Tracing the Emergence of Interdisciplinarity and Integration Methodologies

as advocated by the
Action Learning Action Research Association Inc (ALARA)

By Dr Susan Goff

with critical review by
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ALARA
ACTION LEARNING, ACTION RESEARCH
ASSOCIATION INC.

Presentation by Designatopia

1988: Action Research through Australian voices prior to ALARPM's* formation

"Collaborative participation in theoretical, practical and political discourse is … a hallmark of action research and the action researcher"

Grundy and Kemmis in Zuber-Skerritt, (1992a, p. 16)

Australian political discourses at the time…

- Australian Bicentennial celebrations
- TV soap opera "Home and Away" launched
- Nick Greiner and NSW Liberal Party win NSW election removing Unsworth's ALP gov't
- World Expo '88 opens in Brisbane
- Elizabeth II opens new Parliament House in Canberra
- Federal referendums on 4-year parliamentary terms, recognition of local government defeated
- John Cain's ALP government (Vic) narrowly re-elected
- Two Victorian police officers gunned down in Walsh St shootings
- ACT granted self government by Royal Assent
- Olympic Dam opens

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1988_in_Australia)

* ALARA was originally named the Action Learning Action Research and Process Management Association Inc. (ALARPM)

1989: International Symposium on Action Research (AR) in Higher Education, Government and Industry, Brisbane

The ALARPM network invited action researchers in higher education from the UK, New Zealand, Thailand, Austria, Sweden and Australia. The action researchers arrived at a working definition of Action Research which they presented to representatives from government and industry in Queensland to discuss possible applications in their organisations.

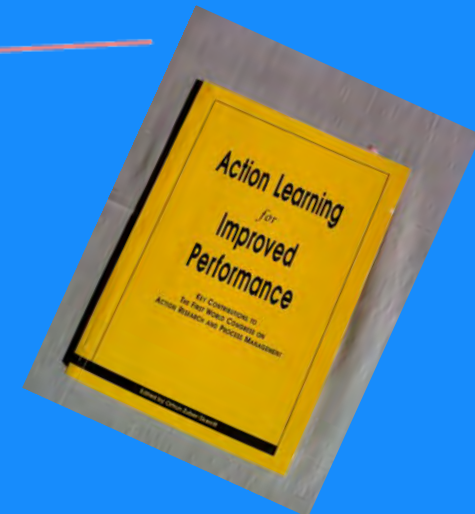(Zuber-Skerritt, 1991a)

In 1992 - Action Research was described as …
 "an alternative research methodology in the interpretive, non-positivist paradigm;… a holistic approach characterised as ethnographic, naturalistic, descriptive, ideographic and interpretive. The holistic method used… is problem oriented, practitioner centred, interdisciplinary… eclectic and heuristically organized."

(Zuber-Skerritt, 1992b, p. 221)

1990: State of Play
Overview of the First ALARPM World Congress (Brisbane)

Discipline based fields of AL/AR participation

PSYCHOLOGY

HEALTH & WELFARE

EDUCATION

AGRICULTURE

RELIGION

Integrated inter-disciplinary fields of AL/AR participation

DEVELOPMENT (c'ty, int'l, org, person)

LEADERSHIP MANAGEMENT KNOWLEDGE ORGANISATIONS

COMMUNICATIONS /CREATIVITY

Integrative methodologies

AR, AL & ASC PHILOSOPHY, METHODOLOGY, METHOD ANLYSIS

Action Learning for Improved Performance

Overview of ALARPM, 1990.
Key to abbreviations: AR - Action Research; AL- Action Learning; ASC- Action Science; c'ty – community; int'l- international; org – organisational

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1994: The action researcher *as* the integrating methodology

"I also strongly believe in the importance of congruency i.e. the match between what you say you believe (your espoused values) and what you actually do (your values in action). .. In this case it was important for me that not only my personal behaviour be internally congruent, but that there would also be a reasonable degree of matching between the theory and the project's practice of stakeholder involvement"

(ALARPM founding member, Uhlmann, 1994, p. 4)

Australian political discourses at the time:

- Major bushfires devastate coastal NSW
- Bronwyn Bishop appointed to Coalition Shadow Cabinet Ministry
- Ros Kelly resigns as Sports Minister
- John Hewson is replaced as Leader of the Opposition by Alexander Downer
- Telephone numbers in Australia transitioning to 8 digits
- Wollemia nobilis, (fossil tree) found by David Noble 150 km from Sydney
- John Newman (State MP) shot outside his home
- Sydney's 3rd runway opens – protests
- Australian Government agrees to pay reparations to Aboriginal people who were displaced during 1950-60's nuclear tests

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1994_in_Australia)

"Problem oriented, practitioner centred, interdisciplinary… eclectic and heuristically organised" – an ALARPM associate's case study

Action Research:

Cycles of action and reflection to integrate and implement multiple participatory and non-participatory methodologies for situation-improvement in any discipline, field, sector or culture.

AR/AL indicative case – 1995: Geoff Berry

Location:	Australia
Discipline/Field:	Education/professional development/ executive development
Cultural group:	Current/aspiring school executives/ school executive teams
Problem/opportunity:	Building an effective executive team within primary and secondary teams with the capacity for school change and development
Epistemology:	Action Research as a component of the multi-phased Team Leadership Course with the focus on organisational culture
Integration characteristics:	School executive team implemented an action research project within their schools over a twelve month period focusing on a key development area within their school.
AL/AR practice support available:	Formal leadership development program within the NSW Department of Education and Training, linked with credit at selected universities towards the post-graduate studies.

ALARA as an organisation is an integrative methodological praxis event at global and international-local system sites

Fourth World Congress, Cartagena (1997): "We are now more assured than before by this week's speakers that there is an immanent validity of critical methodology in the sciences, both hard and soft, that there is only one logic of scientific investigation. But we require more than a unifying method, we require also to entwine it with real experience…

(ALARPM international colleague, Fals Borda, in Passfield, 1998, p. 32)

"South African universities are experiencing severe cutbacks from the State at the same time that they're transforming… we are in the grip of a many tentacled demoralization … Because action research has been effective for our group of school teachers of music… I would like to see if it would be possible to run my whole academic department as an action research project"

(ALARA associate, Goodall, 1998, p. 35)

2000: Integrating hard science and participatory pedagogy – an ALARA associate's case study

2000 ALARPM/ALARA World Congress participants, Ballarat: ALARPM Congresses actively facilitate new works *and* field development in inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary methodologies

AR/AL indicative case – 2000: Penny Gilmer

Location:	USA
Discipline:	Biochemistry/Science education
Cultural group:	University science majors in chemistry, biochemistry, engineering and biological sciences; also biochemistry faculty
Problem/opportunity:	Transform teaching of biochemistry through learning from action research
Epistemology:	Action Research
Integration characteristics:	Using various genres in the writing: fictionalized story, ethnography, and metalogue (those three are the book), and autobiography
AI/AR practice support available:	Books and two "amazing" supervisors, one being Jean McNiff.

2003: Integrative methodologies for transformative change

"Transformative learning is a shift of consciousness that dramatically changes our way of being in the world, including our relationships with each other and with the natural world."

(O'Sullivan, 2003, in ALARA associate Van Breda, 2013)

Indicative case study: 2003 Gabriella Van Breda

Location:	Australia, Africa
Discipline:	Leadership
Cultural group:	Faith based leaders
Opportunity: Epistemology:	Improving leadership through inquiry Action Research with an emphasis on facilitating aspects of holistic reflection using mixed methods within a framework of AR to bring about new ways of knowing
Practice support:	No AR professional support available, but some supervision and other academic institutional benefits

2005: Participatory evaluation – integrating methodological functions

This evaluation was undertaken in three Older Women's Network (OWN) Wellness groups operating in Bankstown, Chatswood and Sutherland.

Carried out collaboratively in 2005, it involved a group of older women from OWN, researchers … and health professionals… The evaluation was designed to broaden and deepen our understanding of wellness in older women and to do this in ways that enabled meaningful participation in the research process by the older women involved. How the story harvesting evaluation was done is as important as what was discovered.

(NSW Health, undated, Personal communication - ALARA associate, Peter Whitecross)

Australian political discourses at the time:

- Nine people killed in bushfires in SA
- Bali 9 arrested
- National Sorry Day renamed National Healing Day
- Van Tuong Ngyuen hanged in Singapore for drug offences
- Cronulla riots take place with attacks on people of Middle Eastern appearance reported around the country

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2005_in_Australia)

2009: The integrative facility
of the Internet and Action Research and Action Learning

"With readily available tools for amateur and nonprofessional users to create images, music, and videos, digital storytelling… is an excellent method to mobilise the tacit, nonverbal, nonwritten, emotional, metaphorical, playful dimensions of activity and knowledge in action research and to capture "the richness of events"… Moreover technical networks allow for the distribution and exchange of products of creative expression along social networks that blur the boundaries between producers and consumers and stimulate critical reflection and discussion across the meta-network of the community"

(ALARA associates and members Hearn, Tacchi, Foth and Lennie, 2009, p. 76)

An organisation and its people influence emergence from their standpoints.

They can theorise it….

From a sociological standpoint - Stages in development of action research

What is it? (These days – the focus is on defining) but originally, during the Great Paradigm Wars of the 1970-80s we asked:

What could be better than positivist social science?

Then we went on and asked:

Are we doing it yet?! (assessing ourselves) – in the 1980s

Well we're doing it – but! it's not all that easy… (paradigm shift) – in the early 1990s. Ok, now we're managing the tricky bits

But how can we do *more* of it, and *better*? (implementing and institutionalising) – late 1990s

Wow, this is really profound – this should be happening everywhere (awe-systemic scaling up) By 2000

Hello, you're doing what we're doing… but wait, you're using different words for the same things. Hmm… that's interesting, not quite the same meanings – what's different? And why? (dialogue) – from 1997 Convergence, Colombia into the 2000s

But there *are* deep commonalities of our shared processes – what's the same? And why? (theory of method/epistemology) – in the 2010s

Then we all start again! What is it?

 (Repeat cycle, all the time!)

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… They can develop it with voluntary and professional works

From an organisational standpoint – stages in development of action research

"I get a sense of specialisation occurring: 1990 was so broad (as was 1992 - with a range of streams in that WC), whereas we seem to be focusing on specific themes in recent years. Has Action Research in Australia gone through the authority cycle associated with group development: dependence, counter-independence, counter-dependence, independence and then inter-dependence? (ref to Bennis and Sheperd)"

(Personal communication, Colin Bradley, ALARA President 2011-13 cont)

From a systemic standpoint – Stages in development of action research

"The work we do now in action research is not the fast work of conception, but the slow work of transformation. We work at the edges, in the niches, battered by circumstance, persisting. We know that participatory inquiry brings diversity and depth to knowing. We know that inquiry in action is transformative, that time is short and that we must go by the most direct route. We know that, as urgent as the situation is, it all takes time, and that the relationships that emerge around committed inquiry will sustain change over time. Where once we were a loud shout for a new paradigm, we are now doing the work, in a thousand places, patiently and passionately.

(Personal communication, Ross Colliver, ALARA committee member
2000-13 cont)

2011: Emergence reflects/facilitates new priorities: Decolonising Action Research – cultural integrations *within* methodologies

"Indigenous research and participatory action research can work together if there is the recognition that the Indigenous worldview is different. It is different because… Indigenous researchers are mostly preoccupied with decolonisation and the legitimacy of Indigenous knowledge… Indigenous research needs to be both an act of defiance and an act of healing."

(ALARA associate, Wright, 2011, p. 28)

ALARA publishes a journal for established and novice authors (since 1996) available on www.alarassociation.org and INFORMIT, peer reviewed monographs and congress publications; also available on Sydney University Press

From Theory to Practice; Context in Praxis

8th Action Learning, Action Research and 12th Participatory Action Research World Congress Proceedings 2010 Melbourne Australia

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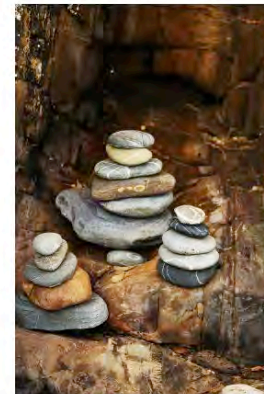
2012: Integrative praxis for meeting resistances to change

Integrative praxis via Action Research and Action Learning in 2012-13 looks like…

- The rise of the Action Research/Action Learning (AR/AL) Facilitator
  - The rise of the AR/AL "insider" Advocate
- The rise of emergent, flexible, complex AR and AL-related methodologies
- Access to a continually extending cannon of AR/AL literature in multiple formats and communication modes
  - The uptake of multi-site, systemic AL/AR
  - The rise of sole practitioner AL/AR without collaboration, practice improvements or problem solving as essential defining qualities
- Incorporation of a variety of philosophies, tools and cultures into methodologies recognised as AR/AL
  - The issue of standardising AR/AL practice is resisted in the interests of best fit, risking or increasing originally- envisioned efficacy
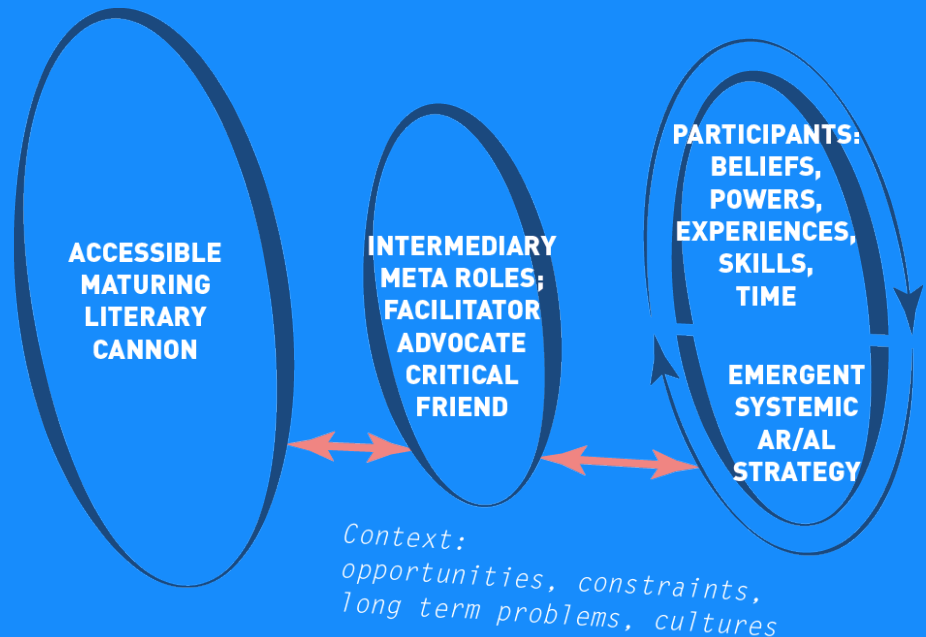
(Goff's overview of ALARA associates and members Perry, Trent, Bruce Ferguson, Chen and She articles in ALARj, Vol 18, # 1, March 2012)

ACCESSIBLE MATURING LITERARY CANNON

INTERMEDIARY META ROLES; FACILITATOR ADVOCATE CRITICAL FRIEND

PARTICIPANTS: BELIEFS, POWERS, EXPERIENCES, SKILLS, TIME

EMERGENT SYSTEMIC AR/AL STRATEGY

Context: opportunities, constraints, long term problems, cultures

Summary: Tracing the emergence of Interdisciplinarity and Integration Methodologies through ALARA's history

Emerging forms of integration…

Late 1980s

1988: AR in Australian voices

The 1990s

1990: Integrated, interdisciplinary practice

1994: Action Researcher *as* the integrating methodology

The 2000s

2000: Integrating hard science and participatory pedagogy

2003: Integrative methodologies for transformative change

The 2000s

2005: Participatory evaluation – integrating methodological functions

2009: The integrative facility of the Internet and AR/AL

The 2010s

2011: Decolonising Action Research – cultural integrations within methodologies

2012: Integrative praxis for meeting resistances to change

ALARA as an organisational system… creating a space for the flux of ideas and events supporting emergent integration of theory and practice…

What's next?

Formation, constitution, and incorporation…emerging vision

First World Congress, Brisbane 1990…followed by 8 further World congresses in Australia, South Africa (twice), Columbia, United Kingdom, Netherlands (including 3 in Australia)

23 Australasian conferences

Publications – Association's journal - ALARj Volume 1, 1996…Volume 23, 2017; monographs, conference and congress publications

Supporting institutional action…

Online presence www.alarassociation.org, INFORMIT, Sydney University Press

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The original of this digital poster was prepared for
the First Global Conference on Research Integration and
Implementation:
www.i2sconference.org

It addresses the theme of:

"Submissions from associated networks and organisations"

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Update October 2017 for publication on ALARA website