (see Zuber-Skerritt, 1993; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988).

■ **Principle 4: Discourses value some concepts and viewpoints at the expense of others, hence marginalising viewpoints and values central to other discourses.**

The language of Action Learning is related to change. However in deconstructing the notion of change, 'change' is meant to read 'solving real problems in the workplace'. Further these problems are solved within the confines of the dominant ways of thinking, talking or writing about practice within that organisation.

The language that is used by Action Research is also related to change. In deconstructing the notion of change, 'change' is meant to read 'personal change' or 'organisational change', not necessarily 'problem solving'. Action Research is primarily directed at changing some practice in the field (eg teaching, organising, making money, relating to others). It is directed at changing some practice either at a personal or organisational level.

It is interesting to note other differences in meaning between Action Learning and Action Research. The term 'reflective' tends to be used in Action Learning circles and where used in Action Research circles is often interchanged with the term 'reflexive', borrowed from the theoretical discourse of critical theory (see Grundy, 1982).

■ **Principle 5: Discourses are related to power relations and hierarchical structure in society, that is, control and exercise of certain discourses can lead to the acquisition of social goods in society.**

Action Learning is a tool frequently used by dynamic organisations that wish to be viewed at the cutting edge. Action Learning maintains the status quo rather than moving the organisation beyond the dominant discourse. Action Learning rarely provides a challenge to existing

power relations and hierarchical structure within the organisation.

Both Action Learning and Action Research break the linear mould of conventional research by focusing on a process of sequential reflection and action. Local knowledge and perspectives are not only acknowledged but form the basis for planning. The key difference between Action Learning and Action Research and conventional methodologies lies in the location of power in the planning and research process.

In terms of Action Research, power structures are only addressed in the emancipatory mode of Action Research and made explicit.

Convergence?

It is curious that a whole new discourse about the 'learning organisation' (Senge, 1990) has been able to hijack the agenda. The question might be raised as to whether this is a result of the failure of both Action Learning and Action Research to take on 'organisational change' or does it represent new ways of working with old problems? It could be argued that Action Research and Action Learning discourses converge in the discourse of the Learning Organisation. The discourse of the Learning Organisation could be analysed/deconstructed as the new converging space between Action Learning and Action Research.

The trend is toward the Learning Organisation, characterised by a strategic intent to learn from experience - both successes and failures. The trend is the product of a fundamental shift in the way managers think about strategy and the ways they pursue strategic action. A learning strategy requires unlearning earlier strategies. Is this not the basis of Action Learning and Action Research?

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Dr. Leonie E. Jennings

Contact Details

Faculty of Education, Work & Training

Southern Cross University

Lismore Campus, NSW, 2480, Australia

Phone: 61-066-20-3614

Fax: 61-066-20-3990

e-mail: ljenning@scu.edu.au

In the misty realm? Action Research and Managerialism

- Marilyn Childs

Oppression can no longer be thought simply to be an evil perpetrated by others, as the exercise of tyranny by a ruling group....it included the everyday practices of a well-intentioned liberal society...(and are) part of the unconscious assumptions and reactions of well meaning people in ordinary interactions...(McLaren and Lankshear quoting Young 1994:4).

Abstract

Based on a case study, this article discusses some of the implications of the use of action research to implement technologies such as Quality Systems as part of workplace change processes. The case study cited was a project developed by students enrolled in the Bachelor of Adult Education at the University of Western Sydney, Nepean.

Quality- what's good for the company is good for the worker is good for the...?

Ann is a Quality Systems Manager. In 1995 it was Ann's brief to introduce 'Quality Systems' throughout the Divisions of the company she works for. As part of her degree program, she decided to adopt an action research methodology to introduce the system. Four other students were also involved in this process as a Critical Reference Group and as a resource and research support for Ann. Later this role expanded to include workplace employees. In particular the project involved employees in the process of *writing down procedures to document all jobs within the 7 divisions of the company.*

The 'Waters project', as it became known, began by completing an analysis that identified the external forces operating in the project and the workplace so that as broad (and specific) a picture as possible could be developed to inform its development. This analysis indicated that the need for 'quality' was seen by the company as being responsive to external pressures that would ensure that it would be able to respond to tenders in the future and thereby maintain competitiveness in the market:

State Government is insisting that any company that tenders for work to be done within the State Government must hold Quality Certification.

and that

These systems cannot and will not work without the full support of management and staff. Management has demonstrated its commitment to this process by setting up a Quality Assurance Group within the division. What is needed now is commitment from the staff to ensure the system works efficiently and effectively (Force field analysis 1995: 'Action Research project.').

In broad terms, the Action Research team used good action research practice. It was 'cyclic, participative, qualitative, reflective' (Dick, Passfield and Wildman 1995:5-6). The students

- widened the circle of participation;
- involved those most affected by the changes;
- encouraged engagement and collaboration by the key players;
- carefully documented and analysed their processes;
- established a 'self-critical community' and that community was given overwhelming evidence as to why past practices needed to change (See, for example, Wadsworth 1991).

As is later documented:

Since the last Critical Reference Group (CRG) meeting, Ann had the task of liaising with Departmental heads and lobbying the two groups still reluctant to join in. (a group of 3 and another of 20 employees.) Process by which Ann handled the groups:

- *get them to come up with the ideas of how they could start action*
- *the employee groups were to determine the solution*

The groups both decided they required outside help for writing procedures and that Ann was to organise this. The assistance was supplied and the task completed. MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH- the groups developed solutions thereby gaining ownership (CRG Field notes 17/10/95:1).

In addition, their diary notes and process involved them in 'reflexive practice' (See for example, Kolb 1984 and Wildman 1995). Quality Systems were successfully introduced, hierarchical communication structures were- at least for the time of this project- broken down and a more democratised process appeared to be substituted.¹

The research notes kept by the team use the emancipatory (liberal, egalitarian) language that appears to be entirely appropriate within a paradigm fostered by action research.

¹ For a useful example of 'democratisation' values in Action Research, see Erin Neill (1992:205). Neill argues that 'egalitarian models' are in principle better than 'hierarchical models' in school education and that Action Research provides a means of achieving those principles.

For example:

There was suggestion that those who were questioned (the Operators) be encouraged to form into an information network in order to achieve commitment through COLLABORATIVE PARTICIPATION & thereby perhaps to enhance the long-term sustainability of the project structure (Field notes 1995:12, bracket note added, capitals in original).

Collaborative participation- but who benefits?

The central feature of the 'Waters project' was that it was to be collaboratively developed and owned. Yet it was established in response to global pressures over which Operators within the company had little knowledge or control. The collaborative endeavour, designed to encourage Operator 'ownership' was, to some extent at least, not in their interests, as has been indicated in other workplaces. For example, in 1990 I was involved in a workplace program in a large public company. Employees were being encouraged to document their work processes- knowledge developed and 'owned' by them over many years- within a changing organisational process which could (and did) lead to their redundancy and the future employment of contract staff. Operator knowledge of workplace practices can be the most powerful collateral that an employee has. Yet it is this very knowledge that proponents of Quality Systems want to 'write down' to gain Certification.

In the 'Waters project', operator control over the introduction of Quality Systems was illusory, despite the use of emancipatory and participatory language and action research methodology. Had Divisions not complied via a collaborative process, Quality Systems would still have been introduced. Operator level employees- those most impacted by Quality Systems- only had control over how Quality Systems were developed within their specific areas. They could for example, decide on timing (within a deadline), on resources needed to complete the process, on who and how

it would be done. They also had control over what was written down- how accurate it was, for example, and whether or not 'short cuts' and 'folk lore' (see Wagner 1996) were included or not. There was no recompense for intellectual property and they didn't have access to broader debates about workplace change or the conceptual development of technologies used to institute change.

There was an a priori assumption that if it is (said to be) good for the Company it is good for the worker (read employee). Managing Director and Members of the Board were not required to be involved in the 'writing down of procedures' process. Although workplace learning and change can 'affect positive change in the workplace' (Sefton 1995:10) given certain conditions, Quality Systems, like competency standards, tend to reproduce existing workplace class divisions. Those with least control tend to be at the lower end of the hierarchy- or in a flatter organisational structure, at the 'flatter' end- the very people most affected by the changes. The 'Waters project' (drawing on workplace change and action research theory and reported practices) saw intrinsic value in participation and collaboration. This assumed 'value' was not challenged by the reflective process, and therefore questions about material interests were difficult to ask or answer. (After all, democracy is good for you!)

Reflective praxis and action research- in whose interests?

I am not attempting to argue here that there is a 'pure' or 'better' form of action research or 'pure' and 'better' forms of research contexts. I am not presenting a moral or a liberal humanitarian argument, nor am I arguing that additional 'constraints' (Dick et al 1995:4) be placed on the ways in which action research is defined.

What I am arguing is that the 'Waters project' exemplifies the coexistence of competing ideologies and vested interests in organisational learning whatever methodology is used, and however reflexive a practitioner might be. Gee's (1994)

exploration of the 'quality discourse' is one way of thinking about these issues. He argues that the coexistence of the 'quality' discourse in organisational development (valuing diversity, empowering workers, improving productivity) at the same time and place as educational discourses (valuing diversity, empowering workers, improving productivity) leads to co-option and the creation of a new 'enforced hegemony' (1994:14) that equates the economic with the person, and colonises the workplace with language that belongs traditionally in the social action domain.

The 'Waters project' inevitably acts both with and against employees' interests. Despite Ann's understanding of herself as providing a process whereby the worker/student has taken control of newly introduced work processes (Quality Systems) and are thus 'empowered', this occurs via a process which is repressive. At another time (for example, prior to the Accord) this could be seen as the introduction of a work process that benefits the company/employer (maintaining class and wealth divisions). Now it is implemented as a process that benefits all (maintaining class and wealth divisions.)

Had 'success' not been achieved this would be analysed (reflectively) in terms of refining implementation - getting it right, continuously improving the process- rather than seriously questioning what is being implemented.² Thus not all questions can be included in the cyclical process. (It can be a useful analytical tool to ask: what questions can't or won't be asked and why?) Action research becomes a technocratic tool for the implementation of a managerial agenda and simultaneously co-opts the language usually associated with social action and change. I want to return to an earlier point- this is not a moral point. If action research is to be used this way- then so be it. But it seems to me to be

² For example, to look at the 'Waters project' in its current form to identify 'better ways to do it.'

important that the *language* used by action research does not hide this analysis.

In 1990, Grundy and Kemmis warned that 'A climate of managerialism is emerging.' (1990: 334). 'Managerialism' however, is not new- it is one of the features of the ideology of capitalism (Anthony 1977). In the 1990s in Australia (1980s in the USA) its face and the language that it uses has changed. It has become less an 'enemy' by adopting technologies and language from other ideological frameworks. It seems to this action researcher that in the 1990s rather than being a threat to Action Research as Grundy and Kemmis warned, managerialism has been an economic boon, with more and more funds being available for researchers to implement workplace projects.

Mike Newman writes:

The problem for adult educators constrained by the ideals of decency, detachment and civic responsibility is that we do live in a world where we have harsh and unpalatable conflicts of interest, and where we have real and tangible enemies.....(but) there are those of us who have had trouble taking sides and joining in the struggle against the enemy...And this reluctance comes about because of our historical commitment to decency, detachment and civil responsibility or, as some of us might admit, because of our willing submission to the will of the 'respectable' capital right who make use of slogans such as decency, detachment and civil responsibility to domesticate potential challenge (1994: 31-32).

McTaggart and Garbutcheon-Singh (1990) remind us to problematise our practice and to question the ways in which 'ideology permeates the substance and production and reproduction of culture institutions and bureaucracy' (1990:425). They identify the trend towards 'iconic simplicity' (1990:410) and the 'stripping of action research from its fundamental values....(and) the treatment of action research as a series of techniques rendered it co-optable as an

instrumental component.’ If this is the case, then the illusion of the ‘benefits for all’ language of Quality Systems needs to be read critically. I believe that action research must take into account the participant’s orientation to the ideology of capital as part of the ‘reflective’ process. Other researchers speak from a liberal humanitarian or communitarian tradition, others from a technocratic, scientific one or a jumble of all. I suggest that the latter do not provide a framework whereby the action researcher can resist the active production and reproduction of the ideology of capital. Nor does it recognise the inherent capacity of capital to *use* radical resistance and critical epistemologies to refine, strengthen or further develop its own position (see also Hunter 1992)³.

Reflexivity or dialogic enquiry?

Newman argues that adult educators (and I am including action researchers) need to engage in ‘dialogic inquiry’ as the foundation of practice in order to inform what action is possible- this is more than a question of methodology. Without this inquiry, action (including action research) becomes dislocated- almost floating in air. Drawing on Marx and Engels (in Wood 1986:1), I think that a view of the intrinsic goodness of action research and reflective praxis represent:

³ For example, in the Forest Industries in Australia the introduction of National Forest Policies, new technologies and soft wood harvesting, appears to be an achievement by the environmental activists fighting to save old growth hard wood forests. However at the same time large multi-national corporations benefit from this change as it provides them with an opportunity to buy out small family saw mills that do not have the infrastructure or training capacity to introduce this workplace change. Thus environmental social action and global capital have overlapping interests.

not true requirements, but the requirements of Truth; not the interests of the proletariat, but the interests of Human Nature, of Man (sic) in general, who belong to no class, has no reality, who exists only in the misty realm of philosophical fantasy (1976 :455-7).

This call for 'dialogic inquiry' is done with an understanding of what Ellsworth calls 'the myth of critical pedagogy' (1989) and what Frazer and Lacey (1993) argue as a feminist critique of liberal individualism. I am not suggesting that this analysis be done as a quasi-psychological tool for a 'person-in-journey' (Passfield 1995). McLaren and Lankshear's discussion is very helpful as a way of understanding this debate:

The appropriation of the dialogical method as a process of sharing experiences is often reduced to a form of group therapy that focuses on the psychology of the individual.....By refusing to deal with the issue of class privilege, the pseudo-critical educator dogmatically pronounces to empower students....they are in fact strengthening their own positions (1994:xv).

In the 'Waters project' field notes, the psychologising of the 'shared experience' was evident in this account of 'informal' discussions with employees involved in the Quality process:

What factors were discussed in the meetings to arrive at this point (CRG Field notes 17/10/96):

- *to identify constraints*
- *discuss their fears, challenges, stumbling blocks*
- *Did they believe that they were being asked to do what would be of help to them?*
- *compared organisational goals to individual goals*
- *how did this information meet their needs/wants?*

What is absent from this discussion is an understanding that:

sharing of experiences must not be understood in psychological terms only. It invariably requires a political and ideological analysis as well....In short, it must always involve a political project with the object of dismantling oppressive structures and mechanisms (McLaren et al 1994:xv).

Action Research as a methodology is neither good, nor bad. It is an instrument that does not carry with it an implicit value system that is universally acceptable nor will its use guarantee the betterment of humanity or its transformation. It is often located within a liberal tradition that values unlocated concepts such as: freedom, empowerment, democracy which are taken-for-granted (and therefore unquestioned) as the value base of the process. It may speak of, and understand itself, using liberal and emancipatory language, without recognising the role it plays in reproducing and refining existing oppressive structures.

An understanding of ideology and politics needs to be historical, and the existence of 'multiple' and overlaid epistemologies in organisational change processes needs to be clearly understood and used by action researchers from the inception and conceptual development of a project to inform the change process. The notion of equivalent interest (what's good for the country is good for the company is good for the worker), so prevalent in current organisational change discussion, needs urgent critical attention in action research debates. It is difficult to identify ourselves as 'the enemy' working both with *and* against the interests of employees, especially when using apparently liberatory methodology and language. But, agreeing with Newman, I suggest that it is a useful question to add to the researcher's repertoire of reflexivity.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank **Dr Regine Wagner** for her insights and helpful suggestions for the drafts of this paper and for our ongoing collaborative practice.

About the author

Merilyn has been involved in a number of action research and action-based learning projects in her work as a Lecturer in Adult Education and a Senior Researcher in the Workplace Learning and Organisational Development Unit at the University of Western Sydney, Nepean. These projects range from those involving social and environmental action to workplace learning. Her involvement in action research comes from an interest in complex learning processes for adult learners, and critical questioning of globalisation, liberal humanist traditions and individualism as they impact in adult education programs.

Merilyn is interested in ongoing conversation about issues raised in this paper, and can be contacted at:

Faculty of Education

University of Western Sydney, Nepean

PO Box 10

Kingswood, NSW, 2747

Australia

e-mail: m.childs@uws.nepean.edu.au

Phone: 61-047- 360105

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CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please note that ALARPM has moved. We also have a new email address.

ALARPM Association Inc.

PO Box 1748

Toowong Qld 4066 Australia

Phone: (61-7) 3870 0812

Fax: (61-7) 3870 4013

email: alarpm@mailbox.uq.edu.au

An Action Philosophy Model

- Tony Nolan

Abstract: On the following pages is an exploration of my model concerning what I call 'action philosophy'. It is different from the standard action model because it is an interactive model and not a cyclic model. The model is also different because it includes the idea that an action philosophy can be applied to a single person, group or organisation. I have also added in some other considerations that I feel are needed in an action model. This paper starts with a discussion, moves to some examples, then to the model and finally closes with a discussion point. A table of terms is provided at the end.

This is a dialogue or a discussion paper concerning action learning and action research. After I explored a few different concepts, paradigms and procedures, it seemed to me that the main underlying procedure is that of 'action'. Whether it be 'learning' or 'research', each is really just a method that is used under the procedure of 'action'. Another observation is that the focus of the action philosophy can be a person, group, organisation, computer system or even within just one person. That is to say the actual cognition and critical thinking involved in the processing of information and knowledge into both understanding and wisdom can be at any level, and with any number of people. Another consideration is the need for the inclusion of a time and need factor in the model.

While exploring the concepts and philosophies of action learning, action research, total quality management, fuzzy logic, decision making, playback theatre and interaction matrices, I began to realise that there are common links of activities in each one, that they have a similar attributes. Whether it be a cyclic process, a finite environment or an

interactive process, there are common building blocks that are used by us to create understanding and knowledge. When you combine this with recent advances in the disciplines of communication and information science, and the technological leaps that are available to us, you get an interesting view of what the future may have in store for us.

Since I came in contact with the 'action philosophy', I found that I liked the cyclic process of action - reflection - planning. It was simple, demonstrated the processes and could be applied to many different situations. But while the cyclic model is good, I found it had limitations in representing reality. For instance,

- Is it for a single person, group or perhaps both?
- Does it include time?
- Did it take account of people's needs?
- At what speed does it run or how fast is the cycle?
- Does only one phase of the model happen at once or do many different phases happen simultaneously?

I found that I had too many questions to ask, and found that there were different answers for many situations. This is illustrated in the examples of everyday occurrences that follow. These are examples of what might happen in a person's day. They are all examples that I feel have some or all of the elements of 'action philosophy'. That is to say, they all require elements of action- planning- reflection in some way. They are all natural occurrences and they are all relevant examples for discussion.

(Scene 1)

You find yourself waking up and you crawl your way out of bed. You turn on the hot water tap, then the cold. You stick your hand under the water flow, it feels nice so you jump under. Oops, the water temperature has changed , slightly colder, you shiver and quickly make the necessary

adjustments. You continue to have a nice warm relaxing shower, and so your day progresses...

(Scene 2)

Driving down the road, early in the morning, the traffic is light. As you go up and down the hills, your foot interacts with the accelerator, as you take the curve turning slowly to the right, you brake as you approach the light, stopping at the red light. The light shines green, you go forward only to slam on the brakes. A car has run the red light, you missed it by inches, and so your day progresses...

(Scene 3)

You get to the office and are ready to start the new day. You look at your diary, confirm the meeting time. You look at your notes, and pick up the phone. You finish the final details, hang up and reflect on your plan for the meeting. You get a fax of a final fact sheet of information. You head out to the meeting, and so your day progresses...

(Scene 4)

You get to the meeting. Finally, after months of hard work, today is the day. The people are a tough crowd, they don't interact easily. You talk, they talk, there are misunderstandings, arrrrhhhh, a multi point of understanding, the meeting starts to flow, people get interested in the outcome. Finally a suggestion. The meeting closes, each person leaves with hopes, disappointments, but with some goals and some answers, and so your day progresses...

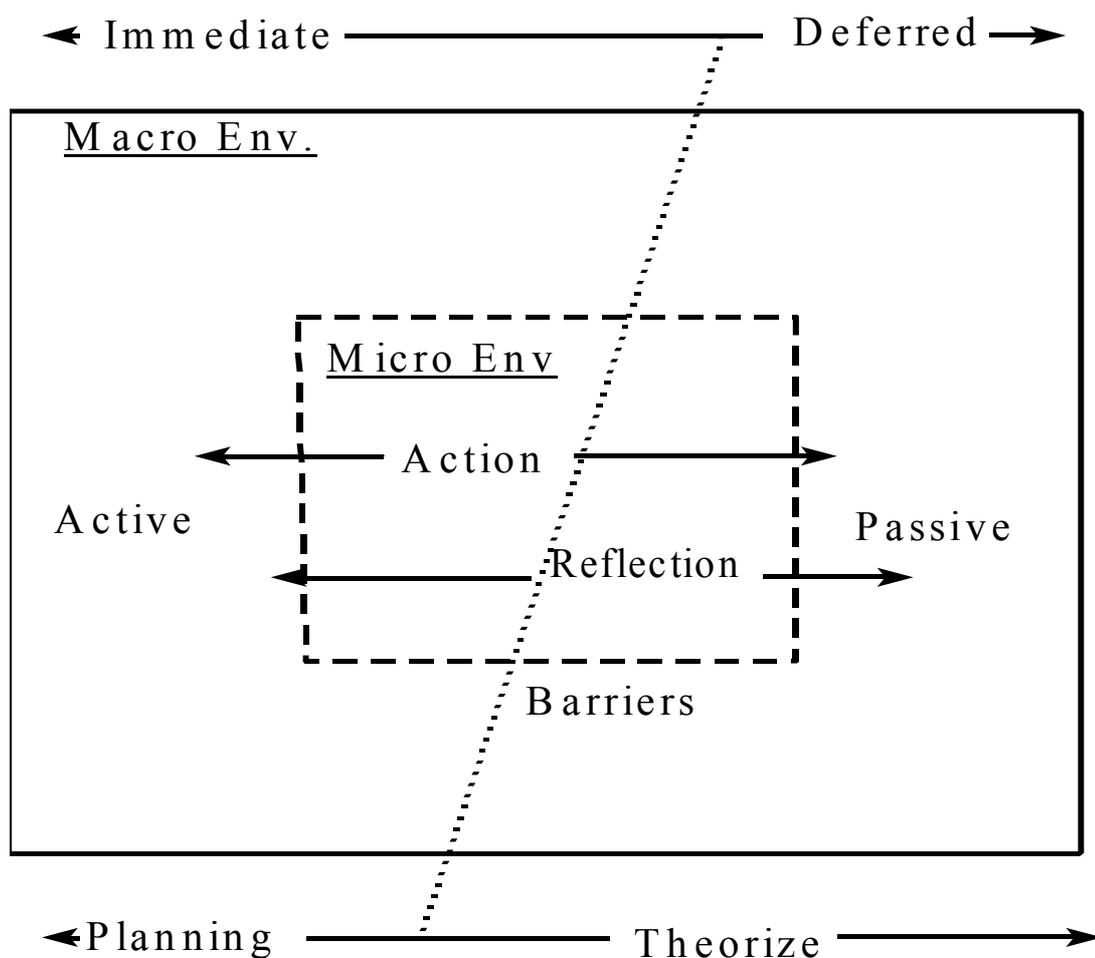
(Scene 5)

Finally a wrap-up meeting of the project. The results gained, at least for now. The boss looks happy, the meeting goes well. He likes the use of action in the project, the desired outcomes will allow building up of better results in the future. He tells you to write it up, and perhaps it will be published; if not, at least it can be used as a guide to others

who might try to adapt this action model in their work, and so your day progresses...

The author sits here and reflects why he wrote this. Surely it is not part of a discussion paper about a model of action. But then again perhaps it is. For in each part of what may be in our daily routine there is action - reflection - planning. It may be as simple as taking a shower , driving a car or as complex as running an important project. The point is that it is a natural process of how we do things. I have attempted to explain the elements of this process in the following model.

Figure 1: The Action Philosophy Model



How it all Fits Together

The whole model is the situation that we find ourselves in each day. It is any time when we interact with our environment, either inside ourselves or outside of ourselves. The premise for this model is that there are two halves contained in what we do. The first half (Micro) is what we do within ourselves to be able to understand where we are, and how and why we react and do the things that we do. The second half (Macro) is how we understand and interact with the world outside of ourselves. The model is also based on the fact that everything causes an action and a reaction, even though it may be unobserved at that time. It is based also on the premise that Action is a basic function of the human being, and therefore is a natural and useable tool for all parties.

The model has some working scales or slides. These slides actually move in response to, and in combination with, different concepts, events, communications, etc, that we find ourselves in each day. The scales/slides are shown in the model as *immediate - deferred*, *planning - theorising*, *action - reflection* and *active - passive*.

Needs are the things that drive us. We need to know something to make a decision, or we may need just to know something because it is useful. We may learn something that we don't understand, and much much later we finally understand it. So needs can be answered in the *immediate* time frame, or in a much later time frame (*deferred*).

Planning and *theorising* are also basic every day tools we use. We have to plan for future events, and we also need to theorise before we try to do many things. If we don't understand how things work, how do we then plan for and work with different machines, people or organisations?

Action and *reflection* are also two slides that interact with each other. We can't act without reflection and reflection presumes action. We need both to operate effectively. But

it's not a cycle, it's an interaction, for a bit of each is involved in both operations. But there is also another point. Some times we are *active* in how we do things, other times we are *passive* in how we do things. We may sit and reflect, and while we are active on the inside (we are thinking), we may seem passive on the outside (just sitting there and doing nothing). Perhaps we are swapping active and passive states so fast that we don't even notice the change.

Finally, when we are engaged in the process or action we have misunderstandings, confusion, pain, dilemmas, etc. This is because there are internal and external *barriers*, that get in the way of our communication and cognitive processes. These barriers exist, and we deal with them at each level and situation in which they arrive.

But what is that broken line in the middle? Well that broken line can be bent, curved, swayed, etc. because the line is the point of interaction, the point of cognition/response. It's where all the slides connect and we have understanding and engage in whatever we need to do.

The author would like to thank you for reading this article, and would welcome any feedback.

Contact Details

5/270 Pacific Highway

Artarmon, NSW, 2064

Phone: 02-9330-3454

Fax: 02-9330-5583

e-mail: t.nolan@uts.edu.au

Dedication

Dedicated to Bob Dick, Ron Passfield, Shankar Sankaran, Pam Swepson, Denis Cowan, Deb Lange, Elizabeth Wilson-Everet, Bob Williams and Richard Burg. The paper is dedicated to these people because they have all helped me to understand the action philosophy with either support,

understanding or criticism. This dedication does not mean that they agree with what I have to say, just that they helped me to think and explore.

The Terms in the Model

Environment

Micro

The area inside ourselves. The total cognitive processes of memory, knowledge, information, history, senses and wisdom, that integrate to create our concepts and understanding to interact with the world outside ourselves.

Macro

The area outside of ourselves, where a group interacts within its members and outside. Where the group interacts collective memory, knowledge, information, history, senses and wisdom, to create our concepts and understanding to interact with the world outside themselves.

Action

Micro

The activity of working through a series of processes, information seeking and information gathering, to create an understanding of need.

Macro

The activity undertaken by a group of people to understand and fulfil a need of that group. It involves combining the different views of each member.

Reflection

Micro

The process of examining one's memories, information, knowledge and concepts and matching them to our world view and knowledge base. To use this world view to fill a need or to change or reinforce our knowledge base.

Macro

The process of examining the group's interactions and creating understanding; and examining the degree that correct answers fill the group's need. The platform that creates the focus for the action or the planning.

Cognition (Planning/Theorise)

Micro

The process of understanding and creating wisdom from the person's memories, experiences and sense making. This is interweaved with their current understanding to make sense and contribute to their environment, and to make constructs for the development of plans and theories.

Macro

The process of group understanding and wisdom from the combined inputs from each person's memories, experiences and the group, social and political patterns. This combines to focus on the answer to a group need and to make plans or theories for future steps.

Time & Need (Immediate/Deferred)

Micro

Immediate need is the primary focus on the exploration or decision at hand. Deferred need is anything else that is experienced that becomes an immediate in a future time.

Macro

Immediate need is when the primary focus of the group is directed towards an activity. Deferred need is any other experience that will be of relevance to either the group or another individual in a future time.

Barriers

Micro

The areas of interference in the communication of information, knowledge and understanding of the message, for example, bias, temperature, politics, emotions, morals, ethics, etc.

Macro

The areas of interference in the communication of information, knowledge and understanding between members of the group and outside, for example, bias, temperature, politics, emotions, language, ethics, morals, protocol, hidden agendas, etc.

Situation

This is where everything that we have experienced and everything that we are experiencing comes together. For example, what we remember of our feelings, senses and understanding merges with what we understand, feel and sense of our current environment at the present time and space.

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.

People

Susan Hall

Susan Hall considers herself lucky to be a lecturer in academic staff development within the Teaching Learning Group at Curtin University of Technology. "Lucky", because she works with colleagues and managers who value, practice and promote reflective practice.

In the Teaching Learning Group at Curtin she co-ordinates the professional development series of seminars entitled *Reflective Teaching Practice in Higher Education*. Susan's special passion is setting up and facilitating action research groups as collaborative learning groups for review and development of work practice. She has done this for many years in a variety of educational settings as a teacher, researcher and education consultant. More recently, in 1994 and 1995, she has worked with groups of academics who conduct action research into cross-cultural education. Her current project (1996) is setting up and facilitating an action research group of academics who are focussing on enhancing their supervision of postgraduate research students.

Some of Susan's projects have included funded ethnographic case studies which portray something of the functioning of the action research groups and the research processes (and their outcomes) of individual action researchers. Such studies have been:

Hall, S., (1992) *Anti-discriminatory Teaching Practices in a Primary School*, S.80 Report number nine within the series, *Discrimination in Government Policies and Practices*. Equal Opportunity Commission, Perth, Western Australia.

Hall, S. and Loveday, S., (in press) *Girls in Secondary Education: Teachers Redressing Disadvantage Through Review and Development*. The Western Australian component of the Gender Equity in Curriculum Reform Project funded by the Department of Employment Education and Training (DEET) through the Social Justice Branch, Education Department of Western Australia.

Another of her funded projects was to develop the SCOPE program (Self-directed, Collegial, On-going, Professional Effectiveness) in 1995. SCOPE is a professional review and development package for primary and secondary school teachers. This program and resource package is currently being trialed in Western Australian schools as part of the National Professional Development Program (NPDP) funded by DEET.

Susan's emphasis on rigour and theoretical development in action research is reflected in her chapter entitled, *Reflexivity in Emancipatory Action Research: illustrating the researcher's constitutiveness*, in the forthcoming book, *New Directions in Action Research*, edited by Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt. This book is scheduled to be published by Falmer Press in 1996.

Her Honours and PhD theses have also been about aspects of action research. The honours thesis was an ethnographic study of the development of a network of action researchers in South Australia. Her PhD thesis was an ethnographic case study displaying the transformative power of making "working knowledge" explicit. The latter focussed on one teacher's ("Ellen's") explication of her knowledge about her teaching of literature to year seven primary school students. The study shows both how "Ellen" made her working knowledge explicit and how, in the process of doing so, she used this knowledge to reinforce and further develop her teaching.

Wanting to branch out from the familiar context of education, Susan is keen to take up the challenge of applying her knowledge and experience in facilitating collaborative review

and development to other areas of the work force. Two contexts which particularly interest her are those of business management and social service. She shares the vision of those who believe that the business and social milieus of our society can be joyful and fulfilling places. And she would like to join with those who are contributing to this vision.

Barry Manion

Barry has recently joined the editorial group as Associate Editor and contributed substantially to this our first issue of the ALAR Journal. We are grateful to Adrian Cahill for providing the following insight into his friend's profile.

Barry is as skilful with his hands as he is with his facilitation. As a shopfitter for the Stefan Hairdressing Chain, he was a key adviser on how a modern hairdressing salon should look. He added considerable value to his own home by using his skills as a qualified wood machinist to renovate his house in Ipswich.

During the last three years Barry achieved a Bachelor's degree in Adult and Vocational Training. On completion of the course, he worked as an adult teacher and supervisor in the Furniture Restoration Centre at Morban's Place - a centre for the chronically unemployed and underprivileged. Barry saw this as a great opportunity to help these people with their skills and confidence. He became a very popular figure through his emphasis on action learning and organisational training.

Barry's dedication to helping these people was shown by organising social outings and being the coach of the Morban's Place basketball team (no easy task!). He is always striving to better himself and is undertaking further studies in organisational training and quality assurance principles. His enthusiasm and willingness to share his ideas with whoever wants to listen is very refreshing. Barry is a

member of the Dialtoners Toastmasters Club (Bulimba) because he understands the importance of communication skills to achieve his goals.

Barry is very sports-oriented and has a keen interest in Aussie Rules, Canoeing, Bushwalking, fishing, restoration and lives by the motto, *Seize the Day!*

Richard Watson

Richard is a Senior Research Scientist with the Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO), Melbourne, and is an Adjunct Fellow designate in the School of Computer Science and Software Engineering at Swinburne University of Technology (SUT), Hawthorne Campus.

He has a BSc and MSc in Physics from Melbourne University and a PhD in Nuclear Physics from the Australian National University, but his career has mainly been spent as a scientist in the DSTO. He spent 16 years with the former Central Studies Establishment (CSE) in Canberra, which was a “think tank” applying operations research (OR) techniques to problems arising in military planning and management. In his time with CSE Richard worked on a wide range of studies including conventional military OR, army inventory management and air force logistics management.

He became interested in systems thinking, and in particular Peter Checkland’s Soft Systems Methodology (SSM), while leading a large action research study of the air force logistics system. At the time SSM was not well known in Australia but Richard’s work helped raise its profile. His success in describing complex systems using SSM led to his secondment to the Federal Cabinet sponsored Review of Systems for Dealing with Fraud on the Commonwealth.

After the abolition of CSE Richard spent some time as a consultant in information systems in Canberra, but moved to Melbourne to join the DSTO’s Maritime Operations Division

and take up a part-time contract lectureship in the Department of Computer Science at Swinburne. His current work with the DSTO involves computer simulation modelling for the navy. In his six years at Swinburne he lectured on Systems methodologies, including SSM, and more recently, object-oriented software engineering.

Richard is a member of the Australian Society for Operations Research, the International Society for the Systems Sciences, the Society for Computer Simulation and the ALARPM Association Management Committee. He lives in Vermont, Melbourne, with his wife Berenice and two teen-aged sons. He may be contacted on (03) 9626 8632 (W) or on e-mail richard.watson@dsto.defence.gov.au.

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

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

Projects

In “projects”, we provide reports of work-in-progress or information about completed projects. There are many ways to use action learning and action research and many different disciplines and locations in which a project can be pursued. We are inviting people to provide reports so that we can all become aware of the wide variety of options available to us.

Black Country Institutional Strengthening (BCIS) - England

We are based at the University of Wolverhampton in England. There are three of us, Colin Fletcher (Professor of Educational Research), Dave Ebbutt (Senior Research Fellow in School Improvement), and George Bramley (Research Fellow in School Performance Indicators). Together we jointly direct Black Country Institutional Strengthening (BCIS). The Black Country is where the Industrial Revolution began, it is the oldest industrialised region in the world. There are 2¾ million people in a 25 mile radius, four education authorities, primary and secondary schools and their teachers. We pursue effectiveness by analysing achievements. We pursue improvement by action research in a Masters Degree in Practitioner Research and Consultancy or by a Masters level dissertation within the same programme. We are both numerate and literate, empirical and empowering, independently sceptical and individually engaged.

Our Action Research is the essential active ingredient. Our inspiration comes from CARE at the University of East

Anglia, Carr and Kemmis and the Educational Action Research Journal.

When Action Research with teachers promotes improvements, we look for proof. When our unique data set on the region suggests effectiveness problems we prompt Action Research Projects. We publish our results and those of our teacher-students in Working Papers and Practitioner Research Series. There are 60+ teachers 'on the Masters' and the number grows each year.

Educational institutions are just one part of the fabric of social welfare so the Masters in Practitioner Research is intended for candidates from throughout the public and voluntary sector.

Intellectually we are making the links between context and content through our understandings of locality, community and environmental education on the one hand **and** informal learning, 'achievement advantage' and citizenship on the other. Our distinctiveness is in the direct dialogue between maths and meaning, statistics and the sense-making of social struggles. We are making links with those in Higher Education who have regional regeneration as a central purpose and democratisation as an essential process in the public and voluntary sectors. We see many parallels between developing countries' concerns and our own. We are in our third year of a ten year commitment.

More broadly we are part of a School of Education which works to strengthen its own university. Institutional Strengthening is a matter of supporting the increased public and professional accountability of all socially valuable institutions and doing so by showing the lessons rather than by 'shovelling out' expertise.

The following publications are one form of this accountability.

Publications

Working Papers in Education

Bramley, G., (1995) *School Performance Indicators and School Effectiveness: the conceptions and the critiques*. 1-897948-16-6

Bramley, G, and Fletcher, C.L., (1996) *Genius Loci: Six Types of School Location and their validity*. 1-897948-46-8

Conduit, E., Brooks, R., Bramley, G., and Fletcher, C.L., (1995) *The Value of School Locations*. 1-897948-19-0

Conduit, E., Brooks, R., Bramley, G., and Fletcher, C.L., (1996) *The Value of School of Locations*. *BERJ*, 22(2), pp. 199-206.

Fletcher, C.L. (1995) *A referendum as action research. A case study of an employee association in conflict*. 1-897948-30-1

Fletcher, C.L. (1995) *A referendum as action research. A case study of an employee association in conflict*. *ALARPM*.

Parker, Z., (1995) *Coming to understand some of the implications of using an action research method*. 1-897948-40-9.

Students in Print

Christie, C., (1994) *Managing learning: an action research study into the effectiveness of group work in a Year Seven English class*. 1-897948-05-0.

McFadden, A., (1995) *Implementation of peer assessment in a midwifery programme of education: action research study*. 1-897948-24-7.

Robinson, N.T., (1995) *School-based governor training in a primary school*. 1-897948-02-6.

For publications please contact Carolyn Edwards

email: in4653@wlv.ac.uk Phone: 44 1902 323285

For BCIS please contact Jan Davies, Secretary

email: in4756@wlv.ac.uk Phone: 44 1902 323136

Networking

“Networking” is a regular feature in which we bring you news about communities involved in action learning and action research. There are many such communities around the world, some of them isolated from their immediate colleagues by their different interests. In the interests of bringing them closer together, we are inviting people to describe their local action learning/action research communities to you.

Dutch Network Participatory Action Research

The Dutch Action Research Network was introduced by Ben Boog in the last issue of the ARCS Newsletter (Vol. 3, No. 1, October 1995).

The Network has now developed a “yearbook” which provides contact details of 74 members of the network together with current interests and projects. It also lists the publications of members.

The 1995 yearbook which is in Dutch and English is available in hard copy from the ALARPM office or from Ben Boog as hard copy, by e-mail or on floppy disk (Wordperfect or ASCII). Ben’s contact details are:

Ben Boog, Department of Pedagogy and Education, Division of Adult Education, University of Groningen, Grote Rozenstraat 38, 9712 TJ Groningen, THE NETHERLANDS.

Phone: +31 50 363 6517

Fax: +31 50 363 6521

E-mail: b.w.m.boog@ppsw.rug.nl

Noticeboard

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

Brisbane Conference - "Energy Switch: the possibilities offered by action learning, action research, and process oriented methods"

This Conference and the Annual General Meeting for ALARPM were held on 19 July 1996 at Duchesne College, University of Queensland.

Conference theme

A kind of thinking - and ways of acting, researching and teaching - has resulted in the enormous problems we face at the close of this century. We might say that this kind of thinking has been dominated by the energy of fear. Globally, we are producing conflicts between peoples, famines, and the degradation of the Earth; in our daily lives we worry that there will not be sufficient resources to meet our needs. We are often at war within our organisations and within ourselves.

This conference explored the kind of thinking - and the action, learning and research - that is based on an energy that is the opposite of fear, doubt or struggle. We might call this energy - confidence, empowerment, compassion, collaboration, love or creativity.

Workshop program

The opening session began with an opportunity to connect with each other and the conference theme. This was followed by a challenging, plenary presentation by Dr. Bert Cunningham on the theme, *All you need is love: the loving, learning organisation*. Reflection and discussion followed.

In the workshops, participants shared how they were using action learning, action research and process oriented methods - in schools, colleges and universities, in government, business and communities - to move beyond fear, competition and anxiety, beyond outdated paradigms and beyond separation of various kinds.

Workshop Presenters:

Denis Cowan, Consultant Efficiency Plus

Starting with nothing

Bob Dick, Griffith University; and Southern Cross University

Generating agreement from disagreement - adversarial, consensual and dialectical processes

Deborah Johnston, Organisational Psychologist and Mary Kenny, Advocacy Development Worker

There's always enoughisn't there?

Nicole Lingard, Education Kinesiologist

Switching on the working relationship

Peter Mellalieu, Director - Innovation & Strategy, MyndSurferS Ltd; and Massey University, New Zealand

ALP-DevCo: a Trojan horse for incubating a learning organisation?

**Sharon Parkes and Roger Marshall - Social Justice Unit,
Department of Education, Queensland**

Working, thinking and learning together: a milling crowd, a disciplined army or a freeform dance company?

Ron Passfield, Scope Consulting and Griffith University

The energies of organisational change: action learning and the seven *Chakras*

Ian Plowman

"Pieces of the Puzzle" - reflections on a Masters Thesis

**Gerry Roberts, Regional Extension Specialist (West), Dept of
Primary Industries, Longreach**

The reflective aspects of collaborative experiential learning

Michael Sheehan

Strategies for eliminating bullying behaviours

Rob Walker, Deakin University

Research as social and deeply personal change

Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt, Southern Cross University

Sharing experiences of supervising and doing post-graduate action research

The conference was organised by Kay Dickie, Pamela Kruse, Anne-Marie Carroll and Lyn Cundy.

Singapore Conference - October 1996

Planning is well underway for the joint ALARPM\Singapore Institute of Management (SIM) Conference to be held in Singapore from 25-26 October 1996. A number of plenary presentations are planned for the first day to address the

conference theme: *Developing the Learning Organisation through Action Learning and Action Research.*

Proposed plenary speakers are Professor Bill Ford (Australia), Professor Michael Marquardt (George Washington University), Professor Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt (University of Southern Cross) and Professor Rod Oxenberry (University of South Australia).

We have received 15 workshop proposals for the morning of the second day (26 October). The list of accepted proposals will be finalised shortly with a view to issuing the Conference Brochure with the detailed program in August.

Action Learning MBA - Singapore Institute of Management (SIM)

This two year part-time MBA programme is awarded by the University of Bradford and organised by the Singapore Institute of Management in conjunction with the International Centre for Organisational Management. This programme, the **first accredited Action Learning MBA programme launched in Singapore**, is based upon the principles of ACTION LEARNING - a process which brings managers together to find solutions to problems and, in so doing, develops individual and organisational effectiveness.

Unlike other MBAs, this programme is targeted for the practice-oriented manager. Its returns can be measured by the extent to which the individual "set" members grow and develop with the organisation thus becoming more efficient and effective in responding to changes in the environment, and by the company's bottom-line results.

Nature of Programme

- Designed around solving real business problems

- Focus on developing effective managers through learning by doing
- Transfer of knowledge and management skills to the workplace through working on a specified project that is significant to the organisation and managers themselves
- Managers are involved in a social process with their peers - they learn best with and from each other.

Structure of Programme

- Workshops cover general management and strategic thinking
- Group and individual projects
- Personal development plans
- Regular local tutorial sessions.

Admission Requirements

A bachelor's degree or the Diploma in Management Studies awarded by SIM or an equivalent professional qualification.

Administrative Information

- Commencement Date: July 1996
- Fee: S\$24,000
- Enquiries: 65-4629370 (Lena) / 65-4629364 (Bee Leng)

Special Issue on Action Learning: Journal of Workplace Learning - MCB University Press

Action Learning: Where are we? Where are we going?

Reg Revans says the heart of action learning is the intelligent question. If we've got a problem, we can ask, alongside others who also have problems: Who knows? Who cares? Who can help?

In 1996, the Journal of Workplace Learning, as a themed issue incorporated within Employee Counselling Today, Vol 8 No 6, will address questions about action learning.

Contributions are likely to cover themes such as:

- a description of an action learning approach or intervention at work
- a discussion of the significance of action learning as a developmental methodology
- an evaluation of roles within action learning (facilitator, set adviser, learner)
- whether action learning can be effectively institutionalised

The submission date for articles was mid-July so the special issue should be published shortly. Enquiries can be directed to the Acting Editor: John Peters, Marriotts, Castle Street, Buckingham MK18 1BP, England, fax 01280/ +44 1280 821317, Email - jpeters@mcb.co.uk

In our next issue of the ALAR Journal, you will find articles on...

- Reflection - the key to change in teaching action research
- A strategic planning approach to writing an action research thesis
- A paradigm of action learning
- Managing the energy of thesis writing, and
- Project reports, new books and more...

The bookshelf

*Research as Social Change:
New Opportunities for Qualitative Research*
by Michael Schratz, University of Innsbruck
and Rob Walker, Deakin University, Australia

“Have you ever thought research is boring? “Research”, writes Umberto Eco, “should be fun”. It seems unlikely that Umberto Eco has read many of the standard social science or education research texts. But social research does offer the possibility of involvement in projects that are informative, sometimes revealing, and fun to do. This book shows us that teaching, learning and research are essentially social and deeply personal activities and that fun needs to be an integral part of this.

Although it is about ways in which research can be used by those in various areas of professional practice, this book is not a conventional text. Its main concerns are with qualitative research, action research and case study methods. It goes back to first principles arguing for research that is concerned with the nature of personal memories and of perception, the use of drawings and photographs, the emotional relationships implicit in any kind of research and the context of the contemporary workplace. The authors develop new directions and new possibilities for research and find ways of bringing together theory and practice, the personal and the social, organisations and their clients. It is an important resource for all who are interested in doing research but are sceptical or critical of most studies that are currently available.”

Publication details:

July 1995: 234x156: 224pp

Hardback: £37.50 (0-415-11858-9)

Paperback: £11.99 (0-415-11869-7)

Publisher:

Routledge,

11 Fetter Lane,

London Ec4P4EE

Telephone: 44-0171-583 9855

Fax: 44-0171-842 2303

***Theory and Practice of Action Research - With
Special reference to the Netherlands***

by Ben Boog, Harrie Coenen, Lou Keune and Rob
Lammerts (Editors)

“The contributions contained in this book show that new developments are continually taking shape in the theory and practice of Action research.

In our last book (see Boog et al., 1993) various examples of Action research were described and analysed, the accent being on practices linked to ‘big’, ‘official’ emancipatory movements like the labour-, youth-, women’s- or the environmental movement. In the present book, however, other fields of action will be given more attention, at any rate as far as the situation in the Netherlands is concerned. What will mainly be discussed are practices aimed at problems formulated from the perspective of a clear policy-need.

These are projects in which the emphasis is on a more or less specific goal-orientedness and on a clear delimitation in time

(at least in two of these cases) and space. It is not clear whether this signals a change in Action research in the Netherlands. What it does show, however, is the variety of fields of action in which Action research can play an important role.

This again raises the question of the characteristic elements of Action research, a question that, implicitly or explicitly, arises in several contributions. The very different practices described both in the previous book and in this one have elements in common in a number of respects. *Participation* is such a linking element; what is evident time and again is that those studied must be seen as subjects of research and action. Because of participation, elements like *mutual adequacy* and *double hermeneutics* acquire great significance from the point of view of truth-finding. The importance that is attached to *contextuality* has been pointed out before. Also the *learning-* aspect keeps recurring ('Action research as exemplarian learning', Coenen 1987), and it is striking that the projects described also refer to concrete situations in education. And finally there is always, albeit sometimes less explicitly, the central goal of *emancipation*. But are these common characteristics enough to speak unequivocally of Action research, or should a distinction be made between 'Pragmatic Action Research' and 'Exemplarian Action Research'? " (Lou Keune, ch 11)

Contents

1 Towards a Closer Definition of Action Research

Harry Coenen

2 The Model of Exemplarian Action Research

Harry Coenen

3 In Search of Paid Employment for the Mentally Handicapped: an Exemplarian Action Research Project in Practice

Marianne Hanegraaf & Ingrid Kervel

- 4 The Need for Humanist Ethical Education in the Netherlands: a Form of Action Research
Rob Tielman
- 5 Action-Learning and Action Research: Reflecting from different perspectives
Dhyan Vermeulen
- 6 Developmental Research, a Developing Research Practice
Froukje Joosten
- 7 Emancipatory Action Research in South Africa: from Critical Opposition to Critical Support?
Owen van den Berg & Dirk Meerkotter
- 8 Exemplarian Action Research: the Third Paradigm
Ben Boog
- 9 Research on Social Interventions: Problems and Perspectives
Max van der Kamp
- 10 Action and Social Order Research
Gerard de Zeeuw
- 11 The Ongoing Discussion on Theory and Practice of Action Research: Some Final Remarks
Lou Keune

The book "Theory and Practice of Action Research" will appear in August, 1996 and will be published by Tilburg University Press (TUP), P.O. Box 90153, 5000 LE TILBURG, The Netherlands, Phone: +31-13.4662909, Fax: +31-13.4663288, Email: TUP@KUB.NL

The price will be around Dfl. 45 with postage/packing around Dfl. 10. (Total Dfl. 55 depending on the number of pages/weight - it shouldn't be much more).

New members

Welcome to those who have become members of ALARPM since the last ARCS newsletter. You may wish to use this list as an update to your networking directory.

AUSTRALIA

New South Wales

HUGHES IAN

Lecturer, Yooroang Garang, University of Sydney
317 Terrigal Drive
ERINA NSW 2250

AUSTRALIA

WORK PHONE: 02-646-6110

WORK FAX: 02-646-6112

HOME PHONE: 043-67-6933

E-MAIL: i.hughes@cchs.su.edu.au

INTEREST: I teach action research & evaluation subjects & am part of a team developing community based action learning materials for indigenous learners.

PROJECT: 1. Koori action research in community health. 2. Self determination (PhD project). 3. Community based learning project.

NETWORKS: Action Learning, Action Research, Community Action, Evaluation, Higher Education, Rural Community Development, Social Justice.

POWER AILEEN

Fulltime PhD, University of Sydney

4 Rusden Road

BLAXLAND NSW 2774

AUSTRALIA

WORK PHONE: 02-351-6365

WORK FAX: 02-351-4580

HOME PHONE: 047-39-3380

E-MAIL: a.power@edfac.usyd.edu.au

INTEREST: Gender, social justice, organisational & social change. Developing democratic research approaches; collaborative writing.

PROJECT: Current PhD - university based researcher's experiences of collaborative research.

NETWORKS: Action Research, Community Action, Gender Issues, Higher Education, Learning Organisations, Method, Organisational Change & Development, Social Justice, Teacher Development - Higher Education

SEBEL RICHARD

Principal Richard Sebel Consulting

9 Warren Road

DOUBLE BAY NSW 2028

AUSTRALIA

WORK PHONE: 02-326-2829

WORK FAX: 02-327-6413

HOME PHONE: 02-326-2829

HOME FAX: 02-327-6413

INTEREST: ALAR & PM as part of my consulting in HRM and general interest.

NETWORKS: Action Learning, Evaluation, Human Services Practice/Change, Manager & Leadership Development, Method, Organisational Change & Development, Process Management, Quality Management, Social Justice, Systems Methodologies, Team Learning & Development

WELLS ROSIE

Social Worker, Illawarra Child Development Centre

4/2 Toxteth Avenue

AUSTINMER NSW 2515

AUSTRALIA

WORK PHONE: 042-28-4177

INTEREST: Introducing collaborative approaches into the workplace & with families & children. Fostering the development of community resources.

PROJECT: Children's rights - creating space for children in families & communities. Developing community perspectives in a "clinical" setting.

NETWORKS: Action Learning, Action Research, Community Action, Gender Issues, Human Services Practice/Change, Learning Organisations, Organisational Change & Development, Rural Community Development, Social Justice, Systems Methodologies, Team Learning & Development, Workplace Reform

Queensland

WILLIAMS CLIVE

Director, The House Is Live!

10 Wright Street

BALMORAL QLD 4171

AUSTRALIA

HOME PHONE: 07-3399-5515

INTEREST: Application to running a theatre company.

PROJECT: Use of Theatre Skills, married with Action Learning in Staff Development, Community Consultation.

NETWORKS: Action Learning, Action Research, Community Action, Education, Higher Education, Manager & Leadership Development, Organisational Change & Development, Process Management, Social Justice, Teacher Development, Teacher Development - Higher Education, Team Learning & Development, Workplace Reform

Victoria

HAWKINS LINETTE

Freelance in Field Education

17/459 Waterdale Road

HEIDELBERG WEST VIC 3081

AUSTRALIA

HOME PHONE: 03-9529-6863

HOME FAX: 03-9529-6863

NETWORKS: Community Action, Social Justice

WRIGHT MAKIA

Senior Project Officer

CDIH

PO Box 57

NORTHCOTE VIC 3103

AUSTRALIA

WORK PHONE: 03-9816-9671

WORK FAX: 03-9482-2127

NETWORKS: Action Research, Community Action, Evaluation, Human Services Practice/Change, Learning Organisations, Organisational Change & Development, Quality Management

Western Australia

ROSS DYANN

Lecturer, Edith Cowan University

Dept of Rural Community Studies

Bunbury Campus

Robertson Avenue

BUNBURY WA 6230

AUSTRALIA

WORK PHONE: 097-80-7743

WORK FAX: 097-80-7813

HOME PHONE: 097-21-8292

E-MAIL: d.ross@cowan.edu.au

INTEREST: AL, AR & PM as a teaching & learning strategy. AL, AR & PM as part of my PhD studies.

PROJECT: Reflective Practice Research Project. Peer Assessment Research Project. PhD work - AR contribution to educator & student empowerment.

NETWORKS: Action Learning, Action Research, Community Action, Gender Issues, Higher Education, Human Services Practice/Change, Learning Organisations, Rural Community Development, Social Justice, Teacher Development, Teacher Development - Higher Education

NEW ZEALAND

DAVISON VIVIENNE

Principal

Sumner School

Colenso Street

Christchurch 8

NEW ZEALAND

WORK PHONE: +64-3-326-6546

WORK FAX: +64-3-326-7003

HOME PHONE: +64-3-348-1282

INTEREST: Leadership in management (especially Education).

NETWORKS: Action Learning, Action Research, Education, Evaluation, Manager & Leadership Development

GAWITH GWEN

c/- Information Studies

Auckland College of Education

Private Bag 92601

Symonds Street

Auckland 1035

NEW ZEALAND

WORK PHONE: 64-9-623-0116

WORK FAX: 64-9-623-0116

HOME PHONE: 64-9-521-5969

E-MAIL: ggawith@nzonline.ac.nz

INTEREST: Teacher education.

PROJECT: PhD in progress.

NETWORKS: Action Learning, Action Research, Education, Higher Education, Method, Teacher Development, Teacher Development - Higher Education

Guidelines for contributors

Contributions to this 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.

Contributed case study monographs

Contributions are welcomed to the Action Research Case Study (ARCS) monograph series. The case studies in this refereed series contribute to a 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 strongly 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.

You may have interesting case material but may be uncertain of its theoretical underpinnings. If so, approach us. We may

offer joint authorship with an experienced collaborator to assist with the reflective phase of the report.

Another option is to submit a project report initially for the ALAR Journal (1000 words) with a view to developing the report into a full case study.

Detailed guidelines for case studies are available from the editor, ALAR Journal. The first case study in the series, by Vikki Uhlmann, is about the use of action research to develop a community consultation protocol.

The cost of *Consulting on a consultation protocol* is listed in the following Catalogue order form.

Vikki Uhlmann, <i>Consulting on a consultation protocol</i>
--

In *ARCS Newsletter* 1.1 Vikki described her monograph as intended to achieve a consultation protocol...

“...which might be widely used by government departments [...] developed collaboratively, as opposed to an armchair analysis where little input or ownership was gained from outside. [...]”

“I used an action research approach because of its perceived congruence with both my values and the values underlying the aims of the project. Four cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting were created by the input of over 100 participants”.

Vikki Uhlmann

Nexus Australia

419 Newbeith Road

Greenbank Qld 4123 Australia

Phone: (61-7) 3200 0754

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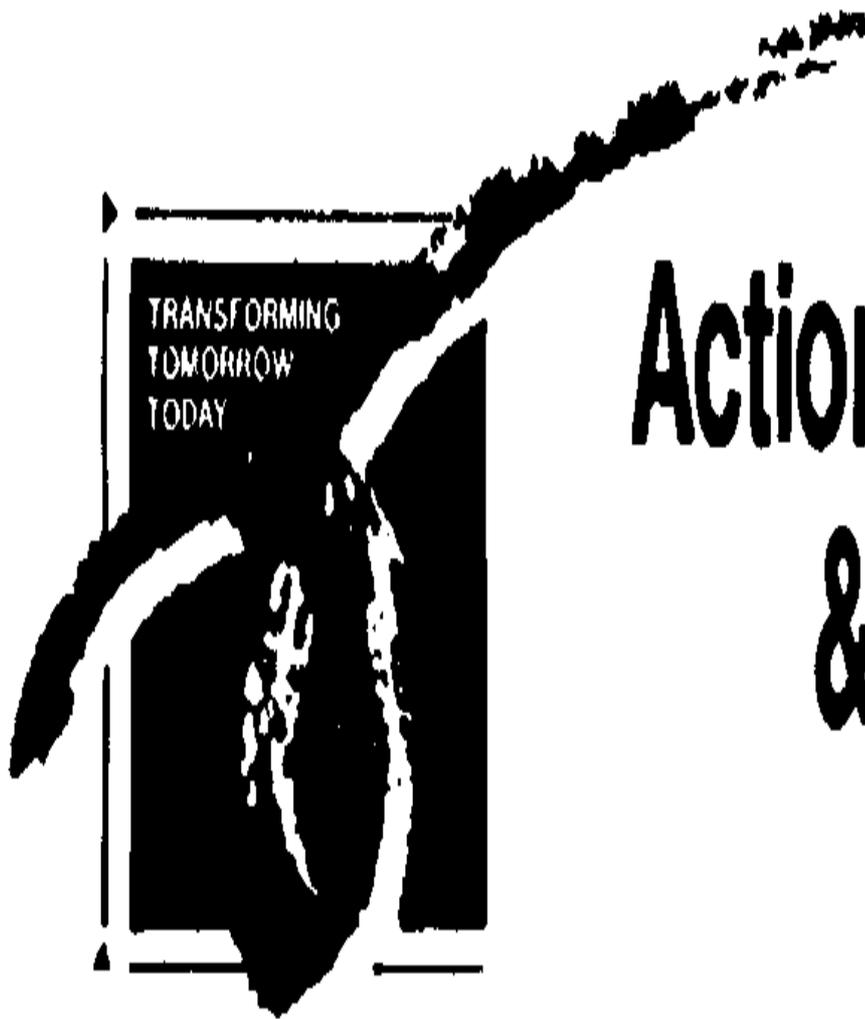
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