

Editorial

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This double issue of the International Journal of Action Research offers a view of the variety of methodologies one can find in Action Research, as well as the diversity of contexts where it is applied. This dynamic nature of Action Research is certainly due to the fact that it is not a method developed outside and apart from the movements and changes of society, but grows out of society's needs to understand and to recreate itself.

Recently I had the opportunity to visit a little village in Chocontá, a municipality distant about 75 km from Bogotá (Colombia). We were greeted by members of the community who proudly took us to the school that they had designed and built when Orlando Fals Borda started what would be known as “Investigación-Acción Participativa” or just IAP (Participatory Action Research). What is remarkable about this fact is not so much the school building itself, which now also houses Fals Borda's personal library and research documentation (a pile of boxes in a small room due to the lack of an adequate space), but the living memory of the “communal action” which still echoes in the community's life after five decades. Some of the persons to whom we talked were children or adolescents at that time, but they had been told about something important that happened in the community, and had been materialized in the school building or the local association, but most importantly fostered a particular way of dealing with their problems.

The opening article, by *Marianne Kristiansen and Jørgen Bloch-Poulsen*, presents a study based on their experience of what they term “critical, pragmatic action research” in two different situations in Denmark, involving 18 teams from one public and two private organizations. In this Employee Driven Innovation in Team (EDIT) project, the authors argue that every

employee has an innovative potential and that dialogic helicopter team meetings, if they are characterized by a dissensus approach, are means of unfolding this innovative potential. At the backdrop of this argument is what has become known as cognitive democracy, in this case meaning the ability that each employee has to organize work, to create value for the organization and for improving and to improve the quality of the employees' work life.

The article by *Alfonso Torres Carrillo*, from Colombia, draws on the history of Participatory Research in the tradition of Paulo Freire (Brazil) and Orlando Fals Borda (Colombia) to bring to our attention new developments in the process of generating knowledge in and through social practice. His analysis focuses on some models of "systematization," where formative and investigatory movements are combined to enhance political and pedagogical effectiveness. His conclusion is rather challenging for Action Research: "the need for further forms and practices of knowledge production linked to educational processes and emancipation movements." This does not only mean everyone can contribute to the improvement of the quality of life and to social transformation, but that within an emancipatory framework the process of knowledge production has to be constantly recreated according to the cultural and social contexts.

The next article, by *Mathew Tasker, Linda Westberg and Richard G. Seymour*, confronts us with a situation where researchers are challenged in some of their assumptions when developing the *Mushuk Muyu* (meaning new seed) project, designed to retrieve the local indigenous Kichwa language and culture in the Ecuadorian Andes. The authors report and analyze the development and application of a theoretical framework, the action research cycle (ARC), which consists of five episodes and a dynamic of ebb and flow. The episodes, in short, are identified as Problem Arena, Fundamental Themes, Strategic Action Planning, Action, and Reflection-on-Action. Among the results are the increased interest in the students' historical and cultural roots and the empowerment of teachers to deal with issues related to the teaching of the Kichwa language. The authors conclude that "for social entrepreneurial initiatives, particularly ones involving active local participation, AR can provide not only solid insight and knowledge generation, but also practical solutions to the problems identified." In the case of Latin America, where a

great number of governmental and non-governmental agencies are engaged in what the authors identify as social entrepreneurship, the ARC framework is an important model to be known and developed.

The article by *Gunilla Albinsson and Kerstin Arnesson* deals with a question everyone involved in Action Research asks at some point of the research process: “How critical can you be ...?” Their empirical data originate from the project “Nurse Gudrun’s Full-Scale Laboratory in Blekinge for IT in Nursing and Caring”, in Sweden. Their argument is that there should be a balance between being supportive of the project and providing constructive criticism. Based on the assumption that, methodologically, on-going evaluation and interactive research have several points in common, they develop a theoretical framework based on Bourdieu, Foucault, and Berger and Luckmann. Through learning seminars, the group analyzed problems such as difficult reporting relationships, lack of information channels, insufficient technical support and need for an effective steering group. As the authors point out, EU Structural Funds tend to substitute the classical evaluation for on-going evaluation, which only underlines the relevance and pertinence of bringing the involvement of the researcher under scrutiny.

David Coghlan, in his article “Interiority as the Cutting Edge between Theory and Practice: A First Person Perspective”, argues that practice and theory are two external horizons of the action researcher, and that “interiority is the integrating factor that enables action researchers to hold both, to appreciate the value of both and to move from one to the other appropriately.” These three realms of meaning: practical knowing, theory and interiority, provide a framework for understanding the challenges confronting the action researcher. Based on Lonergan, the author directs our attention to our own values, assumptions, beliefs and ways of thinking and acting, as playing a central role in the process of inquiry in action research practice.

The reader will also find the review of three books by *Oliver Nachtwey* which deal basically with the present day models of capitalism in Europe and more specifically in Germany. The author’s general conclusion can be seen as a challenge that the development processes in a globalised economy pose for social researchers: “According to these works, he tells us, there can

hardly be any talk of a ‘model for the future’: and it may well be doubted whether the chosen path of liberalized capitalism will lead to renewed systemic stability.” Action research, being permanently involved with changing and interpreting the world we live in, needs the dialogue with social scientists from different fields. This is also why the International Journal of Action Research welcomes reviews and articles that can help action researchers frame their projects and practices within the larger sociopolitical context.