



Action Learning and Action Research for Sustainable and Inclusive Futures

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The Woodward Centre

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Action Learning and Action Research practitioners and researchers joining together to explore what is being done, and what needs to be done, to create a more equitable, inclusive and sustainable future.

Table of Contents

Brady, J. (2026) <i>Researchers can be Disabled too: Disability and Democratic Research Design</i> (paper)	4
Choo, B. (2026) <i>An Intersectional Perspective on Action Research: Working with Young Disabled Migrants in Australia</i> (paper).....	5
Chow, A.M. (2026) <i>Centring the Curated Margins: Decolonial Borderwork in First Nations Art Markets</i> (paper)	6
Fauzanafi, Z (2026) <i>Sensory Ethnography Action Research</i> (paper).....	7
Fenakel Fiedelman, M. & Caplin, Y. (2026) <i>Learning Through Difficult Encounters: Actor-Based Simulation as Action Learning</i> (workshop).....	8
Gómez Auriolés, L. (2026) <i>One Camera, Many Worlds: Co-Creating 360° Video Narratives from Mexican Diasporic Dance in Melbourne to Havana's Sacred Practices</i> (paper)	9
Hogan, J (2026) <i>The Research Circle. Learning from Action, Sharing with Colleagues, Documenting the Story and Joining with Others</i> (paper).....	10
Laguna-Alberdi, A. (2026) <i>Literacy and Voice: Understanding Political Participation in a First Nations Community-led Adult Literacy Campaign</i> (paper).....	11
Meneguello, M & Moore, A (2026) <i>Through Diverse Lenses: Practice-based Reflections on Using Photography as a Learning Activity to Foster Dialogue on Diversity and Inclusion</i> (paper)	12
Mikami, A. (2026) <i>Public Service Evaluators as Action Researchers: A Reflection</i> (paper).....	13
Miller, T. & Flores Darwin, D.E. (2026) <i>Conquering Knowledge: How Rationality Built the Present — and How We Can Loosen It</i> (paper).....	14
Molineux, J. (2026) <i>Design of the Flourish Movement Mixed Methods Action learning intervention</i> (paper)	15
Molloy, T., Heke, S., Bruffy, K. & Ferkins, L. (2026) <i>Te Arawhiti – Bridging Two Worlds: Advancing Te Tiriti-based Futures in Sport Governance – Exploring A 'Braided' Methodology</i> (paper)	16
Mulyasari, R (2026) <i>Action Mediation: Unpacking Methods for Working from Scratch with Island Women on Renewable Energy</i> (paper)	17
Ogawa, A., Choo, B., Laguna-Alberdi, A., Gómez Auriolés, L., Brady, J., Chow, A. M. & Mikami, A.	18
<i>Co-generating Sustainable and Inclusive Futures:</i>	18
<i>Emerging Action Research from a Doctoral Seminar Community</i> (panel presentation).....	18
Orejudos, A., Joya, G. & Santos, E.C.S. (2026) <i>Community Gardening as a Sustainable Intervention to Improve the Nutritional Status of Underweight Indigenous Children</i> (paper).....	19
Parrish, B (2026) <i>Action Mediation as Pragmatist Participation: Inclusive Energy Innovation in Seaweed Farming Communities in Indonesia</i> (paper)	20
Santos, E.C.S. (2026) <i>Logos Dynamics: When the Problem is the Problem</i> (workshop)	21
Sim, D. & Kaur, H. (2026) <i>The Impact of Microteaching on Confidence and Pedagogical Strength in Beginning Teachers</i> (paper)	23
Siscawati, M (2026) <i>Hear Our Voice: A Reflection on Rural Coastal Women's Field Schools in Indonesia and its Relevance for Community Energy Futures</i> (paper).....	24
Smit, I (2026) <i>Guiding Novice Python Programmers to Navigate Learning to Code in an Era of Generative Artificial Intelligence</i> (paper).....	25

Veldsmen, A. *Designing Mahi Tahi Action Learning with Tertiary Students with Hidden Disabilities in Aotearoa, New Zealand* (paper)..... 26

Wadsworth, Y. (2026) *Understanding what Yoland Wadsworth's Transdisciplinary Theory of Action Research as 'Living Systems Inquiry' Might Offer – a Q&A Small Group Roundtable*..... 27

Brady, J. (2026) *Researchers can be Disabled too: Disability and Democratic Research Design* (paper)

Keywords: Disability Accessibility, Co-Production, Disclosure, Inclusion

Abstract:

Disability is often factored into research design for research participants in discussions of methods like co-design and co-production. But how often do we discuss disability accessibility for the researchers themselves? Action research strategies to embed co-design and co-production efforts, afford access for both participants and researchers. Disability disclosure for disabled researchers remains a fraught issue, as stigma surrounding disability is an ongoing issue. Efforts to work in ways that mean time is not lost to lack of access can be seen as an imposition upon others, yet if accessibility is not afforded the same issues apply. Often accessibility planning is a tick box effort that can mean research projects can become an exercise in exclusion via inclusion. This paper argues that normalising disability accessibility for both participants and researchers is important for two reasons. 1. Planning for accessible action research practice means that when disability issues arise, disclosure can be limited to what accessibility conditions are required. 2. If accessibility is embedded from research design to conclusion, disclosure may or may not be necessary and accessibility becomes seamless. Prioritising accessibility has broader benefits, including compliance processes for the right to disconnect and psychological safety laws.

For my PhD project, the action research design and strategy included a thoughtful combination of hybrid working environments which allowed enough time for rest and recovery. My research project (see www.betterbillionairesaustralia.com) used problem-based interviews, fieldwork observation at festivals and facilitated workshops, and the action research strategy contributed to better accessibility planning. This allowed me to deliver research and manage disability issues without the need to disclose in a timely fashion. Action research is one way of working that affords continuous accessibility planning and continued adjustments, to encourage democratically inclusive work, but also a legally compliant and time efficient research environment.

For more information about my research see www.betterbillionairesaustralia.com

Choo, B. (2026) *An Intersectional Perspective on Action Research: Working with Young Disabled Migrants in Australia* (paper)

Keywords: Pragmatic action research, search conferences, disability, migration, intersectionality, inclusive methods

Abstract:

Following Shakespeare's (2019) call for diverse disabled voices to be heard in disability research and addressing the lacuna in migration scholarship on disability (Burns 2017; 2024), this PhD study focuses on the im/mobilities of young disabled migrants in Australia across the intersections of disability, citizenship and race. As an exploratory study with an under-researched community, a Pragmatic Action Research strategy was adopted for its democratic ethos and flexibility. Life mapping interviews were conducted with 15 young disabled migrants in Naarm/Melbourne aged 18 to 26 years old with Asia-Pacific origins. 7 of these participants also participated in 1 to 2 rounds of search conferences. This presentation focuses on the usefulness of search conferences as a method to work with diverse accessibility needs and cultural norms, as well as to provide deep insights into lived experiences across intersecting identities. To do so, I present three key methodological reflections. Firstly, I highlight the importance of providing structured opportunities for co-design to enable participants' agency in the research process, such as through initial consultations, post-conference surveys, action plans and co-facilitation with participants. Secondly, I reflect on the ways in which participants' benefit from participating in search conferences, as they provided crucial opportunities for community-building and resource-sharing as they navigate challenges brought about by migration and disability. Finally, I reiterate the importance of shaping a safe space conducive for researching the complexities of migration experiences. In doing so, this presentation emphasises the potential of Action Research approaches to be mutually beneficial for both participants and researchers, especially when researching with marginalised communities through an intersectional lens.

Chow, A.M. (2026) *Centring the Curated Margins: Decolonial Borderwork in First Nations Art Markets* (paper)

Keywords: Market exclusion, market inclusion, decolonisation, First Nations art markets

Abstract:

Marketplaces are exclusionary structures that reify and exacerbate power hierarchies. In many contemporary marketplaces, one of the power hierarchies that structures marketplace exclusion is colonialism. However, unlike post-colonial nations where the colonisers have left, there are settler colonial nations (i.e., the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand) where colonial occupation is ongoing. Central to the settler-colonial logic of elimination, First Nations people as the original occupants of the land were often forced to move away, assimilated, enslaved, and eliminated. In acknowledgement of settler colonialism as a structure, there is limited understanding on how market stakeholders (e.g., the producers and intermediaries) who are affected by these pervasive colonising structures and systems might resist or engage with the market. Through an investigation of the First Nations art markets in Australia, this study asks: How do First Nations artists and intermediaries navigate and resist settler colonial market structures? I conducted interviews with First Nations art intermediaries, carried out extensive fieldwork at various art market sites which included artists' talks, art fairs, panel discussions, and symposiums. As part of this study, I offer my reflections on my positionality as a non-First Nations scholar who possesses lived experiences of navigating systems, institutions and spaces that are impacted by the legacies of colonialism. It is from the margins that I reflect and examine my assumptions, beliefs, values and potential "blindness" in carrying out this research with the First Nations artists and intermediaries. As a result, drawing on the theory of decolonial Borderwork, we explore market exclusion as a form of decolonial resistance, reclamation and reassertion. We show how First Nations artists and intermediaries as border makers and maintainers engage in practices that foster inclusion *and* maintain exclusionary boundaries that protect and support artists— all towards a goal of fomenting a safer and more inclusive marketplace.

Fauzanafi, Z (2026) *Sensory Ethnography Action Research* (paper)

Keywords: Renewable energy, women's empowerment, sensory ethnography, action research,

Abstract

This is an effort I have undertaken, as part of the POWERE (Participation of Women in Renewable Energy) project, to combine two previously distinct traditions: sensory ethnography and action research. This combination stems from a critique of conventional research: sensory ethnography critiques the disembodied, text-centric researcher, while action research critiques the extractive, non-participatory researcher. The approach I subsequently sought to develop encompasses the following: cycles of action incorporate sensory attunement, participants become co-sensors, and change is evaluated multisensorially.

Fenakel Fiedelman, M. & Caplin, Y. (2026) *Learning Through Difficult Encounters: Actor-Based Simulation as Action Learning* (workshop)

Keywords: Action learning; actor-based simulation; experiential learning; reflective practice; difficult professional encounters; psychological safety

Summary of workshop

The purpose of this workshop is to introduce actor-based simulation as an experiential action learning method for exploring complex work-based dilemmas, particularly those involving communication, conflict, uncertainty, psychological safety, or emotionally charged professional encounters.

Following a brief introduction, **participants will be immediately immersed in a simulation exercise.** A volunteer from the group will navigate, as themselves, a work-based dilemma enacted opposite a professional actor. After the simulation, the volunteer will reflect on their experience, the actor will offer feedback from within the role, and participants will be given a few minutes to process what they observed.

The facilitators will then guide a full-group reflection to unpack the method participants have just experienced. This discussion will examine how actor-based simulation enables participants to move beyond talking about action and instead observe, practise, question, and rethink action in real time. Additional example scenarios will be shared to illustrate the method's range and adaptability across professional, educational, and organisational settings.

Participants will then be invited to identify a work-based dilemma that has been difficult to address through other action learning or training methods. In small groups, they will discuss whether actor-based simulation could offer a useful approach, where it may add value, and what ethical, practical, or facilitation concerns it might raise. Each group will share one example with the full workshop, followed by an open discussion of possible applications and limitations.

The workshop will close with examples of simulations used in conflictual and high-stakes contexts, demonstrating the method's relevance for real-world professional learning. Through direct experience, guided reflection, and collaborative problem-solving, **participants will learn to recognise when actor-based simulation may complement or extend their existing teaching, facilitation, or action learning repertoire.**

Note: This workshop is designed to be delivered online. Its participatory structure depends on all participants joining the same online environment, where the facilitators can see and hear everyone, invite contributions, manage turn-taking, use breakout groups, and guide reflection in a shared digital space.

Gómez Auriolés, L. (2026) *One Camera, Many Worlds: Co-Creating 360° Video Narratives from Mexican Diasporic Dance in Melbourne to Havana's Sacred Practices* (paper)

Keywords: 360 video, intangible cultural heritage, folkloric dance, Afro-Cuban Yoruba tradition, Action Research, positionality, comparative fieldwork, co-creation

Abstract:

This paper presents the Virtual Reality Time Machine (VRTM), a doctoral action research project born from the University of Melbourne's Action Research seminar, comparing two structurally distinct heritage contexts through 360° immersive video. Mexbourne, a Mexican folkloric dance company in the Melbourne diaspora, offered a mono-narrative context: a single cohesive community, comfortable participant social status, full university infrastructure, and over a year of fieldwork. Here, the researcher became a participant (a new dancer) and occupied an "inbetweener" positionality— an insider/outsider hybrid. This phase established the method's base. Havana's pluri-narrative context, by contrast, spanned only three months, with roughly one month per stakeholder across four independent parties — Museo Casa de África (museum), Raíces Profundas Dancing Company, Francisco Gordillo (painter and Babalawo), and Víctor Betancourt (Babalawo) — requiring significant adjustment, particularly because Yoruba religious practice varies across communities and the project needed to reflect that diversity. Casa de África's institutional position helped anchor findings with greater objectivity. In these communities, the researcher was an outsider, more limited to becoming an in-betweeners.

This second action research cycle introduced complexities absent from those in Australia: a pronounced tension in time, given shifting political and socio-economic conditions, where a high-technology project operated within underdeveloped infrastructure marked by frequent power outages. Compensation to participants was also more sensitive and consequential in Havana. Technical fluency gained in Mexbourne's better-resourced environment allowed faster, more efficient filming under Cuba's tighter timeline.

Following the Observe–Reflect–Plan–Action cycle, the paper argues that comparing these two poles reveals how immersive Action Research must adapt not only to narrative plurality and positionality, but to material conditions — infrastructure, political context, and compensation ethics — shaping what co-creation can look like in practice. The paper concludes by reflecting on what this comparative, resource-sensitive framework offers for sustainable and inclusive heritage futures across differently positioned communities.

Abstract

The voices, knowledge and experiences of teachers and school leaders are integral to school based research processes. Teachers are a vital source of information about student learning, classroom practices, school development, and how their own learning is evolving and how that is transforming them; leaders too. In this paper I outline an approach to professional learning and research which ...

The RC brings together the same group of teachers and leaders - on a regular basis over time - and supports them to describe, and document, their practice and learning. Through this 'coming together' members of the group have an opportunity to share their stories with each other, and to give and receive feedback from each other. The group acts as a learning space where people can work on individual and shared dilemmas and problems. Teachers and leaders work with each other to enrich their understanding of the context and where possible to develop strategies to try out in practice. The research circle gives them the opportunity to report back on how it went in action. Importantly, the research circle will enable participants to notice and understand each other's perspectives and interpretations of ideas and events. The intention is to establish a learning community that allows people to speak for themselves 'without fear or favour' where institutional hierarchy and system constraints have less influence. Indeed, they can even be discussed.

Finally, then, by working like this together over time, the group participants will begin to create shared understandings and build new knowledge together; not with a view to agreeing on everything but developing a coherent understanding of their learning. And so they can decide to make their learning more public and share through the production of a product.

This approach to professional learning and research was used in education with teachers and leaders in Australia particularly in the 1990s and into the 2000s. Through this period the Australian National Schools Network (ANSN) used this invitational approach as both professional learning and action research. This approach to PL – over the more often used one-off workshop approach - provided more time to explore complex questions and ideas and yet contains the work to help make it manageable. It is more democratic in giving the participant opportunity to a. be present in the first place, b. choose their own focus and, c. be in charge of their work.

This paper describes the core structure of numerous research circles I've led or participated in over the past 40 years, the key principles as used in the original NSN RCs, the basic tenants of action research/learning and reflective practice employed in the RCs, participants taking action, documenting and sharing their work and learning and finally some notes on leading a research circle.

Laguna-Alberdi, A. (2026) *Literacy and Voice: Understanding Political Participation in a First Nations Community-led Adult Literacy Campaign* (paper)

Keywords: Literacy campaign, political participation, empowerment, Indigenous education, Participatory Action Research

Abstract:

Since 2012, the “Yes, I Can!” (YIC) adult literacy campaign has run in 19 First Nations communities across Australia. YIC adapts a community-led education approach from Cuba that has reached over 10 million adults across more than 30 countries. The campaign forms part of a global popular education movement situated within the paradigm of South-South Cooperation. This paper outlines a doctoral research project examining the relationship between adult literacy campaigns and political participation through a single case study of the campaign in Tennant Creek, a remote community in the Northern Territory.

The research draws on one year of critical ethnography and Participatory Action Research (PAR) conducted in the community. Informed by the practices of Indigenous communities and popular education movements in the Global South, PAR was undertaken in collaboration with campaign students, teachers and other community members through a full cycle of inquiry. PAR activities were focused on understanding how literacy campaigns could strengthen local political participation.

This paper details key findings and analysis emerging from this process. We co-developed a model of political participation comprising four domains: the Australian political system, land and water rights, cultural advocacy and community advocacy. The relationship between participation in literacy campaigns and politics is analysed through a theoretical framework which draws on theories of empowerment to describe the transformative processes experienced by participants. Several barriers to political participation identified through the PAR activities are also examined. The paper concludes by critically reflecting on the experiences and pragmatic challenges of conducting PAR within a doctoral research project of this nature.

Meneguello, M & Moore, A (2026) *Through Diverse Lenses: Practice-based Reflections on Using Photography as a Learning Activity to Foster Dialogue on Diversity and Inclusion* (paper)

Keywords: Photography, reflective practice, higher education, Diversity and Inclusion

Abstract

One of the challenges for university students is developing critical thinking grounded in reflective skills (Andreucci-Annunziata et al., 2023; Harvey et al., 2025). Reflection is fundamental to developing intercultural competence. Moreover, by enabling learners to critically examine their own cultural assumptions, reflection can foster openness to understanding and dialogue with perspectives different from their own (Deardorff, 2006; Freire, 2020).

This work presents a pilot project that uses photography in an action learning activity. The design of this activity was influenced by visual pedagogy approaches that encourage students to engage with concepts through observation, interpretation, discussion, and reflection (Mulder & Dull, 2014).

In a face-to-face class, students were invited to photograph the same object in the classroom using their mobile phones from their individual positions. Subsequently, they uploaded their images to a class chat on Microsoft Teams, which was shared with all students. Thus, students were invited to review and analyse their own and their classmates' images.

The activity generated high levels of student engagement in class discussion. Through guided reflection, students recognised the variety of images generated for the same object, which served as a metaphor for acknowledging diversity. They also acknowledged that no single photograph provided a complete representation of the object. Instead, they noted that, when put together, the different photos provided a better understanding of the object, another metaphor, this time related to the importance of inclusion. This simple and insightful activity was subsequently linked to professional practice, highlighting the importance of seeking and including diverse perspectives when working with individuals, groups, and communities.

Thus, the students demonstrated an increased understanding of diversity as the presence of multiple perspectives and of inclusion as the process of recognising, valuing, and incorporating those perspectives into collective understanding, indicating the beginning of the development of reflective thinking skills.

Mikami, A. (2026) *Public Service Evaluators as Action Researchers: A Reflection* (paper)

Keywords: Embedded researchers, public service evaluation, practical learning and reflection, adaptive public value

Abstract:

Public service evaluators occupy a distinctive position: close enough to policy and delivery systems to influence use, yet often constrained by accountability requirements, timelines and institutional definitions of evidence. This paper reframes that position as a productive site for action research. Drawing on participatory action research, utilisation-focused, developmental and empowerment evaluation, and literature on embedded researchers in public services, this paper argues that the public service evaluator can act not only as a judge of program merit, but as a facilitator of collective inquiry and practical learning. Action Research (AR) and evaluation share commitments to systematic evidence, improvement, stakeholder engagement and knowledge for action. When combined reflexively, these traditions can make evaluation more responsive to complexity, more attentive to the realities of change-making, and more capable of supporting adaptive public value. The embedded action researcher can translate between policy and practice perspectives; create structured spaces for reflection; surface assumptions behind performance measures; and build evaluative capacity among practitioners. Although institutional power shapes evaluation questions, reporting pathways and what counts as valid knowledge, action research offers methods for negotiating these constraints openly. The paper contributes a hopeful account of how evaluation in public sector can become an AR-oriented practice of learning, reflection, action and accountability.

Miller, T. & Flores Darwin, D.E. (2026) *Conquering Knowledge: How Rationality Built the Present — and How We Can Loosen It* (paper)

Keywords: Rationality architecture, inherited logics, sedimentation of the present, diagnostic methodology, onion framework, institutional atmospheres, systemic worldbuilding

Abstract

This seminar introduces a practical diagnostic method for making institutional rationalities visible so practitioners can intervene more effectively in their own systems. Drawing on the conceptual architecture developed in *Excavating the Architecture of the Know*, the session reframes rationality as an infrastructural force that shapes what organisations can perceive, value, and act upon. Through a concise excavation of key historical Turning Points, the presentation shows how metaphysical, epistemic, moral, procedural, and affective logics sediment into contemporary practice, forming the “architecture of the present” that precedes decision-making.

The seminar then introduces the Onion — a diagnostic framework that traces how Turning Points become Layers, how Layers generate Enclosures, and how Enclosures choreograph lived experience. The Onion reveals how coherence, metric, optimisation, proceduralism, and credentialism operate as world-building forces that narrow institutional imagination and pre-format solutions. Using this architecture, the session demonstrates how crises such as climate governance stagnation, housing affordability collapse, and institutional fatigue emerge from inherited logics rather than contemporary failures.

Participants will be actively engaged through short reflection prompts designed for both in-person and remote audiences. These prompts invite practitioners to identify pressures within their own systems and recognise where contradictions accumulate. The session concludes by arguing that meaningful transformation requires architectural visibility: seeing the rationality that precedes the question and formats the answer. The Onion provides a structured way for practitioners to engage in action learning and action research by diagnosing how inherited logics shape their institutional contexts and identifying openings for meaningful change. Rather than proposing a new ideology, the seminar offers a practical method for loosening inherited logics — softening hardened structures so new forms of governance, care, and possibility can emerge.

Molineux, J. (2026) *Design of the Flourish Movement Mixed Methods Action learning intervention* (paper)

Keywords: mixed methods, action learning, intervention, wellbeing, context

Abstract

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to describe a context-specific action learning intervention involving mixed methods design that incorporates a number of innovations to meet the needs of a participant-initiated well-being intervention project which led to an ongoing well-being intervention program for school leaders/principals.

Design/methodology

The design linked a participatory action research approach to design with a context-specific action learning-based multi-modal intervention using multiple quantitative and qualitative methods, including pre- and post-surveys, a diary study, interviews, a buddy system, reflections and evaluations. The intervention included four facilitated whole-day workshops for each group spread over 12 months. A total of 618 participants completed all aspects of the research within 42 groups over a total of nine years.

Findings

Paired sample t-tests showed significantly improved results for outcome measures including work-family balance and well-being. Consistent positive outcomes were achieved across the 42 groups. Evaluative comments from participants detailed the impact of the change, providing confirmation of change.

Implications

The study outcomes have implications for future intervention programs. It shows that involving participants in the design of an intervention program helps ensure context-specific content, and that alignment of methods and processes to the design can produce positive outcomes for participants. It also shows how a participatory action learning approach enables participants to develop their own strategies and outcomes to generate change.

Contributions/originality/value

Key contributions relate to the use of action research processes in designing context-specific intervention programs with mixed research methods. It also shows how diary study data can be reported to individual participants as a catalyst for interview and coaching discussions.

Molloy, T., Heke, S., Bruffy, K. & Ferkins, L. (2026) *Te Arawhiti – Bridging Two Worlds: Advancing Te Tiriti-based Futures in Sport Governance – Exploring A ‘Braided’ Methodology* (paper)

Keywords: Participatory action research, Kaupapa Māori methodology, Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Abstract

Te Arawhiti – Bridging Two Worlds, is a project positioned to answer the research question: *How can Te Tiriti-based futures for sport organisations be advanced through relational leadership practices in sport governance?* Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Te Tiriti) is a founding constitutional agreement between the Crown (representing the settlor-colonials) and Māori tribes (the indigenous peoples). Governing bodies of sport organisations in Aotearoa New Zealand are increasingly motivated to uphold Te Tiriti in ways that extend beyond symbolic inclusion towards structural and relational transformation (Palmer et al., 2023; Sport New Zealand Ihi Aotearoa, 2024). In this paper we explore the ways in which the project’s methodological design can mirror its substantive motivations, to promote partnership and relational and shared leadership as central to sport governance transformation.

Te Arawhiti is conceptualised as a process of ‘bridging’ across the Māori/Tangata Whenua (indigenous) and the Pākehā/Tangata Tiriti (non-indigenous) partners’ worlds, requiring ongoing dialogue, reflexivity, and co-creation (Turei, 2025; Came et al., 2019). It is used metaphorically and conceptually to capture this bridging work, emphasising relationality and development of shared governance futures (Bell, 2024). Methodologically, the research project will be informed by Action Research and Kaupapa Māori Research approaches, supporting co-production of knowledge with sector partners and privileging practice-based insights (Kaukau, 2026; Smith, 2021). Practically, the design involves the selection of three Regional Sports Trusts at different stages of embedding Te Tiriti within their governance practices: one mature, one developing and one immature. It is intended that the data collection and analysis methods will be co-created with the participants in ways that ‘braid’ together (Kaukau, 2026) the voices of Māori and non-Māori in a partnership model. This presentation will share our progress (and challenges) as we work towards this vision.

Mulyasari, R (2026) *Action Mediation: Unpacking Methods for Working from Scratch with Island Women on Renewable Energy* (paper)

Keywords: Action mediation, women's empowerment, renewable energy, participatory methods

Abstract

As part of the POWERE (Participation of Women in Renewable Energy) project, I have spent the past year working with women seaweed farmers on the Tamparang Islands in South Sulawesi, Indonesia, in preparation for the installation of floating solar photovoltaic (FPV) technology. We developed an action mediation programme to support women's participation through collective learning, knowledge exchange, and problem-solving. Working from scratch presented methodological challenges, as there was no existing women's group and limited experience of collective organising around technology and energy. Drawing on ethnographic and participatory approaches, I unpack how action mediation can cultivate collective engagement by building the social and relational conditions through which women develop shared knowledge, recognise collective concerns, and work together around renewable energy.

Ogawa, A., Choo, B., Laguna-Alberdi, A., Gómez Aurioles, L., Brady, J., Chow, A. M. & Mikami, A.

***Co-generating Sustainable and Inclusive Futures:
Emerging Action Research from a Doctoral Seminar Community (panel
presentation)***

Panel Abstract:

Over the past decade, the Action Research seminar at the University of Melbourne has cultivated a vibrant community of emerging scholars dedicated to participatory, change-oriented research strategies. This panel directly addresses the theme of “Sustainable and Inclusive Futures” by exploring how early-career researchers navigate positionality, power dynamics, and co-generative knowledge production across highly diverse global contexts. The panellists will present case studies that highlight the methodological flexibility and democratic ethos of Action Research in solving complex real-world problems. Presentations will showcase innovative approaches and insights. By reflecting on their iterative cycles of planning, action, and reflection, the panellists will discuss both the pragmatic challenges and the transformative potential of their work. Ultimately, this panel demonstrates how embedding democratic collaboration within higher education empowers researchers and local stakeholders alike to actively co-design more equitable and sustainable futures.

To be followed by six presentations from the above panel members (other than A. Ogawa).

Orejudos, A., Joya, G. & Santos, E.C.S. (2026) *Community Gardening as a Sustainable Intervention to Improve the Nutritional Status of Underweight Indigenous Children* (paper)

Keywords: Community health nursing, indigenous child health, malnutrition, stunting, participatory action research

Abstract

Malnutrition remains one of the leading public health concerns among indigenous communities, particularly among children. Many indigenous families experience food insecurity, limited access to nutritious foods, poverty, and geographical isolation, all of which contribute to under nutrition of children ages 5 to 10 yrs old. Children who are underweight tend to have increased risk of impaired physical growth, weakened immunity, delayed cognitive development, and poor academic performance.

Community gardening is a sustainable, low-cost intervention that can improve household food security by increasing the availability of fresh vegetables while promoting nutrition education and community participation. Through this activity, collaborative gardening with indigenous families can develop skills in food production, improve dietary diversity, and enhance the nutritional well-being of their children and school performance.

This action research conducted by community health nursing instructors and students seeks to co-design, implement and evaluate a community gardening program with indigenous families, community leaders and organisations. The aim is to improve child nutritional status and promote indigenously sourced and sustainably healthy eating practices in their community. The initial results of the action research will be presented along with lessons learned and plans for replication and scaling-up.

Parrish, B (2026) *Action Mediation as Pragmatist Participation: Inclusive Energy Innovation in Seaweed Farming Communities in Indonesia* (paper)

Keywords: Action mediation, philosophical pragmatism, participatory methods, renewable energy, social innovation, women's empowerment

Abstract

As part of the POWERE (Participation of Women in Renewable Energy) project our collaborative research team has spent the last year working with three communities of seaweed farmers on a small cluster of islands in the South Sulawesi Sea to prepare for the installation of village-owned marine floating solar stations. Using ethnographic action research and action learning methods we have been working with women's groups to lead the co-design and co-management on behalf of the wider communities. Drawing on insights from philosophical pragmatism, I present a reflection on the transformations we have observed. We use the term "action mediation" to describe the unique capacity the groups have developed, and I discuss the implications of this for inclusive participation in community infrastructure projects more widely.

Santos, E.C.S. (2026) *Logos Dynamics: When the Problem is the Problem* (workshop)

Keywords: Inherited logics, logos dynamics, mental models, systems thinking

Summary of workshop

Purpose of workshop: We often jump into problem-solving mode or “solutioning” when faced with a problem, even while undertaking participatory action research. We (that includes the action researcher, participants, and other stakeholders) immediately apply mental models that we presume to be self-evident, without reflecting on how these pre-dispose us to certain types of solutions. This could result in us trying out a limited set of solutions that are merely designed to optimise an existing system or tinkering around its edges without really addressing the underlying cause of the problem.

The purpose of this workshop is to expose the role of inherited logics of a system to allow action researchers and practitioners to undertake a preliminary investigation of these at the start of their projects to ensure that they do not fall into the trap of path dependency. This ultimately leads to solutions that are more sustainable and inclusive.

How participants will be involved: Participants of this workshop will work within their groups to construct a problem, examine their framing of it, re-examine this through various methods, participate in re-framing it from different perspectives, and reflect on their insights with the larger group.

What participants will learn: Participants will learn how to frame and re-frame problems within action learning and action research projects using logos dynamics for a more sustainable and inclusive outcome. This can help them improve the quality of their research by refining their problem statement through an iterative process of framing, breaking frame, reframing, and re-integrating frame.

Abstract

Many groups that are confronted with perennial or “wicked problems” often go into “solution mode” very quickly without reflecting on their understanding of the problem and explicitly questioning their underlying assumptions. This could lead to a kind of “group think” where solutions follow a well-trodden path, because this is “the way we do things around here.”

When there is not enough examination of our framing of the problem, solutions may tend to tinker around the edges without addressing the underlying structure. This could occur even in an action learning cycle or agile project where we iterate solutions rapidly but remain stuck on the same track. In a world that is increasingly BANI (Brittle, Anxious, Non-linear and Incomprehensible), the framing of the problem becomes the problem itself, as solutions are limited within this frame. It is at this point that people say, we must “think outside the box.” Research has found that knowing we must think outside the box, doesn’t help us in doing it. Creative solutions often come when we reflect on self-imposed constraints that come from “inherited logics” or assumptions we take for granted.

This workshop is intended to provide action researchers and action learning practitioners with an understanding of “logos dynamics”, a way of reflecting on and questioning the way we frame problems. This will allow participants to achieve breakthroughs in the way they tackle problems, by “breaking frame and making frame.”

Through practical examples constructed by participants, the workshop will guide them through the process of achieving this. Participants will walk away with a better grasp of the tools and techniques for gaining an “optimal grip” of the situation when cycling through an action research project. This workshop is designed to help a range of participants, from those that are new to action research to experienced practitioners.

Sim, D. & Kaur, H. (2026) *The Impact of Microteaching on Confidence and Pedagogical Strength in Beginning Teachers* (paper)

Keywords: Impact of Microteaching on Confidence and Pedagogical Strength in Beginning Teachers

Abstract

This Action Research (AR) explores the impact of Microteaching (MT) on the confidence and pedagogical strength of Beginning Teachers (BTs) at Temasek Secondary School. The study investigates how structured microteaching sessions influence BTs' professional growth, teaching competence, and confidence. Drawing from the experiences of three BTs with three years of teaching experience, this research seeks to understand how microteaching nurtures reflective practice, strengthens pedagogical reasoning, and supports the development of teacher identity. Findings reveal that microteaching provides BTs with opportunities to refine their teaching craft in a supportive environment, apply theoretical knowledge to practical contexts, and develop confidence through feedback and collaboration. The study underscores the importance of microteaching as a professional development strategy that enhances teacher learning and aligns with the Singapore Teacher Growth Model (TGM).

Siscawati, M (2026) *Hear Our Voice: A Reflection on Rural Coastal Women's Field Schools in Indonesia and its Relevance for Community Energy Futures* (paper)

Keywords: Coastal women, renewable energy, feminist political ecology, sympathetic knowledge, participatory methods

Abstract

From the experience of coastal women's field schools in different regions of Indonesia, I reflect on the participation of women in building renewable energy communities. This included facilitating the development of women's action learning groups to prepare them for substantive involvement in decision making and managing community-based renewable energy facilities. For this reflection I apply feminist political ecology and sympathetic knowledge approaches using qualitative data collected through ethnography and participatory methods, including the self reflections of participants.

Smit, I (2026) *Guiding Novice Python Programmers to Navigate Learning to Code in an Era of Generative Artificial Intelligence (paper)*

Keywords: Computing Education, Generative Artificial Intelligence (genAI), Novice Programming, Problem-based Learning

Abstract

At a multi-campus South African university, many first-year students – particularly at one of the campuses – come from disadvantaged backgrounds, with limited exposure to computing and programming. These students typically face challenges such as late registration, financial constraints, resulting in restricted access to devices and reliable internet. These barriers create a learning bottleneck, leading students to rely on genAI to produce Python code scripts. By simply inputting problem instructions supplied by the lecturer and copying the genAI generated solutions, students engage in minimal learning. Although genAI is very proficient in the art of coding, it needs to be effectively guided by a proficient programmer.

This study aims to provide the grounding for guiding novice Python programmers in navigating their learning. Since genAI is progressing at a rapid pace, and students enter university while being more reliant on genAI as time progress, this guidance needs to be adjusted according to recent developments and should be ongoing. The five phases Action Research cycle by Susman and Evered of Diagnosis, Plan, and Take Action, Evaluate, and Learning Specified, is deemed suitable to guide this complex longitudinal project, where a team of academics, researchers and post graduate students will make contributions. Its iterative nature allows each year's offering to contribute to the refinement of theory and drive improvement. Its active engagement of stakeholders such as students, academics, ethical gatekeepers, and future employers, fosters collaboration. Within each cycle multiple methods may be utilised to fulfill requirements of the phases in combination.

As a point of departure, the first phase, diagnosing the problem, will be addressed to allow subsequent phases to act on its findings regarding the state of students' reliance on genAI from an ethical stance – to guide improvement, along with a plan to guide the focus of the first three years of the study.

Veldsmen, A. *Designing Mahi Tahī Action Learning with Tertiary Students with Hidden Disabilities in Aotearoa, New Zealand* (paper)

Keywords: Hidden disabilities, tertiary students, Mahi tahi, agency, self-advocacy, neurodiversity, inclusive tertiary education, social model of disability

Abstract

Tertiary students with hidden disabilities, such as neurodivergence, mental health conditions and chronic illness, frequently encounter stigma, misunderstanding and barriers to accessing effective support in Aotearoa New Zealand. This pilot project, Transformation through Mahi Tahī, investigates how participatory action research (PAR) can enhance agency and self-advocacy among tertiary students with hidden disabilities while laying foundations for more inclusive institutional practice.

Guided by the social model of disability and kaupapa Māori principles of mahi tahi, whanaungatanga and manaakitanga, the study positions students as co-researchers who identify challenges, co-construct strategies and reflect on their impact. Using purposive sampling, the project will recruit tertiary students with long-term hidden disabilities (diagnosed or undiagnosed) from across Aotearoa. Data will be generated through an anonymous electronic questionnaire (AUT Qualtrics) to map key challenges and needs, followed by two phases of asynchronous online discussion forums where participants respond to guided prompts, share experiences and develop collective insights.

Qualitative analysis will follow an inductive, Creswell-informed approach, including iterative coding, theme development and triangulation across questionnaires and forums, with member checking to support credibility. The study attends carefully to both procedural and relational ethics when working with a small, potentially identifiable group of tertiary students with hidden disabilities, ensuring voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity or pseudonymity, and access to support when sensitive topics cause distress. It also foregrounds Te Tiriti o Waitangi and kaupapa Māori values such as mahi tahi and manaakitanga, treating students as partners and knowledge-holders, and using ongoing reflexivity to navigate power dynamics, insider status and the respectful use of participants' stories. As a pilot, the project also aims to generate a methodological and conceptual platform for future, larger-scale studies. This presentation focuses on the project design, methodological and ethical considerations, and planned action learning cycles; detailed empirical findings will be reported in subsequent work.

Wadsworth, Y. (2026) *Understanding what Yoland Wadsworth's Transdisciplinary Theory of Action Research as 'Living Systems Inquiry' Might Offer – a Q&A Small Group Roundtable*

Keywords: Meta-epistemology, living systems inquiry, transdisciplinary, full cycle science

Summary of roundtable

Purpose of workshop: To illuminate the theory of how we find that complex systems can change—or don't, as presented in the 2026 book: *Human Inquiry for Living Systems: Building in Research and Evaluation for Life* (2nd ed. by Yoland Wadsworth

What you will do: I Yoland the author, will facilitate the roundtable and respond initially to the questions (which we'll collect in a round robin), and then invite others present to question further or build on the answers further using the theory if they would like to

How participants will be involved: the questions will be the participants', as will be further answers they'd like to add

What participants will learn: Participants might hope to better see the connections between the often-separate bodies of knowledge that come together in this transdisciplinary theory – and how this might illuminate or contribute new (or resee familiar) ways of seeing their own past experience or thinking about new ways in future

Abstract

Over a long practice-based research career of more than 50 years spent working with thousands of participants and projects large and small and aided by more than a decade of academic scholarship, Yoland Wadsworth wrote three popular, surprise best-selling, never-out-of-print books: *Do It Yourself Social Research*, *Everyday Evaluation on the Run*, and *Human Inquiry for Living Systems: Building in Research and Evaluation for Life* – all republished by Routledge in new editions as a trilogy in 2006. (The 1st edition of the latter book was titled: *Building in Research and Evaluation: Human Inquiry for Living Systems*.)

The first two books demystified research and evaluation and were succinct, accessible and written in a conversational style. The third set out to demystify systems thinking in relation to communities using applied action research to achieve desired change for good. To address the various difficulties of change encountered, Yoland found herself generating a ground-breaking new theory. But systems are by nature complex – and for many readers so was Yoland's book!

We will focus on the third book – either edition (1st or 2nd) will be ok for our purposes.

This is the chance to ask Yoland anything that might help better understand the nature, practical consequences and broader contextual implications of the theory. For example, one conclusion may be that action research is far from being just a simple 'alternative method' on a list, or even an optional methodology, but instead may be seen through the lens of this theory to be the way all of life lives, all forms form, and all processes remain continuously dynamic. Here's some starter questions: why doesn't the term 'action research' appear in any of the titles?! Why is there a teapot on the cover of the 3rd book?! And aren't Great Big Theories of Everything dangerous?