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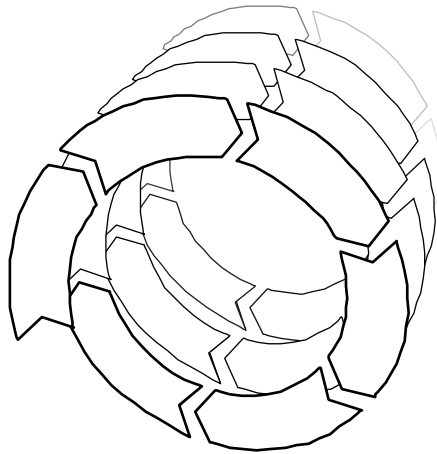
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## Editorial

Welcome to the fourteenth issue of the ALAR Journal. It seems that our teen years are bringing forth a new resurgence and enthusiasm for publication. This issue is packed full of interesting reading for academics and practioners alike. We start with a thought provoking article, by Paul Wildman and myself, about making inner sense of knowledge gained during the completion of a dissertation or extended research project. Next, we present contributions from the ten 'strands, streams and variants' represented at the Research-in-Action Symposium held in Victoria recently. Following, is ALARPM's Annual Report, which includes reports from both President and Treasurer. These reports confirm ALARPM's healthy financial position and provide some of our thoughts and plans for the future.

In 'People' we introduce ALARPM's committee of management and present brief profiles of our new committee members. We are very proud that our committee of management now has representatives from six different countries. In 'Noticeboard' we bring you information about the Australian National Conference to be held in May 2003 at Coolangatta/Tweed Heads, and the ALARPM 6<sup>th</sup>/PAR 10<sup>th</sup> World Congresses to be held in September 2003 at Pretoria in South Africa.

In 'Projects' Paul Wildman and Helen Schwencke present their work promoting community economic development (CED) using action-learning circles, and in 'Networking' we bring you news about the Community Service and Research Centre's Community-Based and Action Research Network (CBARN).

Last but not least, 'Bookshelf' presents two book reviews. First, Bob Dick reviews *The essential U&I* by Yoland Wadsworth, and second, Susan Goff reviews *Global citizenship and social movements: creating transcultural webs of meaning for the new millennium* by Janet J McIntyre-Mills. Also, included in 'Bookshelf' is information, from Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt, about two special issues of The Learning Organisation journal on action learning, action research and process management.

# The esoteric thesis: Making inner sense of the ineffability of knowledge obtained during the exoteric research process

Paul Wildman & Lyn Cundy –

## Abstract

This article explores aspects of the conventional research thesis and identifies one approach - the 'esoteric thesis'- for explicating inner meaning of the outward 'research quest'. Often, when researchers are completing their external world oriented - 'exoteric thesis' - based on research, literature review and so forth, little time or attention is directed to their inner world. Such a huge investment of life energy, often over a period of years, has the potential to offer substantial insights for the researcher and intriguingly may even elucidate what, in the first instance, created interest in the research question itself.<sup>1</sup> An inward-focused 'esoteric' process of inquiry creates the opportunity for identifying patterns in the researcher's past professional activities that may help explicate the 'exoteric' task at hand. This article

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<sup>1</sup> The authors have found during their doctoral studies, as have many of their colleagues similarly engaged, that esoteric thesis considerations/issues are much more prevalent and relevant than they would have expected at the beginning of the research quest. As a guesstimate, our experience suggests a majority of doctoral level researchers are drawn to deal with internal issues as a result of the external research process. Moreover, it is our contention that how well these issues are addressed at the time, directly affects both the quality and timeliness of the thesis and the personal growth of the researcher.

argues the importance of an inner journey that runs parallel to the conventional outward-looking research quest, and in doing so offers an approach that accommodates both.

## **Introduction**

Let us begin by identifying, from the perspective of the researcher, a list of attributes of post-graduate, research-based study. We are most particularly concerned with those attributes related to higher degrees that require a dissertation or major self-directed research component, such as a thesis. The list would probably include certification (achieving the higher degree), publishing the research, achieving peer recognition, career advancement, and (it is hoped) contribution to knowledge and the betterment of humanity in general. Seldom, if ever, is recognition of the potential for self-investigation given to the mammoth investment in time embedded in the outward or public thesis effort. This effort, which often represents an investment of thousands of dollars and a significant amount of life energy, is realised through professional experience, research activity, dissertation writing and the subsequent development of a publication.

Some of the concepts used in this paper may need explanation. The notion of research is defined as an epistemological framework (concerning the investigation of the origin and nature of human knowledge) that is enacted as a methodology, which in turn is used to engage with or investigate an area of concern. Over the course of the research, each element is more fully understood and modified in light of an increasing understanding. The first author coined the phrase 'exoteric thesis' to refer to the conventional academic dissertation, usually made up of literature review, hypothesis stating and testing, statistical manipulation, observations, and conclusions (typically 25,000 words in length for a Masters degree and 80,000 for a PhD).

The authors assert that the esoteric thesis, when undertaken along side the exoteric thesis, enables the researcher to achieve a better understanding of the inner meaning of the conventional research work. This article outlines the principal aspects of the esoteric thesis and explores the potential for self-investigation and even self-realisation during the research process. Over the past decade we have sought to apply this approach in our various roles as academic, co-researcher and supervisor.<sup>2</sup>

## Researcher motivation

It is important to consider the nature of the researcher's motivation. Is the researcher motivated to follow a particular course of study because of external extrinsic factors, such as career or family pressure, or does the researcher's research question stem from a genuine inner, intrinsic drive or urge for self-transcendence and conscious realisation through knowledge? Consciousness, in this instance, may be seen as a continuous spectrum from reflective states (including discursive and analytical – the home of the exoteric thesis) through non-reflective states (ecstatic and meditative) to direct apperception (intuition, gnosis, and esoteric experiences) (Tacey, 1995; Wildman, 2000).

Pathways to achieving higher levels of consciousness may include: spiritual discipline such as diet and meditation;

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<sup>2</sup> Paul Wildman's direct experience, over the past decade, includes many of the elements of developing an esoteric thesis covered in this article, such as:

- . **Story telling** – he included in his dissertation a modified Dreamtime story, which incidentally was not read by any of the three male examiners.
- . **Poem writing** – leading to a CD-Rom (McCubbin 1999).
- . **Sculpture making** – in particular a piece called 'A Question of Balance'.
- . **Applying Reflective Praxis** in developing text for a chapter in his doctoral dissertation, as well as in further research, application and publishing 1993, 1995 and 1997.
- . **Theory development**, trialing and application (Reflective Praxis) independently and then with researchers (see Wildman, 1995; and the link between 'math' and 'myth' in Wildman and Inayatullah, 1996).



displacement events such as trauma and stress; some drugs; epiphanies rational and otherwise; intuition, apperception, gnosis; and methods such as Quadruple Column Action Research (QCAR) (see Table 2). Consciousness may also be achieved through detached objective observation (rational), involved yet separate participation (relational) or integrated as one of many (participatory) (Jantsch, 1975, p. 105).

Indeed, the esoteric thesis may be viewed as a form of 'speculative intuition' and as such another conscious vantage point for the exoteric thesis.<sup>3</sup> Even though the researcher's primary motivation may well be aligned to extrinsic drivers, the intrinsic urge is present in the majority of thesis research and writing situations, and by using a conscious and judicious approach, the internal, esoteric thesis can be encouraged to emerge (Cundy, 1999).

## **Balancing the workload**

While arguing the esoteric thesis has merit, the researcher must also balance the competing needs of private life, study, research, field time, write up, supervision and the requirement to publish from ever-present examiners and perhaps employers. The potential workload of an esoteric thesis is best viewed as a percentage of the time allocated to the exoteric thesis. We suggest that ninety per cent of the researcher's overall effort be directed to the external (analysis, fieldwork, research, literature review, writing, editing and publication), with ten per cent directed to internal analysis including synthesising, reflecting,

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<sup>3</sup> Latin recognises several types of cognition/thought, some of which have become all but discarded today, for example: abstraction, discernment, practical, synthetical, speculative and intuitional. Interestingly, Maturana and Varela's (1980) work, as phenomenologist biologists, describes cognition (not thought) as the activity involved in the self-organisation of all living systems. In other words, cognition does not represent 'the world out there' as thought might, rather cognition is 'a bringing forth of the world through the process of living'. Cognition is the process of life.

connecting, surfacing, illuminating, identifying and tracking important internal markers and understandings that may emerge from external sources, although this may vary considerably.

An esoteric thesis is not in itself an esoteric journey (*inside looking in*), nor is it an esoteric view of the outside world (*inside looking out*). Rather it rides on the back of the external thesis and seeks insights that contribute to the researcher's 'self-knowledge' (the box below provides a metaphor for this process). The two theses should be kept in equilibrium, the goal is to strike a balance between the excessive effects of both rationalism and esotericism. Just as esotericism can remove the importance of 'dancing with detail' and concrete evidence, so exotericism can remove the importance of inner meaning and 'learning about self and other'.

#### **Metaphor for the Esoteric Thesis**

When I was a child, each year my parents would buy a Christmas Pageant calendar. On each day of the last month of the year, as we approached the 25<sup>th</sup> December, my sister and I would take turns opening a series of little (1cm by 1cm) windows in the Christmas calendar. Slowly, window-by-window, the hidden pageant appeared.

On the last day the whole pattern was revealed.

The pageant, like the esoteric thesis, was an inner pattern already present, yet initially not evident to the outside world. Each day added a further perspective on the overall underlying picture.

*Source: Paul Wildman 2002*

Writing an esoteric thesis, then, is about the realisation and fulfilment of one's potential capacities (gained through learning to develop insights and understanding from one's research), and applying this to the self in ways that

demonstrate understanding of, and service to, self and humanity.

## **Characteristics of the esoteric thesis**

The esoteric thesis has a number of specific characteristics. First, the esoteric thesis acknowledges emotional experiences and personal development outcomes achieved through writing the exoteric thesis. Next, the esoteric thesis uses external research, as a subtext, to harness both the outer and inner search for meaning and it seeks their integration. It also assists in the development, revelation, or exploration, of *an internal frame of reference* or paradigm.

Such a frame of reference can, and at an unconscious level already does, integrate and prioritise one's life direction and ability to identify and valorise the research question, future directions and past patterns of inquiry. Further, it provides a path that allows broader and deeper research questions to be asked about the contribution of the exoteric thesis to the researcher's ongoing life, self and emergent familial and professional roles, and it contextualises the exoteric thesis as an analytical engine or outer journey of intellectual comprehension. Finally, the esoteric thesis is about synthesising, amalgamating and patterning questions, data, insights and answers that arise from research conducted in the external world.<sup>4</sup>

It has been our experience that during the exoteric research process, the researcher often realises there is more going on than meets the eye. Thus, we put forward the esoteric thesis as one way of exposing these 'broader/deeper' issues and events to the one's critical eye. This is not intended to set up

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<sup>4</sup> The synthesis/esoteric thesis, created as a consequence of Lyn Cundy's inner journey, makes explicit the theoretical links and language that helped her to develop, describe and most of all communicate the emerging grounded theory that was both the purpose and the focus of her exoteric thesis (see chapter three in Cundy, 1999).

dissonance between the researcher's inner and outer worlds, nor do we argue that either is 'better' than the other. Rather, we maintain that one informs the other in a retroductive rapprochement between one's own 'lifestream' / process (Burgess-Limerick, 1995) and 'lifestyle' / context (EsT and ExT respectively). Further, we suggest, by becoming aware of the interrelationship between the two, we are better able to achieve some level of congruence between our internal and external worlds. Indeed, we believe, authentic research actually requires this level of self-critical reflection, and that the ensuing realisation and explication will highlight, at some stage in the research process, the researcher's desire, or need, to review the research question and/or acknowledge the realisation of possible future research intentions, and perhaps life directions.

### *Descriptors*

If we look behind the quest of the human mind for knowledge, we may see something far deeper than a purely human source. We may see knowledge embedded in bold conjectures and myths derived from a morphic field which, in turn, are embedded in archetypal energies that mental activity in its broadest sense releases as if unzipping a file. It is this unzipping that the esoteric thesis seeks to touch (Tarnas, 1991).

The esoteric thesis is intensive rather than extensive and can be codified into story, painting, sculpture and video/dvd clip or in some instances, text. In all instances, however, it is overarching or underpinning in nature, but not rule-governed (by word counts and the like). It is because our consciousness has been so colonised by narrowly defined 'rational' thinking, that we seek out an alternative vocabulary and process that has the capacity to transform the synthetic and intuitional forms of consciousness, methodologies and associated words.

The English language is rich in its capacity to embrace the internal 'left-hand' and thereby 'right-brain' quest (i.e., William Shakespeare). Currently, such capabilities are at best 'silently enabled' and at worst 'audibly disabled' in favour of the right-hand pair in the list below.

*Descriptors as additional dimensions of knowing*

<i>Aesthetic cycle</i>	Empiric cycle	<i>Inspiration</i>	Perspiration
<i>Aggregation</i>	Disaggregation	<i>Integration</i>	Disintegration
<i>Apperception</i>	Perception	<i>Internal</i>	External
<i>Consciousness</i>	Knowledge	<i>Intuition</i>	Instruction
<i>Design</i>	Detail	<i>Left</i>	Right
<i>Epiphany</i>	Realisation	<i>Negative</i>	Positive
<i>Esoteric</i>	Exoteric	<i>Phenomenal</i>	Noumenal
<i>Evert</i>	Invert	<i>Philology</i>	Philosophy
<i>Gnosis</i>	Logos	<i>Poetic</i>	Noetic
<i>Hermeneutic</i>	Promethean	<i>Subjective</i>	Objective
<i>Idea</i>	Concept	<i>Symbolic</i>	Literal
<i>Imagination</i>	Construction	<i>Syncretic</i>	Analytic
<i>Immediate</i>	Mediate	<i>Synthesis</i>	Analysis
<i>Induction</i>	Deduction	<i>Vertical</i>	Horizontal
<i>Insight</i>	Hindsight	<i>Yin</i>	Yang

The esoteric thesis respectfully challenges the view that only theses that satisfy the imperious needs created by the philosophic and scientific positions of the modern world are uniquely of value. The above (left-hand/right brain) list postulates the esoteric thesis from a language perspective with the first word in each pair relating to an esoteric dimension of understanding. These descriptors allow access to additional dimensions of knowing and learning that may be called meta-knowledge.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Readers unfamiliar with these terms may wish to consult authors such as Gadamer, Rorty, Dilthey or some of the post modern authors. Direct reference to these authors have not been included as this article is primarily a pragmatic discussion drawing broadly on the literature stream of transformational philology – concerned as it is with inner-outer relationships – which have

## Some aspects for consideration in undertaking an esoteric thesis

### *Esoteric biography*

In essence an exoteric thesis is written from an *outside* perspective looking *out*, while an esoteric thesis is in part a biography written from the *outside* looking *in* (from the vantage-point of learning insights and deep reflections gained from the exoteric thesis). In this way, the esoteric thesis seeks to reveal the inner scaffolding that has generated, and will continue to generate, the external activity associated with the actual research question.

### *Retroductive congruence*

The esoteric thesis is not a journey around one's psyche, nor is it an exploration of one's inner world. Rather, it is devoted to seeking inner patterns that give rise to the external research question. It seeks a harmony or congruence and integrity between the outer research question and its associated activities, on the one hand, and the researcher's inner world, on the other. This harmony is arrived at through a cyclic, retroductive process, in which inductive and then deductive processes are followed: working both

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become over the past century largely displaced, and indeed discredited, by reductionist philosophy – concerned as it is with outer truths or their negation.

In enlightenment terms, philology reified the conscious stream of expression from artists, poets and theatre, quite separate from philosophy. The philological processes, such as, *bildung* and *erlebnis* are appropriate 'right brain' counterparts of the philosophical or scientific methods like empiricism. It may well be that English, especially its modern variant, has lost much of these subtle yet crucial distinctions. In the root language stream from which English derived – largely German (extant) and Latin (extinct) – one can still find these linguistic echoes. In this context, cycles of inquiry are expanded to include not only the empirical cycle and its variants, but also the action research cycle; cognitive cycle; hermeneutical cycle; philological cycle and alchemaic cycle. These latter cycles all contain a vertical or consciousness component.

from the particular to the general and then from the general to the particular, and so on. This, in turn, has the effect of assisting in the development of an internal frame of reference with the potential role of integrating and prioritising life directions, as well as enhancing our capacity to identify future directions from past lessons.

### *Interior | Exterior divide*

The esoteric thesis, in effect, links to Wilber's (1995) notion of 'interior' whereas the exoteric thesis links to his notion of 'exterior'. The esoteric thesis represents an inner mirroring of the exterior actions, behaviours and measurements of the exoteric thesis. In Wilber's terms, the western esoteric | exoteric divide (which favours the exoteric) might be described as spinning on an inner | outer axis. Some Asian and indigenous cultures, on the other hand, are often described as spinning on an individual | social axis (which favours the social). Wilber (1995) captures this dilemma well when he says '[t]he permanent sign of [western] enlightenment is domination over an objectified external [read exoteric] nature and a repressed internal [read esoteric] nature' (p. 443). In this regard, readers may recall the 'integral' nature of the esoteric thesis: it is a step towards uniting the interior and exterior aspects of the researcher's being.

### *Supervision to supravision*

Supravision moves beyond technical and academic correctness and the politics of examiner selection, although for a complete and successful outcome the cognitive, linguistic and evidential requirements of the exoteric thesis are still crucial. Yet, the supervisor need not become the navigator of the researcher's inner journey, exploring issues from the mundane to the rational or the spiritual at various levels of consciousness (see Table 1). Rather, the concept of supravision recognises the potential importance for the researcher of navigation devices such as reflective

questioning, joint questing and pattern identification.<sup>6</sup> The supervisor's goal is to assist the researcher in developing the capacity to take the process forward themselves through, for instance, Quadruple Column Action Research (see Table 2).

*From knower to known*

This element of the esoteric thesis derives from a belief that, to have integrity in qualitative research, the outer world being researched must interact with the inner world of the researcher. In other words, the integrity of the research process demands that the research methodology chosen has the capacity to engage the internal and external worlds of the researcher. Esoteric understandings of knowledge recognise our ordinary knowing as theory-laden, conditioned, relative and provisional, or as essentially hermeneutic. Yet, such esoteric knowledge accepts realities, such that human nature is teleological (having an urge to transcend, for an ultimate purpose) and that there is collectivity beyond the purely rational.<sup>7</sup> Through self-observation, introspective traditions claim that we can break the reactive link between mental

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<sup>6</sup> The reader should note that the exoteric thesis is almost always a Promethean work (explanatory, literal and analytic) whereas the esoteric thesis (interpretative, symbolic and synthetic) is often a Hermeneutic work. Generally speaking, universities do not take kindly to the latter. While vocational education may well strive for behavioural competence in the material world, tertiary education reaches for understanding of the mental world. Both are Promethean tasks. The process of completing an esoteric thesis reaches for understanding and interpretation of meaning in the 'symbolical' inner world of the researcher.

<sup>7</sup> In modern physics, for example, the worldview is a systems view whereby everything is connected to everything else, nothing can be understood in isolation and everything is seen as part of a unified whole. While it is not yet clear how this connectedness operates, Jaworski (1988) claims the mind has powers that allow us to go beyond our normal way of being and even beyond what we think is possible. According to Jaworski (1988), when we give something our whole attention things just begin to happen and we experience *synchronicity*. When we join together as a group and rise above our habitual way of being even more possibilities emerge.



processes associated with experiencing and their rational concomitants. Much Zen and Tantra practice, for example, is oriented toward unconditioned, intuitive, immediate experiencing that transcends mental habits.

**Table 1: From exoteric thesis to esoteric thesis and return**

<b>Exoteric Thesis ↔ Esoteric Thesis*</b>
<b>1 → Exoteric Thesis Research Question</b> ‘lived experience’ of the professional field in which the research is being conducted →
<b>2 → Research Actions (column 1)</b> conventional research and fieldwork observations – <i>immersion</i> ** →
<b>3 → Learning Observations (column 2)</b> integration, reflection and abstract analysis of fieldwork observations →
<b>4 → Learning Insights (column 3)</b> epiphany and ‘ah ha’ experiences become ‘what it means for me to be interested in this particular research question, at this moment, in this way’ – <i>incubation</i> ** →
<b>5 → Deep Reflection and Pattern Identification (column 4)</b> creates the potential for deeper understanding of the researcher’s inner world and its interrelationship with the research task at hand, as well as links/themes/patterns from past life/professional/research experiences →
<b>6 → Esoteric Thesis</b> facilitates the creation of deeper/meta patterns (or patterns within patterns like Russian dolls and fractal like structures) that may ultimately expose the research rationale/context/field and help explain why we asked the research question in the first place – <i>illumination</i> ** →
<b>7 → Integrating the Esoteric and Exoteric</b> brings together personal insights and research findings – <i>creative synthesis</i> ** →
<b>8 → Exoteric Thesis</b> makes sense of (usually through written word) the creative synthesis, so that knowledge may be shared – <i>explication</i> ** →
<b>9 → Revisiting the Research Question</b> , as if for the first time, yet knowing more deeply about its meaning for you – self realisation – as well as the realisation of possible future research intentions/directions*** → <b>1</b>
* Can be codified in a methodology such as Reflective Praxis or QCAR (col. 4, Table 2)
** <i>Italics</i> indicate the steps in Heuristic Inquiry
*** One can now make a more conscious decision to continue or change direction

Source: Paul Wildman and Lyn Cundy (2002)



### *Chakra activation*

In terms of obtaining and inscribing the different types of energy in exoteric thesis writing, another consideration may be the *chakras* or energy centres of the body. Known for millennia in the East, they have been used in Western naturopathic systems for the past fifty or so years. The seven chakras run along the length of the spine. Those familiar with meditation will be aware of these centres, about which much has been written. The seven chakras may be seen to represent different 'ways of knowing' or intelligences. In an intriguing piece on this topic, Passfield (1997) describes these seven energy centres as contributing the following energies:

- (1) Base (bottom of spine) → existence
- (2) Genital → activity esp. generative and procreative
- (3) Stomach area → control and power
- (4) Heart → community and family
- (5) Throat → meaning and decisions
- (6) Between the eyes → integration and discernment, and
- (7) Top of the head → spirit and synthesis

While both types of theses can use all types of energy, the esoteric thesis draws heavily on the last three chakras, because they lean towards deep reflection.

### **Quadruple Column Action Research (QCAR)**

One way of integrating the esoteric and exoteric theses is via QCAR. Although not applicable in all research projects, QCAR illustrates how conventional exoteric methodology can be expanded to include an esoteric dimension. By way of QCAR, the conventional action learning field journal used to record observations and reflections (two column), is expanded to include learning insights and pattern identification (four column). Table 1 explains this process in

more detail. Reflective praxis is another method of transforming the data generated, by means of the QCAR process, into esoteric learning. This transformation is in effect another journey of understanding as the researcher searches for meta meaning in the research data.

**Table 2: Quadruple Column Action Research – the QCAR process**

(1) Field Work Observations	(2) Learning Observations	(3) Learning Insights	(4) Deep Reflections and Pattern Identification
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Source: P Wildman 2002

Reflective praxis is the process through which an extended period of professional experience (often a decade or so) engages with action-based research and reflection (Columns 1 and 2), and includes inner review and the application of learning insights (Column 3) and their creative synthesis (Column 4), to produce the final dissertation. Reflective praxis can, to some degree, operate as a methodology for the conventional exoteric thesis. However, with the inclusion of deep reflection and pattern identification (i.e., heuristic inquiry), it can also become a method for explicating the esoteric thesis (Wildman, 1995). The QCAR process forms a triple-loop learning opportunity in which reflective praxis enables the combining of action research with heuristic inquiry.<sup>8</sup> Other methodologies, such as phenomenology,<sup>9</sup> are

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<sup>8</sup> Heuristic Inquiry has five dimensions: *immersion* in the field; *incubation* and *illumination* of learning insights, meta meaning and pattern identification; *creative synthesis* – the application of the lessons learnt in relation to both the researcher and the research; and finally *explication* in the esoteric/exoteric theses. Table 1 and 2 illustrate this process. Moustakas (1990) (Heuristic Inquiry) and Galtung and Inayatullah (1997) (deep pattern identification) are also valuable texts.

also useful in facilitating immersion in the exoteric phenomenon being studied and the esoteric or lived experience of that phenomenon.

Through immersion, pattern identification and synthesis, the esoteric thesis seeks to transcend the pseudo-objectivity that enthrals so much of our academic world. In academic research and essays, banishing the subjective by adopting the stance of 'passive observer recording pure fact' typifies this pseudo-objectivity. One of the most important things about the esoteric thesis is that it invites the collaboration between subjective and objective points of view. In this way, the esoteric thesis promotes a new kind of academic honesty and integrity.

### **The esoteric thesis and academic integrity**

The result of investigations on behalf of the esoteric thesis can, in turn, flow into how we understand 'academic endeavour'. Some academic approaches tend to concentrate on 'thought experiments', which ultimately lead to unnecessarily detached 'fence-sitting' positions that effectively distance academic approaches from enactments of the implied value position. Such ambivalence, although sometimes necessary for objectivity and exoteric theory development, tend to exclude other ways of knowing. In action research, for example, it can lead to a certain

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<sup>9</sup> Phenomenology is the study of essences. In phenomenology the traditional notions of objectivity and subjectivity are redefined. Objectivity and subjectivity are both aspects of the same thing; they find meaning and significance in the oriented relationship between researcher and the phenomenon being researched. Phenomena make themselves known in moods, feelings and emotions and, therefore, cannot be perceived or studied in the manner of objects through neutral and detached descriptions. Hence, the method of phenomenology encourages immersion and in so doing the lived experience becomes a crucial part of the research process. The major task of phenomenology is to interpret both the essences/meta patterns of the phenomenon and the context of the situation in which it manifests itself.

reluctance to explore and enact the personal and collective compliance implications of taking such a theoretical position.

The esoteric thesis stands in fundamental challenge to the all-too-frequent mantra of 'just do your dissertation according to the conventional formula and then you can do what you want.' Indeed, this article answers that suggestion by asking: 'How can one know what one wants without undertaking deep learning such that is provided by the esoteric thesis?' The esoteric thesis responds by seeking ways to touch and understand the ground on which we stand, while explicating our research question and thereby taking various research positions. The authenticity allowed by the esoteric thesis includes personal and social compliance, public self-disclosure, ethical and integrity development, and contestability. In this way academic integrity is enhanced.

## **Conclusion**

Many researchers in their attempt to complete the exoteric thesis as expeditiously as possible tend to overlook opportunities to embark on their own inner journey. The esoteric thesis, when proactively undertaken, can be effectively and productively linked to the exoteric research process, with just a small allowance for additional workload. This parallel process provides a rich and rewarding field of life meaning and personal learning for the researcher, and in some instances the supervisor. Further, the esoteric thesis presents the capacity to enhance the exoteric thesis and thereby the understandings and knowledge created and developed through the conventional research process.

In a small yet significant way, the esoteric thesis responds to the frequent claim by researchers that the research/thesis writing process is ultimately formulaic, alienating and not sufficiently personally challenging or insightful. It is to these latter two critiques of the conventional research process that this article is addressed.

*Little Gidding* by T S Elliot

*We shall not cease from exploration  
and the end of all our exploring  
will be to arrive where we started  
and know the place for the first time.  
Through the unknown, remembered gate  
when the last of earth left to discover  
is that which was the beginning*

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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.*

*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.*

# Research-in-Action Symposium

## – A scan of the field in Victoria

On the 5th of September, a small group of organisers from ALARPM, the Melbourne Action Research Issues Association, and the interim Action Research Program in the Institute for Social Research at Swinburne University of Technology, held a “Research-in-Action” Symposium at Borderlands.

Introducing the Symposium, Yoland Wadsworth wrote:

After several decades of slowly developing momentum, it seems that action research is currently hitting a bit of a “critical mass” and beginning to move to centre stage. We are seeing a noticeable surge of activity: people doing it, government departments and businesses adopting it, books, journals and courses about it, and now a wave of students graduating with higher degrees using action research and workplaces incorporating it.

Here in Victoria, people have been working either individually or in small clusters to achieve this – sometimes over many years, or sometimes through more recent entry to the field there has been a new infusion of energy. We thought it was time to meet, compare notes, and hear from each other. We’ve come together:

- To connect and feel part of a vibrant field;
- To address together current issues;
- To update ourselves on the field;
- To develop our understandings/skills.

Our first session is a 'work-in-progress showcase and scan of the field'. Here we hope to provide a glimpse of the enormous array of experience and interesting projects from a wide range of settings and areas that characterise our field. Methodological areas include action research, community and participatory action research, action learning, organisational development, facilitation and systems thinking; and in urban, rural and local, national and international as well as whole-of-field settings; and in substantive areas including management & business, nursing, government, youth, human services, rural/agriculture, architecture and design, and staff/consumer practice).

This issue of the diversity of our field is an issue (and source of insight) in itself!

People from different 'strands, streams or variants' had prepared quick responses to the following questions:

- Name and organization/or activity;
- What are you working on right now/current project or interest?
- What would you call the entire methodological field we are all working in?
- How would you characterize your own area within this?
- What is the evidence in your own work or experience that action research (or your related methodological area) has worked?
- What are the key issues or problems you are facing right now?

The following ten 'strands, streams and variants' were represented (among others) by distributed papers to support this session. The session proved so popular we thought we would make them more widely available to other ALARPM members.

Tony Andreatta	Systematic developmental change
Susan Long	Systems/psychodynamic approach/action research
John Molineux	Human resources/organisational cultural change
Adam Leggett & Jose Ramos	AR in futures, foresight, complexity, innovation
Susie Goff	Facilitation and participatory process
Chris Morris	Community development/PAR/rural communities
Julie Morsillo	Community psychology/social justice/youth
Jon Kroschel	PAR/dialogue/mental health services
Neil Hooley	Indigenous community/higher education
Chris Price	Action research/youth early intervention

**Changing organisational culture through the involvement and participation of staff at all levels**

- Tony Andreatta (*Corporate Effectiveness*)

**Introduction**

As an organisational consultant, my main purpose is working with client organisations with the view to increasing their overall effectiveness. Effectiveness means

optimising both operational efficiencies as well as providing opportunities for human fulfilment. Typically the work I do involves the development of organisational 'visions and strategies'; facilitating team development; conducting organisational surveys of attitudes; participative job redesign; and personal development work with senior leaders.

## **Project**

An example of a current consultancy is with the Australian/ Asia Pacific part of a large multi-national company headquartered in Europe and with American links. The company had in the past enjoyed good standing in the marketplace with quality products and services and employees felt very secure in their employment. Unfortunately they had also grown accustomed to being directed by a rather autocratic CEO.

Organisation Development activities commenced in February 1999 as a result of the new CEO's identification of the need to improve communication and teamwork; clarify roles and responsibilities; and instil greater enthusiasm for learning and change in the company. An initial series of workshops were conducted in 1999, all with the purpose of providing participants with the opportunity to discuss frankly and openly their concerns about their work and identify means of improving work performance and satisfaction.

The underlying strategy was based on the view that staff have all the knowledge and experience to make the company a more efficient, effective and profitable company, and it was a much better strategy to involve them than it was to hire a big consulting firm who would then have difficulties in getting ownership of proposals and implementing any changes.

The workshops have included managers and staff from every Division in the Company. All workshops have been

rated as very valuable and participants have worked enthusiastically to produce workable improvement plans.

Initial activities addressed specific needs of the various departments and teams, and have proven powerful as a process for generating improvement projects within departments. Participants have all experienced and worked through a basic 'change process' with a consequent increase in their skills in working together. On the 'second time around' more sophisticated planning tools were introduced as well as going deeper into team processes. The prime focus had been on alignment of effort *within* departments. The current strategic step is focussing on aligning effort *between* departments and support functions. This is proving to be more difficult than anticipated, as people seem to be 'structurally encased' in their part of the company.

## Design

Following an initial period of examination of the business the CEO identified significant room for development including:

- more open communications;
- improved cooperation between Regions and between Regions and Head Office;
- enabling individuals to feel a greater sense of ownership for business outcomes;
- recognition of the need to continually learn and change in order to grow the business in a rapidly changing environment;
- clarification of roles and responsibilities.

Discussion of these needs revealed agreement that the best means of meeting these development needs would be to involve people at all organization levels in an OD process consisting of:

- reviewing influences (both internal and external) impacting on their work;
- identifying what is working well and what needs improvement;
- clarifying their vision for more effective operation;
- identifying changes necessary to achieve maximum effectiveness and efficiency together with optimal work satisfaction in achieving this vision;
- developing immediate and longer term action plans for improvement;
- implementing agreed actions;
- establishing means of regular review and ongoing development;
- increasing individual awareness and skill in working cooperatively in teams.

## **Outcomes**

The OD process has enabled participating to:

- tackle important aspects of organisation functioning;
- deal with the complexity of the operation and the market environment;
- gain greater clarity of direction, commitment and understanding of the 'whole';
- develop concrete action plans to improve performance and job satisfaction;
- develop team member skills and the ability to learn 'how-to-learn' from experience.

Activities were designed to fit the particular requirements of each department/team and generally followed a simplified three-step basic OD cycle:

1. *Describing the current reality:* understanding of team objectives and strategy and review of the group's effectiveness. Listing of major issues of concern. Considering the implications of the current situation.
2. *Developing a vision of the ideal:* detailing what people think about the most ideal scenario for the business including what the organisation structure and processes would need to look like in order to achieve the group's ideal
3. *Formulating action plans to achieve the ideal:* what projects must be undertaken to close the gap.

The underlying philosophy of the OD process was to bring some balance to managing growth and development in the organisation, by focusing on the efficiency of internal process and organisational learning as well as the traditional focus on financial performances and customers.

In summary, the OD planning process has evolved into a powerful component for gaining development and growth in performance and for reducing the 'them - us' attitude between management and staff. By encouraging participants to 'learn how to learn', the OD process has created an adaptive learning organisation that is best positioned to manage change effectively. Up till now though, some people have been somewhat wary about what OD really means. To achieve further gains will require official sanction that OD is not just a passing fad but a serious process that is integrated into the 'normal' way of managing the business. The 'big question' is whether the CEO can maintain leadership of the OD process in the face of increasing pressures to cut down costs and increase profitability.

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**Australian Graduate School of  
Entrepreneurship**  
- Susan Long (*Swinburne University*)

The ideas herein are an outcome of our work as members of a research consortium that came together in a funded project, the aim of which was to discover ways of enabling continuous improvement in the practice of evidence-based-medicine. The founding members of the consortium were representatives of three hospitals (including two principal researchers from the largest hospital), an association of general practitioners and an agency that advocates for consumers of health services. After the research tender had been won, the two authors were invited to join the consortium specifically to assist with achieving the 'cultural change' surrounding medical practice that had been identified as a key variable in the research proposal.

We were colleagues in a Graduate School of Management and joined the consortium as representatives of our university. This university affiliation reflected the importance of the formal 'research' status of the project (lest it be regarded by doctors as a quality assurance initiative), and a belated recognition by the consortium that additional expertise, external to the health system, was needed if they were to research the cultural dimension of medical practice. We brought to the project a systems / psychodynamic approach to action research (Long, 1999) which was then adopted, in principle, as the guiding methodology for the project as a whole.

The focus of the project has been on clinician-led development of an algorithm, based on official treatment guidelines for colorectal cancer, that can be carried as software on a palm pilot and used both as a decision support tool, and for the digital collection of patient data and treatment decisions. The rationale behind the project is that patient outcomes will be improved firstly, if doctors' treatment decisions are informed by their ready access to treatment guidelines, accompanied by the level of research evidence that supports the guideline, and secondly, if the collection of timely, accurate patient data leads to study of variance in treatment decisions and subsequent adjustments towards best practice. This is the logic of the project; although in this case the research funders were persuaded that its logical progress may be impeded by cultural factors, so it would be useful to know what they are and how to change them if necessary.

## **Action research**

### *What is Action Research?*

There is a poor general understanding of action research in the broader scientific community and in the medical community. This may be, on the whole, because action research is not the kind of research design normally used in the 'hard' sciences, nor the more statistical sciences. Unlike experimental research design, it is not best described as a process where rules of inferential measurement apply (as, say, in clinical trials). Although, it should be said, that the broad umbrella design of action research may include within it scientific endeavours in this sense.

Action research is really the name given to a **research management process**, rather than a particular research method as such. It tends to include descriptive, rather than inferential data creation and analysis, although, as mentioned, it does not preclude the latter. Most importantly, it involves a political social change process as well as a

research process. It aims at planned change as well as exploration and study.

There are many different forms of action research, but all involve the aim of managed, studied and evaluated change to a socio-technical system.

By socio-technical is meant a system that involves both people and their tasks and technologies for doing those tasks (whether these be in a work system or a broader social system). A model often used to illustrate the change process is a circular or spiral model of STUDY - PLAN - ACT - REFLECT - CHANGE. The STUDY part may involve collecting data through general science or social science methods. The PLAN segment requires the planning of actions based on the findings from the study. This requires not only a rational planning process, but also an understanding of the social and political impediments to change. How might actions not only follow the evidence of research, but also be acceptable and practical to those who are involved with changes? Who are the most appropriate players to involve? Where does the authority for change reside? What are the ethical issues involved? Many of these questions are addressed through an intuitive understanding of the systems involved as well as a careful observation of the issues. The ACT part involves doing something on the basis of findings from the study. This requires authority to act on behalf of the whole system. Thus the actions are taken within a consultation process involving all stakeholders. To REFLECT involves analysing and evaluating the outcomes of the actions taken. This will involve the impact of action on a variety of systems, both task and social. Finally CHANGE involves change to the system on the basis of the reflection and evaluation. In an ongoing way, the cycle may be repeated so that change promotes a new process of study.

Because the action research aims to bring about change, not simply to generate and examine data, it involves social and political processes as well as scientific study. This means that

it involves people within the system bringing their power, authority, accountabilities, responsibilities and ethical and pragmatic judgements to the project alongside their curiosity, intuition and rational thinking. It also involves the people concerned discovering and working with the social dynamics of change, including attendant anxieties, doubts, enthusiasms, questions and unconscious resistances to change.

Also, because in action research the same people have roles as researchers (engaging in both scientific enquiry and a political process of social change) and as researched (with feelings, thoughts and opinions derived from this role), the process may become confused. It is essential to clarify which role in the system one is in at any given time. This is the added complexity for action researchers. In addition, it is important to identify the different levels of the system. Who is involved?

Given the aim is to study and change socio-technical systems, the process involves the identified systems and associated roles (through representatives) and many of the individuals who are in those systems. The basic idea is that the people in the system are best placed to understand their nuances and dynamics with the aid of additional outside perspectives. Moreover, the internal people are those with the power and authority to make sustainable change possible. Given this project is about change in clinical decision making and decision support, those who make the decisions are primarily involved. This means those at an institutional level, at clinic and department levels and at the level of individual clinician roles.

*We invite people to submit reports of work-in-progress or information about*

*completed projects – so that we can all  
become aware of the wide variety of  
options available to us.*

**The implementation of systemic human  
resource strategy to bring about  
organisational cultural change**  
- John Molineux (*Monash University*)

*The project is an action research case study in a large Australian Public Sector Agency. The action research PhD based on this project is due to be completed in 2004.*

The project is into its third phase, at present. A systemic human resource strategy was developed in the organisation from August 1998 to May 1999. The first phase of its implementation commenced in September 1999, and involved the setting up and partial completion of a number of corporate projects. The second phase involved a major rethink and reflection on the strategy, due to a funding cut that cancelled the original projects. The third phase is currently underway, and involves the implementation of the intent of much of the original strategy via other mechanisms.

Key findings so far, include:

1. There are macro-level organisational cycles in the agency, which operate according to punctuated equilibrium theory. These cycles are caused by political and economic factors and have been mapped in this research from 1980. They influence HR strategy to such an extent that it seems that it is only possible to carry out effective large scale change in a “revolutionary” cycle.

2. Soft systems methodology is an effective tool in co-designing changes to HR systems.
3. Large scale cultural change can only occur effectively when all parts of a HR system are changed together and in alignment – the philosophy and design, supporting infrastructure, operations and assurance mechanisms.
4. Major changes to HR systems can bring about behavioural change in the workplace.

Current involvement:

- Writing papers in relation to finding one;
- Participating in several change projects.

Major problems experienced so far:

- The long timeframes associated with cultural change;
- Causal delays associated with using ineffective participation methodologies;
- Funding cuts to strategic projects.

Participation is critical in relation to this project, and there are several key organisational participants involved:

- The original phase one strategy team of four people,
- Ten corporate project leaders for phase one;
- The phase two strategy team of four people;
- Several corporate and line HR leaders in phase three;
- A number of corporate executives.

*Any questions in relation to the project may be directed to John on 61-3-9285-1320.*

# **A program for building university undergraduates capacities in participatory action research, foresight, learning and innovation**

- Adam Leggett & Jose Ramos

*(Univator Initiative)*

## **Introduction**

The intent of the program is to encourage the development of generic personal and professional capacities that enable people to apply their knowledge, passion and creativity in a world that needs more positive innovation. The program is currently at post-pilot stage. A long-term objective is to achieve implementation on a national scale.

## **Participatory action research based on foresight and innovation**

Innovation is the process of change, and preferably the process of change that creates value that the world needs. Foresight, in this context, is the process of finding what value needs to be created now and in the future. Foresight and innovation therefore come together as complementary parts of a greater whole to produce a synergistic effect that has the potential to achieve better designed outcomes with a higher chance of lasting positive impact. One variable that has the potential to influence the value of the outcome from this whole process is the level of individual participation created by the lead actor (innovator) in a field of potentially unlimited human interactions. What is of interest and always a point of reflection for the lead actor, when working in this area, is the appropriate degree or extent to which others are engaged at a particular stage in or aspect of a research,



foresight or innovation project or process. Wadsworth (1998) provides a useful characterisation of Participatory Action Research that can be used as a base to guide thinking and action while engaging with people during the research, foresight and innovation process, thus helping to ensure a more meaningful, valuable and viable outcome.

Yoland Wadsworth has characterised PAR as:

- more conscious of “problematizing” an existing action or practice and more conscious of who is problematizing it and why we are problematizing it;
- more explicit about “naming” the problem, and more self-conscious about raising an unanswered question and focusing an effort to answer;
- more planned and deliberate about commencing a process of inquiry and involving others who could or should be involved in that inquiry;
- more systematic and rigorous in our efforts to get answers;
- more carefully documenting and recording action and what people think about it and in more detail and in ways which are accessible to other relevant parties;
- more intensive and comprehensive in our study, waiting much longer before we “jump” to a conclusion;
- more self-sceptical in checking our hunches;
- attempting to develop deeper understandings and more useful and more powerful theory about the matters we are researching, in order to produce new knowledge which can inform improved action or practice; and
- changing our actions as part of the research process, and then further researching these changed actions.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Wadsworth, Y. What is Participatory Action Research?, 1998

In the Univator Initiative, action, foresight, research, learning, and innovation occur in four domains of participatory activity. In each of these domains PAR can be used to describe the basis of the approach. What differs is the level of participation sought, achieved and achievable in each domain.

### Evidence from my own work experience

Domain	Experience and Evidence
<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Experience:</b> Interaction stimulated by inquiry and presentation of concepts and propositions to create greater understanding of the “problem” or need and perspectives. <b>Evidence:</b> Development of documentation that attracts stakeholders to participate, presentations that resonate with individual and widely held perceptions, structures and strategies that consider a wide range of issues and aspects.
<b>Program</b>	<b>Experience:</b> Two program facilitators/mediators/presenters (action researches) working together in a process of reflection, design, action on a weekly cycle. This was a highly reflective process consisting of exposure to the group, by facilitators, of content and processes in a space of open dialogue and feedback. <b>Evidence:</b> Creation of a program that has utility and meets the needs of the participants. Positive response from participants. Range of new insights and ideas on how to enhance the program in future. Participants more engaged due to a feeling of unknowingness about what will emerge during sessions, as a result the “mental focus” is drawn away from the need to learn and becomes concentrated in thinking.
<b>Participant Capacity Building</b>	<b>Experience:</b> 8 x 2hr sessions with small group of combined degree university undergraduate students. Students participated individually, in pairs and as a full group. Students were exposed to a range of models, frameworks, content, issues, and processes through a facilitated session. <b>Evidence:</b> Percentage of students who participated is now actively pursuing their own informal Participatory Action Research based Foresight and Innovation projects.
<b>Facilitator Capacity Building</b>	This aspect of the project will begin when the program begins to be rolled-out across a wider number of institutions. The expected challenge here will be establishing a process that provides a way for the diversity of facilitators to modify the program based on their experience while facilitating, while also maintaining an appropriate level of consistency over time and across delivery sites.

## Key issues

- Establishing an entirely new way of building capacities in a university environment;
- Means of effectively providing participants with access to the tools and knowledge base that will enable them to be engaged and build their understanding of anticipatory (foresight based) action learning, research and innovation while acting to create value the world needs; and
- Resolving the challenge of increasing the numbers of participation while managing logistics, costs and authenticity.

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## Overview of current works

- Susan Goff (*CultureShift Pty Ltd*)

For the last year and including the near future our work focus has been on 3 levels:

1. A voluntary level of supporting ALARPM.
2. An investment level of company development.
3. A contract level with public sector clients.

## ALARPM

As National Vice President my focus regarding ALARPM has been to bring the participatory dimensions of action

learning and research into the organisation's foreground and to do this by enlarging the organisation's sense of identity by promoting its international links and activities.

The big questions, from my point of view are:

- The capacity for management members to engage in dialogue about the field;
- The capacity for management members to shepherd all dimensions of AL and AR (we tend to promote that which we are familiar with);
- The levels of investment that the general membership places in ALARPM, which are not commensurate with the rate of development of AL and AR (of any dimension) that is taking place in the marketplace or field of practice in Australia and internationally.

The design of a development strategy for ALARPM has been a difficult process. We attempted an electronic collaborative planning strategy and moved towards what Yoland calls the "balls in the air" model, which was developed collaboratively by members of the management committee and is continuously evolving. It is apparent that electronic processes are still foreign to many, and that face-to-face workshopping is essential for understanding and commitment to emerge even if this disenfranchises those who cannot meet.

Where have we got so far? We are in what could be regarded as the second year of development of a new spirit under – or I should say *with* Yoland's leadership. The committee's current coherence stands on the shoulders of the Queensland network's years of development, the rising wave of recognition in the field and determined, capable and visionary leadership.

## **Company development**

As director of my company CultureShift Pty Ltd, I have spent the last year in low-level production mode, to build the company from the inside and turn it into a proactive facility for participatory works. I include this activity in my presentation because we (my partner Jane Gregg and myself) work the principles of participation into internal management systems, client relationships and marketing as well as contract facilitation. It has been a fascinating journey of design, critique, test and adaptation (using AR approaches to corporate development) to explore a new idea of a contemporary ethical small business. I am passionate about this work. Small business is a serious business when combating the positivist assumptions of capitalism in the marketplace.

The big questions have been:

- **Credibility:** How to be taken seriously by peers, clients and advocates when the marketplace is characterised by opportunistic commercial interests, political leverage and academic elitism and territorialism – we are serious about sustainability, humility and collaboration but who else is?
- **Viability:** The dominant paradigms in the market place gear up finance and expectations for consultants and suppliers and gear them down for clients – the impact of this squeeze has particular resonance in participatory frameworks
- **Quality:** How to let the work of the past go into the hands of others and how to monitor and facilitate rigour and co-creativity

With regard to design, we developed a strategic plan to drive our design process, and discovered that human development actually comes first, learning to modify planning to fit human capability and capacity. We also design by investing in trust... developing ideas with peers, supporting their actualisation and treading a delicate path in terms of

identity, copywriting, collaborative investment and reciprocity – always really hard to find.

Where have we got so far? We are ready to approach the market place with a new suite of marketing products and identified potential clients. We are designing approaches to our 3 primary modes of participation: research, learning and evaluation and testing our materials with clients and peers.

## **Contracts**

While we have always worked participation through research, learning and evaluation modes, for the last year the work has been in the evaluation mode. We are working with NSW EPA to develop a manual for evaluation using their “outcome hierarchy model”, with NSW Health to evaluate a collaborative management model that they are developing and now with 13 Councils in the Cooks River catchment to evaluate 6 environmental education programs. The last two contracts have developed strong principles of participatory evaluation practice.

The big questions:

- How to work with and extend existing capabilities for participation simultaneously to informing clients and their stakeholders about evaluation
- How to work into the dissonance that participatory approaches generate – what it means and how to get beyond it
- How to sustain participatory/emergent development within a super-context of outmoded managerial beliefs

We design all our work in reference to key principles, capabilities and a generic 5 stage model of participation, which draws on the works of several contemporary thinkers including Yoland.

Where we are now is beginning a major evaluation study with a client who is really keen to learn about participation

and systemic thinking and development in ecosystem terms. We are building our project facilitation team and capacity to address the big questions identified above.

## **Online community publishing participatory action research project**

- Call for partners and participants  
by Chris Morris

*The Centre for Online Rural Research (CORR) is an initiative of the Wangaratta based North East Telecommunications Co-operative (NETCo-op).*

It holds the view that community networking is a powerful and effective means of community development and community building. Community development in turn is a must-do to achieve a vibrant regional economy – in this case the North East region of Victoria - and the attendant social health, arrest of the decline of small rural communities and decreased need for external and usually top-down intervention.

One of the tools of community development/community building is community publishing, yet little research has been undertaken to clearly demonstrate the relationship between **online** community publishing in particular and community development. The proposed project of NETCo-op's Centre for Online Rural Research (CORR) seeks to do just this. As an Internet Service Provider NETCo-op has the infrastructure and technical expertise to undertake the demonstrably more effective participatory action research (as compared to pure academic research) in this area.

## **How Online Community Publishing (OCP) works**

Online community publishing occurs when members of a community choose to tell their story for public viewing on the internet (that is, become what we are calling “community reporters”). An example of this can be seen at: <http://cisci.org.au/>. Stories/articles can be about anything of interest to others in the same community, ranging from personal experiences to political debate. When people share their experiences and even invite comment from others, a sense of community naturally arises.

Online community publishing represents a cost-effective community building tool because amongst other things, it piggybacks on existing infrastructure, namely internet service provision. It also closely associates participation and shared ideas with the need for change in response to socially damaging factors external to communities

## **First Steps**

In line with CORR’s commitment to electronic democracy, members of the community are being encouraged and hopefully empowered by information, mentoring and support to publish their story. A guide for NETCo-op ‘community reporters’ has been initially developed to begin the online community publishing process. Also in place to ensure real participation by community members are people we have called ‘Community Correspondents’ who it is hoped can act as intermediaries between NETCo-op and potential community reporters if required. Their role is one of peer to peer support and facilitation. A draft guide for community correspondents has been developed to help such people. You can look at all this at:

[www.neon.net.au/community](http://www.neon.net.au/community). It is envisaged that what you see here is just the beginning of a sophisticated online community publishing website in the future based on an open source technology called ZOPE.

Community building works by listening to what local people believe could improve their community and to their ideas



about changes they want to achieve. We are working to establish an accessible, interactive and engaging community publishing website at NETCo-op that allows people to easily express these beliefs. This will promote the community building process and provide a basis for research.

Often in participatory action research as the process evolves, new projects may be generated and unexpected benefits come about for participants. Such a likely outcome is congruent with CORR's willingness to be a Learning Organisation, and to share ideas and defined processes and models with all regional community stakeholders

### **Possible Partnerships in the project**

- Local improver and community development associations;
- Businesses associated with North East Victoria;
- Local government;
- The Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) is based on Australian, US and UK models which encourage partnerships between rural and regional communities, philanthropy, government and business to fund and implement rural development projects aimed at reinvigorating rural areas, especially where initiatives can lead to new sources of economic wellbeing. The Foundation will need key partners at a national and local level to ensure success. CORR is well placed to be such a partner as it shares many of these aims as they pertain to the /North East region of Victoria. Two of FRRR's three key programs, namely Rural Capacity Building and Information & Research will be explored by the project and as such naturally dovetails with their aims, offering insight into new approaches to regional and rural development;
- Philanthropic trusts;

- The Victorian Government's Community Support Fund;
- Appropriate universities could be involved to ensure that research methodology and documentation occur with academic rigour. Students at a sufficient level in appropriate courses could undertake these tasks as part of their assessable work for the year, while their supervisors ensure that methodological rigour is applied. Besides the high value of students gaining hands-on experience in a real-world project, benefits for universities involved may include joint publishing of findings both online and in hardcopy. University partners may fund some elements of this project, either directly or as in-kind support.

*If you are able to get involved or need more information please contact me:*

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## **Social action with youth**

- A community psychology empowerment approach to well-being by Julie Morsillo

*A linkage project of Victoria University in partnership with Good Shepherd Youth & Family Service, St Albans by Julie Morsillo, PhD Research, [morsillo@bigpond.net.au](mailto:morsillo@bigpond.net.au)  
[www.goodshepherd.com.au/gsyfs/say/](http://www.goodshepherd.com.au/gsyfs/say/)*

Social Action with Youth is about youth having a SAY in the community. Young people can be empowered to use their youthful passions to work as a group to improve their local community, and thereby improve their personal, relational and collective wellness.

The researcher is working with groups of young people to encourage them to express their passions and interests in life, and use their passions to engage in positive activities to improve their local community. The researcher encourages the youth in guided group discussions to become critically aware of the problems in their local community and discover ways to actively and creatively become problem solvers together, enhancing their sense of control and their belief in being able to change aspects of their own lives. The participants are encouraged to link up with local community services to work together to promote a project of social change. The researcher, along with other youth leaders, assists the young people to actively plan and carry out social actions of their choice in the local community.

The young people themselves are documenting their social actions in order to produce a *Handbook for Social Change* for other youth groups. The presentation will document empowering processes and outcomes deriving from this multi-site action research project.

### **Action research cycle: plan ◉ act ◉ reflect**

*Guided youth discussions of social action planning, action and reflection, using the following steps:*

**Self** - Check your ID for best personal features or skills

**Others** - Check your group ID for best group members features or skills

**Community** - Check local community ID for best features/facilities/services

**Ideas** - Imagine ideas for improving the local community

An issue - Specific issues for social action

List Steps - List steps to reach the social action goal

Action plan - Plan campaign strategy (research, contacts, education, campaign)

Create tasks - Create specific tasks to be completed for each stage

Timelines - Timelines for who, what, when, where, why

Initiate research - Research stakeholders eg. surveys, contacts, media, document

On with the tasks - Carry out tasks eg. excursions, phone, email, letter, photos, lobby

Now evaluate - Creatively evaluate and document project for published handbook.

### **Social action ideas (*accessing local community service partnerships*)**

1. Youth having a say in the community – eg. Youth events, local youth participation & leadership roles;
2. Refugee issues – eg. local recent refugee youth issues;
3. Youth surviving – eg. employment, training, housing, recreation, access to health care;
4. Improving local public places – eg. recreation facilities, public spaces, & environment;
5. Multicultural issues – eg. attitudes, traditions & celebrations.

### **Empowering education processes & action outcomes**

Level of Analysis	Empowering Processes (focus on efforts)	Empowered Outcomes (results of efforts)
Personal	Learning about self & community	Discovering social justice issues

	<p><b>community</b></p> <p>Reflecting on perception of self</p> <p>Engaging in social critique</p> <p>Participating in empowering group with community agencies</p> <p>Learning how some social systems work in the local community</p> <p>Learning how to go about obtaining resources in the local community</p> <p>Developing skills to attempt to access resources in the community</p>	<p>Redefining some aspects of self-image</p> <p>Instrumental empowerment: gaining some socio-political awareness</p> <p>Relational empowerment: gaining some sense of control over certain situations</p> <p>Taking action to influence events: gaining some participatory competence</p>
<b>Group</b>	<p><b>Experiencing supportive group work</b></p> <p>Participating in a group with initial encouragement from researcher and youth leader/teacher</p> <p>Learning how to work together as a group</p> <p>Participating in group decision making</p> <p>Learning to take some leadership roles</p> <p>Experiencing the value of peer support</p> <p>Learning to collaborate with community service providers</p> <p>Experiencing the benefits of collective action</p>	<p><b>Campaigning together</b></p> <p>Experiencing the results of actions taken by group participants</p> <p>Development of some local networks</p> <p>Gaining some lobbying power</p> <p>Securing some community resources</p> <p>Enhancing of a group vision, ideology, values, and culture</p> <p>Improved concept of group work</p> <p>Enhanced group effectiveness</p> <p>Instrumental empowerment</p>
<b>Community</b>	<p><b>Acquiring community connections</b></p> <p>Developing of some community coalitions</p> <p>Involvement with some stakeholders from across</p>	<p><b>Solving community problems</b></p> <p>Development of more or better community resources</p> <p>A sense of how to improve collective lives</p>

	levels of social system Gaining some institutional support	Substantive empowerment: improved community outcomes
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## Methods to analyse empowering education processes & action outcomes

Methods	Personal empowerment	Group empowerment	Community empowerment
Questionnaires	PARTICIPANTS & CONTROLS complete 'Sense of empowerment survey' Quest 1-6 (pre & post)	PARTICIPANTS & CONTROLS complete 'Sense of empowerment survey' Quest 7-12 (pre & post)	PARTICIPANTS & CONTROLS complete 'Sense of empowerment survey' Quest 13-18 (pre & post)
Group discussions & activities	RESEARCHER guides participants in group discussions on learning about self & the community	PARTICIPANTS plan community work and RESEARCHER & TEACHER/WORKER plan appropriate skill development & group activities for community work	PARTICIPANTS undertake community work with RESEARCHER & TEACHER/WORKER organising appropriate community contacts
Personal stories & evaluations	PARTICIPANTS encouraged to share personal stories & evaluations with group on learning about self & the community	PARTICIPANTS encouraged to share personal stories & evaluations with group of the experience of working together	PARTICIPANTS encouraged to share personal stories & evaluations with group of the experience of making community connections
Group evaluations	PARTICIPANTS encouraged to engage in group evaluations on learning about self & the community	PARTICIPANTS encouraged to engage in group evaluations on experience of working together	PARTICIPANTS encouraged to engage in group evaluations on experience of working for the community

<b>Observations</b>	RESEARCHER documents activities & observations of participants' learning about self & the community	RESEARCHER documents activities & observations of participant group discussions and group work	RESEARCHER & PARTICIPANTS document community activities of the group for the HANDBOOK
<b>Interviews</b>	INDEPENDENT person interviews PARTICIPANTS on learning about self & the community	INDEPENDENT person interviews PARTICIPANTS on experiences of group community work	INDEPENDENT person interviews PARTICIPANTS on experiences of working to improve the community
<b>External evaluations</b>	COMMUNITY CONTACTS evaluate participants' learning about self & the community	COMMUNITY CONTACTS evaluate participants' group work	COMMUNITY CONTACTS evaluate participants' community work

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## **Using PAR in consumer/staff dialogue in mental health services**

**- Jon Kroschel**

*Jon Kroschel is the Consumer Consultant for Alfred Psychiatry. His role is to develop 'an effective Consumer Participation Program for Alfred Psychiatry'. This is not one of 'clinical service provision', nor is it one of 'individual advocacy'. The Consumer Participation Program is a fundamental QI (Quality Improvement) tool of Alfred Psychiatry.*

The Consumer Participation Program of Alfred Psychiatry is a sophisticated, extensively integrated program that has an active consumer membership of over 100. Thirty consumers currently work in a range of capacities including 'Consumer Evaluation Work Teams' (Consumer Interviewers), 'Consumer-run Staff Training Team', 'Consumer Newsletter Work Team' and 'Consumer-run Federally Funded Project work teams'.

It has opportunities for consumers to participate within all service aspects ('Portfolio working groups' and 'sub-committees' [total 17]), working equally alongside staff for service quality improvement. All consumers are paid for their work. In this way it respects and values consumer involvement for all work done.

The Program has developed to be inclusive in all service 'systemic' quality improvement processes. It brings the 'Consumer Perspective' into clinical treatment meetings. It also develops projects that support and skill individuals for



‘participation within their own individual treatments’, without the Program stepping into individual advocacy.

All Consumer Participation Program processes are consumer driven, staff-consumer collaborative and quality improvement of service focused.

The Alfred Psychiatry Consumer Participation Program upholds the following principles:

- Consumer Participation is for all to participate, at whatever level and through whichever medium consumers choose.
- Consumer Driven.
- Staff-Consumer Collaborative.
- Quality Improvement Focused.
- Consumers and staff learn through their active participation.

It is extensively integrated into all service activities at all levels of direct care, management, service evaluation, planning and development.

It has created opportunities for consumers to give their feedback, through a comprehensive range of mechanisms, and opportunities for consumers to work with staff in developing and implementing changes in response to the feedback. It has information dissemination processes that enable all consumers, all staff and all management to stay informed of activities, progress, and opportunities within the Consumer Participation Program. It has now won several major national mental health services awards.

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*Note: Throughout the mid 1990s, Jon was a key player in the major participatory action research project conducted by the VMIAC, the peak mental health service-users' organization in Victoria, in collaboration with staff and consumers at the Royal Park and Royal Melbourne hospitals. A compendium book from this award-winning breakthrough project – The U&I project or "Understanding and Involvement – A Consumer Evaluation of Acute Psychiatric Hospital Services – is available at the website:*

*<http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/>*

*go to Publications, scroll down to **The Essential U&I**, and click on this link.*

<p><b>Nyerna studies: Thinking about community research</b></p> <p><i>- Neil Hooley (Victoria University of Technology)</i></p>
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Over the past six years, Victoria University of Technology, Melbourne, has been working in partnership with the Indigenous people of Echuca on the design and implementation of a highly innovative Bachelor of Education degree. The program entitled Nyerna Studies, a local Indigenous word meaning 'to sit, to listen, to learn, to remember', has brought together university personnel and local community members to work on serious socio-cultural ideas for mutual benefit, to improve educational outcomes at the tertiary level and to make progress towards local reconciliation.

Nyerna Studies is being developed in a regional non-remote area of Australia and is therefore subject to the same pressures of all other people who are coming to grips with

living in a globalised world. Globalisation places specific stresses on a university program, particularly those concerned with the production of knowledge, how young people locate and valorise sites of learning and knowledge and the contradictions being created within a place/non-place, time/space approach to learning and culture. The program is attempting to construct a critical mass of experience and discourse amongst all participants to deal with such matters and in charting its own way forward.

The framework of enquiry and two-way learning (see below) has proven itself thus far appropriate for the introductory phases of the program, but it now needs to be taken to a new level of understanding and practice, if outcomes are to be enhanced. Based on the concepts of partnership and collaboration, the participants have developed a sense of mutual trust and certainty with each other, which can now form a springboard for the investigation of more difficult, risky questions. This should lead to the exposure of underlying contradictions and finally, the application of worldviews for analysis and practical decision making. More often than not, educational programs do not systematically delve into fundamental issues in this way, resulting in more superficial than profound outcomes and findings.

For Nyerna Studies, a process such as the one described is necessary to build serious and respectful relationships over time and to gradually uncover what is of most concern to Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike. Complex questions directed at understanding the true nature of culture, connections with the land and how learning actually occurs in the physical environment, will not be resolved unless dealt with in such a manner, democratic enquiry that leads to critical action research and ultimately, social critique.

## **Community research**

A specific issue that has been taken up very quickly and discussed by staff and students for implementation, has been the notion of community research. For the Indigenous population of Australia, this is of particular importance, given that research is often conducted 'on' rather than 'with' communities and where partnerships can be set up with the production of knowledge and its representations, interpretations and theories can proceed in a genuine atmosphere of respectful enquiry. In this regard, Scougall (1997) reports an appropriate 'adoption of a naturalistic approach to information collection grounded in the community's everyday reality of listening, talking,, participating and observing.'

These considerations by the Nyerna Studies community have generated a draft community research protocol expressed as a variety of propositions. The protocol is presented as the first set of data and a tentative finding arising from the democratic experience to date. It will be subject to continuing refinement and critique as the work of Nyerna Studies unfolds:

### **Community research protocol**

1. *Community*. That a program of community research will be conducted by the community in the interests of the community.
2. *Ownership*. That the design, implementation and evaluation of research must be undertaken by the community through informed consent, with the material and intellectual outcomes remaining the property of the community.
3. *Consciousness*. That community research will enable questions, issues and knowledges to be pursued and, at the same time, enable each participant to reflect upon heir own values, practices, identity, land and kin relationships.

4. *Culture*. That knowledge is located in the culture of the researchers demanding that research methodologies are non-hegemonic, explicit and culturally inclusive.
5. *Readiness*. That research and knowledge production should be unhurried, humble and patient and be respectful of the manner in which knowledge is socially transferred and constructed within communities.
6. *Ethics*. That an ethical framework for the program should outline the rights and responsibilities of all participants and the manner by which the research principles will be met.
7. *Participation*. That when conducting community research, all participants will be considered as equal and will be encouraged to participate fully in all aspects of the work.
8. *Narrative*. That the research program should become a part of the narrative of the local community, providing data and experience to enhance cultural life.
9. *Critical Friends*. That community research will enable critical friends to participate fully in the program and to assist with background knowledge and experience regarding the issues under investigation and the nature of the research process itself.
10. *Validation*. That data, explanations, general findings and theoretical ideas emerging from community research will be validated by reference to other groups and communities in ongoing cycles of reinvestigation and reflection.

The initial work described above constitutes a community in action forging its own history for racial harmony, self-determination and reconciliation between people, as well as exploring a radically new educational and research terrain. It draws heavily on the notion of community narrative which, according to Cherry (1999), involves 'telling and retelling' to 'create a clarity of perspective that incorporates the paradoxical qualities of closeness and distance central to 'critical knowing'.' Traditional and conservative university

methods will most likely not be appropriate, but the non-traditional needs to be pursued to exhibit the deeper meanings of equality, consciousness and truth. The protocol links closely with the cultural and intellectual life of the community and enables practical beginning points for respectful research to be accepted by the university. The ideas are complex in any biography.

McTaggart (1991) comments on the unique position of Indigenous students in teacher education programs in that 'They will always know more than their western teacher-educators about the Aboriginal aspects of the both-ways notion.' The university may often struggle to discern its own community when dealing with large numbers of students in very formal and rigid structures. A program that aspires to be epistemological pluralist and democratic must establish open communication with its community, learn from it and draw upon the central features of its culture. This will take time, patience and a willingness to adopt methods that will be subject to institutional criticism as the journey continues. A broad schema that describes this process is outlined in Appendix 1.

A tentative theory that has emerged from Nyerna Studies to date and the community protocol of teaching and research, is the notion of two-way enquiry learning (see Appendix 2). Two-way approaches to learning are not new in the Australian context of teachers working Indigenous children in either Indigenous or regular school settings. The bringing together of the integrated and enquiry ideas of Dewey with two-way knowing is new and attempts to provide a systematic means of implementing respectful and culturally-inclusive frameworks that bridge different perspectives and understandings. Use of the bridge metaphor predetermines the nature of the intellectual bridge itself as well as a detailed experience of the 'how and what' anchors of the bridge at either end. To know another culture necessitates a robust understanding of your own so that connections and perspectives can be constructed. Hopefully, two-way

enquiry learning will assist educational and community reconciliation in Australia.

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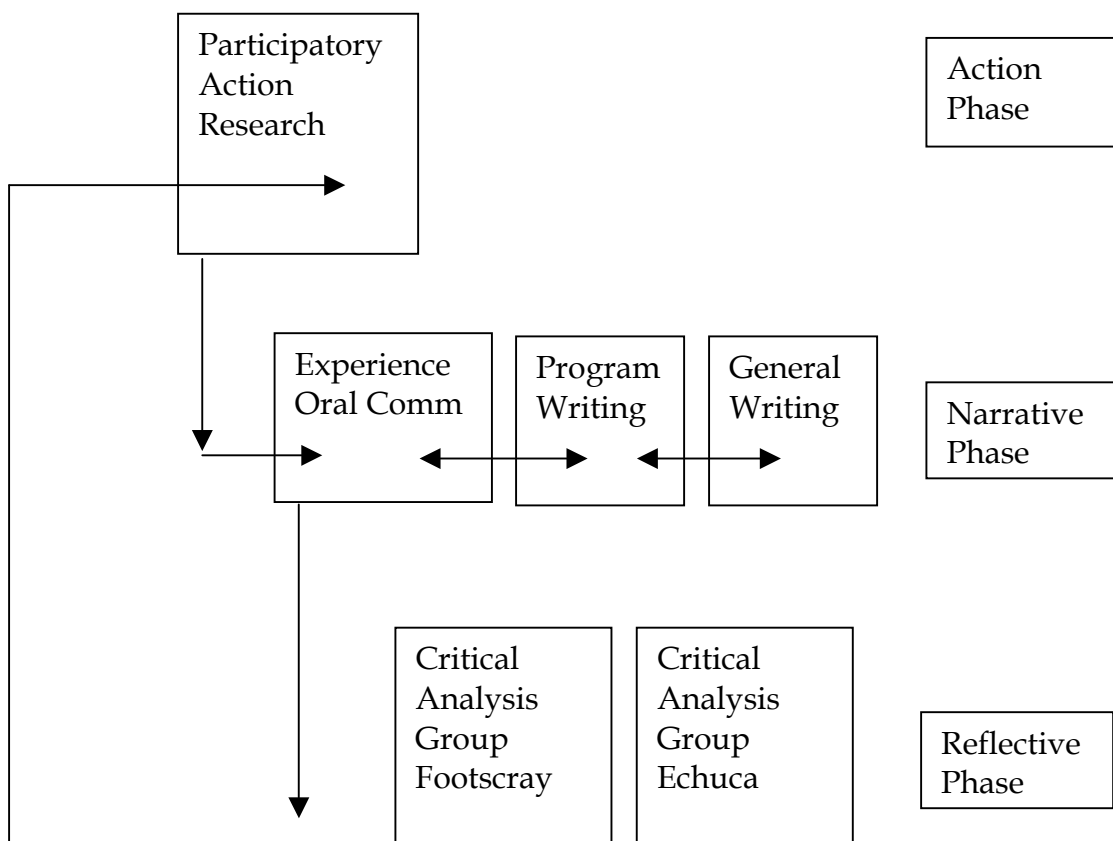
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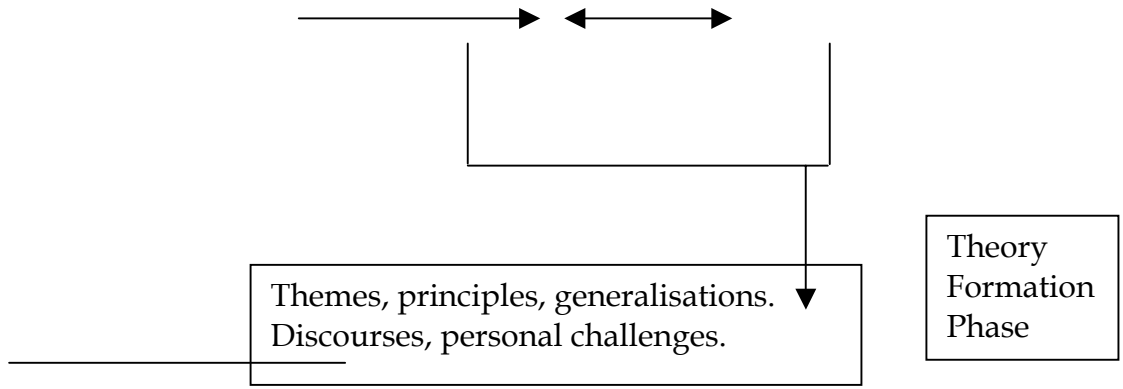
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## Appendix 1:







## Appendix 2: Two-way enquiry learning

Dimension 1	Continuity of experience as the basis of all learning programs.
Dimension 2	Recognition that the expression of learning occurs in different ways for different children based on their cultural and socio-economic background, but that a set of similar factors may exist in all cultures that emphasise construction of new knowledge rather than instruction in old content. This demands a respect for the knowledge and culture that all children bring to school and an acceptance that learning occurs actively from this platform.
Dimension 3	Long-term systematic processes of reflection on experience.
Dimension 4	Integrated theory and practice incorporating respect for and learning with the natural environment.
Dimension 5	Teaching and learning that enables a framework of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ holistic, integrated and constructed knowledge</li> <li>■ emphasis on knowing by doing and experimental work</li> <li>■ collaborative interaction in real life situations</li> <li>■ combining informal and formal situations and events</li> <li>■ negotiated decisions on directions and purposes</li> <li>■ strategies of trial and error, reproduction and</li> </ul>

	<p>critique</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ multiple pathways for entry and enquiry</li> <li>■ unknown results by teachers and students</li> <li>■ opportunities for thinking about previous and new action</li> <li>■ construction and critique of ideas and proposals</li> <li>■ applying context specific and general ideas</li> <li>■ utilising respected local and expert advice as required</li> <li>■ encouragement of personal and group interests</li> <li>■ being challenged by local and global events.</li> </ul>
Dimension 6	<p>Validation of children’s learning, knowledge, experience and propositions that is based upon long-term consensual communication and democratic dialogue between participants and agreement on what is generally considered as being acceptable and true.</p>
Dimension 7	<p>Holistic views of life and learning where knowledge arises from and returns to social and cultural environments for the betterment of communities of interest and where formal systems of education must be connected with the major trends and debates within communities to ground their purpose and meaning.</p>

## **What is action research in Reconnect?**

- A co-construction between Reconnect workers and Yoland Wadsworth  
presented by Chris Price

*Reconnect is an early intervention youth program of the Commonwealth Department of Family & Community Services, and part of its flagship initiative "Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities". For five years it has quietly, impressively and efficiently been developing a program-wide action research capacity to assist its continuous improvement. It has developed this internal capacity to the point where there are now around 20 frontline workers who recently acted as national action research training facilitators for other program staff and management committee members.*

*From time to time Reconnect has drawn on experienced action research consultants as part of its resource infrastructure. Yoland Wadsworth, in collaboration with a number of the Reconnect action research facilitators, developed the following brief piece for use by new staff.*

### **Research in actual practice**

Action research in Reconnect rests on a program-wide commitment to taking the time to systematically think about and improve Reconnect work *in actual practice*. It is a methodology to extend and build on naturally-occurring human abilities to observe, question, reflect, understand, create, plan and trial or act. In practice, one may start with any of these and move forward to plan a new action or look back and reflect on current or past action. Through continuous – both small and large - ‘cycles’ of action and research, Reconnect has built and re-built over the past five

years, a living body of ever-changing ‘practice wisdom’ derived from:

- thoughtful local individual and collective observations that are shared and discussed;
- the pursuit of ‘better practice’ focused questions;
- the creative development of new ways of understanding things;
- and trial-and-error experimentation with better ways of assisting Reconnect clients and service-providers and the overall program facing often-complex issues and challenges.

### **Example 1:**

*You are setting out to try a new practice, approach or activity. You plan ahead to take time to reflect with relevant stakeholders on how it goes.*

### **Example 2:**

*In the midst of everyday practice you take time to stop and reflect on what is being done, make plans to hear from other stakeholders or identify the important questions and collect more people’s insights or ideas for new practice.*

Action research is ‘research-in-action’, ‘action-that-is-researched’, or ‘learning-by-doing’ and ongoing ‘work in progress’: PLANning, ACTing, OBSERVing and REFLECTing. In Reconnect, it is “how we do what we do” and “how we keep doing it better”.

### **What makes it ‘research’?**

In Reconnect, while action research makes use of ordinary human abilities to ‘find out’ things, it is not exactly the same as action per se (nor is it just research that it is hoped will be followed by action!). Instead it tries to be:

- more conscious of noticing something needing looking into, and more explicit and deliberate about turning it into an action question ('What would it take to...');
- more self-conscious about commencing an inquiry effort to answer it and more planned and deliberate about involving others who could or should be involved;
- more systematic and rigorous in the effort to get new and more effective answers;
- documenting and recording action and what people think about it in a little more detail, and sharing it in ways which tell the story to others (relevant stakeholders);
- more intensive and comprehensive, collecting some more views and waiting a little longer before 'jumping' to a conclusion and identifying a 'next action' to try;
- more self-sceptical in checking out hunches and new ideas with others first;
- attempting to develop deeper understandings and more useful and more powerfully creative ideas about the matters we are researching and acting on; and
- changing our actions as part of the research process, and then further researching these new actions.

### **What makes it participatory?**

As action research takes place in actual situated practice, those who are involved in Reconnect become key participating inquirers or co-inquirers – drawing in all other relevant parties with an interest in its conduct and outcomes. People can be both 'researchers' and the '(self) researched', as well as the 'researched for'. Much of what action research entails is coming to see the other person's point of view, and then together identifying best ways forward for joint purposes. Sometimes these may emerge over time, as people keep returning to issues they are thinking about together.

The agreed purposes and beneficiaries of action research – e.g. young people – can specially assist the shaping of action research and decisions regarding what questions need to be asked, who should be involved, the assessment and interpretation of evidence, the drawing of new conclusions and the moving to new actions.

### **Example:**

*A “co-research” group of young people was set up to explore the question ‘What would it take for young people to feel safe about accessing [the service] for support?’ ...The young people coordinated their classmates’ answers to questionnaires and interviews, and completed the observation and reflection phases. The understandings about the issues of access and confidentiality and the service’s profile provided rich in-depth data that was used as the basis for further planning. [They] also produced a video for local schools that covered some of the issues raised in their inquiry processes. [AR Kit 3.17]*

The effective value of new action rests on ‘breakthrough’ creative thought and deeper theory. This is the moment of ‘scientific discovery’ or imagination (‘hey, what if we tried...?’, or ‘Maybe we could...’). Inspired thinking comes when collective values and ideas are combined in new ways or a new and better way of ‘naming’ the world is found. This is often helped by a diversity of ideas and possibilities and the encouragement of people’s voices (particularly of those intended to most benefit from the outcomes of the thinking).

### **Finding the time to ‘build in’ action research**

To help take the time to stop and observe, collect more views, reflect and plan new and more comprehensive responses to questions, an important strategy can be to keep action research efforts relatively small and to focus on *compelling or inspiring* questions.

## **Example:**

*8.30am-9.15am Begin work, receive a message on the answering machine from Rita (Joanne's mum, who I provide case support to) requesting an immediate response. A phone call is made back to her after speaking with the other [Reconnect] worker, who supports the young person. Rita is asked her preferred way of receiving support. The result was that the other [Reconnect] worker finds out if Joanne would be OK about a meeting between them all.*

*Action Research component An ongoing AR question is 'Whether it is more viable for the young person and their parents to have separate workers'. It was found... that this was often the case, but, with the recognition that every client is different, this is a question that is asked of clients and ourselves every time we engage with a family.*

*[From 'A day in the life...' Reconnect, Darwin, AR Kit 5.7]*

Thus the cycle of action and reflection, while following the standard logic of *all* research endeavours – is also in a sense, what we all 'do all the time'. This is helpfully a very familiar logic that can assist people simply *to extend* these familiar processes in modest, do-able but powerfully creative ways.

Lights. Action. Research!

© Yoland Wadsworth, Peter Orchard, Chris Morris et al. May 2002

## **Reference**

Phil Crane & Leanne Richardson (2000) *Reconnect Action Research Kit*, [www.facs.gov.au](http://www.facs.gov.au)

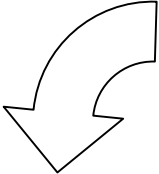
# Action Research in Reconnect

© Steve Francis, Yoland Wadsworth et al. 2002 (Acknowledgement of source thinkers: Phil Crane, Leanne Richardson, Ortrun Zuber-Skerrit)

- Two further broad focal areas:
- **Learning about the whole AR cycle**
  - **Management support and resourcing of AR** (service and program levels).

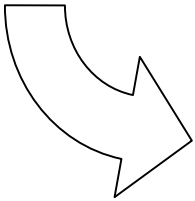
## Observe

- **Draw in and retain all the stakeholders from all the different settings** and who have an interest in the question and its answers
- **Methods** to monitor and seek answers from all the relevant parties to the micro questions, eg, What would it take...? How are things now? How could things be? ["fieldwork" to collect "data"]
- **Document** so as to share observations



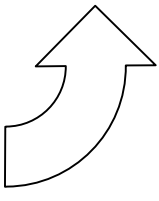
## Reflect

- Build understanding, find the threads, themes, conclusions ["analyse" and "synthesise" and "discover"]
- Theorise - seek deeper grasp...



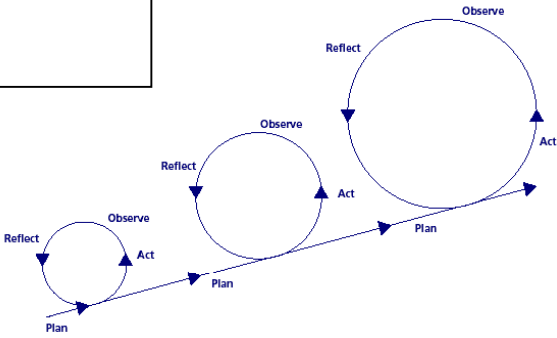
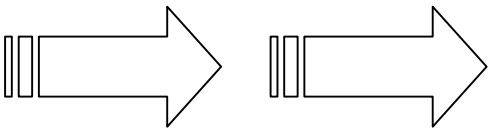
## Plan

- Plan the identified new actions to try out
- Plan how the new actions will be monitored and reviewed
- Implement action
- ["test" and "experiment"]



## Act

- **Building it in**  
The ability to be able to plan for and implement action research in the midst of action  
- **Getting started**  
Preparing for Action Research (Use of the Cyclic phases)
- **Taking the time** to plan, observe, reflect and go on planning better action
- **Raising questions** - clarifying/refining the main question, plan seeking answers (to micro questions)





# ALARPM's Annual Report

## - AGM, 5<sup>th</sup> September 2002

### President's Report

- From big things lots of little things grow!

Most voluntary community associations start small, and after a few years of local meetings they might try their hand at a small conference. While ALARPM started with a small group (of people in Brisbane, Australia in 1991), the first thing it did was hold a World Congress!<sup>11</sup> Successful, inspiring and well-attended World Congresses have gone on being one of the Association's most important contributions to the development of action research, action learning, process facilitation and associated methodologies world-wide. Even if not all can get to the congresses, the era of the internet will slowly and inevitably convert our ALARPM Website ([www.alarpm.org.au](http://www.alarpm.org.au)) into a first rate resource as Abstracts and Papers accrue and go on being available into the future.

Now this ambitious and plucky 'big beginning' is being matched or 'backfilled' with local, national and international group-formation and network-organising - a major highlight of this year's work (see below). All of this has been taking its place alongside the traditional ALARPM activities of producing a networking membership *Directory* and a modest but true *Journal* (in the sense of publishing small-scale

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<sup>11</sup> We acknowledge here the importance of ALARPM co-founder Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt's personal international network which was well-developed at an early historical moment, plus her truly phenomenal capacity to draw on it for that first and subsequent congresses.

accounts of our actual practice/theory). In the past two years, ALARPM has started to 'scale up' another element of its operation to match its being a truly international organisation. This has been through the achievement of a Committee of Management of 21 people across 6 countries – the USA, UK, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea (with a branch beginning to form also in Singapore). Our four full committee meetings were each conducted by e-list over 1-3 weeks of relatively high volume e-mail; and were characterised by a high level of mutual support and respect and nearly 100% participation, subsequently reflected in varying aspects of committed organisational activity.

## **Key highlights**

### *The next World Congress – to be in South Africa*

An exciting moment came this year when a Memorandum of Agreement was signed between ALARPM and the Chairperson of the local Congress Organising (Sub) Committee – Pieter Du Toit – for the 2003 World Congress to be held in Pretoria in September 2003. The attractive initial flyer can be found on the ALARPM website ([www.alarpm.org.au](http://www.alarpm.org.au)). As we write, the new Congress Website is close to being launched, soon to be followed by the Call for Proposals. The local Congress Organising Committee and the ALARPM Executive Liaison Committee members have been working exceptionally hard to produce an inclusive theme – *'Learning Partners in Action'* – and relevant sub themes for all our various 'strands, streams and variants', a varied format program, flexible comfortable venue, sensible budget, secure funding and sponsorship, interesting keynote speakers and participants, and recruit committed sub 'portfolio' holders. As well ALARPM and the Congress organisers have worked both with the international Participatory Action Research Network to achieve an historic third joint congress, and with the

standing ALARPM Friends of World Congresses sub committee which accrues and feeds back the wisdom from congress to congress. We thank them all for their efforts on behalf of us all and the wider international community that will benefit. We have all begun saving to try and be there!

*A viable ALARPM website (Stage 1)*

We are beginning to see how marvellous a website is going to be as a core shared location for our association's information and networking activities. Jo Murray convened a Website sub committee and got up a listserv group for this (and also for the Management Committee and Executive<sup>12</sup>). The basic site was produced and updated (with Procedures codified) this year by Yoland and web wizard Erica Smith from one Denis Cowan developed some time ago. That website address again: [www.alarpm.org.au](http://www.alarpm.org.au) ... which is an address we hope is short enough to remember without having to keep going and looking it up! It is now in the beginning of a Stage 2 redevelopment which will involve an elegant design that can absorb more content as our imaginations supply it. It will also feature a world map and drop-down boxes of information for each country and local area in which al, ar & pm are happening, as well as lots of informative links. A planned Stage 3 will take us to fuller e-capability (e-joining, e-contributing to Directory, e-discussion, e-mentoring, e-access to Journal and e-Directory for members, etc. etc.)

*ALAR (Action Learning Action Research) journal*

Three issues were produced in the past 12 months. One was held over from 2000: the Ballarat World Congress special edition (Vol 6 No 3 November 2001), with a sustained

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<sup>12</sup> We particularly liked the self-referential globalisation irony of a Management Committee (MC) listgroup name of "mcalarpm" :-). ...though we explicitly do not aim for competitive corporate colonisation a la George Ritzer's 'McDonaldsisation' thesis!

reflection from Orlando Fals Borda, convenor of the previous World Congress.<sup>13</sup> A second issue (Vol 6 No 2 October 2001) comprised seventeen AR accounts/reflections from South African women (who were part of an Australia/South Africa Links Project<sup>14</sup>). And the third was our best-ever bumper edition of around 90 pages (Vol 7 No 1 April 2002) with pieces on the overall field, its applications in mentoring as a learning strategy, reference groups that work, storytelling as inquiry, AR in the financial planning process and participation for interdisciplinary education. Editor Lyn Cundy has continued to attract interesting and readable practice methodology contributions and ably edits and produces a journal that holds a special place among the burgeoning swag of journals. Remaining intentionally modest and accessible as well as informative, it aims to provide material coming from the range of practice/theory areas, 'strands, streams & variants' using a non positivist or 'new paradigm' approach. In another 'first', it also moved to include photographs - both accompanying the report of the last world congress in Ballarat, and of a world tour of some key AL, AR & PM sites in the USA, UK and Sweden (a taste of what might be possible on the planned website!).

A special ALARPM issue has also been invited by Bob Flood Editor of *Systemic Practice and Action Research* journal. Pam Swepson and a small group have begun to progress this.

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<sup>13</sup> Orlando raises the very important issues of co-option of participatory process, and the increasing (although always contested/achieved) rise and even relative dominance of 'northern' (western euro-American) action research in relation to 'southern' (developing and decolonising/recolonised use of) PAR. This conversation has continued in the world PAR community and it is anticipated will be seriously re-addressed - along with attention to the philosophical/epistemological and power relations in and of our work - at the next World Congress in Pretoria. The prospects for non violent inquiry-based dialogue, across what Orlando has delicately termed the 'binaries of difference', have both never been more threatened - as truth, whether bullied in the schoolyard or in the offices of the international financiers and their friends in high places, becomes 'the first casualty of war'. And also never more urgent.

<sup>14</sup> Some of whom are now running our next World Congress! (And yet again we see the hand of their teacher and mentor, Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt.)

*A locally, nationally and internationally active Committee*

Important to the overall vision of ALARPM has been that local, national and international activity be supported and information and knowledge be easily and widely exchanged. Towards these ends we began to move from both a Brisbane-centred and Australian-centred organisation to one that is more a global network/er-of-networks. To mirror this on the Committee, we have tried to:

- Firstly expand to include representatives from each Australian state, and then;
- Ensure 'pair buddies' so each state has a 'critical mass' of collaborators;
- Secondly to expand to invite representatives from other countries, and then;
- Begin to ensure 'pair buddies' so each country also has a pair of collaborators.

Eventually the numbers from Australia might be expected to diminish (e.g. as an Australian Branch in-its-own-right forms), and the numbers from other countries increase (e.g. as people from more countries and continents join – such as Singapore, South Africa, New Zealand, the USA, etc.). The all-important initial Brisbane Group continues as a major 'heart and soul' player in the organisation, working in and with the ALARPM Committee and being represented on it. Meanwhile, Australia begins to serve as an example of a possible 'developed' national branch structure with various written-up Procedures and Guidelines – thanks to Susie Goff and Anne Marie-Carroll (e.g. for having successful national events and conferences). And Australian State-based or local groups serve as examples of state or regional groups/structures/processes that might be of general use or interest to other countries interested in forming AL, AR or PM type groups.

After the National Conference was rescheduled to the first half of 2003, we focused on building Australian local and state-based activity and capacity. Brisbane as usual led the way with Facilitators' Markets and two local conferences. Victoria undertook a consultative process to plan a September 'Research-in-Action' Symposium and possible new state-based group. SA linked with an Amory Lovins event. WA had a program of meetings throughout the year, and NSW began developing an AL-style learning event. A surprise late-starter was the NT where some local human service workers (not-yet-ALARPM members) began to build interest in AR through a series of AR workshops for more than 60 people. An initial interested connection has been made with ALARPM.

We have been keen at every step of our expanded networking and organising that we maximise, safeguard and/or contribute to:

- The *autonomy* of local and national groups' self-organising structures;
- The strengthening of links *between* the autonomous groupings;
- The capacity for any committed individual people to also still be able to be *actively involved* in ALARPM, independently of any organised groupings.

## Next plans

Various committee of management members have renominated in the hope of *furthering the work* they have begun (e.g. local/state or national networking and organising; website and e-capacity development; the holding of a national conference on the Gold Coast of Australia; organising for the world congress in South Africa; and revision of a rapidly-being-superseded Constitution, etc.). As well, early in the next term of the Committee of

Management, the 2002-2003 *Membership Directory* will be produced.

After a proposed Special ALARPM General Meeting to be called during the Australian National Conference on the Gold Coast next year to look at *revising the Constitution*, we hope to have the capacity for branch, affiliate and associate *organisational* membership. This might also supply a much larger number of people around the world with an exciting new option of e-receipt of journals and directory at a reduced membership rate, via their membership of a local or national organisation that joins ALARPM as an organisational member.

We hope that over the coming years, every member of ALARPM will eventually be able to get access, if they want it, to face to face *meetings at a local or/and national* level, as well as to all the usual ALARPM activities and resources. If such groups do not yet exist and you would like to start one, you would be encouraged to so do.

We have also begun a process for *advance planning of forthcoming World Congresses* (in 2006, 2009, and 2012). This gives people a chance to observe and perhaps even be involved in a prior world congress as it evolves, to pick up insights and ideas about how they do or could work. We have asked all members to think about whether they might be part of a group - or could develop one - to run one of these. We are interested in the possibility of alternating between countries in the 'north' and 'south', and 'east' and 'west'. So far we will have held them in Brisbane Australia, Bath UK, Colombia South America, Melbourne Australia and Pretoria South Africa. That leaves Europe, Asia and North America ... which narrows it down quite a lot.

Go for it!

**Many thanks**

Each committee member starts life as an ordinary member of ALARPM and, for a period of time, takes on this committee role with the hope of contributing to the collective life and history of the association. Some stay longer and some find they can only stay one term. Almost all hope to do more than we end up being able to! – and some return at a later time to do some more. So finally we thank the dedicated and energetic members of the past year’s Committee of Management:

Pip Bruce Ferguson	<i>NZ liaison, part Secretary</i>
Joan Bulcock	<i>Brisbane Group liaison and Assistant Treasurer</i>
Anne-Marie Carroll	<i>Treasurer and World Congress liaison</i>
Ross Colliver	<i>WA liaison</i>
Betsy Crane	<i>USA liaison</i>
Susan Boser	<i>USA liaison</i>
Lyn Cundy	<i>Editor, ALAR Journal and Editor, Membership Networking Directory</i>
Susan Goff	<i>Vice President (National matters)</i>
Iain Govan	<i>Immediate Past President</i>
Susan Hall	<i>WA liaison</i>
Winston Jacob	<i>PNG liaison</i>
Chrissie King	<i>Initially part-Secretary</i>
Deb Lange	<i>SA liaison</i>
Jo Murray	<i>Convenor, Website Sub Committee</i>
Ted Sandercock	<i>SA liaison</i>
Di Seekers	<i>Qld liaison</i>
Shankar Sankaran	<i>Vice President (International matters)</i>



Pieter Du Toit	<i>Chair, World Congress Organising Sub Committee</i>
Ortrun Zuber-Skerrit	<i>Vice President (World Congresses), South African World Congress liaison</i>
Yoland Wadsworth	<i>President and international PAR community World Congress liaison, Co-ordinator Website Stages 1 &amp; 2, Victoria liaison</i>
Susan Weill	<i>UK liaison</i>

It looks like a big group but somehow we all got to know each other and became increasingly effective and cohesive. We produced some guidelines for our e-meetings' conduct. The committee's output is also 'work in progress' (yes, yet more reflective-learning-in-practice!)

You can see the range of 'Balls in the Air' we all juggled in 2001-2002 (on the website: [www.alarpm.org.au](http://www.alarpm.org.au)). The key 'balls' being:

- promoting networks/groups and their activities, etc.;
- promoting face to face meetings/conferences/seminars etc.;
- promoting other resources and publications, including the website; and
- managing the affairs of the association to sustain all of these.

A focus on other projects, clearing houses, teaching/courses/students, linking across sectors (e.g. community/business/government, or PAR and AR/AL/PM), and promoting peer support and mentoring or advisory/helpdesk consultancy to facilitate the development of theory/practice, may lie tantalisingly close more into the future. Fortunately, our financial situation is currently at last secure, thanks to careful stewardship of our finances, primarily by Anne-Marie Carroll.

In a way, our membership fees are not only so we can receive individual benefits, but also an investment in something bigger. They are perhaps partly a price we more or less willingly pay for the continued strengthening and growth of the action research, action learning and process field – a field which we value so highly. Nevertheless we remain a voluntary association that rests on the work of its office bearers – always a juggle with everything else we are trying to do in the rest of our busy stretched lives and work, and a real cost when so many of us are not salaried to do our ALARPM work. You might like to look and see if you would like to plan towards becoming a committee ‘juggler’ too – perhaps with a special area of commitment. Many hands do more work! And there are always more ideas and possibilities for building our field. If everyone works on just a few then our effective collective efforts increase greatly.

*Prepared by Yoland Wadsworth, on behalf of the ALARPM Association (Incorporated), for its AGM on 5<sup>th</sup> September 2002.*

## **Treasurer’s Report**

### **- Year ending 30 April 2002**

Attached to this report are four documents:

- (1) Income & Expenditure Statement for ALARPM as a whole, which includes the final balance received for World Congress 5 & 9;
- (2) Income and Expenditure Statement for the World Congress 5&9 Account, which shows the detail of transactions this year;
- (3) Balance sheet for the Association as a whole; and
- (4) Auditor’s Report.

In presenting this report, I would like to provide some background about our financial plans this year, some explanation of the attached reports and some thoughts for the future.

## **Background**

After several years of very lean financial times, the World Congress in Ballarat in September 2000 generated a substantial profit and an additional financial bonus for ALARPM, as membership fees were included in the registration for those paying full fees. The result of this can be seen in the healthy financial position shown on the attached reports.

Our resolution was to use this surplus to allow ourselves some margin for unexpected events, to provide seed funds for the next Congress and to fund the development of our website. The latter project will eventually allow us to substantially reduce costs in administration, postage, printing etc. and hopefully allow different fee strategies. We also had a backlog of one issue of the ALAR Journal and the 2001 Networking Directory, which were delayed by the workload involved in the Congress and therefore fell into the 2002 financial year instead of 2001. We were determined to “live within our income” in terms of annual income (excluding the Congress) and our usual annual activities - ALAR Journals, Networking Directory and administration. We have been successful in this objective.

## **Income and Expenditure**

Some factors affecting our financial position this year:

- Membership income returned to more “normal” levels this year after the artificial inflation of the membership income coming from Congress;

- A wonderful Brisbane Conference held in collaboration with the Australian Facilitators Network, International Association for Public Participation and the Southern Cross Institute of Action Research returned \$2500 to ALARPM as payment for the administrative load that ALARPM volunteers provided free of charge and generated a profit of \$7,863 which was shared by all participating organisations proportionately according to the affiliation of delegates. ALARPM's share of this profit was \$3,695;
- As we did at the Ballarat World Congress, we once again offered to donate some of our aging but still valuable book stock (principally Proceedings of previous Congresses) to the organisational libraries of people attending the Brisbane Conference. The effect of this is seen on the financial statements as a reasonably high "cost of books sold/library gifts". It seems better to have these books where they are accessible to others rather than sitting in cabinets under my house or in Lyn Cundy's lounge room;
- We have committed \$10,000 as seed funds for the Pretoria World Congress 6 & 10 and signed a Memorandum of Understanding which provides for a formal and stringent budgeting process, regular financial reports, the return of all seed funds and the payment of any surplus generated back to ALARPM to fund future Congresses;
- The 2002 Networking Directory is 6 months late in production and should be issued within the next fortnight. The funds for this will now come out of the 2003 budget;
- The planned and budgeted web development did not happen in the 2002 year and will be carried forward to next year;
- Our "employment expenses" have fallen significantly as we have relied even more heavily on volunteers to

complete administrative tasks free of charge. Iain Govan took on the initial task of handling membership renewals. The “Brisbane Conference Group” very generously offered their assistance in several “working bees” to assist with receipting, banking, updating the database. As already mentioned, this group also did the lion’s share of the administration for the 2001 Brisbane Conference and for a number of smaller events during the year (e.g. the Philosophy Cafes). Lyn Cundy continues to do a massive amount of work – responding to general email queries, handling all books sales, producing as well as editing the ALAR Journal and producing the 2001 Networking Directory. Joan Bulcock and I have effectively shared the Treasurer’s job this year.

## Balance Sheet

Our financial year ends on 30 April 2002. As of that date, our cash position could be summarised as follows:

Funds in our main account	\$40,000 (approximately)
Fixed Income Bond	<u>\$15,000</u>
Total Funds Available	\$55,000
Liabilities as of 30/4/02	<u>\$ 8,600</u>
Balance available	\$46,400

These funds are committed as follows:

Networking Directory 2002	\$ 5,000 (to be produced & posted 09/02)
Seed funds for WC6&10	\$10,000 (to be transferred to Sth Africa 09/02)
Web development	\$ 5,000 budgeted for 2003

Permanent reserve for future World Congresses

or other events	<u>\$15,000</u>
Total Committed	\$35,000

This leaves us with about \$11,400 as liquid funds to begin the financial year. It is hoped that the Stage 3 Web Development will allow us to reduce the manual labour involved in administration. The introduction of the GST and of quarterly and annual Business Activity Statements has resulted in a huge and very complex administrative workload, which is totally out of proportion for a small not-for-profit association like ours.

### **Thoughts for the future**

With some paid advice from a MYOB whiz, I plan to look this year at ways to simplify administration and reduce double handling. In consultation with our Auditor, I will also look at alternatives to simplify our administration. These might include moving to a financial year with quarters that match the BAS quarters, the option of electing not to register for GST in years where our income is expected to be below \$50,000 (which is most years) and/or returning to cash accounting.

### **Thanks to those who helped**

Finally, I have to say thank-you to all my colleagues on the Management Committee and the Executive. I want to say a special thanks to Susie who is leaving the Executive this year and to Yoland who has done so much in her first term as President and is an inspiration to us all. Most of all, I have to thank Joan Bulcock who is a great friend and colleague. Joan “rescued” me from the Treasurer’s job three years ago and I “rescued” her last year. We shared the job for most of the year with Joan doing more at the start and then gradually handing over to me. We probably met eight times in the year for all day meetings where we worked on the “tricky”

things - reconciling cash and other payments from the Brisbane Conference, following up outstanding accounts, reconciling GST accounts and preparing Business Activity Statements. In between times, we shared the processing load and the follow-up emails or phone calls. Having a friend to share the burden made all the difference. Thanks Joan.

**ACTION LEARNING, ACTION RESEARCH AND  
PROCESS MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION INC.  
ABN: 41 587 420 126**

**INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2002**

	<b>2002</b>	<b>2001</b>
<b>INCOME</b>		
Conferences	21,498.22	5,837.73
Interest	290.76	226.32
Membership Fees	10,287.88	20,815.00
Publications	535.46	5,102.36
Wholesale sales tax refunded	0.00	332.00
	<u>32,612.32</u>	<u>32,313.41</u>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>		
ALAR Journal	3506.02	821.14
Audit Fees	400.00	325.00
Bad Debts	0.00	102.00
Bank Fees	841.31	550.14
Computer Support	105.23	0.00
Conference Expenses	15,091.89	4,371.80
Cost of Books Sold/Library Gifts	2,517.79	6,893.40
Depreciation	162.00	162.00
Discounts given	7.28	166.85
Employment Expenses	695.68	2527.50
Insurance	577.50	445.06
Internet Access	444.95	300.00
Management Committee Meeting Costs	133.67	231.50
Networking Directory	3409.62	0.00
Photocopying	236.20	209.18
Printing, Postage and Stationery	1,116.93	637.12
Registrations	28.36	27.73
Sundry Expenses	105.00	0.00
Telephone and Fax	237.13	305.89
World Congress 6 & 10	164.53	0.00
	<u>29,781.09</u>	<u>18,076.31</u>
<b>NET SURPLUS HEAD OFFICE</b>	<u><b>2,831.23</b></u>	<u><b>14,237.10</b></u>
<b>WORLD CONGRESS ACTIVITIES</b>		
World Congress 5&9	2,680.02	54,636.37
	<u>\$ 5,511.25</u>	<u>\$ 68,873.47</u>

The accompanying notes form part of this financial report.



**ACTION LEARNING, ACTION RESEARCH AND  
PROCESS MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION INC.  
ABN: 41 587 420 126**

**WORLD CONGRESS 5&9  
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2002**

	<b>2002</b>	<b>2001</b>
<b>INCOME</b>		
Sponsorship Vic Govt	0.00	10,000.00
Registrations and Accommodation	7,226.54	146,225.85
Guest Lectures	0.00	2000.00
Bank Interest	0.00	249.86
	-----	-----
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>7,226.54</b>	<b>158,475.71</b>
	-----	-----
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>		
Accommodation deposits	0.00	19,795.55
Administration expenses	0.00	9,695.37
Bank fees	432.33	3,348.46
Catering pre-congress workshops	0.00	378.18
Coach services - shuttle	0.00	1,354.55
Congress catering, room and equipment hire	0.00	17,376.55
Congress Entertainment	0.00	1,732.91
Conference Organiser	0.00	24,493.06
Gifts	1,454.56	0.00
Pre-congress workshops	0.00	10,009.62
Printing, postage and stationery	0.00	1,837.90
Registrations reimbursed	2,534.63	0.00
Scholarly Support	0.00	4,279.24
Travel and accommodation reimbursed	0.00	9,097.95
Website	125.00	440.00
	-----	-----
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>4,546.52</b>	<b>103,839.34</b>
	-----	-----
<b>NET SURPLUS</b>	<b>\$ 2,680.02</b>	<b>\$ 54,636.37</b>
	-----	-----

The accompanying notes form part of this financial report.

**ACTION LEARNING, ACTION RESEARCH AND  
PROCESS MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION INC.**  
ABN: 41 587 420 126

**BALANCE SHEET  
AS AT 30<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2002**

	<b>2002</b>	<b>2001</b>
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
Cash at Bank	39,744.04	28,557.30
Cash at Bank - World Congress 5&9	0.00	12,838.63
Petty Cash	34.76	71.70
Undeposited funds	93.50	0.00
Withholding tax refundable	120.00	120.00
Accounts Receivable	218.50	0.00
Fixed Income Bond	15,000.00	0.00
Stock on Hand	1,164.18	3,227.48
	-----	-----
Total Current Assets	56,374.98	44,815.11
<b>Non Current Assets</b>		
Office Equipment	807.97	807.97
less Accumulated Depreciation	(755.73)	(593.73)
	-----	-----
<b>Total Non-Current Assets</b>	<b>52.24</b>	<b>214.24</b>
	-----	-----
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>56,427.22</b>	<b>45,029.35</b>
	-----	-----
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Trade Creditors	5,167.54	1,011.00
GST Payable	2,329.41	1,709.33
Memberships in Advance	1,110.00	0.00
	-----	-----
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>8,606.95</b>	<b>2,720.33</b>
	-----	-----
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>47,820.27</b>	<b>42,309.02</b>
	-----	-----
<b>MEMBERS FUNDS</b>		
Opening Accumulated Funds	42,309.02	(26,564.45)
Add Surplus - Head Office	2,831.23	14,237.10
Add Surplus - WC 5&9	2,680.02	54,636.37
	-----	-----
<b>TOTAL MEMBERS FUNDS</b>	<b>\$ 47,820.27</b>	<b>\$ 42,309.02</b>
	-----	-----

The accompanying notes form part of this financial report.

**ACTION LEARNING, ACTION RESEARCH AND  
PROCESS MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION INC.**

**INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2002**

We have audited the special purpose financial report of Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management Association Inc. for the year ended 30th April 2002 as set out on pages 2 to 6. The committee is responsible for the preparation and presentation of the financial report and the information contained therein. We have conducted an independent audit of the financial report in order to express an opinion on it to the members. No opinion is expressed as to whether the accounting policies used are appropriate to the needs of the members.

The financial report has been prepared for the purpose of fulfilling the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act (Queensland) 1981. We disclaim any assumption of responsibility for any reliance on this report or on the financial report to which it relates to any person other than the members, or for any purpose other than that for which it was prepared.

Our audit has been conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our procedures included examination, on a test basis, of evidence supporting the amounts and other disclosures in the financial report. These procedures have been undertaken to form an opinion as to whether, in all material respects, the financial report is presented fairly in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements so as to present a view which is consistent with our understanding of the Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management Association Inc. financial position and results of its operations.

The audit opinion expressed in this report has been formed on the above basis.

## QUALIFICATION

Our audit has been confined to recorded transactions within the books of account.

## AUDIT OPINION

In our opinion, subject to the effects on the financial report of the matter referred to in the qualification paragraph, the financial report presents fairly in accordance with applicable Accounting Standards and other mandatory professional reporting requirements the financial position of Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management Association Inc. as at 30th April 2002 and the results of its operations for the year then ended.

by P M Herzig  
HERZIG PROSSER & CO.  
Chartered Accountants  
Indooroopilly Shopping Centre  
318 Moggill Road  
Indooroopilly

## NOTES TO AND FORMING PART OF THE FINANCIAL REPORT

1. This special purpose financial report has been prepared for distribution to the members to fulfil the Management Committee's financial reporting requirements under the Association's constitution. The Committee has determined that the Association is not a reporting entity.

The financial report has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Associations Incorporation Act (Queensland) 1981.

2. There are no mortgages, charges or securities affecting the assets of the Association.

3. There are no other known liabilities.



# People

## ALARPM Management Committee

### - Profiles

*The profiles below provide a brief introduction to ALARPM's newest committee of management members.*

#### **Pieter Hertzog du Toit – South Africa**

I am what I am (I thought): passionate husband, married to a very beautiful brunette, Rina; passionate father, trying to live in tandem with two great and challenging learning opportunities (boys) aged 14 and 12; a people's person – till I recently got my scoring back from an Emotional Intelligence questionnaire; average, just average they report.....; and Proudly South African!

Currently I am senior lecturer in the Department of Teaching and Training Studies, Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria, South Africa. My field of specialization is teaching and learning in higher education. The whole idea of becoming a flexible practitioner that caters for learning style flexibility is one that intrigues me. As higher education practitioner I am very aware that I should be a role model to all my students in this regard. Moreover, I should be a role model regarding all the ideas I voice as innovative practices: portfolio assessment, developing critical thinking skills, developing independent learners, using co-operative learning, monitoring professional growth by means of action research, etc.

I am so proud of my higher education practice – yet, I am not there yet: Why is it so hard to get published?

## **Gail Janse van Rensburg - South Africa**

Gail is currently serving on the Organising Committee for the 6th World Congress to be held in Pretoria during September 2003.

Gail was born in Vanderbijlpark, South Africa. In 1982, she graduated at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education with a Bachelor of Science degree in Operations Research and Mathematics. She achieved a HED degree in 1985 and a Bachelor Education degree in 2000. She also obtained a Certificate in Environmental Education in 1996 at the University of South Africa. She is currently enrolled for a Master of Education.

Gail has experience as an Industrial Engineering Officer, Teacher and is currently a Senior Lecturer in the Department Computer End Using. During 2000 - 2001 she participated in the Australia-South Africa Institutional Leadership Program for Academic Women through Action Learning. She gave presentations at several international and national conferences on her Action Research projects. She has a special interest in learning and teaching strategies for computer competency courses.

Gail has been a member of the Computer Society of South Africa for eight years and is currently a member of the South African Association for Research and Development in Higher Education (SAARDHE), the South African Society for Educators (SACE) and Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management (ALARPM). She is also a member of the Faculty Research Committee of her Institution.

## **Judith McMorland - New Zealand**

Judith McMorland has been an active member of the NZ Action Research Network for many years, and a regular attendee ALARPM World Congresses after catching the

enthusiasm of WC2 in Brisbane. She has been using AR approaches in her teaching at Auckland University since 1973, through student and community projects, change management initiatives and more recently in postgraduate and post-experience education in the School of Business and Economics, where she is a part-time senior lecturer. Her teaching and research interests include Learning Organisations, Managing Change, and Theory and Practice of Organisational Change and Innovation. She juggles teaching and research with her own OD consulting practice, which focuses on developing learning in organisations and has a particular interest in public sector and not-for-profit organisations. She is an accredited Sociodramatist with ANZ Psychodrama Association Inc. and values the close affinity of these different modes of learning through action.

Judith enjoys the opportunity for international networking that AR affords. Recently, (Denver, August 2002) she was project leader at the Action Research Practitioners Series at Academy of Management sharing with other AU staff and PhD candidate collaborators, their study on *How can we improve the practice of the PhD supervisory relationship?* She looks forward to finding ways to contribute effectively to the work of the committee and ALARPM's work over the coming year.

### **Eileen Piggot-Irvine - New Zealand**

Eileen Piggot-Irvine is the Director of the NZ Principal and Leadership Centre and a part-time senior lecturer at Massey University, Auckland. She also directs her own education management consultancy, EPI. This portfolio takes her all over NZ (and a couple of times Australia) working with a wide range of organisations, educational and otherwise. A lot of her current work is in appraisal, management development, action research, and management review, with a particular focus on helping people to develop productive,



non-defensive interactions. She has written one book, about 30 articles/papers in the last eight years since catching the writing bug, and presented at too many conferences and workshops to mention (the last two as a keynote presenter). She established the NZ Action Research Network in 1992 and still co-ordinates this. Prior to 1998 she was the Head of Education Management, at UNITEC Institute of Technology, Auckland, and then previously Head of Professional Development, Northland Polytechnic, and a science teacher. Eileen says that her current half and half academic and consultancy professional life is a deliberate choice, which gives her realism and a balance of academic and hands-on experience. But most importantly she is a mum of two gorgeous kids (22 and 19) and partner of Graeme. They live on a forty acre farmlet, nestled in the bush, beside the Whangarei harbour - pure bliss as a retreat from the bustle of Auckland.

### **Pamela Kruse - Brisbane**

Pamela attended the Second World Congress in Brisbane in 1992. Subsequently, Anne Marie Carroll invited her to be a member of the ALARPM Committee of which she was part for a number of years.

Since then she has been a member of the local committee that organises the annual Brisbane conference. In previous years this conference has been timed to encourage attendance and participation at the ALARPM Annual General Meeting.

The conferences have had a variety of themes as follows:

- Energy switch, 1996;
- Action for a better world, 1997;
- Solutions outside the square, 1998;
- "Success" in a complex and uncertain world, 1999;

- Different journeys, 2001;
- Confronting the gaps, 2002.

In reality, the committee's objective each year is to identify a theme that will allow facilitators to explore a variety of options to assist change or improvement for individuals, organisations and communities.

At these conferences, the committee endeavours to create a welcoming, collaborative community in which people are invited to be as flexible, creative and responsive as they desire. Participating collaboratively on these conference committees provides a wonderful opportunity to work and enjoy the company of some creative and innovative people.

Pamela works as a human resource management and industrial relations consultant in Brisbane. She enjoys travelling and experiencing different cultures. A highlight was tandem hang gliding off a mountain in Rio de Janeiro in mid 2002. She likes theatre and playing sport, including tennis, mixed touch football and bicycling.

## **ALARPM Management Committee**

### **- Contact Details**

#### **Australian Members**

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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".*

### **ANZ ALARPM - SCIAR Conference 2003**

**- Surfing the waves of change: Sustaining development through challenging times**

#### **The ANZ ALARPM Conference 2003**

*is proposed to be held on the afternoon of*

**Sunday 4th May**

*and the morning and afternoon of*

**Monday 5<sup>th</sup> May, 2003**

*in the Twin Cities*

**Coolangatta (Gold Coast, Qld)**

**& Tweed Heads (NSW)**

Perhaps the most important event of the past 200 years has been the victory of capitalism. The market drives political, environmental and social agendas. Current critiques of what has become known as economic rationalism claim that this imbalance cannot lead to sustainable development: that there needs to be an appropriate mix of market, government and community. It is not just that the waves of change are there, they are inevitable. It is a matter of how we surf them. For many the answer lies in changing our values and the way in which we do things. It is argued that what is needed are

sustainable development models at community, organisational and national levels. This conference explores this theme, weighs the pro's and con's and looks to action learning, action research and process management approaches for a contribution to what is *the* essential debate of this decade.

## Call for proposals

We seek proposals for workshops, displays or other presentations that address topics related to sustainable development in changing times and are:

- relevant to action research, action learning, process management or systemic thinking, reflective practice, innovative, knowledge sharing and other relevant approaches;
- will be of interest to a multi-disciplinary audience;
- address individual, group, organisational, community, regional and national development issues.

Along with the conference a Research Colloquium and a Refereed Conference Session is being organised by the Southern Cross Institute of Action Research and will be held at The Southern Cross University's new campus at Tweed Heads.

For further information please email enquiries to [ssankara@scu.edu.au](mailto:ssankara@scu.edu.au)

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**ALARPM 6th & PAR 10th World Congresses**  
*Learning partners in action*  
- University of Pretoria, South Africa  
22-24 September 2003

### **Call for contributions**

You are invited to submit proposals for contributions that address the congress theme *Learning Partners in Action* for presentations as papers, workshops or posters. All proposals must be in English. In the true spirit of action learning, action research and process management, proposals for presentations that reflect active participation of the audience will receive favorable consideration.

### **Presentation formats**

#### *Papers*

Papers are invited that provide conceptual frameworks, analyze theory and practice, present research findings, describe innovative approaches, and investigate challenges in action learning, action research and process management. Each contributor will have 30 minutes to present, plus 10 minutes for discussion and questions as a critical element of the presentation.

If you wish, you may submit a completed paper, in addition to the proposal, for peer review and possible inclusion in the web-based conference publication. All submissions should be in English. All refereed papers will be available online on the conference website prior to the conference.

#### *Workshops*

Workshops should focus on active learning and involvement of the participants. Workshops may demonstrate processes used in action learning, action research or process management or may be used to address and elaborate on some theory or practice. Ninety minutes will be allocated to workshops.

### *Posters*

Posters may be used to communicate information visually, including research findings, innovative action research methods and solutions to challenges. Posters should be self-explanatory, but presenters must be present during the time allocated on the program for Poster Exhibits so as to engage in discussions or answer questions.

### **Submission of abstracts and papers**

Presentation proposals and papers must be submitted electronically preferably as attachments in Microsoft Word. See <http://www.education.up.ac.za/alarpm/> for guidelines for authors and presenters.

Please submit all proposals and full papers to **Erasmus.AS@tng.ac.za** with '**Submission**' in the subject line. All presentation proposals (abstracts) must be submitted by **14 February 2003**, and full papers must be submitted by **1 June 2003**. Presenters must register by **31 July 2003** or their presentation will be removed from the program.



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# 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 invite people to provide reports so that we can all become aware of the wide variety of options available to us.*

## **Using action-learning circles to promote community economic development (CED)**

- Paul Wildman and Helen Schwencke

### **Background**

With increasing layoffs, globalisation, downsizing and the rural crisis, the following question is often asked: What can my community and I (little old me) do to help provide our youth with local employment opportunities? With over half of the world's biggest economic entities no longer nation states, and with unemployment and underemployment endemic in many regional areas of Australia, new ways of working, and better ways of generating jobs are urgently needed.

Existing training and apprenticeship systems are part of the answer, however they only deal with existing employers and do not create 'new jobs' or 'network'. Enhancing our communities' capacity to help themselves by improving their agility and ability to respond to the globalisation challenge are important outcomes, and will be a vital part of their and our economic future.

We believe learning circles provide a better way, by helping people develop their own abilities through learning from each other. Generally learning circles have up to fifteen members, one of whom takes the role of facilitator or guide. The guide for the meeting may change from week to week, but often it is the person with a particular interest in the topic at hand who takes on this role. Meetings are usually in someone's home and they are intended to be informal. Other names for learning circles are kitchen cabinets or study clubs.

The purpose of learning circles, therefore, is to help build community capacity by developing the community's economy and local enterprises. Specifically, this project seeks to encourage community economic development (CED) through an extension of the learning circle idea that includes action, in other words, through **action-learning circles**. To find out more about learning circles go to the website of Learning Circles Australia. Choose a circle and have a look around: <http://www.learningcircles.org.au>.

## **Mission**

To assist communities in rural and remote areas (nationally and internationally), to respond to the challenges of globalisation by generating opportunities for people (particularly for marginalised youth and mature workers) to develop their own job opportunities through training and learning about new ways of working.

## **Objective**

To develop a range of learning resources/materials based on action/adult learning principles and basic regional economics, which will promote community economic development and capacity building through the use of action-learning circles.

## **Strategies**

To combine knowledge and commitment in the area of Adult and Community Education (ACE - Helen) with enthusiasm and experience in Community Economic Development (CED - Paul) and engage the interest of others, and funding, to achieve the above objectives over the next three years.

## **Unique initiative**

After extensive searches, no specifically similar project has been found to exist in the UK, Europe or North America and, we believe, it is the first time an initiative like this has been undertaken in Australia. The project is qualitatively different to accepted capability building, community training or CED centre initiatives.

## **Funding**

The project has received funding through the Gaming Benefit Fund Qld and in-kind support from Learning Circles Australia (LCA). Activists and volunteers from LCA have helped in establishing our four focus groups.

## **Timing**

The project commenced in late 2001 and is scheduled to be completed by early 2003. We are currently on schedule. We have conducted four focus groups and identified several, common, 'front of the head' topics, for which we are currently developing action-learning materials as kits.

## **Innovative design**

The developed kits will primarily be CD ROM based and comprise four topics. There will be no prerequisite entry levels for any topic. Each topic will be split into three areas (1) Learning Interface, (2) Workbook, and (3) Background Information. Innovations include expanding the

conventional learning circle concept to include action-learning, using 'communities of practice' methods to organise interactions between the circles, incorporating triple bottom line considerations, and integrating community foresight processes.

## **Principal workers**

**Helen Schwencke** – [hschwenc@dovenetq.net.au](mailto:hschwenc@dovenetq.net.au)

Helen's qualifications include Bachelor of Applied Science (Biology), Grad Dip Library Science, and Grad Dip Adult and Vocational Education. She has been involved with adult education and, in particular, community based adult education, since 1993. In 1997 she initiated the establishment of the Inner Brisbane Community Learning Association.

**Paul Wildman** – [pwildman@otushome.com.au](mailto:pwildman@otushome.com.au)

Paul's qualifications include BA Econ (Hons) Regional Economics, Master MSWAP Community Development, Doctorate Community Economic Development. Paul has an extensive experience in the area of Adult Learning, Local/Community Economic Development (CED), Futures Studies and Labour Market Programs.

## **Would you like to be involved?**

We are looking to communicate with people who may be interested in the concept and willing to provide assistance in some small way or perhaps even become involved in the project. So far we have found Australian academic institutions completely indifferent to what we are doing. Assistance or involvement might include: being a critical friend, running a pilot action-learning circle, providing facilitator training or mentoring, and/or helping to promote and distribute the completed kits.

*Contact is welcome through the above emails or to PO Box 74 Nundah 4012 Brisbane. Phone/Fax: 61- 7-3266-7570 Mobile: 0412-027-818*

## 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 disciplines. In the interests of bringing them closer together, we invite you to describe your local action learning/action research community.*

### **The Community Service and Research Centre’s Community-Based and Action Research Network (CBARN)**

The CBARN is a loosely structured network of researchers who are committed to community based and action research methodologies and practices. The CBARN is an initiative of the Community Service and Research Centre (CSRC) at UQ Ipswich and currently involves members from across Queensland and Australia.

Through the CBARN, the Community Service and Research Centre hopes to develop its capacity to respond to requests for community based and action research projects and to develop the practice of community based research and university-community engagement more generally. The purpose of the CBARN is to provide a forum through which community-based researchers can access authentic community based research work opportunities; develop their skills and understanding in community-based and action research methodologies; stay up to date with the latest developments in this field of research; and find support for their own research initiatives. The network is comprised of early career researchers from a number of disciplines as well



as senior researchers with extensive experience in community-based and action research.

The convenor of the network is Dr Geoffrey Woolcock, Associate Director - Community Based Research at the Community Service and Research Centre. All general enquiries and expressions of interest to join the network should be forwarded to Lorraine Chamberlain at [l.chamberlain@mailbox.uq.edu.au](mailto:l.chamberlain@mailbox.uq.edu.au)

### **Aims of the CBARN**

- To develop a network of local, state, national, and international researchers to work collaboratively on community based research projects, including all aspects of project management, research design, evaluation, report writing, and editing;
- To develop research teams and methods that consistently and respectfully engage with the needs and perspectives of individual community members and groups;
- To provide opportunities for researchers and academics who are interested in developing innovative, engaged research methodologies to participate in CSRC community based projects;
- To broaden and enhance the pool of disciplinary and intellectual resources that inform the practice of Community Based Research both at the CSRC and beyond;
- To provide opportunities for interested researchers to directly engage with the local communities via the CSRC's existing networks and projects;
- To develop leadership in community based research and engaged methodologies both within The University of Queensland and beyond.

## **Who might be interested in becoming a member?**

The CSRC is particularly interested in working with researchers who possess some or all of the following characteristics:

- An interest in community engagement and/or the civic role of universities;
- Experience in, or desire to gain experience in, community-based and action research philosophy, methodologies, and practices;
- High quality written and oral communication skills, in particular research report writing and editing;
- Experience in, or desire to gain experience in, high quality policy, service, and research evaluation and design;
- An interest in working collaboratively with other CSRC associates, community members, partners, and staff members as part of multidisciplinary community based research teams.

## **Benefits of becoming a member of the CBARN**

CBARN members are classed as affiliates of the CSRC and, as such, are entitled to the following benefits:

- Ongoing opportunities to work collaboratively with CSRC staff members on paid research and consultancy projects;
- Discounted registration for next July's 2nd International Inside Out Conference on Higher Education & Community Engagement, <http://www.uq.edu.au/insideout/>
- A quarterly CSRC newsletter detailing latest developments in Community based research at CSRC, nationally, and internationally;
- Personal invitations to, and/or notification of, all CSRC seminars, symposia, and other learning events, including our monthly staff and friends BBQs following lunchtime seminars;

- Mentoring and team work for early career researchers;
- Opportunities to develop a refereed publications record;
- Facilitated access to CSRC community networks and learning communities.

### **Important information**

The CSRC does not offer either full time or guaranteed employment to CBARN members as part of their involvement in the network. Paid work opportunities will be based on availability and researchers' suitability to the topic area and requirements. General Membership (i.e. apart from members' paid involvement in specific research projects) is voluntary and does not incur quantum from CSRC to be paid to the individual member or to the member's faculty or organisation.

The majority of research reports produced at the CSRC are published internally. Copyright on printed materials will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis between collaborators according to University of Queensland guidelines. It is generally assumed that copyright will remain with the author(s) and/or the University according to standard academic protocol and University policy. CBARN Researchers are encouraged to publish their research outcomes in other academic and professional publications where appropriate.

All members of the CBARN contracted to undertake research on behalf of the CSRC must abide by University of Queensland research ethics guidelines. Any research conducted on behalf of the CSRC involving human research subjects must have University of Queensland ethics approval *prior to the commencement of research*.

For more information on copyright and/or ethics guidelines please refer to the University of Queensland's Policy on Research and Postgraduate Studies available on-line at: <http://www.uq.edu.au/research/index.html?id=4208>

## Bookshelf

### The Essential U&I

- Book review by Bob Dick

Review of

Wadsworth, Yoland, ed. (2001) *The essential U&I*.  
Melbourne: Victoria Health Promotion Foundation. ISBN 0-9579990-0-3. [pp 225 + xi] Au\$27.50

That's the short version of the title, above. To give it its full title ...

*The essential U&I: a one-volume presentation of the findings of a lengthy grounded study of whole systems change towards staff-consumer collaboration for enhancing mental health services.* By Yoland Wadsworth, ed., in on-going collaboration with Merinda Epstein. Melbourne: Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2001.

It's a quarto-sized paperback which crams more information into its 225 pages than you might imagine. It contains some important information and messages for anyone involved in any role in the mental health system. I believe it also has something important to say to all of us who inhabit organisations of any form.

Even before you open the cover the title is revealing. As the "essential" U&I it is a summary of five previous research reports. Together they detail a substantial action research study conducted between 1989 and 1996 under the auspices of the VMIAC, the Victorian Mental Illness Awareness Council, an advocacy group for mental health consumers. Most of the book consists of extracts from those research

reports and other documents. Occasional commentary threads together the extracts and draws conclusions from them.

The “*U&I*” of the title serves double duty. It is shorthand for “Understanding and involvement”, which captures well the participative action research style of the study. It also (deliberately) stands for the “you and I” – those for whom the study sought to improve understanding. The you and the I are staff and consumers, or consumers and staff, depending on your perspective.

(I should mention that “consumers” is the label preferred by many of those who have been the willing or unwilling clients of the mental health system. Some choose “survivors” as a more appropriate label.)

The author, Yoland Wadsworth is well known among action researchers as a committed researcher who favours strongly participative and action oriented approaches to research. A sociologist by training, she has written two influential, practical and readable books which have achieved wide currency: *Do it yourself social research* and *Everyday evaluation on the run*. This isn't as readable as those books. If it leads to action it may well prove to be more important.

## **The study in overview**

An initial study *Understanding, anytime* (henceforth *U,A*) was as an evaluation by mental health consumers of acute psychiatric facilities at Royal Park Hospital in Parkville. Consumers' views about the hospital were gathered and conveyed to staff for their comment. Those comments were fed back to the consumers. The consumers in turn developed recommendations, which were communicated to staff.

In parallel with this process, staff were asked for their views about their own practice. These views were conveyed to consumers.

The more elaborate *Understanding and involvement* study (henceforth *U&I*) initially used reactions to *U,A* as a catalyst for further engagement. It took as its goal the fostering of communication between consumers and staff. Much of the book describes the many mechanisms that were set in place and the results that were achieved.

Importantly, the communication between staff and consumers was not to be limited to what occurred within the research study. Attempts were made, with mixed success, to embed it in the operation of psychiatric services. Further, it was not to be limited to Royal Park. It was to develop a model or framework which would be extended system-wide.

It was a mixed success, though better than I would have anticipated. Beyond this I won't attempt to summarise further what is already a summary of substantial documentation. Read the book.

## **The study as research**

As I read (and sometimes judiciously skimmed) this account, several features of this study *as research* stood out for me. The book is worth reading as an example of a study which capitalises on the features of action research.

For instance I liked the strong commitment towards giving consumers a voice – more than that, an active involvement – in the research. This was done in a way which did not victimise staff.

The flexibility of participative action research was also used to good effect. The researchers and their allies persisted with what worked. They modified what didn't. They refined the mechanisms and the processes as the study proceeded. Much good action research, I think, is emergent – it develops over time as understanding grows. *U&I* is an exemplary instance of how this may be done.

## Contribution to understanding

It is also painfully apparent in much of *U&I* that we are not very good at building psychiatric institutions which are human and humane. Institutions are strong cultures which seem almost to force staff and consumers into roles which are not ultimately good for either. A repeated question throughout the study is “Why is it so hard?” Why indeed?

I am reminded of Philip Zimbardo’s prison experiment at Stanford in 1971. Most readers will probably have come across it. The study allocated eighteen volunteers at random to be either prisoners or prison guards. By the sixth day Zimbardo abandoned the study because the “guards” were behaving in a controlling and punitive way towards the “prisoners”. For those unfamiliar with it, Kathleen O’Toole (1997) provides an impelling account.

Closer to home, Tony Vinson (1982) provides a further example of how hard it is. He has documented his very evident success in managing a high security prison in NSW. His frustration is also evident. He had little effect in spreading his innovations to other prisons. Psychiatric institutions, it appears, are also strongly armoured against change.

Prison roles, it seems, tap into something resembling archetypes in the human psyche. This book indicates that mental health roles may be similarly archetypal.

I have had little to do with mental health or prison systems. Despite that, I expect that people in those fields, whether staff or consumers, will enhance their understanding through reading this book. Its application, though, is wider than that. Some parallels with my own experience in very different systems are apparent. Some examples follow.

It’s clear from the *U&I* study that understanding isn’t enough to bring about change. Without the intention to do something about the present, nothing happens. Unless that intention is accompanied by passion, still nothing happens.

Even understanding and intention and passion together may not be sufficient. Throughout *U&I* multiple mechanisms are used. Many ways of communicating were devised, and many locations in which this might happen. Depending on any one point of leverage may be inadequate. Multiple points of leverage may increase the success rate.

In most systems — in almost all, I suspect — there are those with privilege and power and those without. Those with privilege can usually find some reason not to change. My belief is that power and privilege are at least partly invisible to those who have it: sometimes even to those on whom it is exercised. Even where it is visible and acknowledged, people find ways of rationalising its existence. In most systems, roles are powerful. In total institutions such as psychiatric hospitals and prisons the roles are even stronger.

Beyond this, I think it is when people experience each other as real people that they are best able to see beyond their roles. They are then more motivated to act for the benefit of all. It is not enough that people communicate. Unless the communication is person to person the roles are likely to remain unchallenged or at least excused.

It takes time and energy to interact and to understand and to experience each other as real. Yet in many systems that necessary time is seen as not really work. We define productivity or effectiveness very narrowly, and treat the time for communication as “slack time” or waste, or at best as a luxury. It gets pushed aside by the day by day requirements which are treated as imperatives. My view is that systems need “slack” time. It provides the lubrication which in the end allows systems to function more effectively and enjoyably.

There is much to be said for research programs or change programs which model a different way of doing things. *U&I* talks about resistance in some quarters to using consumers and ex-consumers as researchers. With their involvement legitimised by the study, they were able to be heard and to



be influential. A research program (especially a participative action research program, I think) can be a useful vehicle for creating a sort of counter culture which exists alongside the conventional culture.

### **In summary ...**

If it is not already evident, let me be clear that I found this an informative and valuable report. It could have been even more valuable, I believe. I understand that there were deadlines – the study reports that there were only 46 days for Yoland and a group of staff and consumers to select the excerpts and decide how to present them. I think the haste shows.

I expected *U&I* to be an easy read. Instead it was difficult. This was partly due to the sheer amount of material. Partly, it was that the commentaries for me didn't successfully pull it all together.

Although Chris Argyris is mentioned and some of his work is cited, it is little more than a mention in passing. Yet I was struck by how pointedly his models and processes address many of the issues which partly undermined the intended outcomes of the study. He has argued (1990, for example) that unless the within-person and between person and system dynamics are addressed, the status quo tends to prevail. He offers many models and processes which I think could have further illuminated the situations described in this study.

Let me sum up. Don't expect this to be bedtime reading. In the end I was left with the impression that such a study deserved a more reader-friendly report.

I think, though, that you will find it worth the effort. If, like me, you believe that our organisations are in poor shape, this is a book which will increase your understanding. It has relevance in areas well beyond mental health. If, like me, you are looking to expand your strategies for bringing about

change, you will find plenty here to suggest ways for doing so. If you wish to further develop ways of doing research which is both grounded in reality and which engages the people who will be affected by it, you will find here a fine example indeed.

Bob Dick

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*[http://www.uq.net.au/action\\_research/](http://www.uq.net.au/action_research/)*

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Argyris, Chris (1990) *Overcoming organisational defenses: facilitating organisational learning*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

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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*

**Global citizenship and social movements:  
creating transcultural webs of meaning  
for the new millennium**

- Book review by Susan Goff

McIntyre-Mills, Janet, J., (2000). *Global Citizenship and Social Movements: Creating Transcultural Webs of Meaning for the New Millennium*. Australia: Harwood Academic Publishers.

This is a unique and timely book. It is unique for being a beautifully articulated and integrated “diary” of the author’s learning about being a “global citizen”. It is timely for its wealth of information about global citizenship and the well-researched rationale for its place in social movements at this time in our World’s development. I would like to congratulate and thank the author for contributing this exciting and useful knowledge to the backpacks of fellow long-distance travellers.

The primary readership for this text is anyone for whom a little part of them either erupts or dies when they hear the phrase: “That’s all very well – but in the real world...” Too often, effective approaches to problem solving are compromised or lost in favour of the familiar and not rocking the boat (yet). As the author perceptively states: “These [technocratic, simplistic approaches]... are more insidious than they appear at first; they encourage practitioners to become passive service providers who do not make policy or practice contributions and instead remain passive consumers of what the market dictates” (p. 42).

While many of us understand the imperative of principled action to manifest sustainable social justice at a global scale, the means of achieving sustainable social justice in our “real worlds” are often limited. We can find ourselves being damned if we do and damned if we don’t. This publication serves the

purpose of walking us out of this place and into knowing possibility.

The introduction outlines the author's proposition that too often problem solving focuses on solutions and not on understanding the ways problems are perceived. She proposes that a form of global citizenship takes shape when practitioners develop interlinked meanings that acknowledge cultural differences and common human values. Such citizenship is presented as a practitioner-based affiliation with the "resource and information" poor and their capacity to go beyond fundamentalism in their competition with "empowered mobile capital".

The body of the text explores this idea, describing its influences and viability. It takes us from first hand descriptions of these approaches in South Africa, the Philippines and Australia into informative and practical displays of "transcultural thinking tools" and their philosophical and scientific influences. With this context in mind, and in true participatory action research style, the author crosses her own boundaries and extends her theory of practice from critical humanism to ecological humanism. She describes this "praxis tool" as the basis of her practice as a global citizen because it underlines the way in which people and nature are systemically linked and foregrounds global-scale sustainable social justice as a (natural) consequence. The author's personal context becomes the link to the global contexts of management and global trends, which provide the imperative for sustainable social justice and thus the relevance for transcultural thinking tools such as Ecological Humanism. In her conclusion, the author claims that the world is already promoting social health and preventing problems from even occurring by seeing and working in ways that are tolerant of complexity and based in dialogue.

The language is accurate without being unassailably academic, the tone is balanced and hopeful and the result is an excellent praxis resource for approaching our own ways of global citizenship.

## **Action learning, action research and process management (ALARPM)**

- Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt (*Guest Editor*)

In a special edition of The Learning Organisation journal Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt, as guest editor, presents a range of articles which explore the themes of action learning, action research and process management (ALARPM). The first issue, Vol. 9 No. 3, presents the meanings and concepts of ALARPM in their historical and philosophical contexts. The second issue, Vol. 9 No.4, explains the success of structured action learning programs, and gives instructive examples of action research projects that may serve as models for those who are new in the field. Articles include:

- Action learning, action research and process management (ALARPM): a personal history, *Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt and May Farquhar*
- The Concept of action learning, *Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt*
- The Concept of action research, *Herbert Altrichter, Stephen Kemmis, Robin McTaggart and Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt*
- The Concept of process management, *Richard Bawden and Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt*
- A model for designing action learning and action research programs, *Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt*
- Creating innovation and synergy through a parallel action learning structure, *Ron Passfield*
- Postgraduate programs using action research, *Bob Dick*
- Action research within Organisations and university thesis writing, *Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt and Chad Perry*
- Reflective Internet searching: an action research model, *Sylvia Laurretta Edwards and Christine Bruce*

*The Learning Organisation* is an online journal that can be accessed through the Emerald Web site <http://www.emerald.com/>

# 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):

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- 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.

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You may have interesting case material but may be uncertain of its theoretical underpinning. If so, approach us. We may offer joint authorship with an experienced collaborator to assist with the reflective phase of the report.

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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.

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