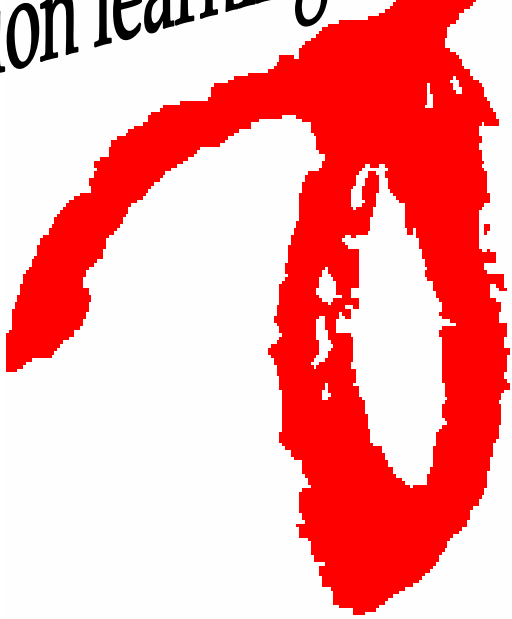


# ALAR

Action learning and action research journal



Volume 12 No 1 2007  
Special Pre-conference Edition



**ALAR Journal Vol 12 No 1 Special Pre-conference Edition 2007**



*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, peaceful and sustainable society.*

# ALAR Journal

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Special Pre-conference Edition

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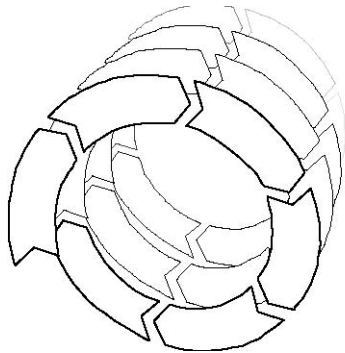
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Welcome to this ALARPM pre-conference special edition. In this edition, we draw you, our members and readers, into the conversations and themes of the up and coming National Conference, as both participants and witnesses to the ongoing development of action learning and action research in contemporary society. This is particularly so for those members unable to attend the conference itself, to be held in Adelaide, South Australia, August 8<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>.

We have brought together some of the voices that have both shaped and supported the organisation of the conference up to this point, namely and most specially, Janet Kelly, Helen Murray and Kim O'Donnell, the conference organisers. Janet, Helen and Kim have been ably supported by the dynamic 'Team SA' to bring the conference to life.

It is with great pleasure that we present to you this of conference abstracts; a map of thematic texture and purpose, as presenters set about to challenge their – and I hope your – understandings of AR and AL through an exploration of Indigenous ways of knowing and doing, which is interwoven with other broad conference themes of environment, health and education.

ALARPM National Vice President, Susan Goff, offers her thoughts on the conference and how it has taken shape over the last few months, through the work of Team SA. Also included is a timely reflective piece by Janet McIntyre, who reviewed many of the abstracts for the conference. Janet draws on the broad conference themes of education, health and environment that are woven through the abstracts; a rich tapestry of conversations set to emerge over the three-



day event. Other voices include Judy Atkinson and Vesper Tjukonai, both of whom offer some words of wisdom about Indigenous ways of knowing and doing at a time when Australia and her people perhaps need to hear these words the most.

An interview with Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt is also included. Ortrun will be presenting at the conference. The English version of the interview (first published in Spanish) was presented to ALARj with kind permission from Ortrun and co-author, Professor Doris Santos, convener of the International Symposium *Action Research and Education in Context of Poverty* held in Bogotá, Columbia, as a tribute to Professor Orlando Fals Borda and his contribution to the field of AR.

We've also included a conference registration form for those of you who may be tempted by these voices and abstracts to make a last-minute dash to join the conversations *in person*, at Tauondi College in Adelaide!

Margaret O'Connell  
Managing Editor, *ALARj*

# **ALARPM National Annual Conference 2007**

The Action Learning, Action Research and Process  
Management Association presents

*National Conference 2007*

**Moving forward together  
enhancing the wellbeing of people and  
communities  
through Action Research and Action Learning**

to be held at

**Tauondi College, Adelaide, South Australia**

**9 and 10 August 2007**

**Pre-conference workshops 8 August 2007**

Topic areas include education, environment, health and  
Aboriginal ways of knowing and doing.

- A multi-disciplinary conference focussing on collaborative ways of knowing and experiencing action research and action learning.
- For community groups and services, workers, volunteers, researchers, professionals, educators, policymakers and managers.

- An interactive conference with a range of themes, disciplines and learning, teaching and information sharing styles including:
  - Special interest yarning and discussion groups
  - Peer reviewed papers
  - Poster sessions
  - Meeting Place stalls

For more information please see website:  
**[www.alarpm.org.au](http://www.alarpm.org.au)**

or contact

<p>ALARPM office:  <a href="mailto:admin@alarpm.org.au">admin@alarpm.org.au</a>          Action Learning, Action Research          and Process Management Assoc          Inc</p> <p>Brisbane QLD          Tel: (07) 3342 1668</p>	<p>Merridy Malin:  <a href="mailto:merridy.malin@ahcsa.org.au">merridy.malin@ahcsa.org.au</a>          Aboriginal Health Council of South          Australia Inc</p> <p>78 Fullarton Road          Norwood SA 5067          Tel: (08) 8132 6700</p>
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### **Call for Presentations - information**

The 2007 action learning/ action research conference aims to provide a space where community groups and services, workers, volunteers, researchers, professionals, educators, policymakers and managers can come together to share knowledge and experiences in safe and respectful ways.

There are three broad strands or themes of education, environmental and health, with a strong emphasis throughout the conference on recognising Aboriginal ways

of knowing and doing. Other areas of interest may include action research in developing countries, issues for business, law, economics, empowerment, capacity building and or livelihoods.

There is a range of presentation and interaction styles being encouraged. These include:

- **Pre-conference workshops**

Workshops will be held on Wednesday 8 August at Tauondi or at alternate sites.

- **Presentations**

Presentations can be by single or joint authors. Presentation time will be 30 or 45 minutes (depending on time frames) with 10 minutes for discussion.

First time presenters very welcome. Please indicate on *Call for Presentations* form overleaf.

- **Peer reviewed paper**

A more formal academic paper, that will be peer reviewed. Presenters will be encouraged to submit a paper prior to the conference to be posted on the website for conference delegates to read and consider. The ALARj will also be calling for papers following the conference.

- **Interactive sessions**

There is a range of interactive session styles that can be used. These include (but are not limited to) round table discussions around a pre determined topic, brainstorming around an issue of concern to a group of people (this may be generated before or during the conference), information café where participants share their thoughts about a topic by writing on butchers' paper covering a table, and then half of

them moving onto another group in the room, thus sharing information in small groups.

- **Meeting place/market place stalls**

People are invited to share information, pamphlets, art and crafts, have a book stall, discuss a project, and promote courses, university opportunities, resources etc during meal breaks. (No cost for conference participants, catering costs for non-conference participants).

- **Posters**

Posters will be displayed throughout the conference, and participants invited to discuss them during the lengthy meal breaks. Posters may be formal laminated posters or other creative forms.

A **Conference registration form** is available at the end of this special edition; it is not too late to register!

# Message from the National Vice President of ALARPM

## ALARPM

*Creating more equitable, just, joyful, productive, peaceful and sustainable societies.*

Janet Kelly is sitting opposite me, on a hotel room bed, cup of tea in one hand while the other weaves serpent-like through the air: 'It's that kind of flow' she says, smiling radiantly 'when things you could never have foreseen suddenly appear, click into place and you know without doubt, that what you are doing is right.'

I won't tell you Janet's amazing story about her moment when she knew that Team SA's ideas for ALARPM's 2007 National Conference all clicked into place. The story is part of the conference's mystery and belongs to the team. It belongs to their life stories, which reach back through so many pathways of struggle, hope beyond endurance which we all share, friendships and betrayals. What I can say is that like so many action research practitioners, I understand that moment when synchronicity appears and energies flow. Effort gives way to being, and being feels strong, interconnected and authentic.

The abstracts included in this journal each reflect an aspect of this energised authenticity, flowing from heritage, through the conference team, into the contributions of the participants, and on into the myriads of outcomes that this wonderful conference is poised to generate. They will give the reader some inkling of the great range and depth of knowledge that the participants will bring to life in

Adelaide, held within our constructions of action research and learning, as described, for example, in the Santos Zuber-Skerritt article in this edition.

At this time, when we are hearing of the Federal Government's extraordinary takeover of Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory, it seems to me that never was there a more urgent time to embrace each other and turn to face the multiple constructions of our cross cultural relationships through truly participatory approaches, rich with learning. The time is right to explore our cultural constructions of action research and action learning. It is entirely fitting that the question of whom we are when we stand together in participation is the question that Team SA has gently posited for our engagement. It is an urgent question of our shared spirit and mind; foundational to the quality of presence we create together within this Australian landscape.

ALARPM is grateful for and admiring of the work that Team SA has completed. We are proud to stand with them and Tauondi College in partnership for this event. We also sincerely thank the gathering sponsors who are supporting the participation of many whose engagement will make the event all the more powerful.

Susan Goff

National Vice President, ALARPM

# **Yarnin up action research to make a difference in the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal peoples - Janet Kelly and Kim O'Donnell**

## **Reflections from the ALARPM National Conference Organisers**

This article reflects our collaborative planning of the 2007 Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management conference, where the principles of action learning, collaborative practice and process management guided our activity.

Janet Kelly, Helen Murray and Kim O'Donnell 'clicked' when they met at Flinders University, South Australia in 2005. Even though they came from very different backgrounds, they found many similar interests and concerns. Janet originally comes from Kangaroo Island, is a mother, a community health nurse, and a PhD candidate searching for ways to make health services more Nunga friendly, particularly for Aboriginal women.

Helen Murray is a mother, grandmother, and the 'Elder' of the three, with a passion for learning about Aboriginal ways of knowing and doing. She weaves in and out of 'blackfulla' and 'whitefulla' ways with ease, always searching for respectful ways to bring people together toward improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people.



Kim O'Donnell is a mother and Wiimpatja woman from the Barkindji nation in far Western NSW. She grew up in Wilcannia, Sydney and Dubbo and is Chair of the Mutawintji National Park Board of Management. Mutawintji is her mother's country, located 130 km north east of Broken Hill and is the first national park in NSW to be handed back to the Wiimpatja owner families via a Joint Management process in 1998. Kim is also the Research Associate for a national project funded by the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health (CRAH) - 'Good Practice in Funding and Regulation of PHC Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples'.



*Some of the members of Team SA: L-R, Amanda, Janet, Kim, Helen and Syd.*

Janet, Helen and Kim first came together because of their similarities and they continue to celebrate the opportunities for learning and action offered by their different life experiences, personal, professional and research journeys.

## **Moving forward together**

The specific focus for the 2007 Action Learning Action Research Process Management conference, *Moving Forward Together and Supporting Aboriginal Ways of Knowing and Doing*,

first evolved when these three women pooled their knowledge, skills, abilities and networks to create a rich and productive learning and action environment. Their ideas and subsequent actions emerged through 'yarnin up' between themselves and other key people such as Ernie Stringer, about the challenges of ethical research and practices between blackfullas and whitefullas. They tapped into their own personal struggles coming to grips with good research practice, and the desire to make positive differences.

## **Meeting place**

From their yarnin up, a question was posed: 'What would a meeting place that promoted and supported action research and action learning, and that incorporated Aboriginal ways of knowing and doing, look and feel like?' This thinking became a reality when Ernie Stringer invited these three women (on behalf of ALARPM), to coordinate the next national Action Learning Action Research Process Management conference in Adelaide 2007. This gave them the opportunity to create a learning place and space that they and others envisioned.

In August 2006, Janet, Helen and Kim started to plan a conference that could 'yarn up' the strengths of action learning, action research and process management in regards to education, health, the environment, business, management, law and lore systems and Aboriginal ways of knowing and doing. The networking and organising team based in Adelaide grew to include people from all three South Australian Universities, the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health and the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre, as well as people from health, education, environment sectors. This dynamic group of people with a wide range of skills, knowledge and experiences became 'Team SA'. One of the first tasks was to

find a suitable venue that could support the intentions of the conference. After much consideration, Tauondi College was chosen. Tauondi College is an independent Australian Aboriginal controlled and managed post-secondary college established in 1973, which provides adult education<sup>1</sup> for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders<sup>2</sup>.

Over the next six months a close and reciprocal partnership emerged between Team SA, Tauondi College and ALARPM management and executive. Planning the conference has been underpinned by a deep respect for people, time, place, cultures and process. Very diverse people have been able to come together, bringing their individual and collective skills, knowledge, priorities, and visions to make a very exciting whole. It has been, from the beginning, a very enriching process of moving forwards together, with each group benefiting and learning something new.

In our current political climate here in Australia, one cannot overstate the importance of finding ways to move forwards together that are mutually acceptable and beneficial for all involved. In our fortieth year since the referendum on Indigenous rights of sufferance, there is great need for Australians to work together to challenge segregating and dividing colonisation practices, policies and perspectives that have continued, and even appear to be escalating.

There are so many people in many different areas doing positive, collaborative and creative things 'out there'. This conference creates a space where we can come together, hear from each other, share our knowledge, celebrate what has worked, discuss what has not, and be re-invigorated to go out there and try again.

---

<sup>1</sup> Visit [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adult\\_education](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adult_education) for a definition of *adult education*.

<sup>2</sup> Visit [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torres\\_Strait\\_Islander](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Torres_Strait_Islander) for more information about *Torres Strait Islanders*.

We welcome you to join us in our vision. No matter what your interest area is, we invite you to come and join us as we move forwards together.

See you there.

Janet Kelly and Kim O'Donnell  
ALARPM National Conference Organisers

# ALARPM Conference

## - Pre-conference workshops

*Action research and postgraduate studies*

**Facilitators: Ernie Stringer and Sue Young**

### **Context**

Action research is proving an exciting addition to the list of methodologies now used for postgraduate research. Increasing numbers of students are drawn to it because of the potential to engage in research that 'makes a difference' in people's lives. It opens exciting possibilities that complement recent developments in qualitative research to enable people to engage rigorous and solutions-oriented approaches to research that are particularly suited to people working in professional and organizational environments.

Action research, however, is not an homogenous field. A variety of orientations and methodologies clash and compete, creating a 'contested field' that sometimes is at odds with itself. Because of the applied nature of its processes of inquiry, action research opens up a range of contentious issues about the nature of the research process/act, the philosophical grounding of research, methodological issues of procedure, and the nature of research outcomes. Alongside these issues, which relate to issues of legitimacy and rigour, action research also provokes interest in the ethical foundations of research that are of central interest to academic research. Finally, dissertation formats that have traditionally served to frame the writing-up of studies are often incongruous with the processes and intents of action research.

Postgraduate students and their supervisors therefore struggle to create a coherent space in their academic and institutional lives as they endeavour to create a rational, rigorous and legitimate place for their work, in an environment that is always questioning, and sometimes hostile to their processes of discovery.

### **Purpose**

To explore and clarify major issues related to the use of action research for postgraduate studies.

### **Process**

Following from the work of symposia that have occurred in each state, this workshop will act as a forum to enable postgraduate students and their supervisors to:

1. Describe their experiences
2. Identify major issues and challenges
3. Engage in supportive dialogue
4. Share successful processes and frameworks
5. Work towards resolution of issues and problems

### **Outcomes**

Individual participants will be encouraged to record ideas, processes, strategies that will assist their own work. Collaborative outcomes will emerge from the group, but may include:

1. Development of a postgraduate support network
2. Support for writing and publication
3. A website forum
4. Papers or publications for dissemination of workshop outcomes to appropriate audiences

### **Preparation**

Participants will be encouraged to engage in a limited pre-conference electronic forum (email or web-based) to identify major issues effecting their research. This will enable the workshop to quickly become focused and productive.

**Dr Ernie Stringer** is the current President of ALARPM. He is Adjunct Professor at the Centre for Aboriginal Studies, Curtin University, Western Australia.

**Dr Sue Young** works at the University of Western Australia in the School of Social and Cultural Studies, and is a member of ALARPM. Ernie and Sue will be conducting this pre-conference workshop in Adelaide.

*Keeping research on track*

**Facilitators: Tahnia Edwards and Kim O Donnell**

There has been a lot of research into health and wellbeing of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities. At times, the outcomes from this research have not always benefited Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

This workshop is about helping Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people to understand the stages in the research journey and to gain an understanding in order to make research work for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This is an interactive workshop and an opportunity to share good research and unsuccessful research stories, with particular focus on what was learned along the way. This workshop is based on the NH&MRC resource package for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a right and responsibility to be involved in all aspects of research undertaken in their communities and organisations.

**Tahnia Edwards and Kim O Donnell** work at the School of Medicine, Flinders University in Adelaide. Tahnia and Kim will be facilitating this pre-conference workshop in Adelaide.



**Facilitator: Susan Goff**

### **Context**

Action research and action learning are knowledge-generating activities that are part of a very broad global development in many other kinds of participatory practices. Such practices are not limited to any specific discipline, mode or sector. They are derived from four generic characteristics that once recognised and developed, have the power to integrate and transform a currently fragmented participatory field. This fragmentation diminishes the potential of participatory approaches to transform all aspects of living in the interests of sustainability.

### **Purpose**

This workshop enables any practitioner to self critically evaluate the participatory qualities of their own practices, and to co-critique those of their peers. In this way participatory approaches can be co-generated in the interests of transformations towards systemic well-being. It opens up the possibilities of participation that draw together and go beyond the four core participatory practices of decision-making, problem solving, inquiring and resisting.

### **Process**

In reference to Torbert's Action Inquiry (2001) and the facilitator's doctoral research (2006), each participant will be invited into a 1<sup>st</sup> person review his or her practice assumptions in terms of four generic elements of governance, development, learning and activism. Using the same criteria we will co-critique each other's practices in 2<sup>nd</sup> person, then work in whole collaboration to generate a 3<sup>rd</sup> person construction of participatory practice which reflects our existing and potential capabilities.

## **Outcomes**

Individual participants will learn:

1. a contemporary construction of 'participation' as it applies to our work, field and networks,
2. first hand experience of Torbert's Action inquiry construction, and
3. how to co-generate a trans-disciplinary, participatory network/field with which engage in transformations towards systemic well being.

## **Preparation**

Participants are encouraged to bring a small case study of their own work.

**Susan Goff** is current National Vice President of ALARPM. She is on the teaching staff of the University of Western Sydney's School of Sociology, and is currently co-facilitating two Communities of Practice in Sydney.

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### **Context**

In Australia at least, most action research takes place within economic sectors that at some level of their definition presume a discipline-based knowledge. It is assumed that an action researcher in the field of disabilities, for example, must be qualified in social science and health specialisations.

In many action research environments however, participation from multiple stakeholders and demographic groups means that no one discipline base of knowledge can adequately conceptualise the needs of all participants or the means of change in their complex world picture.

### **Purpose**

This workshop engages participants in a discussion about 'trans-disciplinarity' and its value to action research practice. It explores the relationships between action research, knowledge generation and traditional and new sciences to encourage confidence with trans-disciplinary practice and benefit action research agendas such as 'human flourishing.'

### **Approach**

The proposers will set the scene by posing a real world action research challenge:

*A major Australian bank has committed to employ 300 indigenous workers within the next 5 years as a commitment to Reconciliation. In its pilot study to explore the culture of the bank's employment practices, a case came to light where a rural branch, which had gone through the process of selecting an indigenous worker for its local service, went against the reconciliation policy at the last minute and chose a non-indigenous worker in their place.*

Using an action research approach, what kind of knowledge would be most appropriate to address this problem?

The session will consider disciplinary, multi-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary approaches to practice orientations in an address of this case. Story telling (auto-biographical narratives) about ways of knowing in action research initiatives will be encouraged.

### **Outcome**

Participants will gain an understanding about the different kinds of knowledge that action research works with and develops, and that this aspect of action research is integral to its value as a means of transforming social systems towards more just and joyful ways of being.

### **Dr Ted Sandercock**

Ted Sandercock is principal consultant of Concerns-Based Consultants, an organisation that specialises in leadership of change, performance management, strategic HR, developing learning organisations, action learning and team development with an emphasis on small business. Ted is the President of the SA Institute for Educational Research, an executive member of Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management Association, Fellow of the Australian Human Resources Institute, and an Australian representation for the ides (International Design and Enterprise Services) project.

**Susan Goff** is current National Vice President of ALARPM. She is on the teaching staff of the University of Western Sydney's School of Sociology, and is currently co-facilitating two Communities of Practice in Sydney.

**sg@susangoff.id.au**

# ALARPM Conference

## - Peer reviewed abstracts

*Evaluation of the Vietnamese Clean Needle Program in South Australia: an application of Participatory Action Research*

**Paul Aylward**

The provision of clean injecting equipment has been described as the 'classic example' of a harm reduction strategy. Australia's needle and syringe program has been operating over the last twenty years to reduce harms associated with injecting drug use. Clean Needle programs (CNP) have been shown to yield extensive health and economic benefits in Australia notably in relation to the prevention of the spread of blood borne viruses, HIV and Hepatitis C. The CNP is for many Injecting Drug Users (IDUs) the first point of contact with health services. The Vietnamese Community SA Chapter Inc has established the Hoi Sinh Committee and a CN/Peer education and support program staffed by the community to provide culturally appropriate CNP services.

Evaluations of CNP generally are highly problematic. Evaluation of CNPs for CALD groups present additional challenges which require a collaborative approach to developing culturally appropriate methodologies which will provide authentic accounts which are both useful to the community and meet the requirements of funding bodies.

This paper discusses the benefits of adopting and adapting a participatory action research approach to evaluating the Clean Needle Program service provided by the Vietnamese Community in South Australia. The evaluation approach has employed a range of qualitative methods including

observation, participant observation, group interviews, in-depth and paired interviews with Vietnamese CNP service providers, Vietnamese IDUs who have accessed the CNP service and Vietnamese IDUs who have not accessed the CNP service. The research was a collaborative exercise engaging the community around the issues of approach, interaction and interpretation.

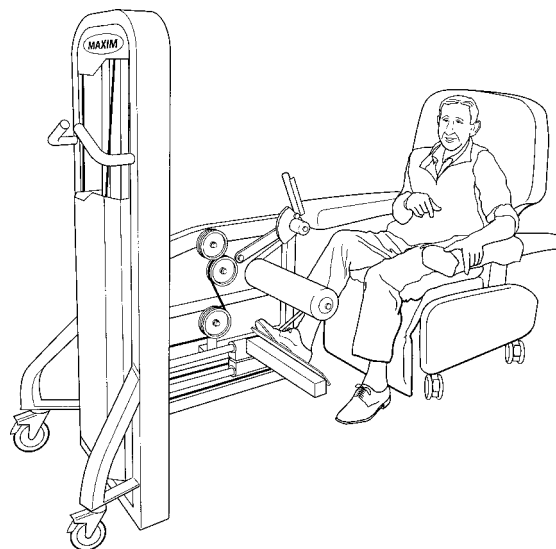
**Paul Aylward** is Tri State-Wide Coordinator of the Primary Health Care Research and Evaluation Program. He works in the Department of General Practice at Adelaide University, South Australia.

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*Using action research to improve people's lives: the example of exercise for people on dialysis*

**Paul N Bennett (Presenter), Leo Breugelmans, Megan Agius, Carol Wegener, Kathy Simpson-Gore, and Bob Barnard**

Regular exercise has been shown to be beneficial for people receiving haemodialysis (HD) and can be an important part of their rehabilitation. Intradialytic (during dialysis) exercise promotes the greatest uptake and has been shown to improve physical functioning and HD efficacy. Major barriers to intradialytic exercise include lack of patient motivation (not physical impairment), lack of skills to motivate patients and the perception that it is not a part of the nurse's responsibility. We developed a multidisciplinary clinically focused research program to develop a **sustainable** exercise program and culture in a metropolitan dialysis centre. In addition, an intradialytic exercise machine (Figure 1) was developed to stimulate further exercise performance.



*Figure 1. Intradialytic exercise machine.*

Action research was first coined by in the 1940s to describe group research work with postwar USA community projects. An action research theoretical underpinning was used to guide our research program. Our program demonstrated the vital role nephrology nurses have to play in promoting exercise for dialysis patients. Our results have shown this involvement contributes to an improvement in all physical function measures for dialysis patients.

Improvements in validated measures which mirror normal daily activities such as sit to stand ( $p = 0.0006$ ), arm curl ( $p = 0.02$ ) and step in place measures ( $p = 0.005$ ) all indicated clinically and statistically significant improvements. In addition we found an improving trend in quality of life (+3.6  $p = 0.19$ ), in particular in the health and physical functioning domain (+3.5  $p = 0.055$ ).

We found that the involvement of exercise experts in the development of a structured program, the development of a purpose built exercise machine, appropriate use of informatics and the commitment by all nephrology nurses, patients, researchers and management can sustain a dialysis exercise program in a dialysis unit. We believe that nephrology nurses have the most vital role to play in improving the physical function and quality of life of our patients.

**Paul N Bennett** RN (Renal Cert) BN MHSM MRCNA currently lectures in the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Flinders University. He is the current Renal Society of Australasia Journal Chief Editor and Renal Research Coordinator (SA Branch).

**Leo Breugelmans, Megan Agius, and Carol Wegener** work at the Hampstead Dialysis Centre, Hampstead Rehabilitation Centre, Royal Adelaide Hospital.



**Kathy Simpson-Gore** works at the Department of Clinical Dietetics, Royal Adelaide Hospital.

**Bob Barnard** works at the Centre for Physical Activity in Ageing, Hampstead Rehabilitation Centre, Royal Adelaide Hospital.

In complex systems, knowledge is best developed through inquiry in the midst of practice. But the collaboration and openness this requires does not sit easily in workplaces where practice is managed around tightly defined and reported outputs and outcomes. In a complex situation, both outputs and outcomes may need to change as more is learnt about the situation and as the situation itself changes. An action research project with Landcare Networks in Victoria has developed four understandings:

1. *Create a space for inquiry.* Inquiry serves the organisation, and must address directly the organisation's contribution to the world, assisting it become more effective in some way. With the end fixed, the process can stay loose. Inside the group, the theories of action behind practice create the cognitive ground on which the group works - context with its relevant features, outcomes, and the actions chosen to achieve outcomes. But the ground is always shifting.
2. *Open up inquiry.* Inquiry is constrained by the habits of finding solutions and remaining rational. Reduce the constraints, and question and intuition bloom. Soften the habit of offering solutions by coaching people to follow the other: what have they already done to handle their dilemmas, what conclusions have they reached, where are their questions? Soften the habit of overvaluing the rational by providing a soapbox as well as a microscope. There's good and bad in the world, and we need a place to name them.
3. *Provide tools for investigation.* In complex systems, everything is connected to everything else, so you can pretty much start anywhere, as long as you go deep with it. Critical incidents are gateways, nodal points on

the web of cause and effect. Find moments where people were surprised, or sense that something important was going on. But don't just leave them to make their own way. Give them pattern mapping tools – stakeholder analysis, role relationships, causal loops – that fit the practice domain.

4. *Drive inquiry into action.* Reflection is delicious, but insist on action: leave time to plan for it, secure it with commitments and peer checking. Sharpen as well the edge of question. Find the questions without immediate answers that accompany people as they take action.

**Ross Colliver**, The Training and Development Group, works at the interface between government, industry and community. He has facilitated action learning and action research with teachers, public sector managers, farmers, and agricultural extension staff and natural resource management facilitators. For the last 10 years he has been deeply involved in developing more effective ways for making decisions for the common good. His current research investigates the ways Landcare is influencing planning and action at landscape scale, with implications for governance that integrates top-down policy with local decision making.  
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*Investigating informal learning in critical care*

**Sally Dew and Helen Edwards**

This research explored how Critical Care Nurses' understanding of their informal workplace learning enhanced their professional practice. The study was undertaken in an intensive care unit of a large metropolitan hospital. A participatory action research approach, with focus groups, was used to examine the process. The use of focus groups in participatory action research enabled the Nurses to explore informal learning practices. The study also provided opportunities for them to reflect on the many ways they gained knowledge and the strategies they used to learn. Data was also collected from the Critical Care Nurses' written narratives of learning experiences, together with some open ended interviews.

A thematic analysis revealed the strategies the Nurses' believed to be effective, as well as challenges to their learning. The participatory action research cycles made apparent the difficulties Nurses faced undertaking such a study, whilst concurrently engaged in clinical practice. This paper reflects on the on-going challenges of building new knowledge.

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**Dr Helen Edwards** works in the School of Education, University of New England, NSW.

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## *Reconnaissance*

### **Paul Dillon**

Action researchers talk about reconnaissance as being a phase of action research. McNiff, Whitehead and Lomax (2003, p.35) describe reconnaissance as those activities that allow a determination for the action researcher of 'where I was at, what I hoped to achieve and how I thought that I would get there'. Ultimately the activities within the reconnaissance phase of action research clarify 'where I was starting from in my real world situation' (McNiff et al., 2003, p.35).

As an action researcher completing doctoral research I found that the concept of reconnaissance needed scaffolding. In developing a framework conceptualising reconnaissance I clarified that reconnaissance could be either an intentional or an unintentional process. I suggested there were two dimensions to reconnaissance:

- self reconnaissance- the exploration of the investigator's beliefs and behaviours within a particular investigation context, and
- situational reconnaissance- the exploration of the particular context.

This paper explores the research journey that led me to these conclusions.

**Paul Dillon** has been a school based educator for 28 years. During this period he has been a classroom teacher, Head of Department, Deputy Principal and is currently Head of Senior School at the Brisbane School of Distance Education. Paul has recently completed his Professional Doctorate with the Queensland University of Technology using living theory action research to undertake a self study of his

professional practice with a particular focus on knowledge management and structured reflective practice. He used conversations as his data in this practitioner investigation.

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*Learning from action: researching with Indigenous health care managers*

**Judith Dwyer, Cindy Shannon and Shirley Godwin**

This presentation outlines an approach to combining action learning with research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health managers. The project aimed to identify the management challenges in this sector, and their underlying causes. Participants were senior managers in AHSs in Queensland, and were engaged as co-researchers with a small project team. They participated in a year-long learning program (with an option for academic credit) and presented current management challenges in workshops.

Documentation of the management challenges in the form of stories (and the participants' reporting back at subsequent workshops on action taken and results) constitute the data for this research. We would like to discuss the methods we used, and some of the difficulties we encountered in documenting the outcomes.

**Professor Judith Dwyer** is Director, Department of Health Management at Flinders University.

**Associate Professor Cindy Shannon** is a researcher at the University of Queensland.

**Ms Shirley Godwin** is a researcher.

*Making a net work: the Far West Coast Aboriginal Enterprise Network*

**Deb Fernando and Syd Sparrow**

This paper, by co-authors Deb Fernando and Syd Sparrow, will document the rise of the Far West Coast Aboriginal Enterprise Network from a loose federation of family to being the best practice model for both Indigenous Enterprise networks and researching in remote Aboriginal communities.

The paper will focus on ethical considerations involved in researching with Aboriginal communities and ways in which the people are empowered by the research they are involved in.

Implicit in this research is the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers in conducting this type of research collaboratively. Also to teach Aboriginal people to play a more prominent role in their own research will be other themes to emerge in this presentation.

**Deb Fernando** is a Field Researcher at the School of Natural and Built Environments, University of South Australia.

**Syd Sparrow** is a lecturer in Aboriginal Studies, Unaipon School, University of South Australia.

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*Bert's story: action research narrative and parrhesia*

**Margaret Freund**

Action research is a valuable way for teachers to examine their practice, to develop resilience and to meet the needs of students. An essential part of the process is to be self aware, to meet needs through understanding of social issues and to acknowledge where the educator him/herself is situated. Through examination of a teacher narrative entitled *Bert's Story*, this paper aims to develop an understanding of the 'situatedness' of action research in order for it to be effective and emancipatory. *Bert's Story* is also examined through Foucault's notion of parrhesia, his notion of truth telling and self reflection.

**Dr Margaret Freund** is Course Coordinator of Professional Identity, Community and Social Justice (Educators' Work) in the School of Education, Mawson Lakes Campus, University of South Australia.

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*Doing action research the Yolngu way*

**Joanne Garngulkpuy and Dorothy Yunggirnga**

Our first try at Action Research was the project, 'Exploring the connections between education and health', for the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health. This led to the establishment of the Yalu Marnggithinyaraw, a research centre on Elcho Island. The Yalu does many things. We help outside researchers to make their research more appropriate for our community. We carry out projects which improve the health of the Elcho community, and we do our own action research projects. One Action Research project we have just done in partnership with Darwin City Council is the Long Grassers project. We will talk about these projects and also about how we do action research in the Yolngu way.

**Joanne Garngulkpuy and Dorothy Yunggirnga** are from the Galiwin'ku Community on Elcho Island, part of the Wessel Island group located in the East Arnhem Region of the Northern Territory.

*Participatory practices: integrating the field and manifesting transformation*

**Susan Goff**

Participatory practice is a specialisation that designs and delivers environments in which people formulate, determine and implement their futures together. This is true for practitioners as much as it is true for those with whom practitioners work in strategic environments.

An analysis of our practice shows that it draws its heritage from four generic and global domains of activity: governance, community development, social learning and activism (Goff, 2006). Conventional approaches to social, policy and organisational research and development tend to draw from only one or two of these traditions. In contrast, participatory approaches, such as action research, participatory evaluation, participatory planning and action learning draw from all four in an integrated manner.

Participatory practitioners encounter conventional approaches and contest their assumptions drawing on methods and values that originate in these four domains. When we recognise participatory patterns at work our ability to deepen our own practice and collaborate with other practitioners is greatly enhanced. Such an integration of these four generic domains provides the means for systemic social transformation towards sustainability. The intention of sustainability is now a priority for those sectors of our community whose participants accept climate change as a reality, and who accept their responsibility in systemic shifts away from *unsustainable* activity.

Participatory practices represent a paradigmatic shift in how business, community and government understand research,

policy, programme and service delivery. They rest on an understanding of governance that is held in stakeholder engagement as well as regulatory compliance; an understanding of development that is adaptive as well as goal specific; an understanding of learning that is formal and informal; an understanding of activism that is conservative as well as radical.

Principally, and at a much deeper level, participatory practices have faith in human dignity as the core of wellbeing and primary means of addressing the challenges of the twenty-first century. Using participatory approaches to knowledge generation for social change enables transformation of forms of knowing in the realisation of human dignity.

The paper will outline the theoretical background to a construction of participatory practice across disciplines and sectors. The pre-conference workshop, 'Praxis Critique' is an experiential precursor to a panel presentation of this paper.

**Susan Goff** is current National Vice President of ALARPM. She is on the teaching staff of the University of Western Sydney's School of Sociology, and is currently co-facilitating two Communities of Practice in Sydney.

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*The importance of Elder involvement in aboriginal early childhood education*

**Beverley Hall**

This paper explores the development of an Elders programme implemented in an Aboriginal Kindergarten in Port Adelaide. The programme received funding from the Commonwealth Office of the Aging to investigate the involvement of Elders in the daily activities of the pre-school children called a 'share and care programme'.

The process incorporated the philosophical basis on which the centre was originally established and aimed to develop pride and dignity in being Aboriginal while involving the Elders with the children in a similar manner to traditional times.

This action research proceeded with a basic curriculum and timetable being drawn up involving the Elders and staff then implemented on a daily basis. For several years the children had had an Elder coming in for Kaurna language, story telling and songs once a week, but with the grant this programme could not only be expanded, but monitored. The process involved participant observation, weekly diary accounts by staff and after twelve months an analysis made.

Several researchers not only stress the need for studies to be based on actual pedagogic practice and experience, but also incorporating the context in which the education process is occurring. A Native American saying states 'that if we have not taught the traditions, values and beliefs of our culture to our children by the time they are four then that child will have a difficult pathway to walk.' This Elders 'Share and Care' programme aimed to improve the confidence of the

children in their identity so they could proceed into the school system with pride and dignity.

**Dr Beverley Hall** works at Adelaide University, South Australia.

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*Action research bridging 'Management' in 'Place'*

**Antonia Hendrick**

This paper will explore the connections between Place Management and Action Research as twin principles of the Commonwealth's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy. Little is understood about Place Management as a theory or practice model yet all levels of government policy embrace it as an approach to address a broad range of issues facing disadvantaged communities and through which to build community capacity. Priding itself upon applying an Action Research framework to evaluate a 'place' based or 'managed' initiative the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy leads the Nation forward – albeit rhetorically? Examining these connections is important given the lack of clarity surrounding this new practice model. Additionally, further uncertainty exists about how and in what way(s) Action Research can contribute in this policy and practice area.

Place Management is said to be further underpinned by principles of social capital, capacity building and community development. This certainly suggests a civil setting in which to locate Action Research although questions arise around:

- Who drives the processes (top-down or grass roots)?
- What are the effects of time constraints, funding and reporting requirements?
- How does a place management model translate into relationships (working and community)?
- Why a place management model and how is this different from social planning and more aligned with developmental processes?

Does Action Research have a place in this new national policy arena? If so, how and in what ways does Action Research have a role? This is the subject of this paper's exploration. Two Communities for Children sites will form the backdrop for examining these reflections.

**Antonia Hendrick** is a PhD Candidate at Curtin University of Technology in Western Australia. Her PhD involves a formative evaluation of two Communities for Children initiatives in Western Australia. Antonia successfully obtained a scholarship with the Alcoa Research Centre for Stronger Communities and The Smith Family in 2005 and is in her final eighteen months of her PhD. Alongside her PhD, Antonia works in the Department of Social Work and Social Policy. Antonia is a mother to three children, aged 8, 6 and 3 years.

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*Engaging practitioners in change of practice: the importance of Reconnaissance*

**Geof Hill**

The action inquiry literature refers to Reconnaissance as an initial phase in the iterative cycles of investigation. Dillon (2007) in his doctoral thesis elaborated on the nature of Reconnaissance and suggested that it is both personal and situational. While this may often be an unconscious process, the act of making the reconnaissance explicit not only enhances the transparency of the action inquiry but also helps the investigator/ change management facilitator to reflect critically on the rationale for the change and the personal agendas that they carry into the change process.

This paper represents the beginning of an elongated action inquiry into the introduction of pedagogical change in a Queensland University in response to its Accreditation Review. It specifically looks at the initial change management strategies in response to the situational reconnaissance and explores the change facilitator's uncovered agendas in a response to his personal reconnaissance.

**Dr Geof Hill** is the Principal Consultant of the Investigative Investigator. He has been engaged as a research coach with a number of community action research projects and has also been working with several universities providing pedagogical professional development for academic staff. He is currently working with a Queensland University that, as a result of their Accreditation Assessment, has a change management brief to get staff talking and writing about their academic (pedagogic) practices.

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*How do we go about documenting the history of our Arrernte Elder?*

**Margaret Kemarre Turner and Debra Maidment**

*Abstract pending; please see details at the conference.*

*Time + Respect = Trust*

**Velma Long, Lilly Lebois, Rose Daniel, and Janet Kelly**

In this presentation, three Aboriginal community women from Gilles Plains will discuss the community based-participatory action research program that they co developed with the help of a nurse/researcher. They will discuss how they became interested in working together, what happened and what they learned along they way. They will also describe action research from a community perspective, in particular the importance of researchers and workers taking time to build respectful relationships before trust and working together (collaborative action) can occur.

We are Aboriginal community women and a PhD researcher from Gilles Plains community women's group and Flinders University, South Australia.

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**Lindy McKeown**

This paper will report on a PhD research project in progress investigating the potential of 3D virtual spaces for supporting action learning at a distance. Transactional distance theory suggests that traditional distance learning methods may not effectively support the level of engagement typical of action learning. A participatory design-based methodology incorporates input from experienced Action learning and online learning practitioners. The process has been applied with data from successive iterations of design being used to refine both the practical design and theoretical understanding of how the affordances of 3D virtual environments can increase learning through decreasing transactional distance.

Examples from programs hosted in the online environments of *ActiveWorlds* and *Second Life* will be used to describe how the 3D environment was used to accommodate elements of Action Learning including work place projects, journal writing, Learning Set Meetings, content delivery and facilitation.

**Lindy McKeown** is a fulltime PhD candidate at the University of Southern Queensland.

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*AFL Central Australian reduction and alcohol responsibility program 2005-2007*

**Ricky Mentha**

This program aims to address issues related to alcohol consumption and violence at football matches in the Alice Springs area. Using data from Australian Football League Central Australia (AFLCA), and its security company, Alice Springs Police Department (ASPD), Alice Springs Hospital and Tangentyere Council, along with direct crowd observation, a survey of AFLCA staff, club officials and umpires, this action research aimed to promote a new approach to alcohol and football.

This research has assisted AFLCA to incorporate a zero tolerance policy in their approach to managing alcohol related, antisocial and violent behaviour and has made a dramatic impact towards the number of incidents occurring at the ground.

Strategies have included serving no alcohol in the remote community competition games and fewer and lower alcohol content drinks within the town based competition, AFLCA are working with clubs to overcome issues of lower revenue, providing transportation for remote community players and supporters that are unable to travel back to their respective communities after attending football matches held in Alice Springs and by delivering a healthy lifestyle messages through school camps to the children involved with football through the *Auskick* and school based kick-start programs.

The social benefits for the community are less alcohol related, antisocial behaviour incidents occurring during the AFLCA season. Spectators are able to enjoy a happy environment where everyone in attendance is able to enjoy

the atmosphere of good football by supporting their teams without fear of alcohol related violence erupting and impacting negatively on the events. The provision of a transport strategy through Tangentyere Council, an Indigenous organisation who provide a remote community Return To Country Program, has assisted remote community residents with the means to travel back to their communities after being left behind in town following an AFLCA event. The delivery of Healthy Lifestyle Messages of what it takes to become an elite Aussie Rules Footballer through consistent healthy diets, physical activity, obtaining an education and making healthy lifestyle choices are incorporated.

**Ricky Mentha** is a Research Associate at the Centre for Remote Health, Alice Springs NT.

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*An action research project involving user-based design*

**John Molineux**

The paper describes an action research process involving the use of Integrated Administrative Design, a user-based design methodology which enables stakeholder group participation in the design of administrative processes. The paper outlines the application of the process to redesign an employment health and safety system in a large government agency. It describes how a small design team worked with a community of practice of health and safety practitioners and several representative stakeholder user groups to redesign the system. Included in this approach is the creation of user pathways, which describe how the various user groups interact with the system.

The paper outlines the cyclical action research process involved in the design and evaluates its progress from the views of the users. It concludes with an assessment of the methodology and recommends its use in other organizations.

**Dr John Molineux** is Human Resources Manager at the Australian Taxation Office in Victoria.

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*'Build Your Own Island Paradise': action research with children, families, paper mache and glitter*

**Luna Oestereich and Damian Stolp**

*Families Together* is an activity-based group program, supporting strong parent-child, family-school and family-community relationships. Parents/carers join their children at school to work on a shared project: perhaps a family castle, a rocket ship, or their own island paradise. Family projects serve as metaphors for their relationships, offering opportunities to explore who they are, their aspirations and strengths.

A success - and challenge - for *Families Together* has been its use of Action Research. A cycle of 'plan-act-observe-reflect' is central to *Families Together*. Each family is invited to identify their goal and make a plan to reach it. Each family puts its plan into action, being encouraged to notice and reflect up on their shared experience of this. This process is facilitated to emphasise individual and family strengths, and people's connections with each other.

Our presentation will explore:

- the ways we've sought to make Action Research family-friendly and genuinely participatory,
- processes and tools that we've found can facilitate communication, sharing and reflection with and within families, and
- the ways *Families Together* generates an atmosphere in which participants share concerns, ideas and hopes. In other words, the potential for Action Research to open ways for families to move forward together.

Our presentation will emphasise:



- the characteristically playful, creative and engaging nature of work with children and families,
- honouring the ways families inform our practice,
- acknowledging the challenges that Action Research presents us, and
- inviting participants to share their insights.

**Luna Oestereich and Damian Stolp** are family workers for Colony 47 on the *Families Together* program in Hobart, Tasmania.

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*Our Country, to nurture us*

**Kevin 'Dookie' O'Loughlin**

Our country provides us with the spirituality that keeps the sacred balance between humans, other beings and the natural environment. We feel the wind in our face and we know if the season is right to hunt for food. Everyone who reconnects with the land of their origin will feel at home on their land and will find nourishment in the plants and animals around them. Visitors to Australia did not know how to find food and water, to travel correctly, or to be at peace in this vast, spiritual landscape. Four early explorers, Warburton, Giles, Forrest and Carnegie (1870 to 1897) wrote journal entries about exploring the 'miserable' and 'wretched country' that had no water, no kangaroos and no fodder for their stock. Colonial survival depended on importing a material culture, unaware of or insensitive to the deep knowledge of the land resource and the sophisticated culture of the Aboriginal people. The separation of the caretakers from their own land is the reason the country was destroyed. Magarey (1897) recognised the 'gifted genius,' the precision and skills of the tireless Aboriginal tracker, trained through tradition, from infancy, to do his share of hunting to obtain supplies.

Aboriginal people today, disconnected from their land, need to relearn the 'forest lore and hunter craft' that ensured the cycle of life that not only fed us with wholesome tucker, but also ensured the continued reproduction of the bush. At Tauondi College, dispossessed Nunga kids and other students get a morale boost by learning to make old coolamon bowls, to see the earth signs of animals, to learn landmarks for navigation and to know the laws of the sacred balance. Each person has a complex connection to their own country, which can transform the resources into a nurturing landscape. Then, what can we say to the political leaders

who broadcast this policy of homogenisation: 'we are not a nation of tribes... there should be one law for all Australians... our expectation is that when people come and settle in Australia, they are under an obligation to accept the law and the principles that go with it... we will decide who comes to Australia and the manner in which they come?'

How can we teach the Australian people how to live within the Natural laws of our Country, to find food and connection to the spirit of the land?

**Kevin 'Dookie' O'Loughlin** is a lecturer and an adviser at Tauondi College in Port Adelaide, SA.

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*The art of change – seeing, hearing, doing*

**Carol Omer**

The disproportionate statistics in the areas of family violence, mental health, incarceration and poverty within Aboriginal communities highlights that as a nation we are in the very early days of healing and recovery from the devastating impact of colonisation.

The Western models of counselling and support by professionally trained workers, whilst effective for some are not working for many people [both Indigenous and non-Indigenous] as we are seeing by the current crisis in the mental health system and in the areas of family violence /drug /alcohol addiction and child abuse and neglect.

By recognising the rich resource of traditional cultural practices and social systems we are able to develop significant opportunities for creativity and connection across the human services sector, with a much greater opportunity for personal and community empowerment that bridges the cultural divide.

I am basing my presentation/discussion on my background experiences in human services and as a trainer for both mainstream and Aboriginal specific agencies. Action learning strategies, life coaching and art based Neuro-linguistic programming are all strategies that underpin this work. The ART of Change is all about co-creating empowerment tools and using art as a vehicle for learning.

*Towards the effective teaching of cultural competence: working in partnership with Indigenous Australians*

**Rob Ranzijn, Keith McConnochie and Wendy Nolan**

This paper describes the process of developing psychology courses in cultural competence in relation to Indigenous Australians. We describe how a small project established by a group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics at the University of South Australia grew into a national project which is helping to integrate Indigenous content and understanding into psychology schools throughout Australia. In particular we focus on what is arguably the most important part of the process, consulting constantly with Indigenous stakeholders and ensuring that their voices are dominant. This partnership approach has produced unexpected spin-offs. However, it is essential to ensure sustainability of this endeavour so that the hard-won gains will not be lost, as has happened so frequently in Indigenous affairs.

**Rob Ranzijn**, PhD, is a Senior lecturer in the School of Psychology, University of South Australia.

**Keith McConnochie** works at the David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research, University of South Australia.

**Wendy Nolan** works at the Centre for Indigenous Studies, Charles Sturt University.

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*Using participatory R&D for capacity building in rural  
Philippines: implications for remote communities in Australia*

**Maria Fay Rola-Rubzen**

Participatory approaches to R&D have commonly been used to improve livelihood systems of rural people. One approach that has been used in the Philippines is a six-step process called Continuous Improvement and Innovation (CI&I). The approach was used to build farmer capacity with a view of improving their knowledge and skills. Researchers worked with farmers in improving farmers' knowledge base in technical and economic aspects of their farming system. With a focus on improving profits, farmers were equipped with a range of tools to enable them to improve their system and to assess possible changes in their system. This paper will describe how CI&I was used in the project, outline some lessons learned and explore the usefulness of this approach in the context of remote communities in Australia.

**Dr Maria Fay Rola-Rubzen** is Core Project 3 Leader for Desert Businesses and Project Leader for the Australian Women in Farms Project at the Muresk Institute, Curtin University of Technology in Western Australia.

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*Bush food: growing your health back* (extended abstract)

**Nicola Samson**

When I first came to live in Australia I was amazed to discover different bush food which tastes like nothing else in the world. I can't remember where or when it was but I do remember the surprise that you could actually pick something off a tree, eat it and not end up in hospital. I had spent my early life picking blackberries which were not a weed in my native country and getting my Mum to make an apple blackberry pie a favourite with my brothers and sisters. It was the fun of picking the fruit which I really enjoyed and in time we learnt all the best places and only picked from there.

This love of collecting and eating food is still fun for me in later life and it was both an honour and pleasure to go out into communities and be shown by Aboriginal people where the best places to collect food were. To be shown where this and that plant grew and what was the best time to collect. How they used the plant and more importantly how their parents had taught them to use the plant.

This knowledge however is being lost, those people who grew up supplementing commercially produced food with wild harvested food become fewer and fewer as the years go by. What a loss to all those aboriginal people who over the years have selectively collected and planted those species of plant best suited to that time and place, selectively breeding/choosing better plant varieties and plant selections.

If you don't think that this type of plant breeding and selection was going on in Australia you are wrong. Not only was it a common practice but people knew very well the

different soil types, rainfall, collection time and all the knowledge needed to provide for the group/family with bush food. While this information is not commonly known, the process of plant selection has survived as proof that Aboriginal people had a deep knowledge of the plants and trees that provided for their well being.

One story I remember well, is of some elder women who were coming down from Alice Springs to the northern part of South Australia. The fruit of the quandong plant in the community where I was staying had failed to mature in the country I was in. Still the elder women seeing the fruit en route had collected them and kept them for the two day journey south. When an elder from our community announced she was sorry that she had no quandong to offer, the old women laughed and went to the truck and produced the biggest quandongs any of us had ever seen. 'Yes,' they reported, 'these are very good we know where to collect them in our country and this crop has been good. Last year it was poor. It's not the same every year, it really depends on the rain and when it comes. We know the best ones.' They laughed at being able to provide for all of us as we sat in the river bed and ate them all.

When you eat this food 'you stay healthy.' I was told this is food special/specific to your area, 'you almost need to eat it.' I have heard this many times from the elders in the communities. At first I did not get it. 'Why?' I would ask, 'why do you need to eat it?' They replied, 'you just do, it's right for you, it's good for you.'

In time I came to understand that different food provides for different needs at different times that whenever the food was available and where ever it was growing, if you lived in that country you ate it. 'It was good for you'. That eating that



food gave you something you needed at the time for that place. I can't explain it and I certainly don't understand it, I only know it's true.

So what happens when you leave country and move away? What will this do for you? Many Aboriginal people have moved away from their particular country and have moved to the cities and towns, so that they are not able to eat some of the local food they would have in times passed. Perhaps this is why it is always so good to go back to country and take it all in, the land, the people and the food the land has to offer.

I do know that Aboriginal people and the seed they have cultivated over the years are being used for revegetation projects in Africa and other parts of the world. They are a rich source of protein, especially some of the Acacia species in the poorer drier soils in Africa. As one Aboriginal woman said to me, with tears in her eyes at seeing the picture of a starving women looking on as an Aboriginal woman in Africa prepared food for them to eat; 'It's not good to be hungry.'

These plant and seeds are being used in Africa to help stabilise the land and provide a food source at the same time. So I ask the question, why don't we do the same here in Australia for our own people, back on the land, back in their own country? Here in Australia in trying to manage the land, we have the following issues to deal with;

1. Environmental issues

- a. Salinity
- b. land clearance
- c. soil loss

- d. deforestation
- e. water quality
- f. loss of biodiversity
- g. habitat loss
- h. species loss

## 2. Social Issues

- a. unemployment
- b. poor health
- c. lack of opportunities
- d. isolation
- e. high food prices (transport costs)

All these could be addressed in part or in whole if we adopted the large scale growing on of those plants that address the issues stated and provide a food source at the same time. It is not that difficult and it makes sense.

I have worked with communities in the growing of Bush Food back on aboriginal Land it was a project that had the support of the remote aboriginal communities and it provided work and an income for the people in those communities. However, like many really good ideas it was not supported or even expanded even though the people in those communities felt as though they were really doing something useful in providing for themselves.

Why it was not supported has its roots in the current political climate which suggests that the Mining Boom is the way to go, that people would get more jobs and provide for the communities by working in the Mining Industry. This is true in part but it will not last for ever and will not provide for the community when the resource runs out. In the

meantime the knowledge is lost and the elders have lost the opportunity to pass it on to the younger people.

I believe this is not the way to go and perhaps if I do nothing more today than stir your interest in the growing of bush food. Then this knowledge is not and gone forever but is rekindled and kept alive. With the knowledge learnt to grow more plants, comes the opportunity to produce seed now and for the future needs of the children in the years to come.

**Nicola Samson** (nee Keane) is a Lecturer in the Centre for Environment Conservation and Horticulture, Urrbrae Campus, TAFE SA.

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The paper describes a project in which Action Learning was utilized in a graduate course at mid-sized university in the United States. A total of approximately 35 graduate students participated in the course, with each student identifying a significant challenge or problem to address in his or her own Action Learning project. Utilizing core learning episodes, reflective journals, and learning sets, each student developed an action learning plan to systematically explore, plan, act, and reflect regarding their chosen topic or issue. Each student's action learning project was unique to their professional and academic needs and interests within the parameters for the course description. Students were expected to meet regularly with their learning set and post comments, questions, ideas, and suggestions to an online discussion board.

Each student maintained a blog for reflective commentary about their respective projects as they moved through the action learning cycle of exploration, planning, acting, and reflecting. A 3D immersive learning environment using an Active Worlds server provided a space in which students could meet together, interact with students and faculty, access course and project resources, contribute to discussions and blogs, and ultimately, engage in the building of a learning community. This virtual environment provided access to tools and resources necessary for the successful completion of the students' action learning projects and, more importantly, offered an immersive learning space in which it is believed that an increased sense of presence contributed to the students' social construction of skills and knowledge within a community of practice.

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*Modelling and participative action research - the good, the bad, and the ugly*

**Brentyn Schubert**

The use of feedback-loop models in Checkland's Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) and Senge's systems thinking approach to Learning Organisations, are examples of where modelling has been suggested as an important facilitator in Participative Action Research (PAR). Other authors have advocated the benefits of extending these 'paper' models into computerised versions, in order to better understand potential unintended consequences over time due to feedback loops and lags in the real life systems and processes.

Several case studies will be used to discuss the 'good, the bad, and the ugly' aspects of using 'paper' and computer models to assist PAR in practice.

**Brentyn Schubert** is currently completing post graduate studies by research at Flinders University, titled 'Evaluation frameworks using modelling for problem solving and facilitating appropriate change in organisations and communities.' He is principal consultant of Empowering Solutions, 'business and personal planning for changing times' and looks at problem solving, strategic planning, business coaching, facilitation, etc with particular emphasis on the use of soft systems methodology and other critical systems theory approaches to 'wicked' problems.

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**Janine Slocombe**

The university sector has a strong potential to facilitate sustainable thinking and ultimately assimilate socially and environmentally sustainable practices within its local community. The University of South Australia, School of Natural and Built Environments (NBE) has a strong emphasis on educating for sustainability through integrative teaching and learning approaches. This is action learning, achieved by embedding student and research academic outcomes with the 'greening campus' initiatives and culturally linked biodiversity-based community activities. Current projects involve undergraduate students designing eco-buildings and land restoration teaching resources, incorporating ESD principles into the existing UniSA EcoCentre at the Mawson Lakes campus. This precinct, currently comprising a greenhouse, plant propagation building, and fauna centre, facilitates sustainability-focused research across environmental and engineering disciplines within the university and provides an innovative educational facility for external stakeholders.

In conjunction with UniSA EcoCentre projects, the School of NBE is currently embarking on strengthening dynamic partnerships with 'all levels' of education, including other tertiary institutions and engaging with private industry involving indigenous communities. Key linkages with the board of education to establish cross-institutional environmentally sustainable programs and to instigate changes in the education curriculum is a significant step forward in establishing awareness within the community. Similarly, collaborations with Ngarrindjeri, Adelaide Kurna Plains and the Far West Coast Indigenous communities involving Landcare and restoration projects and cultural private enterprises, has been fundamental in expanding our

perceptions about the meaning of sustainability to instigate action in the broader community.

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*Collaboration ideas and strategies*

**Stephen Stark, Julie Coulls and Janet Kelly**

The Gilles Plains Community Campus is a unique setting in urban Adelaide involving a primary school, kindergarten, childcare centre, community health service, Aboriginal Outreach Health Service and Community Assistance Program, as well as a variety of visiting agencies.

Over the years, the whole campus has been working collaboratively to better meet the health, education and welfare needs of local communities. Many creative programs have been run across the campus including parenting programs, nutrition, exercise, social inclusion, and reconciliation projects (just to name a few).

We would like this opportunity to talk with you about our collaborative works and share ideas and strategies.

**Stephen Stark** is Principal of Gilles Plains Community Campus.

**Julie Coulls** is a community health nurse who works with Gilles Plains Community.

**Janet Kelly** works at Flinders University, South Australia.

**Binh Thanh Nguyen**

The organisation, or the pattern, of a public space often reflects attitudes, power, and interrelationships of society and authority towards this common environment.

The public participation meanwhile can contribute activities, meanings, and values to a public space. While the public participation has power to influence many decisions of authority, it is a subject of control of authority. In daily life and within the public space, the authority possesses power and instruments to regulate most public activities, public environment, and even the interrelationships between different groups of society.

In Vietnam, the communist administration system since 1954 always affirms its goal to build up high quality and equal public environment. However with strong top-down decision system of one ruling party (the Communist Party of Vietnam), social needs towards public space have been never seriously considered. As a result, many interventions of authority in public space often served interests and visions of some leaders, but not the interests of society.

How some major social groups in Vietnam, with their different needs towards public space, have struggled to maintain their interests in this situation is the central question of this paper. The answer can be quite useful as it could explain the motivation and ability of some major social groups in Vietnam in the process of building up their public space.

Using several case studies in Haiphong, a coastal, second largest city of Northern Vietnam, the paper tries to explore strategies that some major social groups have used in public space to fulfil their needs, including some attempts they used to challenge the interventions of authority.

Haiphong is perhaps the only city of Northern Vietnam suffering most radical interventions from administration system both in French colonial (1870s-1954), post colonial (1955-1986), and Reform period (from 1986), because of its strategic location. Such interventions not only changed Haiphong's society but also meanings, activities, and values of its public spaces. Haiphong therefore is perhaps the very distinctive city of Northern Vietnam, where inter-relationships between society and authority reach the high level of diversity and intensity.

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*Where First Nations' languages maintain the health of the lands and her peoples, English fails.*

### **Vesper Tjukonai**

As long as English is spoken as a dominant language in Australia, attempts to restore the health of lands and her peoples will fail. The English language lacks the words to connect people with a living land. English has been disconnected from its places of origin and its current state is dislocated abstraction, while Indigenous languages have an enduring connection with country. Indigenous language relationships promote health, education and maintain the environment in a state of balance.

As long as English is spoken as a dominant language in Australia, any effort to correct the damage still being imposed on Indigenous peoples and upon the environment, can only hope to slow down the rate of degradation, dis-ease and despair. For health to be restored, change needs to be at least three-pronged.

- Australia, value Indigenous languages.
- Reduce English dominance and halt present linguicidal practices.
- Tell the denied history of the English language, so that its suppressed roots of connection and reciprocity between people and the land of their ancestors can be restored to the language. That is, English-speakers, first heal thine own tongue!

In this presentation, linguicidal language practices in this country will be spotlighted, and key language concepts relating to health, environment, and education will be in focus.

*Read Vesper's extended piece further on in this edition.*

*Feel blue, touch green*

**Mardi Townsend**

Contact with nature may not just improve human health and well-being, but may be essential for optimal human health. This is not surprising, given that humans evolved in the company of other species and for much of human history have been almost totally dependent on nature for sustenance and survival, yet in recent times have been separated from nature through urban living. While in global terms, Australian life expectancy is among the highest in the world, a number of health problems are evident. The prevalence of overweight and obesity, and of mental disorders is increasing, and there are sectors of the Australian population that do not fare as well as others – especially rural Australians and Indigenous Australians.

This presentation draws on the findings of an action research project entitled 'Feel Blue, Touch Green', a collaborative project which connected people experiencing anxiety, depression or social isolation with a community conservation group to work on a range of environmental activities such as plant propagation, habitat rehabilitation, walking in the bush, watching and/or counting wildlife. Through observation, interviews and pre- and post-questionnaires, the benefits of that engagement were identified.

Participants experienced many health and wellbeing benefits from the project, including developing social links, learning new land management and personal development skills, increased confidence, stress-reduction, increased motivation and interest in life, enjoyment and more. The research suggests the development of similar programs in other regions and for other groups (including rural and

Indigenous Australians) may improve the health of individuals, communities and ecosystems.

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*Improving the condition of land in the Coorong wilderness depends on changing the habits of local farmers*

**George Trevorrow and Joan Gibbs**

A change in attitudes of the farming community will improve the sustainability of wilderness and wetland habitats in the dying Coorong ecosystem. The local traditional people of the Ngarrindjeri nation are providing educational opportunities for community action in land restoration. The University of South Australia provides support for ecological restoration, in a unique partnership. The Coorong Wilderness Lodge is an attraction for travellers on the Princes Highway, in addition to being an international conference venue for groups who want to hear about Aboriginal approaches to caring for country. Land managers should work within the capacity of the land, without changing the face of the land or putting up barriers to water flow. Humans must fit into the land and not fight the land by changing it with artificial drains. The 60,000-year history of Aboriginal traditional ecological knowledge teaches people today about water flow and types of crops consistent with the local rainfall and salinity. A bushfood industry should be based on what grows locally and is sustainable in the face of climate stress. This paper will discuss cross-cultural solutions to the serious environmental impacts of degrading farm practices on the Coorong of South Australia.

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*Driver education: TAFESA Aboriginal education driver education program*

**Judith Welgraven**

Driver education has proved to be an exciting but very time consuming development for Aboriginal education within TAFESA. Approximately 10 years ago local community members in Amata asked the then local lecturer employed by Aboriginal education how they could get their driver's licence with him. After lengthy discussions with the lecturer and myself it was determined that if Aboriginal education were to deliver driver education, what were the reasons for this and how could this be justified. Some of the reasons for community members' requests included, driving with no license, imprisoned due to lack of licensing, needing a licence to enable the student to gain employment, and the list grows.

It was from this initial request that the lecturer made contact with myself as to how Aboriginal education could respond to this request. In these initial discussions lists of 'to do' and 'how to' and 'who to speak with' were compiled. This began the long haul into the program's ability to respond to these community requests. The first thing to consider was; what curriculum was available, was it relevant in the short term? Timeframes for writing the 'Road Traffic Code' in conjunction with the another lecturer and then using the booklet provided by the Department of Motor Vehicles, needed to be allocated. Once the theory component was completed the practical side needed to be addressed.

This was an all-consuming exercise, as Amata is approximately 500 Kilometres from Alice Springs and approximately 1100 kilometres from Port Augusta, so there was the tumultuous task of sending information back and



forth between myself and the lecturers until we had what we thought we needed. We then had to have it accredited with the curriculum branch to ensure that it met their requirements.

The next issue we faced was the need for a vehicle that could be utilised and that would pass the test on roadworthiness. Could we convince local car sales companies to come onboard, if not what were our next directions or options? The lecturer and I discussed the possibility of utilising the government vehicle that was allocated to the TAFE program at Amata. So began the meetings with Legal and Delegations for the Department to ascertain as to whether this could be an option. After various meetings the approval was given to enable us to use the government vehicle, so long as the lecturer became a qualified instructor and assessor. The next task was to consider how was this lecturer, who was approximately 1600 kilometres from Adelaide, going to become an accredited instructor?

*Stay tuned for more at Judith's presentation at the conference in Adelaide.*

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To what extent does any sustainability or social capital initiative (policies, programs, plans, regulations, decisions, actions, etc.) support or undermine each of the following qualities:

1. Personal Area:

- empowerment, awareness, creative visioning, values and worldview clarification, acquisition of essential literacies and competencies, responsibility, wellbeing and health maintenance practices, vitality and spontaneity (building and maintaining personal capital – personal sustainability)?
- caring, loving, responsible, mutualistic, negentropic relationships with diverse others (valuing equity and social justice), other species, place and planet (home and ecosystem maintenance)?
- positive total life-cycle personal development (lifelong learning) and ‘progressive’ change?

2. Socio-Political Area:

- trust, accessible, collaborative, responsible, creative, celebrational, life-promoting community and political structures and processes (building and maintaining social capital – cultural [including economic] sustainability)?
- the valuing of ‘functional’ high cultural diversity and mutualistic relationships?
- positive cultural development and coevolutionary change?

3. Environmental Area:

- effective ecosystems functioning (building and maintaining natural capital – ecological sustainability)?
- ‘functional’ high biodiversity, and prioritized use and conservation of resources?
- positive ecosystem development and coevolutionary change?

#### 4. General Area:

- proactive (vs reactive), design/redesign (vs just efficiency and substitution) and small meaningful collaborative and individual initiatives that can be achieved (vs heroic, Olympic-scale, exclusive, high risk ones) and their public celebration at each stage – to facilitate the spread of concern for wellbeing and environmental responsibility?
- focusing on key opportunities and windows for change (pre-existing and contextually unique change ‘moments’ and places)?
- effective monitoring and evaluation of progress (broad, long-term, as well as specific and short-term) by identifying and using integrator indicators and testing questions, and by being attentive to all feedback and outcomes (and redesigning future actions and initiatives accordingly)?

**Janice Withnall and Professor Stuart Hill** work at the University of Western Sydney, NSW.

*Using an Indigenous worldview for action learning and action research to create equity in education*

**Frances Wyld**

Education is the key to providing equitable outcomes for Indigenous people. Good teaching is built on students' prior knowledge. Effective learners use their worldview to cognitively adopt new knowledge through highly individualised neurodevelopment systems. But whose knowledge has currency in contemporary education and how does the learner choose a pathway that will suit their aspirations? Indigenous knowledge is undervalued in Australia and this contributes to their ongoing disadvantage in the education system. Yet the Indigenous worldview is ethical, reciprocal and sustainable, mirroring the methodology of action research.

This paper uses pedagogical examples across the education continuum, demystifying the learning process, curriculum pathways and supports action learning and action research as the framework to create equity in education, and therefore achieving better outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

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*Participatory action research and education in South Africa:  
personal experiences and reflections*

**Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt**

This interactive workshop is based on a keynote address in Bogota, Columbia (May 2007) and aims to:

1. contribute to the debate on Participatory Action Research (PAR) in South Africa,
2. illustrate how Orlando Fals Borda and his associates have profoundly influenced many professionals, practitioners and activists in Australia and other developed countries, and
3. reflect on my professional and leadership development programs in higher education (HE) in South Africa through PAR.

These aims are achieved by presenting models and examples of such programs in South Africa with intellectual leaders who are prepared to be activists and change agents in HE, to move learning and teaching away from a 'pedagogy of the oppressed' to a 'pedagogy of hope'. This means - from the traditional, hierarchical, oppressive and inequitable ways that were rooted in apartheid policy to a more process/learner-centred approach to self-directed, emancipatory, life-long learning and towards an equitable, democratic society.

These examples may stimulate others to explore similar strategies to develop people's active participation, empowerment, development of praxis and better quality of life. The process models may provide a useful framework for action or adaptation.

*Further details on conference presentations are available in the attached program at the end of this edition.*

# Participation is a means and an end to support wellbeing in democratic societies - Janet McIntyre

As I complete this prologue the troops are moving into the remote Aboriginal communities of the Northern Territory, to respond to alcohol related violence, a problem that has been highlighted for decades. According to the *Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse*:

*The combined effects of poor health, alcohol and drug abuse, unemployment, gambling, pornography, poor education and housing, and a general loss of identity and control have contributed to violence and to sexual abuse in many forms.<sup>1</sup>*

These are vicious problems in that they are both causes and effects (Beer 1974, McIntyre–Mills 2003a<sup>2</sup>, Atkinson 2002).

Whilst no one can dispute the urgency to keep little children safe, the challenge will be to ensure that top down interventions do not tip the balance that erodes decades of work to achieve rights.

In 1962, Aboriginal Australians were recognized as citizens, but only had the right to vote recognized in the constitution in 1967. Some would argue they are citizens with limited rights (Chesterman and Galligan 1997) because they do not

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<sup>1</sup> See Wild, R. and Anderson, P., (2007), *Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse*. Accessed 26/06/2007 [http://www.nt.gov.au/dcm/inquirysaac/report\\_summary.html](http://www.nt.gov.au/dcm/inquirysaac/report_summary.html), page 2 of summary.

<sup>2</sup> See Diagram 1.5, p.14 called 'Breaking the cycle through participatory governance and developing citizenship rights and responsibilities.'

participate sufficiently in setting policy agendas and designing services.

The elders in South Australia explained, in a conversation over a lunch to discuss our research on wellbeing, that by flying the Aboriginal flag bullying at school could be reduced and the next generation would have a sense of their rights and responsibilities as Australian citizens. The elders, service users and many Aboriginal service providers stressed the importance of 'yarning' and using this interactive process to make sense of public and private issues to raise awareness and to prevent silencing.

It is my sincere hope that this conference and the related research helps to redress this imbalance, because:

*There has never been a serious attempt to focus on the institutional interface between Indigenous people and governments in Australia. To construct an interface that creates greater parity and mutual accountability (and true shared responsibility) would require governments to agree to limitations on their existing powers and prerogatives and to make accountability a two-way street rather than the existing one-way street. ...<sup>3</sup>*

"The process is the message", to adapt McLuhan and Powers' (1989) phrase! Thus testing out ideas with people is both a means to an end, namely better decisions and a sense of being citizens with rights and responsibilities to 'have a say' and 'have a fair go'.

Contemporary debates centre on the role of communication in governance and democracy and the implications for the way in which processes can promote two-way communication (see McIntyre-Mills 2006b) or to promote

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<sup>3</sup> Pearson, N., (2007), A structure for empowerment, The Weekend Australian, *Inquirer*, June 16-17.

one-way communication. Borradori (2003) explored this theme in conversation with Habermas and Derrida in the book, *Philosophy in a time of terror*. They raised concerns about the need for respectful versus hospitable dialogue to create shared identities. More recently Al Gore in his new book, *The assault on reason* (2007), argues that one-way communication raises many problems for democracy. Importantly, Gore writes about the way in which two-way communication is vital for building relationships and creating attachments between people at the individual level and also at the societal level. Participation is inextricably bound to wellbeing and democracy.

New approaches to communication within and across organizations to support good governance require working with many variables and considering not merely linear 'cause and effect' but instead considering the boomerang effect of feedback loops (see McIntyre-Mills 2006a,b).

Systemic communication is the basis for democracy and governance, not to mention wellbeing across self-other and sustainable governance. Categories need to be re-considered in terms of the:

- **'Boomerang affect'**: Beck (1992, 1998) argues that if poverty and pollution cannot be shifted they will impact across boundaries. Boundaries are constructs and not fixed in Euclidean space. They are relative. If space is understood in Einstein's terms then it needs to be seen in relation to others and as shifting and moving (Downes 2006). Us/them, in/out are boundary judgments that can be reconceptualised as being part of one system with ongoing feedback.
- **Spirituality** and the boomerang concept of Aboriginal Australians.
- **Dialectic** of thesis, antithesis and synthesis from Greek philosophy. Dialogue is the basis of Aristotelian notions of wisdom (which he called *phronesis* in Nichomachean ethics) and which Marxist and critical theorists have re-worked (Michels, 1915) to avoid top down tendencies in all democracies.



- **Recursive notions** (Giddens 1991; Beck 1992, 1998) of what we think shapes the world and how the world shapes our own thinking. The recursive communication process is the basis for the field of sociocybernetics<sup>4</sup> and it provides rich support for the value of language as a reservoir of diverse meanings.

Wellbeing is based on involvement in decision making that spans social, cultural, political, economic and environmental factors.

Aboriginality is a matter of family connections and a history of marginalisation and disadvantage. But it is also about survival against the odds, a celebration of spirituality, diversity, creativity and life.

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<sup>4</sup> The way we see the world is shaped by how we are socialized to see the world, but because it is a construction we can remake the way we see the world. This is central to a critical systemic approach and it has important implications for social transformation and healing. For example: Downes (2006) argues that whether you concentrate on figure or ground/environment depends on how you are encouraged to see the world. For an American, the figure of a fish in a pond is described first. For a Japanese informant, the environment of the pond is described first.

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# **A national crisis: What John Howard isn't doing**

**- Judy Atkinson**

I woke up this morning with a sense of doom. What was wrong? Yes. I remember! The Prime Minister has announced that he is 'sending in the troops'. He has declared, in effect, a National Emergency.

Is it a National Emergency? Yes, to some degree it is. It has been, for twenty years. More importantly, it is a National Shame. Why was this emergency allowed to develop to the stage that ordinary Australians are outraged? And whose shame is it? The blame game, which I do not subscribe to, but which I will move into for this specific article, rests with government. How come the average Australian did not know what Government has known for many years? How do I know they have known? Because, apart from the reports I have been involved with, I have had ministers say to me: *well we know the problems. You tell us the solutions.*

I therefore must assume they knew the problems.

I have been looking for solutions since 1992.

This morning I asked myself: If I were Prime Minister, with all his powers, what would I have done? Firstly I would understand and respond accordingly, to the fact that this is not an issue isolated to 'Aboriginal Lands' in the Northern Territory.

## **In the Short Term**

In the short term, I would focus on a child-centred approach to building child-centred, child safe communities. My first question would be what child safe places are already within communities. How can I support them? Often the safe house in the community is inhabited by a grannie on welfare, who opens her door to any child in need. She is someone who, somehow, like the miracle worker with loaves and fishes, can feed many children from her welfare cheque. I would support those people who are already doing hard jobs with little or no resources.

Secondly, I would ask for Aboriginal peoples living in remote Aboriginal communities, rural towns, and urban centres, to put up their hands if they wanted to be involved in a long term approach to building their futures, from within a child-centred, child safe infrastructure. I would then, in the short term, begin to work with select communities from each region across Australia, to help build their capacity. I would do this with an understanding that each community I worked with, supported, and resourced, would be obliged to work, in turn, with others near them.

In the short to medium term I would provide educational opportunities, to increase skill development which could be piggybacked from one community to another.

Third, following on from my child-centred approach I would immediately start to build networks of workers already out there on the ground, and I would build from their knowledge and expertise. I would resource them to do their jobs without the stress levels they live with on a day-to-day basis.

I would provide educational opportunities to workers so they feel capable in working with the child, who, as described on page 67 of the report<sup>1</sup>, saw his mother shot in the head and had to clean her brains up off the floor. I would ensure that workers have clear child trauma counselling skills by providing short courses for culturally safe crisis intervention. These are both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal workers, who have as their fundamental work ethic, the rights of the child to live and learn in child safe, child friendly environments.

These workers would include police officers who are legislated to protect children from harm, hence restricting access to alcohol and other drugs - an important part of their work responsibility. Social workers and child protection officers, who see the damage pornography does to the developing child, would be encouraged to work with police officers to help restrict access to such material. I would charge mine workers and mining companies for the behaviours of their employees and others such as mechanics, school teachers, and builders, who are found with such materials, on Aboriginal lands, in Aboriginal communities.

I would expect school teachers to embed in their class curriculum, modalities and activities which heal trauma.

### **In the medium term**

In the medium term, if I were the Prime Minister, I would build a *community strengths based approach* into all that I do, advancing education at all levels. The strengths based approach would provide educational opportunities for Indigenous Australians to acquire skills so they can work

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<sup>1</sup> Full report can be accessed from <http://www.nt.gov.au/dcm/inquiry/saac/>

with their own people, and others, for healthy early childhood development, education for lifelong learning, and education for healing.

Such educational packages would be both community based and tertiary delivered. They would have formal accreditation so that graduates could work in any field that helps build a society where children will always feel, and be, *safe*. This approach is an Indigenous employment strategy, and I would build that into my government's employment and enterprise strategies.

### **A long term approach embedded in education and quality research**

In the longer term, if I were the Prime Minister, I would embed in all that I do, research on the ground. Those researchers undertaking Professional Doctorates, with scholarships for Indigenous Australians, would work with those working on the ground, and would document the activities and processes, so that in five or ten years time, I could show the Australian nation what works, why it works, and how it would work in the towns and regions of Everywhere.

I would expect then that we would be able to work together, all of us, to build a future for all people in this country. I would then be able to say to my senior bureaucrats; you now have the practice based evidence. Support these approaches, on behalf of all Australians.

But I am not the Prime Minister.

And I am sorry that I am not, for if I were this Prime Minister, I would ask of myself; am I now willing to say *sorry* for my government's inability to respond to this *long term* 'emergency', an emergency that has existed over the ten years that I have been Prime Minister of this country? Am I willing to say *sorry* on behalf of my ministers, who have known of this crisis for many years, for their lack of will to do their jobs? Their inaction has profoundly deepened this so-called emergency.

If I were the Prime Minister I would sit in deep soul searching about my lack of leadership in response to these critical needs, and I would acknowledge that in my mandate on behalf of all Australians, I have failed Aboriginal children today. And I would say ...*Sorry*.

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# Where First Nations' languages maintain the health of the lands and her peoples, English fails - Vesper Tjukonai

## Acknowledgements

Let me begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of this country, those who have never sold nor ceded lands to any foreign power. Let me acknowledge with shame that while English can be spoken by 'one out of every five people' world-wide 'to some level of competence,'<sup>1</sup> this dominance has led in this country to the percentage of First Nations' peoples speaking their own languages decreasing from '100 percent in 1800 to 13 percent in 1996'. The number of First Nations' languages spoken fluently has decreased 90 percent since 1800.<sup>2</sup> Let me acknowledge the detriment to all of us that English maintains a dominant discourse across this continent.

In the tongue of my ancestors, I say to you all, *Failte* (pronounced *fawl-che*), Greetings.

*O mo bheul, o mo chridhe, dhuit fhéin* (pronounced *oh mo vee-al, oh mo cree, hont hane*).

From my mouth, from my heart, to Thee Thyself.

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<sup>1</sup> THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE - FACTS AND FIGURES:  
[http://www.englishenglish.com/english\\_facts\\_6.htm](http://www.englishenglish.com/english_facts_6.htm)

<sup>2</sup> State of Indigenous Languages in Australia – 200,  
<http://www.environment.gov.au/soe/techpapers/languages/main1.html>

It has taken 800 years for the people of 'my' ancestral lands to throw off the oppressive rule of the British. This country and its people cannot wait so long. In the words of Ngarrindjeri elder, Tom Trevorrow:

*We are still being treated as second and third class citizens within our own country, and being denied our rightful say and share of what our country has to offer to us.*<sup>3</sup>

This is a sacred land whose well-being has been maintained for a hundred thousand years by a spiritual people.<sup>4</sup>

The Australian Government inhabits a different world. Its world began with a crime, the theft of a continent in 1788. Since then, how many immigrants have sat down with First Nations' elders to ask them how to live in this country, how to abide by the laws of this land? Sitting under the shade of ancient ti-trees, my gaze followed the Inman River to its mouth and the foaming waves of the sea. Although within the regional city of Victor Harbor, with a population of over twelve thousand people,<sup>5</sup> I sat alone in the park or so I thought. Beside me, I felt someone approach and quietly deliver a message:

*Your world can crumble in the twinkling of an eye, because its foundations are corrupt.*

When I looked again, a gull wheeled in a blue sky and glided gently down to the sand. Beyond, the sea lapped an island of granite rock, rosy in the morning sun. This ancient world

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<sup>3</sup> Tom Trevorrow's speech on Gurindji Freedom Day, accessed 19/06/2007 from <http://antarsa.auuspics.org/>

<sup>4</sup> 'We are a spiritual people,' said Verna Koolmatrie, during celebrations of twenty years' ownership of the 'Church block.' English words are inadequate to describe the First Nations' relationship between the spiritual world and the physical. The fact that English separates the world into the old Greek triad of body, mind, spirit doesn't help.

<sup>5</sup> Victor Harbor's Indigenous population: not available, in 2001, was 0.8% of the total population, Australian Bureau of Statistics, National Regional Profile, 20/11/2006.

was neither corrupt nor inanimate. It glowed with spirit. I pondered my encounter and wondered how many people would think me mad if I spoke of it. Suffice to say, my world did crumble. I began again in Country, which had a heart.

Writing about encounters with spirit, in English is difficult. English is a language, full of names for things, right down to the smallest molecule, far out into the universe, all things have individual names; but to speak about their connections, to speak about their emanations of life and spirit, then English begins to fail.

## **English, a market place language**

English is a 'vehicular' language, observed French socio-linguist, Louis-Jean Calvet (n.d., p.6). It is a language of conveyance and commodity. It is the utilitarian currency of the market place. It serves the interests of the speaker, rather than the holistic needs of a community. In contrast, indigenous languages are 'gregarious.' They foster belonging, support relationships, nurture diversity, cross boundaries into liminality and accommodate the 'inexplicable' and 'ineffable.'

When English-speakers try to relate to an environment that is neither inanimate, nor someone's property, words become scarce, trite or convoluted. 'What about English poets?' you may say. 'Go ahead, recite,' I will reply. That too is generally outside people's experience, and the reason for this can be traced to a particularly traumatic period in English history.

## Legacy of 1066

In 1066, William the Conqueror seized England and became its sole owner. Everyone else became mere tenants.<sup>6</sup> Gone was the tradition of common land ownership and common rights to roam over untilled open country.<sup>7</sup> Gone into folklore was the sacred marriage between She who could not be owned: Queen of the Land and the king who could be discarded if he neglected Her.<sup>8</sup>

Under William's rule, land changed from a 'She' deity to be respected, to an 'it' property to be bought and sold, wealth to be hoarded by the few, education and culture enjoyed by the privileged. William's rule caused extreme upheaval in English society and death to any opposition. The English were reduced to the class of 'serfdom' and enslaved to foreign lords of the manor. Control of a quarter of the country was given to the Roman Catholic Church, in gratitude for blessing William's invasion. It banned as heretic and heathen the indigenous religion. The Latin-based Norman-French became the dominant language, while the Old English tongue was reduced to the language of the 'peasantry'.<sup>9</sup> A heavy burden of taxation was imposed. In 1085, the king commissioned the Domesday Book. He wanted to know exactly what he possessed. Land, livestock, crops, people, all became his property.<sup>10</sup>

In fact, here's a list of words that all bear some relation to the Norman-introduced concept of private property and private

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<sup>6</sup> *English heritage*, accessed 19/06/2007 from

<http://home.earthlink.net/~jimpool/genealogy/history/heritage1.html>

<sup>7</sup> Edgar S.J. Powell, *The prehistoric right to roam*, [http://www.tlio.org.uk/pubs/LE2\\_lrights.html](http://www.tlio.org.uk/pubs/LE2_lrights.html)

<sup>8</sup> Caitlin Matthews, (1996), *The Celtic tradition*, Element Books: Shaftesbury, Dorset.

<sup>9</sup> *Norman conquest of England*, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman\\_Conquest#Language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_Conquest#Language)

<sup>10</sup> Roger Heape (2000), *The Domesday Book*, from Land Essays, [http://www.tlio.org.uk/pubs/LE2\\_lrights.html](http://www.tlio.org.uk/pubs/LE2_lrights.html)

ownership, and all arrived in English as a result of the Norman invasion:

*armour, army, assets, assess, assign, attach, battle, barrister, capital, castle, cattle, caution, champion, chancellor, chattel, cheat, chief, colony, conquest, constable, coroner, country, court, crime, crown, damage, danger, demesne, destroy, dungeon, duty, enemy, entail, estate, eviction, execution, feast, fee, felony, fort, freight, gaol, government, grant, heir, hodgepodge, judge, jury, justice, larceny, lease, magistrate, manor, mansion, manure, market, marshal, master, mistress, molestation, mortgage, occupy, order, palace, pardon, parliament, parson, patrimony, pay, peace, peculiar, penalty, permanent, place, poach, possession, power, prefect, prince, prison, privilege, prohibit, property, proprietary, propriety, province, punishment, reality, rebel, reprisal, rent, rejoice, religion, revenue, riches, royal, siege, seize, sir, soldier, solicitor, sovereign, state, surname, servant, slave, tax, tenement, tenant, tenure, testament, throne, title, torture, tower, traitor, vendor, verdict, vest, victory, voucher, wage, war, waif, warranty.*<sup>11</sup>

The tragedy of this list is that almost a millennium after the Norman Conquest, people still use these words to maintain a discourse of dominance.

## **Demesne, domain, and domhain**

Let's consider the word Anglo-Norman word *demesne* and its more common counterpart *domain*. *Demesne* came from Old French *demeine*, 'land belonging to a lord' (Ayto 1990, p.180). Under William the Conqueror's feudal system, the *demesne* was land retained by the lord for his own use and not let out to tenants (ibid, p.163). Its twin, 'domain', came into English three centuries later, via a Scots dialect, via the Middle French *domain*, but from the same Old French source as *demesne*. *Demesne* is now a legal reference to 'possession of

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<sup>11</sup> *War* entered Old English in 1050, from O.N.Fr. *Werre*. Accessed 20/06/2007 from <http://www.etymonline.com>. I've included it in this list, given its arrival in OE during the Norman influenced period of unrest leading up to the Norman Conquest.

real estate as one's own' (Oxford 1983, p.118), while *domain* has become completely detached from land, and now refers to some sphere of activity or of control. *Public domain* refers to the public ownership of knowledge and innovation; while a *domain name* identifies a computer on the Internet. The terms *Royal Demesne*, *Demesne of the Crown* or *Royal Domain* still refer to land set aside for use by the sovereign. In 1788, Governor Phillip dispossessed people of the Cadigal nation and turned their sacred ceremonial ground into 'his private reserve:' the *Governor's Domain*, private property of the British Crown.<sup>12</sup>

What's happened to the traditional owners of these places? While the Botanic Gardens Trust has a website about 'Bush foods of the Cadigal people', all references to them are in the past tense. I could not find any information about the traditional owners of the other Domains mentioned, such is the dominance of Anglo-centric Australian society.<sup>13</sup> What's more, since the Crown has opened *The Domain* in Sydney, the *Queen's Domain* in Hobart, and the *Domain Parklands* in Melbourne to public use, why retain a name that aggrandizes barbaric medieval English land tenure? The word 'Domain' when used in Business is equated with prestige real estate and market spread: 'Many of Melbourne's elite have made *Royal Domain Tower* their home because it is simply the best.'<sup>14</sup>

The Scots Gaelic Ceilé Dé tradition has a *fonn*, song to the land: 'Co sine tàth an domhain tàth', 'As we unite the worlds unite.' The chant is used to 'greet the sidhe (ancestors, spirits in nature, deity) when one is entering a sacred site, or indeed

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<sup>12</sup> Botanic Gardens Trust, History Timeline, accessed 20/06/2007 from

[http://www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/royal\\_botanic\\_gardens/garden\\_features/history](http://www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/royal_botanic_gardens/garden_features/history)

<sup>13</sup> Accessed 20/06/2007 from [http://www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/plant\\_info/aboriginal\\_bush\\_foods](http://www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/plant_info/aboriginal_bush_foods)

<sup>14</sup> Royal Domain Tower website, accessed 20/06/2007 from

<http://www.royaldomaintowers.com.au/main.html>

any place in nature.<sup>15</sup> *Domhain* may look like the English *domain*, but its history is quite different. *Domhain* (pronounced *dowain*), world, universe, the Earth, can be traced to the Old Irish *domun*, the Celtic *\*dubno*,<sup>16</sup> to an Indo-European origin *\*dheub-*, deep, which gave rise to the English words, 'deep' and 'dive'. In a sacred sense, *domhain* means the spirit Otherworlds which co-exist with the physical world. *Domhain* is also used in expressions like: *ar domhan* (pronounced *ehr DOWN*), 'on earth, in the world', and *Tá an domhan saibhris aige* (pronounced *TAW uhn DOWN SEHV-rish EH-gyuh*). 'The world of wealth is at-him.' He is wealthy.<sup>17</sup> It is significant to note that it is the *domhain* that gives the wealth, in contrast to English usage where wealth is taken from one's domain.

## Dominance and dominion

Both *demesne* and *domain* ultimately came from the Latin *dominium*, 'property, dominion,' from *dominus*, 'lord, master, owner,' from *domus*, 'house.'<sup>18</sup> 'A man's home is his castle,'<sup>19</sup> the inviolable nature of one's dwelling, is directly traceable to indigenous threats to William the Conqueror's security.<sup>20</sup> Originally, *Dominus*, and its feminine form *Domina* were Roman titles for deity. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, the Roman Emperor elevated himself by assuming the official title *Dominus*. In Roman society, the *domini*, plural of *dominus*, were Roman *masters* and owners, 'particularly of slaves.'<sup>21</sup> Roman Catholicism uses *Dominus*: Lord, today, even though there is no Biblical basis for doing so.<sup>22</sup> Around *dominus* has

<sup>15</sup> Fionn Tulach, *Fonn – sacred chants of the Ceilé Dé*, CD track 6, [www.ceielede.co.uk](http://www.ceielede.co.uk)

<sup>16</sup> Accessed 20/06/2007 from <http://www.wordgumbo.com/ie/cel/sco/macbain.txt>

<sup>17</sup> *Focal an Lae*, accessed 20/06/2007 from <http://w3.lincolnu.edu/~focal/backinst/focal049.htm>

<sup>18</sup> Accessed 20/06/2007 from <http://www.etymonline.com/>

<sup>19</sup> The Australian comedy, *The castle*, directed by Rob Sitch, satirizes this particularly 'Aussie' attitude.

<sup>20</sup> *William the conqueror*, accessed 20/06/2007 from [http://www.britainexpress.com/History/William\\_the\\_Conquem](http://www.britainexpress.com/History/William_the_Conquem)

<sup>21</sup> Accessed 20/06/2007 from <http://www.britannica.com/eb/topic-168799/dominus>

<sup>22</sup> Accessed 20/06/2007 from <http://www.enduringword.com/commentaries/5901.htm>

developed a large web of English words: dominant, dominate, domineer, dominie, domino, don, dame, danger (originally, the power of a master to punish) despot, dome, domestic and dungeon (the lord's tower) and dominion.

'Dominion' was used in the King James version of the Bible to translate Genesis 1:28 where God commanded humanity to exert dominion over the earth.<sup>23</sup> Many historians, human rights' advocates and ecologists alike, assert that Christian Dominion Theology has led to the West's 'exploitation of the earth' and its 'superior' attitude 'to all the rest of creation'.<sup>24</sup> 'Dominion' was the term the British Empire applied to its territories across the globe. Australia became a Dominion in 1901, when the six colonies formed the Commonwealth of Australia. The term Dominion was replaced by another medieval French word 'Realm' in the titles held by Queen Elizabeth in 1953, but the phrase 'Her Majesty's dominions' is still used in a constitutional context, referring to 'all the realms and territories of the Sovereign, whether independent or not.'<sup>25</sup>

## Loss of language diversity

Wherever the British Empire held dominion over its territories, English was imposed as the official and dominant language, as a supposedly unifying principle. It was an excuse for subjugation and the impact on indigenous land and languages has been severe. In this country, of the 250 First Nation's languages spoken by the 600 to 700 pre-invasion nations,<sup>26</sup> only 'around twenty really viable

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<sup>23</sup> *Dominion theology and genesis 1:26*, accessed 20/06/2007 from <http://www.religioustolerance.org/tomek30.htm>

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Accessed 20/06/2007 from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dominion>

<sup>26</sup> *The spoken word*, Keeping the Aboriginal language strong, accessed 19/06/2007 from <http://www.bri.net.au/spokenword.html>



traditional' languages are now spoken 'with an ever dwindling number of speakers' (Thieberger and McGregor 1994, p.xii). In human terms, the loss of language means a lot of misunderstanding and misery, and more than that.

## **Loss of language, loss of land, loss of knowledge, loss of health**

Anthropologist Daniel Nettle and Professor of English language, Suzanne Romaine<sup>27</sup> assert that language diversity is linked explicitly with the health of the environment. All is connected. Indigenous languages have an ecological link with their homelands. Land sustains the language. Language sustains the land. The words of indigenous peoples, shaped by intimate knowledge of the terrain, the waters, the turning of the star, the seasons, ring out across country in ways that are life affirming for all. On the west coast of Scotland, for example, men would chant to the sea (Bord 1983, p.119):

*A Dhe na mara*

*Cuir todhar's an tarruinn*

*Chon tachair an talaimh*

*Chon bailcidh dhuinn biaidh.*<sup>28</sup>

'O God of the sea

Put weed in the drawing wave,

To enrich the ground, To shower us with food.'

Nettle and Romaine maintain that the extinction of languages is 'part of the larger picture of near- total collapse

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RMW Dixon, Bruce Moore, WS Ramson, Mandy Thomas, (2006), *Australian Aboriginal words in English, Their origin and meaning*, 2nd edition, Oxford University Press: South Melbourne, p.1.

<sup>27</sup> Daniel Nettle and Suzanne Romaine, (2000), *Vanishing voices: the extinction of the world's languages*, Oxford University Press: Oxford UK.

<sup>28</sup> *Cuilidh Mhoire*, accessed 20/06/2007 from [http://www.sundown.pair.com/SundownShores/Volume\\_V/cuilidh\\_mhoire.htm](http://www.sundown.pair.com/SundownShores/Volume_V/cuilidh_mhoire.htm)

of the worldwide ecosystem.'<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, they point out that Indigenous peoples who make up 'around four percent of the world's population' speak 'at least 60 percent of its languages and control or manage some of the ecosystems richest in biodiversity.' Does it follow then that 96 percent of the world's population is poorly managing their environment? Ngarrindjeri elder, Tom Trevorrow laments what is happening to his nation's Country under European 'management':

*Ngarrindjeri Concern for Country*

*The land and waters is a living body.*

*We the Ngarrindjeri are part of its existence.*

*The land and waters must be healthy for the Ngarrindjeri to be healthy.*

*We are hurting for our Country.*

*The Land is dying, the River is dying,*

*the Kurangk (Coorong) is dying and the Murray Mouth is closing.*

*What does the future hold for us?<sup>30</sup>*

Tom's elder brother, George Trevorrow, puts his concerns another way. Ngarrindjeri country is a 'big book', he told anthropologist Diane Bell. 'Now, over the years, people been taking -- like tearing pages out of our book ... and then that leaves us with a big blank' (Bell 1998, p.307). Let's look at that Old French word, *Country*.

## Country

When 'country' arrived in English in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, it referred to a foreign land, a geographic place not connected to the home of the speaker. The word came from the Old

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<sup>29</sup> Accessed 20/06/2007 from <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~romaine/vvoices.html>

<sup>30</sup> Ngarrindjeri Tendi, Ngarrindjeri Heritage Committee, Ngarrindjeri Native Title Management Committee, Ngarrindjeri Land and Progress Association (Inc.), (2007), *Ngarrindjeri nation yarluwar-Ruwe Plan*, p.5.

French *cuntrée*, which was an abbreviation of the Medieval Latin, *terra contrāta*, 'land opposite or before one', from *contra*, 'against' or 'opposite' (Ayto 1990, p.140). In its origins, *country* was travelled across, mapped, invaded, carved up and its wealth plundered.

'Country' was a foreign land until the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Then it began to be used interchangeably with 'county' or district', and became synonymous with nationhood.<sup>31</sup> 'Country' as a rural area, as opposed to a city, didn't exist until the 16<sup>th</sup> century. But still the country is travelled across, mapped, invaded, carved up and its wealth plundered. The Ngarrindjeri translate 'country' as *Ruwe*, but unlike European countries where borders shift with the latest conquest, Ngarrindjeri *Ruwe* is inviolable. For *Ruwe* is alive. *Ruwi* cannot be translated simply. As anthropologist Diane Bell points out, the Ngarrindjeri *ruwi/ruwa* is the 'living body' of the land and waters, creatures and peoples. 'Ngarrindjeri *ruwar*' sings Ngarrindjeri elder, Victor Wilson: 'one body, all the people.' *Ruwalan* are 'the nerves of the body *ruwa*.'<sup>32</sup> A child is born of the *ruwa/ruwi* of its parents (Bell 1998, p.622-3). Thus when Ngarrindjeri people speak their language, they can hear how they and their country are connected through their words.

But more. Ngarrindjeri people know where the diversity of their 18 *lakinlinyeri* languages originates. Their oral history records it. It was created from the body of *Wururi*, Grandmother Spider (*ibid*, p.137). The Ngarrindjeri could visit where this all took place, before March 4<sup>th</sup> 2000. But when the Hindmarsh Island Bridge was built, the South Australian Government removed culturally appropriate

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<sup>31</sup> In 1553, Nicholas Grimald translated Cicero with the phrase, 'to bee of one countree, of one nation, of one language.' *Lanfranco*, <http://www.funtrivia.com/askft/Question58945.html>

<sup>32</sup> Diane Bell, (1998), *Ngarrindjeri Wurruwarrin: a world that is, was and will be*, Spinifex Press: Melbourne.

access. The impact of this loss on the Ngarrindjeri community has been cruel. Community Health Worker, Andrea Henschke observes:

*'When the bridge was built, the women were disempowered and dispossessed all over again. The impact on their psyche was dramatic and physical health issues have been exacerbated. Diabetes and heart disease are significant issues for older Ngarrindjeri women. Substance abuse and suicide are issues for the young. Violence and abuse against women within the community is of great concern.'*

*'And without the Ngarrindjeri women,' Andrea said, 'the land is not regenerating'<sup>33</sup>*

## Prayer song of my country

The dining hall at Camp Coorong was alive with talk, until Ngarrindjeri elder, Victor Wilson, took guitar in hand. Then stillness, as if the air Herself was listening, accompanied him as he sang *Pakari Nganawi Ruwi* (Prayer Song of My Country). We all felt the emotion evoked: reverence, cherished memory and continuous connection, as Victor sang:

*'Take us back  
To our country  
To the place  
Where we call home  
Ngarrindjeri Ruwi  
Nganawi Ruwi  
To the place where we belong  
Nangi Winamuldi  
Made it for us  
In the Dreamtime  
Long ago.  
He taught our Pakanus  
to take good care of it...'<sup>34</sup>*

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<sup>33</sup> Vesper Tjukonai, (2002), 'The Language of the Land', in 'Woman and Sustainability', *Woman's Studies Journal*, York University.

<sup>34</sup> Victor Wilson, *Pakari Nganawi Ruwi* [Prayer Song of My Country] in *Ngarrindjeri Wurruwarrin*, p.194.

Tears slipped down my face. I was so embarrassed. Every one else in the room had much more reason to weep than I. Hadn't Aunty Daisy talked of her old people's terror when the red-coats on horseback thundered down on them? They'd saved themselves by diving into the lake. Hadn't Uncle Neville spoken of the truck that pulled up at Raukkan and of the command: 'You, you and you'. Men were ordered aboard and driven off to war, and how many loved ones didn't return? Hadn't a feisty but teetotal aunt spoken of the indignity, upon her return to the Mission, of having her suitcase searched for alcohol at the Narrung ferry? Hadn't another respected elder voiced her anguish that a South Australian Royal Commission claimed her traditional stories were 'fabricated? I wept for the pain of it all. I wept also for the joy of hearing, despite everything, the Ngarrindjeri affirm in the prayerful tradition of their ancestors, their sovereign connection to *Ruwi*.

What words does English have for expressing this kind of connection? Ecology?<sup>35</sup> A German zoologist, Ernst Haeckel had to invent a word to describe relationships between living creatures and the land in 1870 (Ayto, 1990, p.193). And, as a scientific term, ecology doesn't accommodate a landscape full of spirits. English has become a language of abstraction. It enables mind to transmit ideas to mind, but not feat to hear the earth beneath them or skin to talk to attentive wind. English words such as hill or lake, observes Benjamin Lee Whorf, have been separated from the 'entire relationship' with nature. They are perceived not as 'an aspect of nature's endless variety' but as a 'distinct thing, almost like a table or a chair.'<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Ökologie*, ecology, the study of habitat, literally means, 'study of houses', from the Greek *oikos*, 'house'.

<sup>36</sup> Benjamin Lee Whorf 'Time, space and language,' in *Culture in crisis: A study of Hopi Indians* quoted by Dolores LaChapelle (1988) in *Sacred land sacred sex rapture of the deep*, Kivakí Press: Durango, CO.

## ***Country* in Aboriginal English**

In contrast is the Aboriginal English usage of *country*. *Country* is often encountered without a possessive adjective, as in 'Caring for Country'. Academic Deborah Bird Rose, points out that 'Country in Aboriginal English is not only a common noun but also a proper noun.'<sup>37</sup> She observes that it is a 'living entity' with a 'will toward life'. People relate to Country in a kinship relationship. 'People and country take care of each other,' writes Rose.

Synonymous with *Country* in Aboriginal English is *Land*. Ngarrindjeri elder and educator, Tom Trevorrow, regularly sweeps his hand either side of the Walking Trail and teaches: 'We as Aboriginal people look upon the Land, as our Mother. It provides everything for us...without the Land, without the clean Water...you're nothing.' The 600-700 pre-invasion nations of this continent, each have a country which is unique and yet an 'inviolable whole'. Diplomacy between nations follows a sophisticated web of relationships which 'ensure that no country is isolated.' Trade, sacred ceremony, Creation song-lines, the flightpath of birds, the movement of animals, the current of winds, the flow of waters, the turning of the stars, all weave together in an holistic net called Country. People respect Country, not only because it sustains life, but because 'spirits guard the country and the people, and when they are angry they can become dangerous.'

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<sup>37</sup> Deborah Bird Rose, (1996), *Nourishing terrains, Australian Aboriginal views of landscape and wilderness*, Commonwealth of Australia, accessed 20/06/2007 from <http://www.ahc.gov.au/publications/generalpubs/nourishing/chapter1.html>

## Spirits of the land

Alexis Wright, of the Waanji nation in the southern Gulf of Carpentaria and recent winner of the Miles Franklin literary award, wrote:

*I've often thought about how the spirits of other countries have followed their people to Australia, and how those spirits might be reconciled with the ancestral spirits that belong here. I wonder if it is at this level of thinking that lasting forms of reconciliation between people might begin, and if not, how our spirits will react.*<sup>38</sup>

There's a clue to how this ought to be, in the Gaelic calendar month of *Lunasa*, August. Every year *Lunasa* commemorates how an invader society became reconciled with the spirits of the land. The old name for the commemoration was *Oenach Taltien*, Tailte's Gathering or the Assembly of Peace.<sup>39</sup> *Tailte* in Old Irish means 'lands.' The lands were always embodied as a woman.

Tailte was Queen of the Sacred Earth. She was daughter of the King of the underworld and married Eochaid, the Horseman of the Heavens. During their reign, every year had a harvest and the land was peaceful.

But then invaders came. Eochaid was among the thousands slaughtered and Tailte was enslaved. She was forced to cut down sacred woods, to make way for the invaders' crops. It broke her heart and her spirit.

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<sup>38</sup> Alexis Wright, quoted by Kerry O'Brien on the *7.30 Report*, Australian Broadcasting Corporation Broadcast: 21/06/2007 <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2007/s1958594.htm>

<sup>39</sup> Caitlin Matthews, (1999), *The Celtic spirit, daily meditations for the turning year*, HarperCollins: New York.

The new king imposed heavy taxes. The land sickened. Famine was widespread. Tailte had a foster-son, Lugh. He was a prince of the same blood as the invaders, but he gave his allegiance to the oppressed and led them into battle, defeating the oppressors.

On becoming king, Lugh went to his foster-mother, Tailte, Queen of the Land, to acknowledge Her Sovereignty and Law. He was stricken with grief because Tailte was close to death. He apologized for all the harm his people had caused Her. He asked how he could make amends.

The last behest of Tailte was for 'justice'. She requested that the people come together 'to lament her' in an 'unbroken truce'. She wished for a 'fair without dispute, without raving, without challenge of property, without suing, without law-sessions, without evasion, without arrest.' She wanted a fair 'with games, with music of chariots, with adornment of body and of soul by means of knowledge and eloquence.'<sup>40</sup> Tailte predicted that while her people did this, 'corn and milk' would be in every home. Lugh fulfilled her last wishes. And so, the place of Tailte's death became a place of rebirth for Ireland. For a thousand years, the country enjoyed prosperity. Then came the English. The English Church stopped the Lunasa fairs. For 800 years, the Irish were again oppressed and impoverished. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, southern Ireland won independence and the old ways began to be restored. The country prospered again. For those of us who despair that, after two centuries of plunder, this ancient land is dying, we can learn from Tailte's last requests. We can follow Lugh's example.

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<sup>40</sup> Knud Mariboe, *Encyclopedia of the Celts*; 'Settling of the Manor of Tara' from Caitlin and John Matthews, *Encyclopedia of Celtic wisdom; Lebor Gabala Erenn* The Book of Leinster, 1150 CE; Cath Maige Tuired, The second battle of Mag Tuired, trans. by Elizabeth A. Gray.



1. We can, like Lugh, listen to the traditional owners of the land, listen to the mothers of the land.
2. We can acknowledge the harm that has been done and apologize for what's happened.
3. We can see that justice is done. We can call for the robbery, raping and exploitation to cease, and for disputes to be settled.
4. We can recognise the sovereignty of the people of this land. We can follow international law and enter into a treaty.
5. We can give our energy back to the land and her people. It is the wish of any mother to heal the wounds of her children and watch them grow in health and thoughtfulness.

## Two communities

*'Our people die young, too frequently, and many die badly. The majority of Aboriginal deaths are associated with poverty and neglect, while governments abuse us for their lack of decency and responsibility. Our story is about unfulfilled lives, unfulfilled histories -- stretching over 200 years,'* said Alexis Wright.

*'What I try to do in my writing is make some sense of our world, the stupidity of it, the despair of it, and create a record of it.'*<sup>41</sup>

As an Anglo-Gaelic-Australian, I am aware of my social privilege: I am three times more likely to survive infancy than any Indigenous person. Anglo-Australian students are twice as likely to finish secondary education. Anglo-Australian job-seekers are seven times more likely to get paid employment.

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<sup>41</sup> Alexis Wright, *Breaking taboos*, Tasmanian Readers' and Writers' Festival, September 1998, <http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-September-1998/wright.html>

Anglo-Australians are half as likely to get diabetes and 10 times less likely to go blind. Anglo-Australians are three times more likely to own a home; and far less likely to be imprisoned. Anglo-Australians are likely to live 20 more years than First Nations' people in this country.<sup>42</sup> As an Anglo-Australian, I am a monoglot and can only guess at the respect and empathy that is developed by being able to communicate in several different languages, like many Indigenous Australians.

'From the time of European settlement in Australia, English has become Australianized in two speech communities: the European and the Indigenous communities,' writes Ian Malcolm, from the Research Team on Aboriginal English at Edith Cowan University.<sup>43</sup> Linguistically, 'there is nothing to choose between' the English spoken within Indigenous communities and Australian English, Malcolm points out, but 'the two dialects have very different status within the community.' Significantly, speakers of Aboriginal English 'suffer discrimination when it comes to receiving services intended to be equally available to all Australians.'

Malcolm cites studies which found that speakers of Aboriginal English, exist in 'an Aboriginal lifespace', despite 'nearly all' being monolingual English speakers. 'Aboriginal frameworks of activity and relationship' are not relinquished upon learning English, Malcolm observed.<sup>44</sup> This is either overlooked or not understood by the Federal Government's Indigenous Affairs Minister, Mal Brough, who thinks that

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<sup>42</sup> These statistics come from ANTaR at <http://www.antar.org.au/>

<sup>43</sup> Ian G Malcolm, *Inquiry into the needs of metropolitan and urban dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*, A Submission on Aboriginal English and Urban Dwelling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, accessed 20/06/2007 from <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/atsia/urbandwelling/sub31.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup> Studies of over 200 oral texts produced by Aboriginal people, mainly school age in the south-west of Western Australia, in Ian G Malcolm, *Aboriginal English: A case for Recognition of Prior Learning*. [http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content\\_storage\\_01/0000000b/80/27/dc/54.pdf](http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2/content_storage_01/0000000b/80/27/dc/54.pdf)

forcing all 'Aboriginal children' to learn English will give them 'the same opportunities as white children.'<sup>45</sup> 'Aboriginal kids do need to be bilingual, but it's a bit rich coming from a person who actually is part of a government that took away funding for bilingual programs in the Northern Territory,' commented NSW's first Aboriginal MP, Linda Burney.<sup>46</sup>

A Northern Territory Schools Report 2004 – 2005 found that 'there is irresistible evidence to show that when the home languages and cultures of students are reflected in their learning experiences and learning environments, students achieve better levels of learning.'<sup>47</sup> The Federal Government also plans to enforce Indigenous school attendance by linking it to 'income support and family assistance payments'.<sup>48</sup> However, the Australian Education Union's Deputy Federal President, Angelo Gavrielatos, pointed out: 'The reason thousands of Aboriginal children don't go to school is because of the simple fact that there is no school in their home community.'<sup>49</sup>

## Beyond mindsets

My ancestral people have an expression: *Sireadh thall* (pronounced *Sheer-ich haal*), Seek beyond. It means that 'whatever we are experiencing, there is always more'.<sup>50</sup> It is a

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<sup>45</sup> Joel Gibson, 'Indigenous school plan criticised,' *The Sydney Morning Herald*, May 26, 2007, accessed 20/06/2007 from <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/indigenousschool-plan-criticised/2007/05/25/1179601669092.html>

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Indigenous languages and culture* in Northern Territory Schools Report 2004 – 2005, [http://www.deet.nt.gov.au/education/indigenous\\_education/previous\\_publications/indigenous\\_languages\\_culture\\_report/ilc\\_report\\_exec\\_summary.pdf](http://www.deet.nt.gov.au/education/indigenous_education/previous_publications/indigenous_languages_culture_report/ilc_report_exec_summary.pdf).

<sup>48</sup> 'Howard bans alcohol, porn in indigenous communities,' *The Australian*, June 21, 2007, accessed <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20867,21943476-601,00.html>

<sup>49</sup> 'Thousands of indigenous students miss out on school because of lack of funding', Media Release, *Australian Education Union*, 25 May 2007, accessed 20/06/2007 from <http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Media/MediaReleases/2007/2505.pdf>.

<sup>50</sup> Fionn Tulach, *Fonn – Sacred chants of the Ceilé Dé*, CD track 10.

reminder that the mindsets and social frameworks that we exist in, limit us. Around the continent, First Nations are publishing 'Sea Country' or 'Caring for Country' plans. These documents have been birthed from Country, respected as Mother. Reading them, enables non-Aboriginal people to step beyond their accustomed mindsets. The writers of the Ngarrindjeri Sea Country Plan (2007, p.16) issue an invitation:

*'Our Old People taught us to Share with others. We invite all who respect us to join with us in our responsibility and duty to Care for Country. Let us walk together to build a healthy future for our children, our grandchildren and all generations to come.'*<sup>51</sup>

To support the will of Country towards life, may we reduce the crushing dominance of the English discourse. May we validate the language rights of First Nation's speakers, and value the knowledge inherent in Indigenous languages. May we nurture languages which can communicate with a Country alive with spirit. So, may the people of this continent respect the living Land which sustains health, education, employment, culture and nurtures our spirits. As Tom Trevor said, without this, we are 'nothing'.

So, 'may our spirits find rest and peace within our Lands and Waters' (ibid, p.4).

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<sup>51</sup> *Ngarrindjeri nation yarluwar-Ruwe Plan*, Ngarrindjeri Tendi, Ngarrindjeri Heritage committee, Ngarrindjeri Native Title Management Committee, Ngarrindjeri Land and Progress Association (Inc.), 2007, p.16.

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**Vesper Tjukonai** will be presenting on this topic at the Conference in Adelaide.

# **Professional and leadership development in higher education through action learning and action research: An interview with Ortrun Zuber-Skerrit**

**- Doris Santos and Ortrun Zuber-  
Skerritt**

*This email interview was recorded prior to the International Symposium on Action Research and Education in Context of Poverty, a tribute to Orlando Fals Borda. The symposium was convened by Professor Doris Santos, and sponsored by the three universities in Bogotá, Columbia (16–18 May 2007). Professor Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt was an invited keynote speaker at the Symposium. Professor Zuber-Skerritt will be presenting at the National ALARPM Conference in Adelaide. This is the English version of the interview and is printed here with kind permission.*

*Doris: You have been known worldwide for your models of learning, teaching and professional development using action research in higher education. Could you please describe your framework of action research for those who have not heard about it in the Spanish-speaking world?*

*Ortrun: Yes, thank you for inviting me [to the symposium]. I published two companion books entitled *Professional development in higher education: a theoretical framework for action research* and *Action research in higher education: examples and**

reflections (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992a, b) where I defined action research in my CRASP model, as shown in Table I.

*Table I: The CRASP model of action research (Zuber-Skerritt, 1992a:2; b:15)*

Action research is:

*Critical* (and self-critical) collaborative enquiry by  
*Reflective* practitioners being  
*Accountable* and making the results of their enquiry public  
*Self-evaluating* their practice and engaged in  
*Participative* problem solving and continuing professional development.

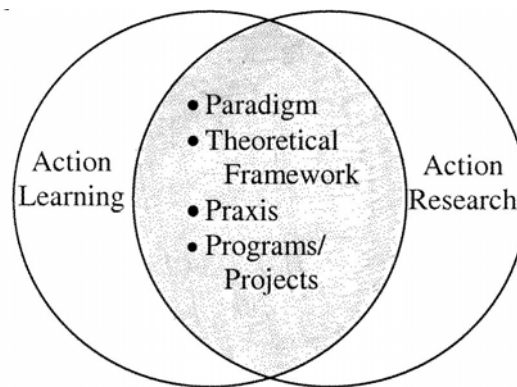
Since then I have combined action research with action learning, offering the following definitions and distinction.

Action learning means learning from action and concrete experience, as well as taking action as a result of this learning. Similarly, action research is a cyclical iterative process of action and reflection on and in action. Through reflection we conceptualize and generalize what happened (action). We can then investigate (research) in new situations whether our conceptions were right; that is, we try to find confirming or disconfirming evidence. There is no separation between, but integration of, practice and theory, development and research.

The main difference between action learning and action research is the same as that between learning and research generally. Both include learning, searching, problem solving and enquiry. However, action research is more systematic, rigorous, scrutinizable, verifiable, and always made public (e.g. in publications, oral or written reports).

My revised theoretical frameworks of Action Learning and Action Research (ALAR) was published in Sankaran *et al.* (2001) and Speedy (2003). I reiterate these here in brief, because readers of this journal in the Spanish-speaking world might not have easy access to these books.

First, I show the overlap and commonalities of ALAR in Figure 1, that is, the three Ps of ALAR: (1) the **Paradigm** and theoretical framework, (2) the **Praxis**, and (3) **Programs** and projects.



*Figure 1: Commonalities of action learning and action research*

## **Paradigm and theoretical framework**

Both action learning and action research are located in the human and social sciences, not the natural sciences. This is important to note, because we are not dealing with organic or inorganic matter, but with sentient human beings, groups of people, organizations, communities or societies, whose characteristics, ideas, strategies and behaviour are complex and not easy to predict, if predictable at all. One of the problems in the social sciences is the lack of understanding of what underpins and influences our actions, behaviour and strategies for maintaining or improving our practice. These



are, importantly, paradigms, philosophies, values and *Weltanschauungen* (worldviews).

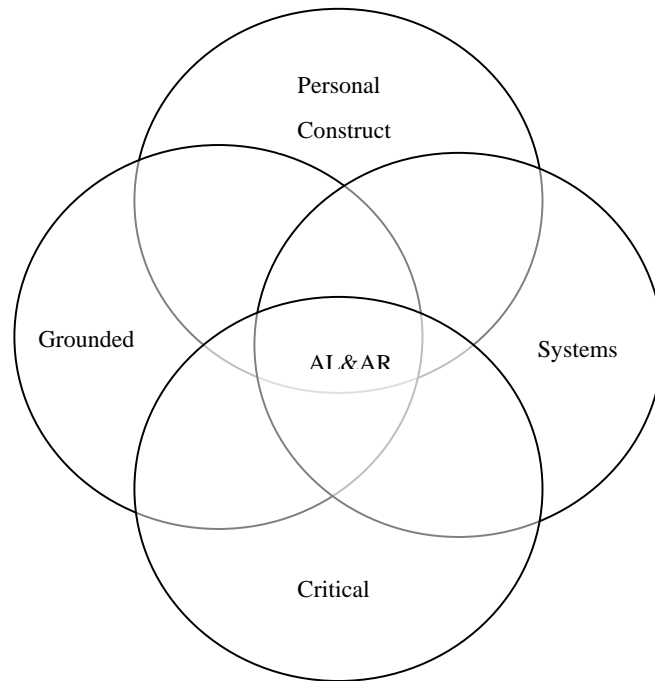
The two main competing paradigms in the social sciences are positivism and phenomenology. The former leads to a technical, reductionist approach; the latter to a more holistic approach to learning and knowledge creation (research). Positivism is the belief that science through its scientific methods can construct 'objective' knowledge of reality, of 'the world as it really is', and that scientists can be detached observers of objective facts. Positivists claim that this kind of knowledge, which is just *one* kind among others, is the *only* valid and legitimate one.

Non-positivists reject this view, because it is based on the natural sciences. They argue that the human and social sciences require methodologies different from the natural sciences, because the nature, behaviour and mind of humankind constitute a complex whole, which cannot be observed objectively or separately in parts by outside researchers. They recognize that observations are not neutral, objective or value free, but involve subjective interpretations dependent on the observer's theoretical framework and value system. They see that the 'subjects' need to be 'participants' in the research process (e.g. in the analysis and interpretation of data) in order to make the results as objective as possible.

Phenomenology is a research tradition that focuses on the natural, experienced human world. Instead of applying their pre-conceived ideas to reality, researchers study how this world actually appears to people or how people experience, conceive and describe the world around them. Action research is located in this non-positivist, phenomenological paradigm. Since paradigms are human constructs, they are

the products of human perception and interpretation. Thus we need to explain and justify our paradigm choice so that our research findings can be evaluated against our own criteria, rather than against external, positivist criteria.

My revised theoretical framework consists of an overlap of selected aspects and principles from four existing theories that are relevant to ALAR and that I have integrated into a new model. These theories are Grounded Theory, Personal Construct Theory, Critical Theory and Systems Theory, as shown in Figure 2.



*Figure 2: Theoretical framework for action learning and action research.*

### *Grounded Theory*

One of the first influential books providing a theoretical framework for ALAR and other methodologies within the non-positivist paradigm was Glaser and Strauss (1967) on *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. This theory established the notion that theoretical knowledge can be generated from specific contextual information and data collected from people within a certain context (e.g. an organization) by an iterative process of alternating and interacting the phases of discovery and subsequent testing or 'sampling of grounded theory'.

Unlike scientific empirical research aiming at verification of 'grand theories' and placing little value on their discovery, 'grounded theory' emphasizes the process of discovery and places value on generating meaningful theories. While empirical research produces 'etic' theory by an outsider who is uninvolved and removed from the object of enquiry, grounded theory is 'emic' with an insider view of the people, groups, organizations or cultures being studied.

The etic inquirer tries to establish generalizable (nomothetic) laws; the emic inquirer wants to provide knowledge and understanding of a particular, individual (ideographic) case. For the former, generalizations might be statistically purposeful and significant (e.g. in population audits, causes of illness and health, national trends), but they often are not applicable or irrelevant to the individual case and specific group, whilst action research is directly and exclusively relevant to an individual case.

### *Personal Construct Theory (PCT)*

George Kelly published one of the first books on this topic in 1955. His main message was that everyone is a 'personal scientist'. This means that it is not the privilege of experts

and professional scientists exclusively to advance knowledge (theories, rules and principles), which we may then accept and apply, but rather that all of us in normal mental health are capable of creating knowledge at various levels. We are not passive receivers of knowledge, but active constructors (or self-instructors) and interpreters of our experiences. Thus, knowledge and theory become personalized, relevant to, and fully integrated into our practice.

Based on this epistemology, Kelly developed his personal construct theory in terms of a fundamental postulate elaborated by eleven corollaries that I have explained in relation to ALAR in higher education (Zuber-Skerritt 1992a: 56-66). In particular, I state:

*Kelly's epistemological position is 'constructive alternativism', that is, the assumption that our present constructs or interpretations of the universe are subject to revision or replacement. This means that people understand themselves and their environment, and anticipate future events, by constructing tentative models or personal theories and by evaluating these theories against personal criteria as to whether the prediction and control of events (based upon the models) have been successful or not. All theories are hypotheses created by people; they may be valid at any particular time, but may suddenly be invalid in some unforeseeable respect and replaced by a better theory (p. 57)....*

*Kelly also believes that people construe reality in an infinite number of different ways. Although he does not deny the importance of childhood experiences or present environmental constraints, he suggests that it is more important to explore people's thinking about their present situation (i.e. their current hypotheses structure). He believes that people need not be trapped by their early experiences or be impotent in the face of present environmental constraints, but that change can occur if they see their personal theories as open to refutation and not as 'objective truth' (p. 58).*

Relating this to ALAR, I largely agree with PCT that action learners/researchers are personal scientists, each with an individual system of constructs (individuality corollary) that

can be explored by him/herself and by others (sociality corollary). A group of action learners/researchers may be similar in terms of their construction and interpretation of experience (commonality corollary), but their development and conceptual change depends on the 'permeability' corollary, i.e. their openness to change and their willingness to search for disconfirming as well as confirming evidence in their research.

However, my constructivist view also acknowledges human feelings, beliefs and values, rather than only a rational construct system in the human mind. Therefore, I refer to 'concepts' and 'conceptions', rather than 'constructs'.

### *Critical Theory*

So far we have established that everyone can be a personal scientist and create contextual knowledge (grounded theory) in an organization or in any group of people by conducting ALAR projects. Ideally, this kind of problem-solving enquiry is conducted critically *and* collaboratively in a supportive, non-hierarchical environment.

The Frankfurt School of Critical Theory and its followers have provided useful principles for ALAR, e.g. Carr and Kemmis (1986). I mention here just two of these principles that I feel are especially important: 'symmetrical communication' and 'becoming critical'.

Symmetrical communication demands that everyone in the project team is considered equal – no matter what their rank/position – and contributes equally, albeit differently, to solving the research problem at hand. The assumption is that each member has knowledge, skills, capabilities or talents in a particular area that need to be identified and used effectively.

The second principle, 'becoming critical', was argued and discussed in detail for the education sector by Carr and Kemmis (1986). They distinguished between technical, practical and critical action research. I would add: and action learning. I have summarized the characteristics of each type of enquiry in Table II below with regard to its aims, the facilitator's role and the relationship between facilitator and participants.

*Table II: Types of enquiry (after Carr and Kemmis 1986).*

<i>Type of enquiry</i>	<i>Aims</i>	<i>Facilitator's role</i>	<i>Relationship between facilitator and participants</i>
1. Technical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Effectiveness/ efficiency of practice</li> <li>- Professional development</li> </ul>	Outside 'expert'	Co-option (practitioners depend on facilitator)
2. Practical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As (1) above</li> <li>- Practitioners' understanding</li> <li>- Transformation of their consciousness</li> </ul>	Socratic role, encouraging participation and self-reflection	Co-operation (process-consultancy)
3. Emancipatory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- As (1) and (2) above</li> <li>- Participants' emancipation from the dictates of tradition, self-deception, coercion</li> <li>- Their critique of bureaucratic systematisation</li> <li>- Transformation of the organisation or system</li> </ul>	Process moderator (responsibility shared equally by participants)	True collaboration

Carr and Kemmis (1986) maintain that only critical, emancipatory enquiry is true action research. However, my experience tells me that emancipatory action learning and action research are both developmental processes from

technical to critical enquiry. Most of us as critical action learners/researchers started with technical, then proceeded to practical, and finally understood and practised critical modes of enquiry. The critical mode is definitely what we should aim at, in order to achieve far-reaching transformational change rather than functional or transactional change.

For personal and organizational change to be truly transformational, it is essential that all members of an ALAR group adopt a critical and self-critical attitude. This means critique is never taken as a personal attack (destructive), but accepted as a necessary condition for organizational change, innovation or recreation (constructive). In action learning programs, actions and thoughts are submitted to the constructive scrutiny of supportive colleagues as 'critical friends'. We learn from our mistakes and failures as well as from successes. We are not interested merely in changing people and organizations; we want them to grow and learn, and we want to learn ourselves within this process.

### *Systems Theory*

In this age of global interdependence, systems thinkers understand that everything is interrelated with everything else. As Marquardt (2000) and others before him have pointed out, our worldview has changed from a Newtonian perspective – studying the parts in order to understand the whole – to a Quantum Physics view where the whole organizes, and even partly defines, its parts.

Marquardt (2000: 234–35) claims that action learning builds leaders to be systems thinkers.

*Effective problem solving requires the ability to be a systems thinker ... Systems thinkers have the ability to see connections between issues, events and data points – the whole rather than parts (p. 234). ...*

*During action learning sessions, participants learn how to think in a systemic way and how to handle complex, seemingly unconnected aspects of organizational challenges (p. 235).*

In ALAR 'sets' or groups, members develop system-oriented, holistic resolutions to complex problems in an organization or other social settings. In this process, participants develop and grow as persons, managers and leaders.

To summarize, within the new paradigm in the social sciences, our theoretical framework for ALAR comprises theories and principles derived from certain aspects of:

- *Grounded theory*: enabling action learners/researchers to create knowledge, inductively developed from 'raw data' that has been systematically obtained.
- *Personal construct theory*: regarding action researchers as personal scientists who share and negotiate meaning to arrive at their individual and group concepts.
- *Critical theory*: requiring a critical and self-critical attitude in order to achieve real transformational change.
- *Systems theory*: developing system-oriented, holistic resolutions to complex problems through ALAR.

This framework is by no means complete or static. It is designed to provide a starting point for other people interested and engaged in ALAR to critically reflect and develop their own conceptual framework.

An important point to make is that *established theories may inform us, but we as systems thinkers, personal scientists and critical action learners/researchers develop our own theories as grounded theory*. It is based on our own action and on our data that are systematically collected, analysed and interpreted in the course of our inquiry, which is collaborative more often than not. It is this dialectical relationship between action and research that we consider in the next section.



## Praxis

There are abundant definitions and ill-defined uses of 'praxis' to be found in the literature. I define praxis as the interdependence and integration – not separation – of theory and practice, research and development, thought and action. I have explained this dialectic relationship between theory and practice and its underpinning philosophy in more detail elsewhere (Zuber-Skerritt 1990). Here it is important to state that the concepts of both action learning and action research are conceived as a dialectical relationship between 'action' – activities, concrete experiences, practical trials, explorations, or applications – and 'learning' or 'research' – coming to understand and creating and advancing knowledge through reflection, enquiry and critical evaluation.

In ALAR we come to know and learn from our action/experience, but whatever we have conceptualized and learnt must lead to action, improvement, development or some other form of change. *There is no learning/research without action to follow, and no action without a knowledge foundation based on prior learning/research.* This is the main difference between action learning and action research on the one hand, and traditional learning/research on the other. The latter may be pursued in its own right (*per se*), in isolation from concrete situations, and not necessarily be of practical use.

The philosophical assumption underlying this concept of action and praxis is that – according to Kolb (1984) – not just the so-called experts, but all of us can create knowledge on the basis of our action and concrete experience by

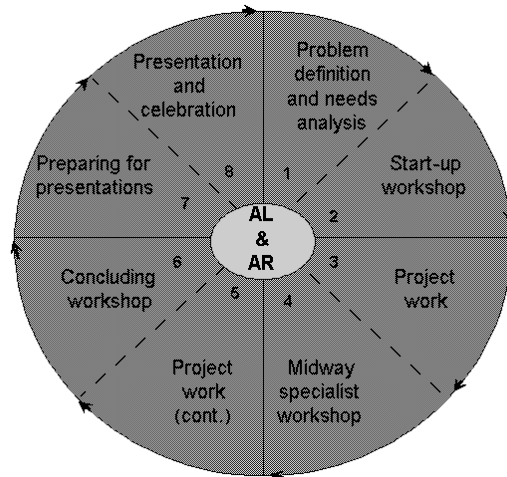
- reflecting on and in action,
- conceptualizing, theorizing and generalizing this action/experience,
- testing these concepts in new situations, and thus

- engaging in a new cycle of gaining knowledge through new concrete experience, reflection, conceptualization, testing, etc.

On the basis of this philosophical assumption, learning is life long and ongoing in cycles of action and reflection, in response to fresh questions that are new and unknown to us and that we seek to resolve.

## Programs and projects

There is no prescriptive recipe for conducting action learning programs and action research projects because of the open-ended nature of solving complex problems in complex situations. However, we have learnt from experience that there are certain processes that can be generalized. For example, I have developed a generic process model for action learning programs with action research projects conducted within organizations, reproduced in Figure 3 below.



*Figure 3: A model for designing ALAR programs (Zuber-Skerritt, 2002: 144).*

I have explained and illustrated this model by an example of a leadership development program for women academics in six historically disadvantaged universities of technology in South Africa, published in Orlando Fals Borda's *Festschrift* (Zuber-Skerritt, *in press a*). In addition to this example, I believe it is also useful to refer to major ALAR programs and projects in large organizations in industry and higher education that, in hindsight, followed this generic process model.

Dotlich and Noel (1998) in their action research on action learning provide clear examples and evidence for success of their programs in large multi-national companies. These companies not only improved their productivity and bottom line, but they also became 'learning organizations', and their leaders and managers developed life-long learning skills that equipped them to deal with change and totally new problems in new situations on a continuing basis.

Examples of some effective leadership development programs in higher education that I designed and implemented with my associates are summarized in Figure 4.

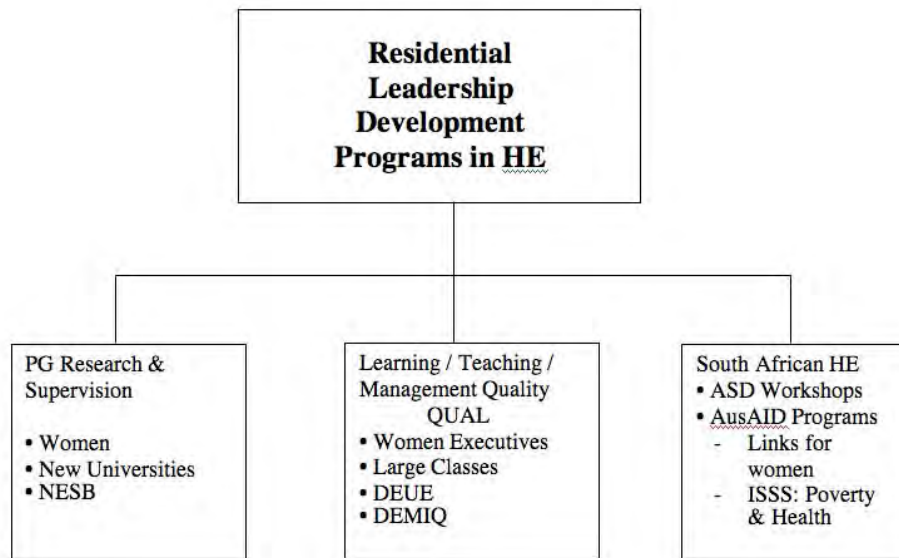


Figure 4: Residential leadership development programs in higher education through action learning and action research.

These were action learning programs with action research team projects, *funded* by the Australian Government, *residential* – away from private and professional distractions – and in an *exclusive environment* conducive to discussion, intensive work and informal networking. The themes/concerns were in three categories.

The first was on *postgraduate research and supervision* for:

- women academics as affirmative action, because they were disadvantaged by the so-called glass ceiling,
- academics from newly amalgamated colleges of advanced education whose role had been only as teachers but with institutional amalgamation suddenly had to meet university requirements to produce research and supervise Masters and PhD theses, and
- supervisors of students from Non-English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB).

Participants came from nine universities in Queensland and northern New South Wales. The results were published in manuals, video programs and books, e.g. Zuber-Skerritt (1992c, 1996), Zuber-Skerritt and Ryan (1994), Ryan and Zuber-Skerritt (1999).

The second theme was QUAL – Queensland University Action Learning – to enhance the quality of learning, teaching and management for:

- a) women executives,
- b) academics teaching large classes (more than 1200 students),
- c) departmental teams in the *DEUE* program – Departmental Excellence in University Education, and
- d) departmental and cross-institutional teams in the *DEMIQ* program – Departmental Excellence in Managing Institutional Quality.

These QUAL programs were evaluated by Passfield (1996).

The third set of themes was on *South African Higher Education* for:

- several cohorts of university academics from all provinces in South Africa and surrounding countries, and – as mentioned above,
- women academics from six historically disadvantaged universities of technology in Gauteng, funded by the AusAID Links Project through IDP – the Australian Government’s International Development Program. Some of the results of this Links program were published by Speedy (2003), and
- another leadership development program that has been proposed and submitted to AusAID’s ISSS – the International Seminar Support Scheme – to alleviate poverty and improve education and health through ALAR in six African countries.

On personal reflection, these programs have been successful because they were:

- strategically and professionally planned, designed,

- implemented and evaluated,
- well resourced, national government-funded, and supported by top management in the respective universities,
  - residential, away from the office and home distractions with opportunities of networking and informal discussions during coffee/meal breaks and after dinner,
  - using our heart and head, and
  - producing tangible outcomes (relationships and publications) that can be evaluated.

The reasons for our less successful programs (not discussed here) were that there was not enough time, a lack of resources and/or interest, or no management support for:

- 1 start-up workshop (foundation program),
- 2 team building,
- 3 building creative future vision by the team,
- 4 discussing values and worldviews,
- 5 learning and reflection (only a focus on tasks and products), and
- 6 collaboration (individual competition instead).

To sum up my theoretical framework, action learners and action researchers may be informed by the above and other theories, but they are also personal scientists themselves, able to create grounded theory based on their own enquiry. They are open to critique, refutation and change. Their enquiry is emancipatory and system-oriented. They are 'critical friends' or 'comrades in adversity' (Revans 1991, 2006) who learn from and with each other and support one another in 'symmetrical communication', leading to mutual respect and synergy. Synergy is "the value that comes when the whole adds up to more than the sum of its parts" (Kanter 1990: 58).

This is the main reason why collaborative action learning and action research are so powerful and successful in organizational change programs. Usually, the aim of these programs is to solve complex problems in unknown

situations during times of rapid change. It is therefore not surprising that ALAR has much to offer as we seek to understand and maximize opportunities for growth and sustainability in the present time of rapid change and unpredictability.

*Question 2: Based on your experience in this field, what are the main challenges for universities today?*

The main challenges, as I see them, are that universities as organizations need to be competitive, progressive, accountable, effective and efficient. They need to be quality-, customer- and society-oriented on the one hand, and to respect and foster the human dimensions on the other. Re-humanizing universities is the biggest challenge. This requires a certain kind of leadership that can be developed through ALAR. I have just written a paper on this topic in relation to South African higher education (Zuber-Skerritt, *in press b*). I have argued for an alternative approach to Academic Leadership Development (ALD) that can be achieved actively from 'inside out' by the participants themselves through reflection on their own character, values and roles, rather than through application of theory 'from the outside in'. Thus, the research and development discussed in that paper are *for* and *with* people as 'participants' in the research, rather than *on* people as 'subjects' in the research. In this way, the paper contributes to a new paradigm and model of self-developed leadership in higher education in the light of Covey's (1992) 'principle-centred leadership' and Maxwell's (1999, 2000) 'indispensable qualities of a leader' and the action learning concept of 'failing forward', that is, turning mistakes into stepping stones for success.

Reflecting on this literature and my own experiences in leadership development, I was able to develop a model of academic leadership based on a holistic, principle- and learner-centred approach to higher education, as shown in Figure 5.

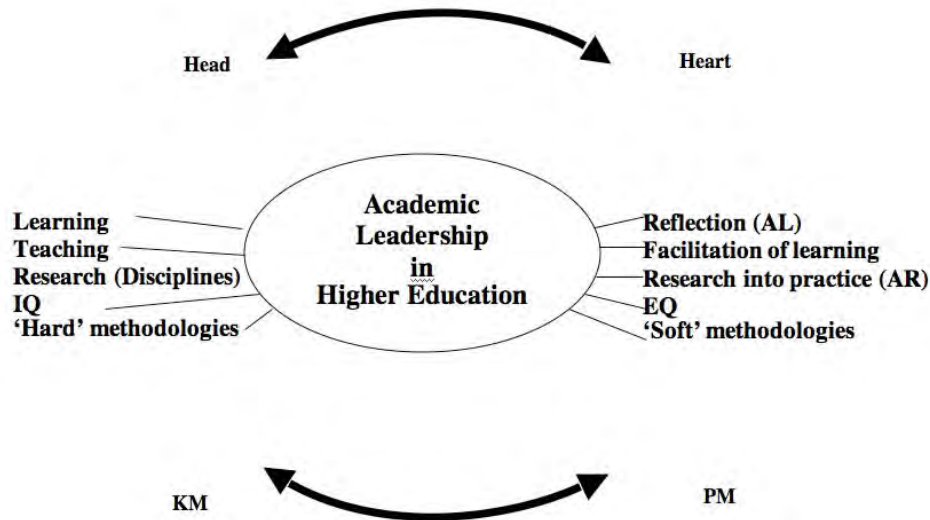


Figure 5: A model of academic leadership development in higher education

This model illustrates the integration of the two sides of the brain:

- the head (rational thinking) and the heart (feelings, emotions),
- knowledge management (KM) and process management (PM),
- traditional learning/teaching and reflection through action learning/facilitation of learning,
- disciplinary and educational (expert) research and practitioners' research into their own teaching practice through action research and evidence-based enquiry,
- hard and soft research methodologies, quantitative and qualitative research methods, and
- IQ and EQ.



Goleman (1998) convinced us that EQ – emotional intelligence – and emotional management skills are vital in leadership development for personal competence (self-awareness and self-management) and for social competence (social awareness and relationship management). Newman (2006) tells us how to develop these skills.

Newman (2007) calls today's top executives 'emotional capitalists' and maintains that their effective leadership in the workplace is the by-product of emotions, such as self-confidence, optimism, independence, enthusiasm, feelings, beliefs and values. These emotions can be developed, managed and can boost personal and professional performance. They are valuable because they can create strong relationships. Newman advocates 'partnership' as the best model for leadership and inter-personal relationships with a collaborative approach and a willingness to distribute power so that everyone can contribute to a 'win-win' situation.

Leadership in higher education needs to re-create these human elements of collaboration, inter-personal relationships and true partnerships in this time of fast and unpredictable technological and socio-economic change, characterized by restructuring, institutional mergers and redundancies in higher education.

Within this context, the Quality Assurance (QA) system has been of particular concern in universities where there are discrepancies between the rhetoric of a government's QA agency on the one side and the academics' reality of quality in higher education on the other. There are problems of the bureaucratic system for academic staff who are directly affected in ways that are deleterious to their work performance, since this system contributes to their anxiety,

work overload and loss of academic freedom, and hence reduces academic efficiency and effectiveness.

There is no denying that QA is necessary and has many advantages as well as dangers and pitfalls. However there needs to be a shift in QA from the bureaucratic and accountability focus to transformational leadership development and vision setting for the institutions. Academics need help and professional/leadership development in order to be prepared for their new roles and challenges in this rapidly changing society and global world.

Action learning and action research offer a methodology that is able to develop, sustain and foster the human dimensions of development and growth in academic leadership within the overall goals of effectiveness and efficiency, quality and productivity. This methodology has proven to be useful to academics in developed countries, but is especially so in developing countries, such as in Africa (Seale et al., 2005; Robinson and Meerkotter, 2003) because it is practical, collaborative, rewarding, and achievable with regard to both research and development goals.

*Question 3: Besides a PhD in Higher Education from Deakin University, you have a PhD in Literature from the University of Queensland in Australia and a DLitt (Professional Doctor of Letters) from the IMCA (International Management Centres Association) in the United Kingdom. Taking into account your areas of expertise, what are some of your main reflections on the role of language in action research processes in educational contexts?*

As in all collaborative human communication, action research processes are shaped powerfully by language, both verbal and non-verbal, which in turn is shaped powerfully

by culture, values and worldviews. The language of ALAR has developed internationally, and I would characterize it as simple (not simplistic), concise, without jargon, clearly defined/explained and distinctive. For example, we use terms like 'participants' instead of 'subjects' in the research, a shared research 'problem' or 'thematic concern' that is complex and has many possible solutions instead of a 'hypothesis' that requires a 'yes' or 'no' answer. The criterion for evaluating action research is 'authenticity' (whether the findings are recognizable, valid and authentic to the participants involved in, and affected by, the research) rather than measurable 'validity' and 'generalizability'. The difference in language ties to the different philosophical assumptions, values and worldviews discussed earlier.

I have identified seven core values and principles inherent in an ALAR culture (Zuber-Skerritt, 2005: 53-54) and gave them the acronym of ACTIONS, because:

1. *Advancement of learning and knowledge* can be achieved on the basis of concrete experience and reflection on this experience in iterative cycles of reflection and action (or experience) – the essence of action learning.
2. *Collaboration*, team spirit and 'symmetrical communication' accept that everyone is unique and equal, accepts difference positively, and has capacity to contribute as best they can to solving a problem. This leads to systemic development and synergy of results.
3. *Trust, honesty and respect* are pre-conditions for the search for truth/truths – the heart of ALAR.
4. *Imagination*, intuition, and vision of excellence enrich the pursuit of ideas, possibilities and ultimately knowledge and appreciation, and so lead to high-level performance.
5. *Openness* to criticism and self-criticism fosters the exploration of multiple possibilities, rather than single-minded, black and white solutions.
6. *Non-positivist assumptions* and beliefs allow grounded theory to be developed, that is, theory based on data collected from multiple sources, including practitioners. Non-positivist assumptions reject the positivist belief that the only valid and

legitimate kind of knowledge is scientific in nature – based on descriptions only of what can be observed, to the complete exclusion of what cannot be observed and measured. Non-positivists recognize that knowledge is produced from various sources; it must be practical and integrate both explicit and tacit knowledge, including people’s subjective insights, intuitions and hunches.

7. *Success* here means shared success, accountability, recognition and reward, manifest in learning and productivity outcomes.

These are the values identified in what Orlando Fals Borda would call the ‘North’. It would be interesting to see whether the values of an ALAR culture in the ‘South’ might be significantly different. My guess is that they are not. But whatever the language, it is our principle mode of communication whether written or spoken. As we all know, language difference can be a major problem if it impedes upon, distorts or prevents effective communication; and if it presents barriers to shared understanding. Language can be both a tool of oppression to perpetuate and force compliance with a dominant culture, and a tool of liberation to spread the human voice and gain personal empowerment. It is therefore instrumental in action, learning and research, and therefore in producing certain kinds of ‘knowledge’. So language really plays a vital role in action research processes in educational contexts, as it does in almost all life contexts.

*Question 4: Being one of the founders of the Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management (ALARPM) Association in 1990, what has been your main learning through academic networking?*

Networking can make the impossible possible. For example, when I initiated and convened the First ALARPM Congress in Brisbane in 1990, my associates and I had no funding at all and only one year lead time, an almost impossible situation when compared to later ALARPM congresses and other

international conferences that were funded and had two- to three- or four-year preparation time. The reason for our success was networking, not only with academics in the three universities in Brisbane, but with managers and executives from the Queensland Government, from industry, large consulting firms, communities and small and medium size businesses. These were all represented on the Organizing Committee and generously offered their ideas, international contacts and local resources, such as board rooms and catering for our meetings, postage and mail-outs through their offices, equipment and services, such as photocopying, printing, binding, graphic art and fax facilities. We all pulled together and had 360 delegates attending from 14 countries in a highly successful congress.

Later we extended our ALARPM Network in partnership with the PAR (Participatory Action Research) Network. Orlando Fals Borda convened the 4<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> joint ALARPM/PAR Congress in Carthage in 1996 with over 1800 delegates from 61 countries. This is what networking can achieve.

*Question 5: What do you think has been the most important contribution by Professor Orlando Fals Borda to action research?*

The marriage or partnership between ALARPM and PAR that I mention above, his keynote addresses at a multitude of international conferences and the network of like-minded people he has created around the world are some specific, concrete examples. But above this, I think Orlando Fals Borda's greatest contribution has been that he has humanized action research and used PAR to alleviate poverty. He has advanced PAR conceptually and advanced poverty alleviation practically.

Based on his clear conceptualization of participation, democracy and pluralism (or plural ways of knowing), he has used PAR as a methodology while pursuing his primary objective: “social activism with an ideological and spiritual commitment to promote people’s (collective) praxis” (Rahman and Fals Borda 1991: 25). He is committed to helping the common people to increase their control over their own lives and over the processes of knowledge creation and use. By ‘common people’ Rahman and Fals Borda mean those ‘common in need’:

*... the subordinate classes, the poor, the peripheral, the voiceless, the untrained, the exploited grassroots in general. ... One purpose is to break up and/or transform the present power monopoly of science and culture exercised by elitist, oppressive groups... Another purpose is to continue to stimulate and support people’s movements in progress and socio-economic justice, and to facilitate their transition into the political arena ... (p. 30).*

As I point out in my paper (Zuber-Skerritt, *in press a*) included in Orlando’s *Festschrift*, Fals Borda (2006: 357) repeated his plea for northern and southern scholars to converge, ‘as colleagues and soul fellows, for the quest of meaning’ in order to fulfil ‘our political, objective and non-neutral duty of fostering the democratic and spiritual dimensions through more satisfying life systems.’

Drawing from over 30 years of personal observation and participation, Fals Borda (2006: 358) concludes that:

*... we need new educational, cultural, political, social and economic movements in which greater account is taken of grassroots groups, the excluded, the voiceless, and the victims of dominant systems. ... To prove our worth as resolute, thinking, feeling, experiential investigators we need to become fully involved in these fundamental transformations.*

I look forward to the forthcoming International Symposium on *Action Research and Education in Context of Poverty* as a well deserved tribute to Orlando Fals Borda. The symposium will be convened by one of his disciples, Doris Santos, and sponsored by the three universities in Bogotá, Columbia (16-18 May 2007) in honour and recognition of the work of a great human being and a world leader in action research. I know that this occasion will be a time for learning, networking, sharing and outreach and inevitably for friendship and pleasure as we celebrate Orlando's wonderful contributions to humankind and to scholarship.

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**Professor Doris Santos** holds a Bachelor in Education specializing in Modern Languages from Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, and a Master in Linguistics of the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Professor Santos is finishing her Masters studies in Philosophy and teaches at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia, and in the Masters Program of Education at La Salle University in Bogotá. She has conducted action research, critical ethnography and critical discourse analysis research projects on higher education issues. She is a member of research groups on moral education, discourse studies and Intersubjectivity in higher education, and of the Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN), the Association of Latin-American Discourse Studies (ALED), and the International Association of Argumentative Studies (ISSA).

**Professor Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt** is Director, Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt International (OZI) P/L and Adjunct Professor at Griffith University, QLD. Ortrun will be presenting on this topic at the national ALARPM conference in Adelaide.

# ALARPM Conference 2007 - Conference Registration Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation/group: \_\_\_\_\_

**Payment** (see next page for information)

Early Bird fees paid by Monday 25 June 2007

Credit card details: **\*\*preferred option\*\***

Visa     Bankcard     Mastercard

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Name on card: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Cheques - payable to *ALARPM Association Inc.*

**Send this completed registration form to the ALARPM office:**

83 Plimsoll St Greenslopes Qld 4120 Australia	Tel: (07) 3342 1668 Fax: (07) 3342 1669
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### Registration Types

Registration type	<i>Early bird pre June 25</i>	After June 25
Full registration	\$340	\$375
ALARPM Member registration	\$300	\$330
Low income registration (full time student, community member, unemployed)	\$170	\$190
Low income ALARPM member	\$125	\$140
Overseas registration	\$350	\$385
Overseas ALARPM member	\$315	\$345

**Upon receipt of payment, a tax invoice will be issued by email.**

### Accommodation options

There is little accommodation in the close vicinity of Tauondi College but there is a very good tourist park with a range of accommodation options at West Beach, near the airport and beach. We will be providing a bus to and from there at the beginning and end of each day of the conference (approx 20 minutes).

Information about Adelaide Shores is available at:

[www.adelaideshores.com.au](http://www.adelaideshores.com.au)

Tel: +61 8 8355 7320

Address: 1 Military Road, West Beach, SA 5024

There is a wider range of accommodation options on the ALARPM website [www.alarpm.org.au](http://www.alarpm.org.au). These accommodation options will not have transport provided by us.

*Please pay accommodation direct, not through ALARPM.*

# **ALARPM membership information and subscription forms**

## **ALARPM individual membership**

The ALAR Journal can be obtained by joining the Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management (ALARPM) Association. Your membership subscription entitles you to copies of the ALAR Journal (2 issues per year).

ALARPM membership also provides information on special interest email networks, discounts on conference/seminar registrations, and a membership directory. The directory gives details of members in over twenty countries with information about interests and projects as well as contact details. The ALARPM membership application form is below.

## **ALARPM organisational membership**

ALARPM is also keen to make the connections between people and activities in all the strands, streams and variants associated with our paradigm – including action learning, action research, process management, collaborative inquiry facilitation, systems thinking, organisational learning and development, for example, and with people who are working in any kind of organisational, community, workplace or other practice setting; and at all levels.

To this end we now have the capacity to invite organisational memberships – as Affiliates or Associates of ALARPM. We are currently trailing this new form of membership with some innovative ideas which we hope your organisation will find attractive.

### **Affiliate and associate organisations**

Affiliate and Associate organisations pay the same modest membership subscription as an individual member and for that they will receive:

- The voting rights of a single member; Member discounts for one person (probably a hard-working office-bearer);
- One hard copy of the journal and the directory (which can be circulated and read by all members, office holders and people attending meetings);
- The right to a link from the ALARPM website <<http://www.alarpm.org.au>> to your website if you have one. Our new website allows your organisation to write its own descriptive paragraph to go with its link;
- Occasional emails from ALARPM about events or activities or resources that you may like to send on to your whole membership.
- Members of organisations who become ALARPM Affiliates or Associates may also chose to become an individual member of ALARPM for 40% the normal cost (so they can still belong to other more local and specialist professional organisations also). We believe this provides an attractive cost and labour free benefit that your organisation can offer to its own members;
- And, if 10 or more of your members join ALARPM, your own organisational membership will be waived;
- Members of ALARPM Affiliates or Associates who join ALARPM individually will receive full individual membership and voting rights, world congress and

annual conference discounts (all they need to do is name the ALARPM Affiliate or Associate organisation/network on their membership form).

Please note: members of ALARPM Affiliates or Associates who become discount individual ALARPM members receive an electronic version of the journal and membership directory rather than a hard copy.

### ***ALAR Journal subscription***

A subscription to the ALAR Journal alone, without membership entitlements, is available to individuals at a reduced rate. Subscription for libraries and tertiary institutions are also invited. The ALAR Journal subscription form follows the individual and organisational ALARPM membership application forms.

#### **For more information about ALARPM and its activities please contact us on:**

ALARPM Association Inc  
PO Box 1748  
Toowong Qld 4066  
Australia

Email: [admin@alarpm.org.au](mailto:admin@alarpm.org.au)  
Fax: 61-7-3342-1669



# INDIVIDUAL MEMBER SUBSCRIPTION FORM

I wish to apply for membership of the Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management Association Inc.

## Personal Details

<i>Mr/Ms/Mrs/Miss/Dr</i>		
<i>given names (underline preferred name)</i>		<i>family name</i>
<i>Home address</i>		
		<i>Postcode</i>
<i>Town / City</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Nation</i>
<i>Home contact numbers</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Fax</i>
<i>Email</i>		<i>Mobile</i>

**Please send mail to:**       *Home*                       *Work*

## Current Employment

<i>Position / Job Title</i>		<i>Organisation</i>
<i>Address</i>		
		<i>Postcode</i>
<i>Town / City</i>	<i>State</i>	<i>Nation</i>
<i>Work contact numbers</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Fax</i>
<i>Email</i>		<i>Mobile</i>

**My interests/projects relating to action learning, action research and process management are:**

<input type="checkbox"/> Action Learning	<input type="checkbox"/> Manager & Leadership Dev
<input type="checkbox"/> Action Research	<input type="checkbox"/> Methodology/Methods
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Action/Dev	<input type="checkbox"/> Org Change & Dev
<input type="checkbox"/> Education/Schools	<input type="checkbox"/> PAR
<input type="checkbox"/> Environment/Sustainability	<input type="checkbox"/> Process Management
<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> Quality Management
<input type="checkbox"/> Facilitation of AR, AL, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/> Rural/Agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> Gender Issues	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Justice/Social Change
<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Systems Approaches
<input type="checkbox"/> Higher Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Development
<input type="checkbox"/> Human Services (Health)	<input type="checkbox"/> Team Learning & Dev
<input type="checkbox"/> Learning Organisations	<input type="checkbox"/> Vocational Education/HR
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
<hr/> <i>Please specify</i>	

***Do you wish to be linked with a world network of people with similar interests and have your information included in our database and appear in our annual networking directory?***

*Yes*                       *No*

***Please complete payment details overleaf...***

To apply for ALARPM individual membership, which includes ALAR Journal subscription, please complete the information requested overleaf and the payment details below. You do not need to complete the ALAR Journal subscription form as well.

## Payment Details

*Category of subscription (all rates include GST)*

### Mailing address within Australia

\$93.50 AUD Full membership for people with mailing address *within* Aus

### Mailing Address outside Australia

\$104.50 AUD Full membership for people with mailing address *outside* Aus

### Concessional membership within or outside Australia

\$49.50 AUD Concessional membership for people with a mailing address within or outside Australia. The concessional membership is intended to assist people, who for financial reasons, would be unable to afford the full rate (eg. full-time students, unwaged and underemployed people).

*Method of payment:*

Cheque/Bank Draft       Money Order

Visa/Bankcard/Mastercard (*please circle card type*)

Card No:

Cardholder's Name:

Cardholder's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date:    /    /

*Cheques, bank drafts or money orders must be made payable to ALARPM Association Inc. in Australian dollars. Please return application with payment details to:*

ALARPM ASSOCIATION INC.

PO Box 1748, Toowong, Qld 4066, Australia

Fax: (61-7) 3342 1669

Email: [admin@alarpm.org.au](mailto:admin@alarpm.org.au)

# ORGANISATIONAL MEMBER SUBSCRIPTION FORM

We wish to apply for membership of the Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management Association Inc.

- As an Affiliate Organisation (with primary purposes being action research, action learning, systems methodologies or a related methodology)
- As an Associate Organisation (with primary purposes that are not specifically one of these methodologies)

## Organisational Details

<i>Organisation name</i>		<i>If incorporated</i>
<i>Contact address</i>		
		<i>Postcode</i>
<i>Town / City</i>		<i>State</i>
<i>Nation</i>		
<i>A/H contact numbers</i>	<i>Phone</i>	<i>Fax</i>
<i>Email</i>		<i>Mobile</i>

Contact person / Please send mail attention to: \_\_\_\_\_

## Nature of Organisation

<i>Please say if your organisation is an Association, Society, Group, Network, Collective, Informal/Community, Set, Department, Business, Institute, Centre, Library or other configuration.</i>		
<i>How many members (approximately) does your organisation have?</i>		<i>Do you know how many are ALARPM members? Is so how many?</i>

What are your organisation's interests/projects relating to action learning, action research and process management?

<input type="checkbox"/> Action Learning <input type="checkbox"/> Action Research <input type="checkbox"/> Community Action/Dev <input type="checkbox"/> Education/Schools <input type="checkbox"/> Environment/Sustainability <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitation of AR, AL, etc. <input type="checkbox"/> Gender Issues <input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Higher Education <input type="checkbox"/> Human Services (Health) <input type="checkbox"/> Learning Organisations <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Manager & Leadership Dev <input type="checkbox"/> Methodology/Methods <input type="checkbox"/> Org Change & Dev <input type="checkbox"/> PAR <input type="checkbox"/> Process Management <input type="checkbox"/> Quality Management <input type="checkbox"/> Rural/Agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> Social Justice/Social Change <input type="checkbox"/> Systems Approaches <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Development <input type="checkbox"/> Team Learning & Dev <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational Education/HR
<i>Please specify</i>	

**Do you wish to be linked with a world network of people with similar interests and have your information included in our database and appear in our annual networking directory?**

- Yes       No

**Please complete payment details overleaf...**

To apply for ALARPM organisational membership, which includes ALAR Journal subscription (2 issues per year), please complete the information requested overleaf and the payment details below. You do not need to complete the ALAR Journal subscription form as well.

Please note that the cost of organisational membership (affiliate and associate) is the same as for individual full membership. There is no concessional membership fee, but if an organisation has 10 or more individual members of ALARPM (or 10 or more who would like to be electronic -only members) then organisational membership is free.

## Payment Details

*Category of subscription (all rates include GST)*

\$93.50 AUD **Mailing address within Australia**  
Full membership for organisations with mailing address *within* Australia

\$104.50 AUD **Mailing Address outside Australia**  
Full membership for organisations with mailing address *outside* Australia

**Method of payment:**  Cheque/Bank Draft  Money Order  
 Visa/Bankcard/Mastercard (*please circle card type*)

Card No:

Cardholder's Name:

Cardholder's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiry Date:    /    /

***Cheques, bank drafts or money orders must be in Australian dollars and made payable to ALARPM Association Inc. Please return completed application with payment details to:***

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PO Box 1748, Toowong, Qld 4066, Australia

Admin: Donna Alleman

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## JOURNAL SUBMISSIONS CRITERIA AND REVIEWING PROCESS

The Action Learning Action Research Journal (ALARj) contains substantial articles, project reports, information about activities, reflections on seminars and conferences, short articles related to the theory and practice of action learning, action research and process management, and reviews of recent publications. It aims to be highly accessible for both readers and contributors. It is particularly accessible to practitioners.

Please send all contributions in Microsoft Word format by email (not a disk) to **alar@alarpm.org.au**

### *Guidelines*

ALARj is a journal (provided in PDF, with hard copies available) devoted to the communication of the theory and practice of action research and related methodologies generally. As with all ALARA activities, all streams of work are welcome in the journal including:

- action research
- action learning
- participatory action research
- systems thinking
- inquiry process-facilitation, and
- process management

and all the associated constructivist methods such as:

- rural self-appraisal
- auto-ethnography
- appreciative inquiry
- most significant change
- open space technology, etc.

### *Article preparation*

New and first-time contributors are particularly encouraged to submit articles. A short piece (approx 500 words) can be emailed to the Editor, outlining your submission, with a view to developing a full article through a mentoring process. One of our reviewers will be invited to work with you to shape your article.

Journal articles may use either Australian/UK or USA spelling and should use Harvard style referencing. Visit <http://www.library.uq.edu.au/training/citation/harvard.html> for more.

### *Requirements*

Written contributions should contain:

- 1 ½ or double-spacing in all manuscripts, including references, notes, abstracts, quotations, figures and tables
- double quotation marks within single quotation marks to set off material that in the original source was enclosed in single quotation marks. Do not use quotation marks to enclose block quotations (any quotations of 40 or more words) and italicise block quotations
- Harvard style referencing
- maximum of 8000 words for peer reviewed articles and 2000 words for other journal items (including tables and figures)
- an abstract of 100-150 words
- six keywords for inclusion in metadata fields
- minimal use of headings (up to three is OK)
- any images or diagrams should be used to add value to the article and be independent from the document as either jpegs or gifs and inserted as image files into the page where possible. If using MS Word drawing tools, please 'group' your diagrams and images and anchor them to the page, or attach at the end of the document with a note in-text as to its position in the article.

*Note: if you are using photos of others you must have them give permission for the photos to be published. You should have written permission in these instances and forward such permission to the Editor.*

On a cover sheet, please include contact information including full name, affiliation, email address, small photo (.jpeg or .gif) and brief biographical note.

*Please note: all correspondence will be directed to the lead author unless otherwise requested.*

### *Peer review contributions*

All contributions for review should fit the following structure (only include those sections that are appropriate to your article):

- Title (concise and extended as required)
- Abstract and Keywords (100-150 words)

- Body of article – eg. introduction, background, literature review, main argument or research question, research methodology, research results, discussion, conclusions and future work (see formatting template)
- Useful links (if referring to weblinks, include these in full)
- Acknowledgements (about 100 words)
- Reference list (Harvard style)
- Appendices (use sparingly)
- Biographical notes of authors (up to 50 words)
- *Optional* small photo image of author(s) (.jpeg/.jpg - no larger than 150 pixels)

*Please note: Those preferring a full peer review, must indicate as much to the editor at the commencement of writing, by email.*

### *Editorial team*

ALARj is supported by a team of reviewers and is jointly published by ALARA Inc and Interchange and Prosperity Press. The ALARj publication is supported by the ALARA Publications Working Group, a team of ALARPM members who share an interest in the development and progress of the journal and other ALARPM publications.

### *Journal article review criteria*

The following criteria will be used by the Editorial review team to identify and manage the expectations of articles submitted for inclusion in the ALARj.

Articles submitted for inclusion in the journal should maintain an emphasis and focus of action research and action learning in such a way that promotes AR and AL as supported by ALARPM members, and contributes to the literature more broadly.

Authors are sent a summary of reviewers' comments with which to refine their article.

The criteria are that articles submitted for inclusion in the ALARj:

- be both aimed at and grounded in the world of practice;
- be explicitly and actively participative: research with, for and by people rather than on people;



- draw on a wide range of ways of knowing (including intuitive, experiential, presentational as well as conceptual) and link these appropriately to form theory;
- address questions that are of significance to the flourishing of human community and the more-than-human world;
- aim to leave some lasting capacity amongst those involved, encompassing first, second and third person perspectives; and
- critically communicate the inquiry process instead of just presenting its results, and some reflections on it.

These overarching criteria should be considered together with the following questions:

- Is the article logical?
- Is it based on evidence? If so what kind?
- Does the article consider ethics?
- Has it considered the viewpoints of many stakeholders? Is it dialectical?
- Does the article consider the consequences for this generation and the next?
- Does it illustrate good practice in AR and AL?
- Does it progress AR and AL in the field (research, community, business, education or otherwise)?
- Does the writer present ideas with flare and creativity?
- Would the writer benefit from some mentoring to produce an article of journal-standard?