

## Editorial

Action research, as we know, covers a vast geographical, political and cultural spectrum. This issue of the *International Journal of Action Research* is of special interest for bringing together experiences and reflections from various countries, continents and cultures. From the traditional “parliaments” of Ondjango and Otchiwo in Angola, to the challenges of youth participation in a Participatory Action Research project in Greenland, the reader will be presented with a rich variety of experiences and reflections.

The first two articles are related to action research in the field of health. Michel Thiollent and Renata Ferraz de Toledo start out from the assumption that “health has stopped being a right and an issue related to citizenship, to become a profitable business like any other. Patients are seen as consumers of medicine and high cost services, controlled by large private companies.” Action research, because of its participatory and dialectical nature, can promote changes by involving all stakeholders (public users, professionals and managers) in producing a shared vision and knowledge on the functioning of the system. Furthermore action research allows a more adequate appraisal of the complexities involved in health care. Based on examples from Brazil, the article illustrates how the conversion of biological and medical facts into collective actions can impact environmental or sanitary conditions.

The article “Developing Practice in Healthcare: The Contribution of Bildung to Negotiating the Tensions among Practical, Professional and Organisational Knowing”, by Geralyn Hynes, David Coghlan and Mary McCarron, starts with the confirmation that action research is today well established in health services, which can be attested by two recent systematic reviews. The authors’ purpose is to “to illustrate the contribution made by a particular understanding of the idea of Bildung to engaging with positionality, different voices in healthcare and the context of care in a complex envi-

ronment.” Positionality is understood as the researcher’s position or stance in relation to the participants and is presented as an instrument for “gauging” the strength of participation and reciprocity within a project. The concept of *Bildung*, as a constant process of self-formation and cultivation in dialogue with others, provides a framework for understanding the complexity of relating to patients, in this case the nursing practice, to address the palliative care needs of patients with advanced chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in an Irish hospital.

Youth present a very special challenge for action research, which in most cases is conducted with adults. In this sense, the article by Laila Wattar, Sandrine Fanous, and Peter Berliner on youth participation in participatory action research in the Paamiut Youth Voice research project (Greenland) is an important contribution for methodological developments in action research. The research proposal was developed based on the community’s requests, concerning enhancement of well-being of the youth in Paamiut. Based on the findings, programmes and forums for youth participation were created, breaking with the discourse of “pathologising” and blaming the families, or the youth. Among the methodological recommendations for Participatory Action Research with youth, the authors identify the use of a number of means for communication, including writing, arts, physical activities, and a variety of situations that open up dialogue between the participants and people in the community; a time-frame of the research project long enough to allow creating mutual trust between all involved parties; opportunities for both individual interviews as well as focus groups; the inclusion of skills development, among others.

Dialogue, as a key concept in action and participatory research, is the basic theme of the article presented by Gomercindo Ghiggi, Martinho Kavaya and Avelino da Rosa Oliveira, who reflect comparatively on the experiences of Paulo Freire’s culture circles in Brazil and the *Otchiwo* and *Ondjango* from the Ovimbundu culture in Angola, the former being a space of participation by women, and the latter restricted to men. The authors present us with a vivid description of the possibilities of dialogue in these three experiences, bringing to our attention both the interconnectedness of human beings, and the distinct forms that cultures develop to know and transform their reality.

Among the conclusions, I would stress the intercultural dialogue as a vital posture to be assumed by everyone conducting action and participatory research. There are important insights on this topic in the article.

Following the discussion forum in recent issue of the *International Journal of Action Research* [IJAR, 7(3), 2011], Marianne Kristiansen and Jørgen Bloch-Paulsen accepted the invitation to organise a special issue of the *International Journal of Action Research* on “participation and power in participatory research and action research”. What understanding of participation underlies and manifests itself in our research practice? How do we deal with power relations among the various stakeholders within a given project? These are only some of the fundamental questions the proponents raise in this call for papers. The deadline for submitting a draft of an abstract is July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012. The special issue is planned as part of an international conference on participation and power to take place in Copenhagen June 5<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> 2113 at the University of Aalborg, Copenhagen. You are welcome to share your experience, your concerns and your concepts.

This issue brings the obituary of Per Hartvig Engelstad who died in November 2011 at the age of 76. In their words of gratitude the colleagues of the Work Research Institute (Oslo, Norway), Bjørn Gustavsen, Nina Amble and Øyvind Pålshaugen, remember his outstanding contribution for all Nordic programmes of development of working life and for action research. The editors of the *International Journal of Action Research* join the colleagues and family in this moment of grief as well as of hope for the example Per Hartvig Engelstad left.

*Danilo R. Streck*  
Editor-in-chief