



Action Learning, Action Research Association Inc. 2018 Action Learning, Action Research and Participatory Action Research World Congress

**Norwich University
Vermont USA
June 17-20 2018**

Introduction

Ninety-one participants from eleven countries attended the Action Learning, Action Research and Participatory Action Research World Congress in June 2018. The World Congress was the first ALARA had held both in the USA and in partnership with Norwich University (at which an ALARA Chapter commenced the previous year). Many of the first-time ALARA event participants were surprised by, and expressed delight in, the openness and support provided by experienced participants.

The Congress participants were a mix of experienced AL / AR practitioners and graduating students from Norwich Master programs, who had undertaken action research projects as part of those programs.

A primary attraction for the Congress was the quality of keynote presenters. Many experienced practitioners commented on the presentations of these presenters, who were:

- Her Excellency, Prof Alidou Hassana
- Dr Hilary Bradbury
- Prof Jack Whitehead
- Dr Mary Brydon-Miller
- Dr Ernie Stringer

Promotion

Norwich University developed a promotional video for inclusion on the Congress and ALARA websites, which was one of the many contributions made by Norwich and its staff in making this event successful. ALARA sent emails to over 1,500 people known to be interested in Action Learning / Action Research, and arranged publication of the Congress on four conference-promoting websites. Dr Pelletier promoted the Congress across Norwich University and associated organisations. Dr Tetteh also emailed a large number of universities in USA and Canada with Action Research affiliations.

Program Schedule

The Congress commenced with an opening event on the Sunday where William H. Clements, PhD, Vice President and Dean, College of Graduate and Continuing Studies, welcomed participants. The following morning, Dr Richard W. Schneider, Rear Admiral USCGR (Ret.), Norwich University's President, delivered his official welcome, after which the five keynote presenters engaged the participants.

Participants attended over thirty concurrent presentations, workshops and seminars, and five poster presentations over the three days of the Congress. A program for the Congress is available on the [ALARA website](#).

Presenters were from most of the countries represented in the audience. Their topics were broad, within the five streams of:

1. Action Learning, Action Research Experiences of Individuals
2. Action Learning, Action Research Experiences of Professionals
3. Action Learning, Action Research for Communities' Developments
4. Action Learning, Action Research for Organizational Advancements
5. Action Learning, Action Research for Global Initiatives

The last session of the Congress was a Panel Debate, chaired by Dr Victor Friedman. This session was a great success and an excellent way to end the Congress. Dr Friedman invited the keynote presentations to sit at the front of the room on high stools to commence the discussion. He then invited the participants to swap with the keynote presenters on a rotating process by taking the chairs at the front of the room to continue the discussion.

Conduct

The program ran very smoothly, with minor problems on the evening of the welcome event due to the relocation of the venue (some university staff were unaware of the new location). The rooms for the concurrent sessions proved to be most appropriate for the size of the audience at each session.

The unexpected heat of the Monday made the sessions on that day difficult, but the weather cooled by the next day.

Support

A large number of people supported the preparation and conduct of the World Congress including the following.

- Marcia Beaulieu
- William H. Clements
- Stephen L. Fitzhugh
- Brian Hoar
- Edward P. Kohn
- Ashley Legacy
- Robyn Lynn
- Michael B. McGinnis
- Charles F. Nettleship
- Dr Richard W. Schneider
- Jon Sherbatskoy
- George J. Silowash
- Aron Temkin
- Regina Tetteh
- Dr Cheryl Waterman
- Lauren Wobby
- Amanda Brigham
- James M. Ehrman
- Jennifer K. Gagnon
- Christopher Hoar
- John A. Kunelius
- Megan C. Liptak
- Prof Tome Mapotse
- Dr John Molineux
- Lawrence J. Rooney
- Jeff Schulz
- Jacqueline Shiner
- Phillip T. Susmann
- Dr Emmanuel Tetteh
- North Waringa
- Debra R. Wick

Also supporting the World Congress were the following scientific streams / track panel reviewers of submitted papers.

- Dr Michael Akintayo
- Dr Diane Dayson
- Dr Susan Goff
- Prof Neeta Jayant
- Prof Saravan Krishnamurthy
- T.K. Mashiloane
- Dr John Molineux
- Colin Bradley
- Dr Sophia Gaikwad
- Prof M.T. Gumbo
- Dr Brian K. Jennings
- Prof Tomé Awshar Mapotse
- Dr Milton Milaras
- Dr Samuel Peasah

- Dr Michelle Redman-MacLaren
- Dr Amanda Smith
- Prof Emmanuel Tetteh
- Dr Christian Ukaga
- Marius Venter
- Prof Jack Whitehead
- Dr Linda Roseburr
- Dr Greta R. Strong
- Dr Molaodi Tshelane
- Dr Vicki Vaartjes
- Prof T. Volkodav
- Dr Robert Wright

Sponsors

The World Congress was well supported by several sponsors, advertisers: and donors.

- Global Centre for Work-Applied Learning
- NIGP The Institute for Public Procurement
- Sage Publishing
- Dr Emmanuel Tetteh
- IETF, Cisco, ICANN
- Dr Jack Whitehead

Not obvious from these lists or the financial summary below is the large number of important contributions made by Norwich University.

We thank these generous acts of support for the World Congress. We hope that all those who contributed were satisfied by the Congress's outcomes, communications and networking.

Financial

The Organizing Committee had expected a much larger audience, and the original budget reflected that expectation. Reduced registrations (discussed below) necessitated many changes to the schedule, including moving the welcome event and the concurrent sessions to smaller venues.

Through excellent management by the Congress administrator (Marcia Beaulieu), tremendous support by Dr Ro Pelletier and her team at Norwich, and distribution of some costs to other activities, the loss on the Congress was reduced to \$4,299 (USD). A summary of the income and expenditure is provided below and a more comprehensive report is available on request.

Income			
Registrations / Accommodation		\$24,239	
Congress Dinner		1,600	
Advertising / Sponsorship / Donation		<u>3,878</u>	\$29,717
Expenses			
Plenary Speakers		\$ 6,512	
Administration / Congress Staff		11,000	
Entertainment		1,000	
Accommodation		6,865	
Venue / Food / Beverage		5,001	
Congress Dinner		1,388	
Other costs		<u>2,250</u>	
			<u>34,016</u>
Net Loss			-\$4,299

ALARA and Norwich University will share the loss.

Feedback

ALARA executives led two reflection sessions at the end of the first two days, at which the participants made many comments (refer Appendix). The final Panel Debate, as mentioned above, was also an opportunity for participants to comment on the Congress, and many comments were highly supportive and complimentary. The desire expressed by many for increasing the awareness of action research in the community was encouraging.

Reflection on the Congress

The Congress was as the ALARA executive had hoped – high levels of communication, support and involvement by all participants in the sessions. The only disappointment was the relatively low number of participants.

Three people whose proposals were accepted withdrew when their universities declined to fund their attendance. At least one other person commented on the cost to attend and stay at the Congress location, while another commented on the distance between the closest available accommodation (at the time that person booked) and the University. It seems that the low cost of the dormitories (on-site) was not attractive enough for some of the potential participants.

Countering these views of getting to the venue was both the beauty of Vermont, Northfield and Norwich University and welcome expressed by so many during the Congress.

Lessons Gained

All aspects of the Congress, with the exception of the number of participants, worked well. The co-hosting of the Congress helped the relationship between Norwich and ALARA, although both organisations can gain much more from continuing their relationship.

The extensive promotion of the Congress did not translate into high numbers of registrations. Some non-registrations may have arisen from the competition caused by the ARNA Conference in San Diego two weeks later. ALARA attempted to gain ARNA's participation in the Congress, but that network chose to hold a separate event.

The location, cost of travel to that location, perceived cost of accommodation, and in some cases, lack of support by universities were possible contributing factors in lowering the number of registrations.

The Organizing Committee considered using a teleconferencing arrangement, but the cost of this arrangement was very prohibitive. The Committee could not utilize one option, sourced by Prof Pelletier, as the company had a conflicting event.

ALARA may need to investigate ways to conduct future events incorporating teleconferencing to expand the audience. Smaller events, with smaller costs, are also possible, and Norwich's ALARA Chapter is investigating holding such events in 2019.

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Program Director
Master of Public Administration
Master of Science in Information Security and Assurance
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Colin Bradley
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Appendix

Comments provided by participants at the four reflection sessions.

- Sharing 1st person in stories of 3rd person AR
- Learning from the best practices, then networking to explore other different avenues
- Validation of the work of our group and of our hope for a more just world – wish they all could be here!
- Giggle, laugh and point, then try to explain AR to undergrads, even though I am flummoxed myself
- Action research is based on empirical evidence, and provides better outcome in problem solving
- International networks already exist that want us to join – want to make it happen for my university
- Other people are working on related things
- We need to link to each other's websites
- It's a marathon and a lifestyle
- Sometimes feel the fragility of the work: we need young action-researchers!
- Seen how AR has been used to make a difference in the lives of many – to always remember the greater cause
- The sessions were illuminating and full of knowledge and wisdom which I hope to use
- Living theories to use in developing self to improve ability to be involved in AR
- Email presenters to request slides
- Availability of abstracts
- Hilary's Power, Love, Inquiry is a great process to transform thinking
- Research and political intervention
- Open agenda – explicit
- Turning –ve into +ve
- People going into details about their projects
- Participation was strong
- Sessions motivated , encouraged me to return home to start my own research project
- To look at the problems I can address in my profession
- To look at the I, community's interests – stakeholders
- Inspired by colleagues' work and connectedness at professional level
- Quality research
- Recognizing the respectful participation and contributions of participant "audiences"
- Creating sharing opportunities that produced growth and understanding
- Connecting with people and their ideas about issues close to my heart and in my mind
- Posing difficult questions that don't have easy answers
- That "eyes" that is seen , that is seen by
- "If action research were tennis" Colin Henry's point from his evaluation of the 1st World Congress make explicit the principles that distinguish your enquiry as Action Research

- Encourage audience participation and engagement on equal terms
- Nathalis was very clear about the story he wanted to tell and because he started with his own story, I felt the session connected very well (and deeply)
- How do I ensure that what I write helps readers learn
- Importance of developing and maintaining relationships and comms
- Doing AR on ourselves at a Congress – look at what we are doing
- Willingness to be accountable for our sharing of what we are doing
- Taking risks and taking leadership
- Make space for new leaders
- Take on tough issues
- Meeting lots of people – connectedness
- AR is for service to community
- ALARA has power /capacity to deal with difficult comm issues
- What is the 'special issue' that is the W/Congress, so people can work on over 2 years and bring to the W/C and share the stories
- Connection between AR communities
- Spend more and more time be academic – with not enough distribution of knowledge and ethics
- Find new ways to communicate amongst AR
- How do we create framework to allow knowledge to be hard
- Need a co-ordinator for ALARA You-Tube channel
- Need community to be involved – so not overkill – to help find answers to our problems
- Identify more research problems in the world
- How to develop the linkages to deal with these research problems
- How do we create ecology of knowledge to appreciation of the work being done
- Project develops in size and complexity as students go through years of education
- Big variety of things that fit in the container of action research
- Degree is where you build the strength to do big important things
- Degree goes on shelf – the important thing is the research – not the written work; it is the community of inquiry that stay in touch (asking how do we do this /that?)
- Research (and academia) must make a difference
- AR e.g.s of academia helping practitioners
- What are the opportunities to develop this connection between academia and practitioners
- Your experiences contribute to your knowledge and what you can offer
- How do we synthesis the knowledge that exists (e.g., categorise the articles that exist)
- What can ALARA collaborate with others to help with communication / collaboration
- Can see walking off campus and out of AL/AR world as do not have capacity to continue
- Challenge is helping those with ideas but no outlet for those ideas
- The world and my relationship with my world is changing as I progress my studies

- To what extent are we learning from these situations
- My commitment is to not stop
- A knowledge from everyone
- Anyone can contribute to the knowledge base
- Have to be committed to being a lifelong learner
- People at home do not understand the language of AR
- Glad made lots of connections
- Going home with lots of knowledge, contacts
- Actions start in small ways by individuals
- Participatory AR allows to start small, giving people power to develop great societies
- Session shows democracy in AR
- Sustaining dialogues for years after study ends
- Demand that educational institutions give genuine learning
- Caring, compassion and action
- Local knowledge
- Must be useful to ourselves and to the world
- Should be able to connect websites
- Stagnation in our community
- Hopeful of going forward with what we are doing
- Recognise deep anxiety to make social change