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Call for papers

Building bridges in/through action research 175

Special issue of the International Journal of Action Research as part of the

Conference to take place in San Sebastian in 2020

Editorial

This issue of the International Journal of Action Research presents four articles and one book review. The articles cover different fields of interest, but share the concern for collective and participative production of knowledge that originates within the process of changing their realities. The book review is about the theory and practice of “systematisation of experience” which in Latin America is closely related to Action Research.

Stephen Allen and Judi Marshall, in the article “What could happen when Action Research meets ideas of socio-materiality?” argue that matter is active in creating our understanding, and so significant for fostering critical action. This understanding could be helpful for Action Researchers to develop congruent ontologies, which are defined by relationality and interconnectivity, in particular with connection to climate change and loss of biodiversity. As the authors point out, the article has a provocative and speculative character as a step forward for a more integrative practice of Action Research. It is an invitation “to connect with fellow scholars engaged in action research and with concerns about sustainability.”

The article “Participant and co-operative research within a social movement of recyclable materials collectors: Methodological reflections on a long-term political praxis”, by Cristiano Benites Oliveira and Emil Albert Sobottka, presents methodological reflections on a participant research project within the National Movement of Recyclable Materials Collectors (MNCR) in Brazil. It emphasises methodological aspects of the researchers’ long-term participation in the process of questioning and denaturalising of political, social, and economic inequalities by the collectors, understood as subjects of their self-organisation. As pointed out by the authors, with the focus on the modes of interpretation of the collectors, and based on the relation of trust between the actors, the notion of reflectivity of the actors allows the obtaining of a ‘second-order observation’.

“Action Research and Teacher Education: the use of research in a classroom for the transformation of reality”, written by Nilda Stecanela, Alessandra Chaves Zen, and Fabiana Pauletti, aims to provide reflections on a research experience within a continuing education course for teachers of public schools in South Brazil. The analysis of the modes of reception and appropriation of those involved in the research process, and expressed in the materials produced, evince the difficulties in exercising the passage from naive to epistemologi-

cal consciousness through criticality. These difficulties reinforce the importance of the process of reflection-action-reflection in the education of teachers.

The last article, “Language Education and primary school children: the story of using stories”, by Christina Nicole Giannikas, presents data derives from an Action Research study carried out as part of a longitudinal study in South Western Greece, where storytelling is a neglected language learning source. The research concentrates on Young Language Learners at a Beginners level, aged 7-9 years old. The results show the advantageous use of Action Research as a tool of intervention to apply necessary change in language teaching contexts.

The book review, written by Carolina Schenatto da Rosa, summarises and comments on the book *La Sistematización como investigación interpretativa crítica* (Bogotá: Editorial El Búho) in which the authors Disney Barragán Cordero and Alfonso Torres Carrillo propose systematisation of experience as critical interpretative mode of research. This Colombian research practice presented in this book can be understood as a development of the Action Research tradition of Orlando Fals Borda and many others in Latin America.

Finally, there is a call for papers for a special issue of the International Journal of Action Research as part of the Conference to take place in San Sebastian in 2020 (October 1-2), following the “Coping with the Future” Seminar in Agder, Norway in October 2018. The main theme, as suggested, is bridge building processes in various scenarios. We welcome papers which will also help us to get prepared for the San Sebastian Conference.

Danilo R. Streck
Editor-in-chief

What could happen when action research meets ideas of sociomateriality?

Stephen Allen and Judi Marshall

Abstract

Action research in its various forms highlights the interactional and relational ways in which research and knowledge become socially produced *with* people, with intentions of positively transforming real-world relations. In parallel, there is a growing interest in organisational research informed by the field of Science and Technology Studies, about the potential significance of matter to understanding how processes of researching interact with the world. By experimenting with connections to debates about sociomateriality, this paper explores what implications there might be for understanding and performing action research, especially given that action researchers are often values-oriented and attached, and acknowledge that they want to change material issues.

Keywords: action research, affordance, matter, sociomaterial, sustainability

Qué podría pasar cuando la investigación-acción se reúne con las ideas de socio-materialidad?

Resumen

La investigación-acción en sus diversas formas resalta los caminos de interacción y relación en donde la investigación y el conocimiento se convierten socialmente producidos *con* personas, con intenciones de transformar positivamente las relaciones del mundo real. Paralelamente, existe un creciente interés en la investigación organizacional informada por el campo de Estudios de Ciencia y Tecnología, sobre el significado potencial de la materia para comprender cómo los procesos de investigación interactúan con el mundo. Al experimentar conexiones con los debates sobre la socio-materialidad, este documento explora qué implicaciones puede tener para comprender y realizar una investigación-acción, especialmente dado que los investigadores-acción a menudo están unidos y orientados en valores, y reconocen que desean cambiar los asuntos materiales.

Palabras clave: Investigación-acción, *affordance*, materia, sociomaterial, sostenibilidad.

Introducing attentions and purposes

Action research involves co-producing knowledge and action to positively transform real-world relations (e.g. Bradbury 2015; Cooke & Wolfram Cox 2005). This article considers how debates in the field of Science and Technology Studies (STS) (e.g. Barad 2007, 2013; Law 2004; Orlikowski & Scott 2008) can help to develop a perspective of action research as materially as well as socially (co)produced. In particular, we draw on the concept of ‘affordances’ (Bloomfield, Latham, & Vurdubakis 2010; Hutchby 2001; Jarzabkowski & Pinch 2013) to explore how action researchers can be critically and reflexively aware of ways that sociomaterial relations can shape possibilities for action.

This paper is offered in the service of fostering organisational and societal change for sustainability. We understand action on sustainability is imperative so that future generations of humans and non-human species can flourish together on the Earth. At these times of, to us, profound environmental crisis (e.g. IPCC 2018; Steffen et al. 2015), we are acutely aware of the limitations of offering yet another *damned* journal article. But we find articles valuable when they prompt us to feel surprised about aspects of being and researching that we might have taken-for-granted, making us pause to consider other possibilities for action. So, by developing a sociomaterial perspective we want to attempt to extend visibility on the significance of matter to the relations involved in action researching.

We believe that developing a sociomaterial perspective is vital for action researchers, particularly those who are values-oriented and attached, as material relations matter. We assume that paying attention to emergence and interdependence are crucial for creating change with integrity, which means that action researching requires systemic ways of thinking, acting and being (Burns 2007; Flood 2010; Marshall 2016; Wilson, Walsh, & Bush 2018). Consequently, sociomateriality can offer possibilities for action researchers to develop congruent ontologies which are defined by relationality and interconnectivity, because we cannot change the world without transforming and being transformed by matter. How we make and reproduce ‘boundaries’ between ourselves and matter is a fundamental concern (Midgley 2000). We are responsible to matter, especially in connection with climate change and loss of biodiversity. By understanding matter as active in creating our understanding, and so significant for fostering critical action, we hope to help to enrich debates about implications of sociomaterial relations in action researching.

Positioning contributions within action research debates

Action research is a ‘family’ label applied to a richly diverse range of approaches (Bradbury 2015; Cooke & Wolfram Cox 2005; Reason & Bradbury 2001, 2008). Whilst there is no one ‘it’, we are drawn to key characteristics in formulations of action research which foreground being in the service of human and ecological flourishing.

In a seminal contribution to action research debates, Reason and Torbert describe an ‘action turn’ in social research generally as involving a need to develop knowledge that relates to “a practical knowing embodied in the moment-to-moment action of each researcher/practitioner” (2001, p. 7). This turn or paradigm is positioned as contrasting significantly

with an academic tradition that aims “to contribute to an abstract ‘body of knowledge’ available to third-persons” (Reason & Torbert 2001, p. 7).

Action research intends to produce knowing in and through action with others, which is thoroughly embodied as well as propositional (Heron & Reason 1997). A core idea is that everybody involved is treated as an active agent in producing the research. Those involved make sense of their world and their practice by inquiring collaboratively to generate theories and insights (Kemmis 2008; Reason 1999). As Reason and Torbert describe:

[H]uman knowing after the action turn is essentially *participative*, growing from collaborative relations with each other as co-inquirers into our world; and in addition, since human persons and communities are a part of the larger cosmos, *all knowing is grounded in participation in the wider ecology of living and non-living things*. (2001, p. 7; our italics)

This participative and systemic view of the world sees acting and knowing as arising through our relational embeddedness with humans and nonhuman species and entities, i.e. social and material relations. However, whilst the action research literature shows considerable interest in understanding relational and power dynamics amongst communities of people pursuing action (e.g. Janes 2016; Ravn Olesen & Nordentoft 2016), there has been limited attention to the ways in which material arrangements, within which and through which these social dynamics take place, could be significant to action. Consequently, by drawing on ideas of sociomateriality, and in particular ‘affordances’, the contribution of this paper is to consider more fully the potential implications of understanding action research as “grounded in participation in the wider ecology of living and non-living things” (Reason & Torbert 2001, p. 7).

Writing form and content

The format of this paper reflects the pattern our conversations took as we developed our ideas about the possible meanings and implications of a sociomaterial perspective for action research. Proposing insights from sociomateriality that might be relevant for action research felt like the breaking of a wave lapping up the beach, over-riding, spreading out. However, had we left our thinking there, we were not doing due justice to the potential shadow sides of what we were proposing. A next phase of our conversation was more nuanced, asked questions, softened our advocacy, had a feeling of pulling back from over-strong assertions, as a wave recedes back down the beach. We then reviewed where this took us, what was left on the beach. We have sought to show this formatting here. The article thus shows its emergence, acknowledging questions and dilemmas as we write, rather than seeking to resolve them, intending dialogue between action research and socio-materiality. It adopts the form of two waves of proposing ideas followed by reflexive recessions, with a final section that brings together some closing reflections.

This article is itself intended as an inquiry, seeking to connect with fellow scholars engaged in action research, and with concerns about sustainability. We have inquired together through cycles of writing and reflection (Heron & Reason 2008), but we have not figured out the action implications of bringing these ideas and action research practices together. Our intention here is to share speculative thinking, as a step towards envisaging grounded practice.

Wave 1 – Bringing in (socio)materiality

surge.... swell.... as the wave rushes up the beach, with impressions to offer....

“Humans’ do not simply assemble different apparatuses for satisfying particular knowledge projects but are themselves specific local parts of the world’s ongoing reconfiguring” (Barad 2003, p. 829).

Interdisciplinary debates within STS challenge taken-for-granted ideas about how we can know what to do (Felt, Fouché, Miller, & Smith-Doerr 2017). Knowledge making is understood to be an embodied process. STS provocations challenge constructions of human ‘subjects’ as active, knowing and influencing, and material ‘objects’ as passive, knowable and formable (Law 2004).

Matter is not ‘an inert canvas’ of passive objects which are organised by social processes (Barad 2007, 2013). Nor is it “some thereness available for the taking, a mere backdrop to what really matters” (Barad 2013, p. 17). Matter is “a doing, a congealing of agency. It is morphologically active, responsive, generative, articulate, and alive” (Barad 2013, p. 17). Matter matters because “it generates consequences for how we experience and act in our world” (Carlile, Nicolini, Langley, & Tsoukas 2013, p. 4). Thus, “humans are part of the material world, not transcendent gods or magicians able to manipulate the material without being incorporated or changed by it” (Dale & Burrell 2008, p. 210).

Sociomateriality connects the social and material by understanding that they are only defined and produced by their interaction (Jones 2013). The metaphor of human entanglement helps understand the implications of being interactively part of a sociomaterial world (Orlikowski 2007). “Humans are constituted through relations of materiality: bodies, clothes, food, devices, tools, which, in turn, are produced through human practices” (Orlikowski 2007, p. 1438). The skin is “not an impermeable boundary but a permeable zone of intermingling” where “every organism: indeed, every thing. is itself an entanglement” (Ingold 2008, p. 1806).

“We do not obtain knowledge by standing outside of the world; we know because ‘we’ are of the world” (Barad 2003, p. 829). Any human practice “will necessarily involve the material bodies of the participants, located in a particular material context, so there can be no social that does not involve the material” (Jones 2013, p. 213). There are no independently existing entities with inherent characteristics. The social and material are mutually constitutive.

Researchers are entangled within research communities which are bound up in material practices of knowledge making (Latour 1987; Law 1994). Materials used in practice (e.g. technologies, artefacts and tools) have an active role in shaping the actions and routines of knowledge production. For example, fossil energy resources power aeroplanes, spurring researchers to travel further. Computer algorithms shepherd researchers' literature searches, helping delineate inclusion, exclusion and boundaries of perceived relevance.

friction... breaking.... swash.... initial surge is interrupted... breaks apart... spreads out.... intermingles....

STS languages offer enticing possibilities for broader attention, but how action researchers can work with these often esoteric ideas is challenging. In the few papers which already attempt sociomaterial interpretations of action research initiatives (Allen, Brigham, & Marshall 2018; Suopajarvi 2017), sociomateriality is drawn upon as part of retrospective analysis. Allen, Brigham and Marshall (2018) analyse their participation in an urban regeneration initiative, which had a vision to be environmentally sustainable, by taking a sociomaterial lens to explore how building and facility management arrangements (including legal contracting processes and computer systems) can be understood as having significant agency in shaping the boundaries for what sustainability could become. Suopajarvi (2017), by completing an ethnographic analysis alongside action research workshops about ageing, attempts to notice the potentially active role of non-human agents such as the physical meeting space (e.g. furniture) and artefacts (e.g. a magazine brought in by a participant) in shaping the processes and outcomes of the research.

We realise that action researchers are working across territories of action and expertise. In the grounded realm of practice, we expect more openness to sociomaterial sensibilities, for example in how environments are shaped and engagements enacted to empower co-inquirers (Gaventa & Cornwall 2015). We wonder if nuanced experiencing and noticing of relations with matter can be readily articulated as researchers seek to publish their work. We suspect that fine-grained engagement with matter might be discounted in the rubrics of what counts as acceptable knowing, potentially considered too banal. For example, detailed care in relation to repeatedly writing up, formatting and circulating notes during a collaborative inquiry might become a footnote under 'Research Methodology'. Legitimising action research in the academy could risk losing, and thus not communicating to developing researchers, this wider realm of being, however much we aspire to live with multiple forms of knowing. Does STS offer languages for helping to develop and maintain sociomaterial attentions?

Much of the work associated with STS tends to be related to studies of scientists (e.g. Law 1994) and technologies (e.g. Orlikowski 2007). Whilst science and technology are used as multifaceted terms joining us with a world, co-evolving socio-cultural 'nature' in the flow of knowing and being is not focal. For example, human settlements can often be understood to be substantially organised by the physical landscape, such as growing from proximity to rivers for water and transportation. So when the river dries up due to changing climates, the settlement likely disappears, such as is suggested about some 'lost cities' of ancient worlds (Zalasiewicz, Williams, Steffen, & Crutzen 2010). Now the rights to personhood of rivers, such as the Colorado, are being legally claimed in attempts to prevent hydraulic fracturing (Turkewitz 2017). Consequently, if we are to adopt a sociomaterial

perspective for action research, we need to pay attention to the interactive material consequences, beyond being in dialogue with other people, to the ground that we walk on, the air that we breath, and the water we drink.

Perhaps some action researchers are already being attentive to matter, and do not need the languages STS offers. For example, Pimbert and Wakeford (2003) pay explicit attention to material issues in their research methods, and care is taken to work against social power disparities in how forums for co-working are set up to form visions about local futures for food and farming. Pimbert and Wakeford supported the development of citizens' juries: the people sat as a panel, and 'experts' in agriculture came before them to offer their views, reversing pervasive dynamics in which receivers of aid are placed physically and intellectually as supplicants.

We suggest that engaging explicitly with ideas from STS offers action researchers opportunities to develop further and explicate their sociomaterial perspectives and sensibilities, and embodied action. However, examples tend to become about matter's usefulness to humans, turning matter into tools (e.g. shale gas as an energy source), and so inadvertently bring in neo-positivist ideals that we know, are separable from, and can control matter. Helpfully illustrative as (simple) examples are, such as understanding 'natural' landscapes as informing human settlements, do they tend, and encourage us, in this direction? But materiality is more than that.

We are interested to consider if and how sociomateriality can be further integrated into the processes and practices of doing action research. In the current world of climate change, loss of biodiversity and mass extinction these are fundamental issues. If a deep respect for matter's right, in its own right, is held by action researchers, sociomateriality offers another language, sensibilities and legitimacy for articulating those intents and practices. This is likely a different direction than academic aims of action research, which can include gaining legitimacy through publication in journals considered prestigious (to avoid being seen as a 'niche' research approach).

receding... ebbing... backwash... depositing some things, taking others away... residue... the beach reshaped in dynamic interaction

We appreciate the surge and excitement that STS ideas about sociomateriality can offer us to reflect upon our action researching. So far we notice two particular strands. Firstly, we are attentive to how our entanglements with matter shape our knowing. For example, as mentioned above, collaborative inquiry notes are not only derivative, a reflection of human conversation, but are also mutually constitutive of ongoing action. Notes circulated by email may not reach or be accessible to some co-researchers. Their 'absence' too is potentially significant. We require a different sensibility about such activities, so that a different sense can be made. Dwelling with notes from inquiry meetings, we could pay attention to how they are circulated. Does the account include pictures? What material consequences will the formatting choices have, in terms of toner and paper requirements if the account is printed?

Secondly, we notice a strand about developing respect for the rights of matter, rather than matter being used flagrantly and hurriedly, in the service of efficiency and convenience in human-only terms. For example, if only one hour is allowed for a meeting, and no-one wants to engage with the politics of who makes coffee, and washes up, these

days, in the UK, a cluster of one-use cups and plastic lids may be left behind at the end. How can we interact with sufficient levels of material engagement and respect?

The next wave attempts to elaborate on these strands, and develop others. The concept of ‘affordance’ seems especially fruitful for extending and developing a sociomaterial perspective in action research. In the history of action research debates, sociomaterial ideas such as Actor Network Theory have had some marginal explicit and tacit influence, but limited or no connections seem to have been made in action research to the notion of ‘affordance’.

Wave 2: Affordances in sociomaterial relations

surge.... swell.... as the wave rushes up the beach, with impressions to offer....

“Far from being inscribed upon the bedrock of physical reality, meaning is immanent in the relational contexts of people’s practical engagement with their lived-in environments”
(Ingold 2002, p. 168)

An affordance is about understanding the action possibilities that our interactions with matter affords us. Affordances refer to how “specific action unfolds in that unique moment and situation, whom and what it enrolls, and how it affects the world” (Faraj & Azad 2012, p. 255). Affordances help to bring sociomaterial appreciations to understanding (in)actions.

Perceptual activity involves “the movement of the whole being (indissolubly body and mind) in its environment”, “to perceive what it *affords*” (Ingold 2002, p. 166). “Knowledge of the world is gained by moving about in it, exploring it, attending to it, ever alert to the signs by which it is revealed” (Ingold 2002, p. 55). Learning is about an embodied ‘education of attention’ to be able to engage with human and non-human, animate and inanimate (Ingold 2002).

Affordances offer possibilities to deal with issues of ‘undersocialised and oversocialised’ ways of understanding human and non-human sociomaterial interactions (Bloomfield et al. 2010). Affordances are relational. The dynamics enabling and constraining action differ between beings and contexts, e.g. “water surfaces do not have the affordance of walk-on-ability for a lion or a crocodile, but they do for an insect water-boatman” (Hutchby 2001, p. 448).

Affordances “are not reducible to their material constitution, but are inextricably bound with specific, historically variable, ways of life” (Bloomfield et al. 2010, p. 428). Any

object can afford various action possibilities in the social context of its use. For example, a bag could afford “a cheap and effective drinking vessel in Asia, fashioning a medical device in an emergency, or making a Halloween mask for a children’s party” (Jarzabkowski & Pinch 2013, pp. 587-588).

Bringing attention to how matter interactively shapes action possibilities opens up questions about how affordances are sustained and can be challenged. Can we explore and represent how “the body comes to grant particular affordances to the (made) world and conversely, the world comes to be ‘mirrored’ in the ... action capabilities of the body” (Bloomfield et al. 2010, p. 429)? How can we come to appreciate the assumptions and social obligations which hold sociomaterial relations in place (Jarzabkowski & Pinch 2013)?

friction... breaking.... swash.... initial surge is interrupted... breaks apart... spreads out.... intermingles....

Taking a relational view of affordances, i.e. avoiding essentialising and undersocialising viewpoints, offers potential to develop a sociomaterial perspective for how ‘action possibilities’ emerge for action researchers moving within and with environments, artefacts and technologies.

We are curious about what is involved in bringing notions of sociomateriality more to the fore in researchers’ ongoing thinking and action. The concept of ‘affordances’ is enticing to help to work towards a richer way of understanding the potential implications of a sociomaterial perspective for action researching. Affordances brings a dynamic orientation to action possibilities which can heighten attention to noticing how materials can shape and be shaped through social interacting. However, these are not simply functional interactions such as the possibilities for using materials in different ways in action, but inescapably relational and situated within historical socio-cultural evolutions. What this implies is that the social meanings given to materials and the skills needed to be afforded interaction are bound up in evolving differentiated power relations, such as gendered practices (e.g. a man feeling a need to open a door or carry a ‘heavy’ bag for a woman). How could greater attention be brought to the participatory dynamics of what matter affords of you, and the possibilities for what you can afford of it?

In affordance terms the (natural-artificial) physical environment affords different peoples’ bodies differing action possibilities or capabilities, such as the example above where water affords different possibilities for different types of animals. This could be about peoples’ skills or strengths, such as being challenged by their bodies’ mobility, and how the ways the physical environment is constituted and construed shapes movement and the meanings of (non)movement, as well as how those movements relate to others’ bodies, and the varying social values and identities placed on the ways people move themselves and objects.

An example (based on one author’s experience) of meeting with people to talk and eat together can be explored with a sociomaterial lens to prompt critical and reflexive questions about how (in)action possibilities emerge. This example, which was not part of ‘formal’ processes of action researching, took place among the organisers and speakers the evening before an academic symposium. The meeting place, a pub, was chosen due to its unique significance of being understood as the oldest public building in the city where the

symposium was taking place, in the North of England. The table for dinner was located on the first floor, a space afforded only to bodies able to be navigated up winding stairs. Bondings of the place 'pub' with collective alcohol consumption, renders possibilities of non-alcoholic refreshment 'atypical' and potentially open to question. The food on offer enrolled and afforded many possibilities for meat and fish eaters, but little opportunities for a plant-based meal. Lastly, the walk home late in the evening through a quietening city centre afforded movement possibilities for people who would feel that space to be unthreatening, and whose bodies others would read as unapproachable.

From this example, we can consider how sociomaterial interactions which produce meeting places can shape possibilities for action. A place to meet is chosen based on its historical significance, and connected potential appeal to visitors. This selection of place, whilst apparently banal, can be consequential to the action possibilities which can emerge. Some potential participants in the talking and eating together might be repelled by the imagined space they will encounter, and their anticipated inability to dwell within it, as well as to navigate to and away from it. Those who do 'go to the pub' are enrolled into a certain range of eating and drinking possibilities, which may discomfort and disconnect some people, as well as help to keep others tightly enrolled in eating practices (such as high meat intake) which have negative environmental consequences (e.g. Hedenus, Wirsenius, & Johansson 2014).

For action researchers seeking to bring bodies together, and foster ways forward on issues of collective concern, not being attentive to sociomaterial dynamics involved in meeting together, means ideals of 'multiple perspectives' and 'diversity of voices' can become naively claimed. In other words, the materialities of being together are bound up in exclusions and inclusions of certain problematic social relations (e.g. relating to gender, wealth, race, disability, sexuality) which may be counter to the emancipatory intentions hoped to be addressed through action research, such as engaging with marginalised immigrant communities, or disenfranchised young people.

How the dialoguing in support of action comes from within particularly constituted and understood spaces is potentially important to any participatory unfoldings. These interactions could be mundane and unnoteworthy but may have significance to action possibilities. Indeed, attempting with others to re-see aspects of the physical environment, and the significance for movement and action, and for matter's intrinsic rights, could be productive for opportunities to influence change. For example, seeking to prompt action associated with averting ecological destruction from within pampered, windowless and air-conditioned surrounds could be disruptively disembodying, dulling and dumbing relevant sensibilities. What might be different about conversations held in a tent, in the rain, with (congruent) toilets along the path?

receding... ebbing... backwash... depositing some things, taking others away... residue... the beach reshaped in dynamic interaction

The concept of affordances can help us to consider the sociomaterial dynamics which are involved in the action possibilities which do and do not emerge, as we seek to positively transform real-world relations. Affordances could help to add to the multi-dimensionality of attention and knowing adopted by action researchers by bringing greater visibility to the participatory dynamics of what matter affords of us (e.g. enabling or disabling entry of

different bodies into spaces to meet together), and the possibilities for what we can afford of matter (e.g. perpetuating or interrupting patterns of consuming and conserving certain foods and drink).

We glimpse the potential to understand relationships as grounded in mutual communion (Bakan 1966; Marshall 1984), a coevolving and interdependence of social and material in which the person-researcher is indelibly entangled in multifarious and multidirectional responsibilities. However, using the notion of affordances in a truly relational manner is challenging. As STS writers have noticed, there can often be a need to split social and material to make sense of and communicate our research involvements (Faraj & Azad 2012). Consequently, we do need to be aware of how language categorises and bounds people and things, and seek to act and write in critical and reflexive ways that engage with sociomaterial entanglement (e.g. Allen 2019).

Closing reflections

We began this article suggesting that we wanted to develop a sociomaterial perspective which could prompt us and other action researchers to feel surprised about aspects of being and researching that we might have taken-for-granted, making us pause to consider other possibilities. Our inquiry and writing are in the service of sustainability. The article's formatting of waves has tried to keep things open and has allowed us, we think, glimpses of possibilities. For now, we accept the unfinished quality of the perspective that we offer and seek to notice some momentary contours of the 'beach' before another wave arrives. We can particularly identify two themes running through our attempts at examples which can add texture to the perspective we are attempting to offer.

Firstly: human inclusion or exclusion as mediated by material circumstances. Although connected examples come somewhat readily to mind (e.g. the places and spaces of meetings, and information communication technologies patterning our interactions), we risk treating matter as a tool for human intentions. Also, in writing, language has been challenging, so predicated as it is on human subject and distinguishing material world as 'object', and potential tool. We seek appropriate language as well as sensibilities, to conceive of, and write about, our engagements with more material respect and communion. Can we appreciate entangled ways of being by reaching beyond dualist notions that encourage subject-subject or subject-object thinking? We wonder if influences such as Robertson's (1990) principles for an economy for the 21st Century of enabling and conserving could be part of helping develop our perspective. We are also aware that action research likely has offerings to make to STS sensibilities, through its attentions to subtle dynamics involved in participation and emancipation.

Secondly: compressions in time as a significant cultural patterning, focusing (rather than contextualising) perception and shaping behaviour. Notions of time efficiency and subsequent hurry seem to make matter more dispensable. They also constrain and rush human bodies, encouraging stress reactions. Slower movement is likely to be less energy intensive, and more humane. However, examples indicating alternative possibilities can seem trivial, and too highly focused. Why pay attention to the use of toner in a print cartridge, when the room, the

lighting, the printer (and its replacement regime), and the paper are all normalised? Additionally, the moment we place certain ways of working and being as socially and/or ecologically more congruent with values we might seek to uphold we can lose a sense of how everything is produced and afforded within specific constellations of sociomaterial relations. For example, a circumstance of a cyclist who mainly gains sustenance from airfreighted vegetables reconfigures a low intensity mode of travel. Hence we need to be attentive to how we might craft positions and inadvertently pin 'things' down.

Wanting to share our inquiry with others at this preliminary stage of thinking, we have favoured speculative openness, wanting to stay metaphorically close to the ground. Two images have then arisen about how to continue to think about these issues. Firstly, sociomaterial inclusion seems, perhaps, more possible when experiences and 'things' are kept malleable/ pliable/ multi-dimensional and are not too pinned down. Secondly, empathising with a tent in the rain as a congruent place to consider sustainability, we realise we are pulling against thinking becoming abstracted, with associated implications of 'better', more generalisable, less attached; for example in scenario planning considering alternative futures. Do we need a procedural form of biomimicry, grounded, entangled, in touch with matter? It is in this territory of action research, with radical participation at its heart, in which we hope a sociomaterial perspective can emerge.

If we critically turn a sociomaterial lens on our action, we do see shadow sides to our efforts to produce this article. The matter of this article is consequential to sustainability. We may have worked together without needing to burn fuels to travel to meet to develop the writing. However, the servers and datacentres which enable the internet connectivity of our video calls, screens and computer processors require electrical power with various associated emissions (e.g. Berners-Lee 2011). Anybody who wants to read this article online requires similar technologies and electrical power. Such computing technologies contain metals like tin and tantalum whose mining and extraction can involve socially and ecologically exploitative processes (e.g. Simpson 2012). Additionally, the assembly of some computer devices have been connected with disastrous labour processes (e.g. Moore 2012), and excessive executive pay (e.g. Colt 2015). This is just a brief glimpse of our sociomaterial entanglements in aspects including validating publishing as valuable academic work, reinforcing certain information and computer technologies as essential, accepting problematic trading and production arrangements for metals, and being complicit with processes of extreme capital accumulation. These patterns of relations afford the possibility of the publication of this article in an academic journal.

Living and researching responsibly, within the perspective we have suggested, inevitably requires action researchers to attempt to avoid or subvert a multitude of sociomaterial relations, whilst seeking to create values-based alternatives. Understanding ourselves as upholding what we value in times of palpable human unsustainability, without becoming too overwhelmed in the imagined contradictions can be challenging. Our collective entanglements unavoidably cast long and complex shadows, as we indicated above. However, if we want to strive for positive change, seeking to commune with a wider ecology of living and 'non-living' things is core to our action researching.

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Participant and co-operative research within a social movement of recyclable materials collectors

Methodological reflections on a long-term political praxis¹

Cristiano Benites Oliveira and Emil Albert Sobottka

Abstract

This article presents methodological reflections on a participant research within the National Movement of Recyclable Materials Collectors (MNCR) in Brazil. It emphasises methodological aspects of the researchers' long-term participation in the process of questioning and denaturalising of political, social, and economic inequalities by the collectors, understood as subjects of their self-organisation. It addresses quality criteria for long-term participant research, and the role of the scholar in the tension between engaging in social movement and being an integral part of academic life. The development of a master's thesis and of a doctoral dissertation between 2010 and 2016 sets the background. This article is a systematisation of the hermeneutic practice focusing on the research relations and processes of sharing of meanings between actors and researcher, aiming at the improvement of the subjects' political praxis.

Keywords: recyclable materials collectors, praxis, reflexivity, denaturalisation of inequalities.

Investigación participante y cooperativa dentro de un movimiento social de recolectores de materiales reciclables. Reflexiones metodológicas sobre una praxis política a largo plazo

Resumen

Este artículo presenta reflexiones metodológicas sobre una investigación participante dentro del Movimiento Nacional de Recolectores de Materiales Reciclables (MNCR) en Brasil. Enfatiza los aspectos metodológicos de la participación a largo plazo de los investigadores en el proceso de cuestionamiento y desnaturalización de las desigualdades políticas, sociales y económicas por parte de los recolectores, entendidos como sujetos de su autoorganización. Aborda los criterios de calidad para la investigación participante a largo plazo y el papel del académico en la tensión entre participar en el movimiento social y ser parte integral de la vida académica. El desarrollo de una tesis de maestría y una tesis doctoral entre 2010 y 2016 establece el telón de fondo de la reflexión. Este artículo es una sistematización de la práctica hermenéutica centrada en las relaciones de investigación y los procesos de intercambio de significados entre actores e investigadores, con el objetivo de mejorar la práctica política de los sujetos.

Palabras clave: recolectores de materiales reciclables, praxis, reflexividad, desnaturalización de las desigualdades.

1 Translated by Gustavo Matiuuzzi de Souza.

Introduction

In this article we seek to report our participation in the National Movement of Recyclable Materials Collectors (MNCR) in Brazil. Through a praxis of socio-political organisation, collectors of recyclable materials sought to denaturalise political, economic, and social inequalities, to legitimise their activity as a dignified and socially relevant occupation, as well as to constitute for themselves spaces of autonomy. The intention is to present methodological aspects of the process of militant participation, done simultaneously with academic activities, in a long-term strategy.

The use of materials discarded as ‘junk’ by people living in poverty and misery in Brazil was gradually transformed from the 1980s into an alternative occupation, although precarious, for a growing contingent of people. As material recycling became industry-wide and became thematic (concerning environmental protection), the activity of picking, sorting, and reselling materials started to provide a small income. With the support of civil entities, various groups began to organise themselves in the form of associations and cooperatives, some of them formalised, others only as solidarity bonds (Bortoli 2013). A significant number of people were already living in this activity even before there was an official policy for the reuse of solid waste, created in 2010 (Souza et al. 2014; De Lorena Diniz Chaves et al. 2014). In the wake of the organisation process of this population, the National Movement of Recyclable Materials Collectors was created in 2001, in a congress that gathered more than 1700 collectors from different parts of Brazil (Pereira & Goes 2016; Fergutz et al. 2011).

The importance of deepening the methodological discussion stems from the fact that, in the field of Social Sciences, scholars engaged in practices of long-term social transformation still find difficulties in methodological terms to account for their own praxis in assisting in the thematisation and understanding of social problems experienced by sectors of the population. This difficulty derives from the classic, rigid separation between the subject of the research activity and the object to be researched, as inherited from the positivist tradition. However, there are consolidated methodological paths that break with this separation. These paths are systematised participant methodologies within, among others, the social and education sciences (Brandão & Streck 2006; Torres Carrillo 2010). The participant methodology becomes applicable in a satisfactory way insofar as it allows to interpret the relations established between researchers and researched, contributing to the improvement of both praxis and research itself.

We use here empirical data of a master’s thesis and a doctoral dissertation (Oliveira 2010; 2016). Both the synthesis of performance experiments and the theoretical and methodological categories of interpretation of the empirical data seek to provide an understanding of the effects of co-operation on the strategic reflections established between researchers and collectors. It is hoped that they will contribute to the consolidation of a critical and reflexive field of study of situations, in which economic, political, and social strategies are shared between the militant-researcher and the social movement in which he/she participates.

To account for this synthesis, the article is structured as follows: first, we address some assumptions and quality criteria of participant and co-operative research. Second, we

present the experience of one of the authors in the relations established with the collectors of the MNCR. Finally, we analyse data from interviews, feedback moments between researchers and collectors, and documents from the MNCR. In this third section, we describe and interpret, within the limits of an article, moments of sharing of strategic meanings of denaturalisation of the political, economic, and social inequalities to which a historically marginalised sector of Brazilian society is exposed.

Quality criteria for participant and co-operative research and the role of the intellectual

Participant methodologies have solid criteria for verifying their quality. Such criteria consist of social relevance of research, reflexivity, quality of the relationship between subjects, practicability of knowledge and descriptive and interpretive density (Streck 2016, p. 538). The social relevance of the research (which in this case dialogues with the practicability of knowledge) is established as the study accompanies political action in an unequal but transformable reality, stimulating the knowledge necessary to question political, social, and economic inequalities, as well as through support in the autonomous organisation of collectors of recyclable materials.

The criteria of reflexivity, and the quality of the relationship between research subjects, seem to be fulfilled through long-term praxis as immediate action in daily routines while researching with the collectors. Both provided the researchers self-knowledge before research subjects, a kind of 'research of the self'. To deepen the matter of the quality of the relation between researcher and subjects, we will describe the experience of one of the authors as a researcher as a way of highlighting a role that approaches considerably that of *organic intellectual*.

To achieve a descriptive and interpretive density, we bring excerpts of interviews and documents along with observations that illustrate how, among the collectors of the movement, the awareness that the political, social, and economic inequalities to which they are exposed come from historically constructed social relations and, therefore, subject to questioning and change. These are details captured within the movement in the collectors' context and praxis to fight inequalities. To be able to describe and interpret the perceptions that emerged in the daily life of the movement in-depth seems to us to be the greater contribution as researchers in the strategy of the movement itself.

The activity of the engaged researcher is not free from difficulties and ambiguities, nor is it the only one to be assumed. On the contrary, traditional intellectuals often consider themselves (relatively) free from strong ties to groups or social classes, and they cultivate the image that they would be able to grasp and embrace the interests of society as a whole. Others consider themselves independent, in the sense of being willing to stand by their free choice, in the service of other social groups, advising them or even assuming functions of intellectual direction. But there are also those who see themselves socially and affectively linked to social groups and with them maintain a relationship of co-operation by affinity.

The issue is not new and there is already a kind of specialised branch of sociology around it (Kurzman & Owens 2002). Almost a century ago Antonio Gramsci (1971, p 5)

asked himself: “Are intellectuals an autonomous and independent social group, or does every social group have its own particular specialised category of intellectuals?” Gramsci was an acid critic of *traditional intellectuals*, who deludingly defined themselves as autonomous. He does not deny that they could have certain class independence, but he emphasises their *functional* link when placing themselves at the service of the dominant social group. He contrasts these with the *organic intellectuals*, who derive from the social group itself, be it dominant or dominated. Gramsci was convinced that every social group occupying an essential function in economic production produces its own organic intellectuals. Advocates from within this group, bound by origin and engagement, the organic intellectuals would not be mere ideological appendages, but an inextricable part of the group to which they belong. They are the intellectuals who, together with their respective social group, construct unity as a class and consciousness of the place that the group occupies in the economy, politics, and society.

In addition to academics, Gramsci includes in this category cultural activists, people with managerial or technical roles in society, and those who participate in the articulation of their group’s strategies of struggle in the construction of class solidarity and alternative hegemonies. For the proletariat in developed capitalist societies, the great challenge, according to Gramsci, would be precisely to overcome its dependence on traditional intellectuals, and to develop leadership from its own organic intellectuals. He hoped, on the other hand, that the organic intellectuals would not only develop intellectual faculties, but would, through their praxis, be active participants in the daily life of their social group as permanent builders, organisers, and persuaders.

This position of Gramsci contrasts, for example, with the conception that Karl Mannheim (1995) has of the intellectuals as a group of people who would not be so firmly situated in the social order; they would not be a class, nor a fraction of a class. Intellectuals would be a relatively unrelated stratum, which because of its educational process, would be able to transcend the narrow limits of the social worldview, of its social origin, and to develop a broader view of the whole social and political structure. Since they did not have a specific group interest, they would be able to associate with classes to which they did not originally belonged. They would thus form a relatively free-floating intelligentsia.

In participatory and co-operative research, the social and affective bond of the researcher with the group would preclude any claim to constitute himself as a traditional intellectual or as part of a free-floating intelligentsia. But we cannot rule out the possibility that, without coming from the social group itself, as is required of the organic intellectual in Gramsci’s conception, he/she should build a relationship that allows him to be both a *participant* and a *researcher*, responding to challenges that come from the clashes of the economic, political, and social life of the social group, and from participation in the academic community.

In the logic of co-operative research, “the distance from the observer is not only considered impractical, but a limit to the process of knowledge” (Terragni 2005, p. 147). According to Streck (2005, p. 24), the involvement with research and with subjects consists of,

[...] sooner or later, researching oneself, expanding the self-awareness of limitations and possibilities. The researcher does not enter his field of research as a stable and fixed element. He changes because (or when) he learns. Writing the results is therefore also a self-writing exercise.

The act of engaging with the everyday activities of the collectors required a high degree of reflexivity for the combined production of meaning between these actors and the researchers. Research itself has become thus an articulation of encounters between the different subjects involved in the same process, whose purpose is to establish the necessary negotiations about the best ways of “pronouncing the world” (Streck 2005, p. 28). Participatory and co-operative research has proved adequate for the description of a praxis that involves aspects of the researchers’ political formation to the expressions of the strategy of denaturalising the inequalities that affect collectors of recyclable materials.

This co-operation between research subjects provides a ‘co-generative learning’ that is constituted through the “continuous activation of feedback mechanisms between the researcher and the various social actors present in the field” (Navarini 2005, p. 170). Such mechanisms are ways of putting into common the diversity of viewpoints and the partial information that each actor has, aiming to build a joint analysis. This type of study can be characterised as a relation of exchange, within which the researcher offers “the fruits of the imagination to feed the thinking of others” (Botti 2005, p. 131). The constant discussion with the collectors constituted a legitimating factor of the identity of supporters and scholars within the movement. The sharing of knowledge was a way of strengthening the social processes in which these actors are involved until the present day.

In the joint construction of knowledge, very different forms of interaction are alternated. While it benefited from participation in the daily activities of collectors of recyclable materials (in defense of social valorisation and the formal recognition of the occupation as well as of the organisation of a social movement), on the other hand, it benefited from periods of suspension of engagement, of public debates about the interpretation of empirical data, and of moments of reflexivity between researchers and collectors. Spaces of feedback deserve a special highlight. They consisted of various levels of deliberation, such as executive coordination meetings, state government’s meetings, and all other deliberation and discussion activities in which it was possible to participate. Spaces of feedback were also provided in the moments of semi-structured interviews in which, through the constant questioning to the interviewees, we encouraged the exercise of reflexivity about daily actions concerning their experiences and expectations.

We understand that, for the systematisation of a participant research, it is important to contextualise the participation of the researcher as a subject involved both in the political praxis and in the theoretical production that support and make comprehensible the strategies of the collective subjects, for themselves and for the research itself. Beyond a quality criterion of the research, the explicitness of this participation allows us to see how the researcher goes through processes of political formation and how his/her self-knowledge, his/her place in the world and his/her theoretical perspectives linked to research are transformed. During the research reported here, the participation of each co-author was very specific. Emil A. Sobottka was the academic supervisor for much of the period and, as a social movement researcher, was primarily a participant-interlocutor. Cristiano Benites Oliveira was a collector of recyclable materials, participant of the social movement and researcher at master’s and doctoral levels. Since his personal trajectory formed the backbone of our joint research experience, we have chosen to briefly describe it here.

The researcher and the social movement: intertwined trajectories

The researcher's experiences, built up along personal, political, and professional trajectories, can be taken as part of the elucidation of relationships established during the research between him/her and the social group. Not considering this dimension would be to incur an "absence of objectivity" that prevents social scientists from realising "how much their work is influenced by their experience" (Terragni 2005, p. 147). As far as research relations are concerned, we will evince three different areas of experience in the investigative process that reflect a temporal sequence: personal experience of rapprochement with the collectors, the experience of socio-political engagement, and the experience of academic research.

Approach and personal involvement

To begin this memory exercise that compiles part of my personal experience with the collectors, I recall some images of Vila Pontilhão, in the town of Gravataí, Southern Brazil. This imagining was part of my childhood, when I was vacationing at my grandparents' house, who lived nearby. Soon after my father died, it became my home. As I passed through Vila Pontilhão, I realised that many carters lived there: people collecting various materials in the city, aided by carts pulled by a horse.

The community of Vila Pontilhão since that time is composed of approximately fifty families. Their poor houses are arranged side by side along a small stretch of road in the outskirts. Even though I lived in a near community, I did not know then a single resident from that neighbourhood. I could not imagine that such poor community, at that time devoid of piped water and electric light, would be part of my own trajectory, or that in the future it would become an important base of the recyclable materials collectors' national movement.

After ups and downs in the life of my family, I entered the university and began to participate in the student movement and in discussions of a group that identified itself as anarchist. We sought non-traditional ways of action, not mediated by political parties. Four principles gave meaning to the action of this collective: direct democracy, self-management, solidarity, and class independence. There was also an Ecology Nucleus, which discussed the reality of recyclable material collectors and of carters. The members of this group started a socio-environmental work at Vila Pontilhão, which consisted of joint efforts to collect the garbage thrown into community vegetation and the construction of a communal shed in the neighborhood.

At a group meeting I reunited with Geraldo, whom I knew from my adolescence. Geraldo was 35 years old, he was a material collector and his base was Santa Tecla I, a large waste yard in the metropolitan area. He was also the national coordinator of the newly-created National Movement of Recyclable Materials Collectors (MNCR).² After being

2 Traditionally, the municipalities of the region collected 'garbage' practically without any form of separation or classification and deposited it in a large, open-air landfill, popularly known as dump ("lixão"). Poor people looked for various types of materials to be reused: food, household utensils, and materials for resale, with which they obtained their income. From the 1990s, gradually, forms of domestic waste separation were introduced, and dumps were being closed. A 2010 legislation banned this form of disposal at national level. In Gravataí, the regional dump was closed and covered with dirt, and next to it they built a shed for garbage recycling.

dismissed from the metallurgical industry in which he worked, Geraldo became a collector and was part of the Ecology Nucleus. From the narrowing of the ties between it and the residents of Vila Pontilhão, the Nucleus began a struggle for social demands: from obtaining a basic urban infrastructure, such as piped water and electric light, to the betterment of conditions of housing and labor in the community.

Faced with the social problems of Vila Pontilhão, I became increasingly interested, supporting the struggle of this community, committed to transforming their precarious condition of life. Our group congregated students from various areas such as the Social Sciences, Literature, Chemistry, Geography, Medicine, among other courses, and developed cultural and social actions such as popular high school equivalency program (“Supletivo”), community garden, health voluntary labor, etc. Progressively, our relationship began to include parties, birthdays, communitarian food, listening and telling stories, and the search for community organisation to get a voice in society.

The struggle for electric power and water was fought through peaceful demonstrations and actions of occupation of the city hall and the headquarters of the electric power company. Further communities, trade unions, and social movements expressed their solidarity with our struggle. The idea of using part of the community shed for recycling work came into light, since it was the basis of the professional occupation and of income composition of many of the local families. The shed was transformed gradually into a popular space for recycling, where street collectors could triage and classify their material, have better control over the volume of their production, and receive a better income in comparison to the income obtained with scrap dealers (commercial intermediaries, owners of deposits of recyclable materials, commonly called ‘middlemen’). In short, this space became the place where “the first discussions could be established through shared word and through the real proposals of action in the productive field” (Fischer 1989, p. 54). However, the operation of this ‘recycling shed’ was shortened in June 2000 by a fire. This event made me very sad, because we had dedicated a lot to make the shed come to life.

After the conquest of tap water and power supply, residents began to pressure the public power to obtain another structure. This mobilisation coincided with the moment of implementation of a municipal solid waste management programme. Within this programme, the political agenda prioritised the selective garbage collection. Thus, from many discussions and participation in meetings of municipal councils and in the Participative Budget, the collectors of Vila Pontilhão agreed to establish themselves in the district of Santa Tecla, some 15 kilometers away from their community. In Santa Tecla there was already a shed for the collectors who used to live on the landfill. A second shed was then built for the collectors of Vila Pontilhão. About twenty people are currently earning their income from working in this shed.

In Vila Pontilhão, shortly after the fire, residents themselves rebuilt the shed, which today is a space for various social activities in the community. There, the MNCR develops education projects with collectors’ children. I remember the many birthdays and end-of-year balls that we celebrated in the shed. During my experience with the collectors, I obtained the necessary guidelines to develop an experience of engagement as well as a political and social reflection.

Sociopolitical engagement and the organization of collectors

A little before the fire of the Pontilhão Village shed, the Association of Carters and Collectors of Gravataí had been set up at the local level, and at a regional level, the Federation of Recycler Associations of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, in an attempt to gather all state recycling associations. My relationship of active solidarity with the collectors would enter another stage when Geraldo, then secretary of the Federation of Associations, invited me to be an educator in the training of collectors, offering courses in agreement with the state government. I was able, through this work, to act in activities of formative nature aimed at the qualification of the collectors in self-management processes.

In the same year of 2001, during a congress in Brasília, the MNCR was founded. As part of the construction of the movement in our state, we made a public demonstration in December 2001 with explicit reference to the 53 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Through this vigil I was able to better understand the possibilities of mobilising and strengthening the identity of this category of workers.

Considering the possibilities of engagement, I began to question my own condition as an 'educator' of the recycling workers. How to plan training moments for these subjects without knowing for sure what it would be like to work and live under the same conditions as the collectors? I began then to consider the option of joining a group of collectors, to work and live as one of them. After completing my degree in Social Sciences, in 2002, I decided to learn from my own experience how everyday life functioned in a collectors' organisation. I lived in a community called Restinga, in the city of Porto Alegre, and ended up becoming a collector in the recycling shed of that locality.

I could see hence better what made me different from the collectors. Each day these differences became sharper. It costed me a lot to learn how to work with the weight of recyclable materials, both in the handling of cylinders filled with material already classified by the women at the sorting tables, and in the baling and displacement of those large bales. The worst burdens were those of white paper chips, which were very heavy and easily crumbled. But the most difficult thing was the almost daily strangeness of the collectors with regard to that person 'without callus', who uttered complicated words difficult to understand in the midst of that hard, repetitive work.

It was a difficult experience. I was able to taste what it was like to be a collector, how it was living with approximately BRL 250,00 (roughly USD 65.00) a month. I was also deeply annoyed when people felt sorry for my condition, or when they ironically dealt with the fact that I was working on recycling 'junk'. I also knew the authoritarian profile of people who occupied positions in the direction of the association and sought to favour one faction over the other within the shed.

Establishing a dialogue between the rival factions was a very difficult task, since great care had to be taken not to break with both rival groups in order to maintain a level of internal political stability, as a way of building the MNCR in that association. Today, I am convinced that the strategy of action I adopted, of trying to be neutral in relation to the conflicts, proved to be mistaken. The two factions within the association sought to bargain their adherence to the MNCR in exchange for maintaining access to the welfare benefits of the Work Emergency Fronts Programme, which guaranteed the distribution of basic food baskets and a supplemental income of approximately BRL 200,00 (USD 50.00) monthly

per member. The conflict was not overcome and the Restinga association did not formally join the MNCR.

The construction of a nursery for collectors' children was another claim of the workers. At a general assembly I was chosen to be provisionally its pedagogical co-ordinator. I believe that what weighed in this decision was my inadequacy to work with the presses and cylinders. After a transition, the kindergarten teacher took over the day-care co-ordination. This freed me to attend a call for the Movement for training activities in the three Southern states. I worked on several training projects until my entry into the master's programme in 2008.

The revitalisation of the academic experience

In the above actions, the defence and promotion of the subjects gave me sense of engagement, subjects whose valorisation would be the element capable of transforming their living conditions. However, the libertarian impulse coming from student times contrasted with governmental programmes that stimulated welfare, such as the Work Emergency Fronts Programme Assistance. Programs in Brazil are not managed professionally as a public policy, but symbolically appropriated and presented as a generosity of the governing political party in exchange for which the beneficiaries would have to owe their loyalty (Sobottka 2006). The Work Emergency Fronts Programme effectively served to distribute basic food baskets and emergency income to the collectors, but because of its insufficiency and symbolic appropriation by a political party, it led the distributive conflict into the interior of the association by dividing it. It was also necessary to deal with the projects that aimed to insert collectors into the market as part of the recycling chain. With the objective of establishing a central commercialisation of recyclable materials with a business and market orientation, the productive chain torpedoed the political channeling of the social question of the population that survives from the recycling of materials in the periphery of the big cities.³

These findings could only be formulated a posteriori through the study of the senses built among the activities of the collectors as societal actors. Since I was deeply connected to these actions, it was not possible for me to understand more accurately the processes within which the MNCR was introduced. I came to think of specialising in Pedagogy, because I was impressed with the training activities of the collectors during this period. However, the movement grew, and with it grew its challenges and problems. Only action by action, or training by training, would not bring the answers necessary for the collectors to face their social, political, and economic problems. These experiences of sociopolitical engagement were the fundamental factors that led me to the resumption of my academic career and of my commitment to study, and to sociological research on the collective paths that were embodied in the actions of this movement. From then on, another part of this trajectory was inaugurated.

To delineate the specific scope of research experience, it is important to note that personal experiences, experiences of engagement, and academic experiences differ from

3 By stimulating the dependent insertion of collectors in the recyclable materials circuit, the 2010 national solid waste policy represented a victory for local public managers and companies linked to it in terms of *business* (Demajorovic 2014; Lima 2018).

each other. The differentiation between these three types of experience lies in the methodo-methodological conditions of knowledge production, whose emergence comes from social processes and relationships within which a series of interactions with the collectors are developed. The first two spheres can be characterised by the empirical dimension of social action in its most basic form. On the other hand, the practice of research, as another field of experience, allows the researcher to perform a second-order interpretation (Melucci 2005, p. 33) capable of amplifying the production of sets of meanings and the consequent deepening of the meanings attributed to social and collective actions in the relationships within the movement. Such a second-order interpretation concerns the enhancement of both the researcher's capacity and the social actor's ability to observe the way one observes and how one interprets the relationships in which both are embedded (Ranci 2005, p. 66).

In this sense, the relations established both in the condition of actor (sociopolitical engagement) and in the condition of researcher (second-order interpretation) become significant 'inputs' directed to the practices of both one and the other. This is due to the fact that the relations established in the scope of the practices with the actors constitute the 'raw material' necessary for the construction of the objects of interpretation of the research. On the other hand, the senses of research produced from reflective interpretations within the scope of investigative practice can contribute significantly to the political maturation of the actions of the movement, by begetting reflective practice on social relations, and on the directions taken by these actors in their daily political, economic, and social disputes.

Denaturalisation of political, economic, and social inequalities

During the elaboration of the two cited academic studies (Oliveira, 2010, 2016) it was possible to systematise perceptions and intuitions that were already delineated during the period of direct engagement. Three types of inequalities directly affected collectors: political, social, and economic inequalities. Each inequality is experienced and perceived in the daily life of the social group, even if not completely conscious. Within the movement, the gradual perception followed the conviction that these are not inequalities that are naturally given, but socially constructed. Such raising awareness can be identified especially in documents of the MNCR, in interviews with leaders, and in memories from feedback spaces.

In search of political, economic, and social autonomy

Describing the beginning of the process of organisation of collectors, Michelotti (2006) identifies three distinct chronological phases. First, the participation of the collectors as mere spectators; second, their becoming into supporting actors of the process; third, their performance as protagonists of their organisation.

A social issue was present in the start: people living in garbage areas in search of something reusable, whether to eat, to use or to resell. Ministry agents from grassroots communities as well as socially engaged people and even intermediate traders (middlemen) began, in mid-1980s, to become involved and to induce a process of organisation *in favour* of these people living in poverty, not rarely taking direction roles in the emerging entities.

From the 1990s, waste collection under the responsibility of the municipalities took place, which often stimulated the creation of associations of recyclers in sheds. The rate of recycled materials grew, and a more stable market for collectors was created. However, it also increased tension between recyclers from sheds, who received the material from municipalities, and collectors who gathered materials on the street and selected it for sale. There was a proliferation of forums, committees, associations, and other forms of grouping agents involved with urban waste, such as local governments, recycling companies, purchasers of materials, and many other sorts of waste recyclers. They sought, on the one hand, to solve the problem of urban waste and, on the other hand, to participate in the emerging market. Public resources from cleaning taxes, and recyclable materials were in dispute. The initiatives were however still very local, with little articulation among themselves.

In the second phase described by Michelotti (2006), from 1995 to 2000 approximately, collectors began to become involved in the management of forums, associations, and other entities. The regional articulations of the collectors were strengthened, as was the interest of external agents (NGOs, government, companies) in the cycle of reuse of waste. There is a strong tendency among public agents in placing recyclers and collectors in a dependent position in the commercial reuse of waste, albeit collectors are more aware of the need for greater economic and political autonomy. Some of these organizations acted authoritatively (Maciel & Braga 2018) and others even fraudulently (Sterchile & Batista 2011). In Rio Grande do Sul, for example, the Federation of Associations (mentioned above) was created with the aim of gathering forces and resources. Not only did collectors participate, but also recyclers connected to sheds, small material merchants, and members of the government. The conflict of interests between the participants prevented the Federation from prospering. The Federation was one of the main promoters of a congress of collectors of recyclable materials at the national level, from which the momentum for the formation of the National Movement of Recyclable Materials Collectors (MNCR) was born, in 2001, under the organisation of the collectors themselves.⁴

The creation of a social movement organisation, and not a classic non-governmental organization, with a declaration of principles and objectives, marked the objective of keeping the prominence in the hands of the collectors and, with this, pointed straight ahead to the questioning of the political inequality that had been experienced in previous initiatives. The way in which the movement itself perceived the transition from collectors-spectators to leading-roles can be seen in the minutes of one of the organisation's bodies:

During the discussion, we started by considering that, in the beginning, the MNCR was conceived by external agents of the third sector who wanted a national entity based on several [federated] states to be able to represent the collectors in front of numerous organizations of fundraising, for their projects and for the conservation of their bureaucratic positions. At that time, NGOs, companies, and governments were articulated around the Garbage and Citizenship forums. They discussed the future of privatization policies for basic sanitation but attempted to fit in waste collectors to such policies. In the evaluation of Cristina Bové, a technician linked to the Catholic Church of Minas Gerais, if the MNCR had not been created at that 1st Congress of Collectors and Street Population in July 2001 in Brasília, these entities would have found in any

4 On the formation of MNCR, see not only Michelotti (2006), but also Pereira and Goes (2016), Fergutz et al. (2011), and Pereira and Teixeira (2011).

case a national entity to carry out their plans, the fact that it was originated from a Social Movement was a great advance (MNCR, 2007).

This passage shows an initial process of denaturalisation of political inequality when collectors question the external influence in their organisation and look for a body that does not substitute its prominence. In an interview, in 2016, a MNCR co-ordinator from the state of Minas Gerais illustrates this:

Our movement has an advantage, man. I do not know if in other movements it is like this. But we have an advantage that is: we are a collector's movement, managed and organised by collectors, so there is no leader of this movement that never pulled a cart and had never been to a dump. Unlike many movements, in which the guy sometimes never [sic] used a hoe but is the leader of the movement. [...] They are middle class people who want to help, who have good intentions, have good hearts, but who never lived under a marquee, and who never paid a rent with seven children to raise. [...] But they are leaders, they do not stop being ... But the differential of the MNCR is that everybody that is in the committees, that is in articulation, that is running errands, that is so-called 'leadership' [...] these guys and these women who are making it work, the origin of everyone is the dump and the street. There is none that is not. I do not know of. Only if there are some that I do not know of, but no, everyone comes from that.

This Movement leader brings, in his interview, elements of a conception of self-management and direct democracy, as the values established in the MNCR's declaration of principles.⁵ Such principles contribute to the denaturalisation of political inequality and need to be constantly reaffirmed. The feedback moment below highlights how this reassurance can happen.

At an executive co-ordination meeting of the MNCR in February 2010, Geraldo said we could not help but remember who we were, and where we came from. He went on to say that those present at the meeting were part of the group of actors who knew how to take advantage of a historic organisational moment, and succeeded in putting into agenda a strategy and a militant code of conduct. They would have influenced many organisations of collectors at the national level. At the end of the talk, he was asked whether the strategic objectives and principles of militant conduct would be clear to the majority of collectors at the national level, and whether it did not seem to him that sometimes not even the executive co-ordination group itself had clarity about such assumptions. In this sense, Alberto (also state co-ordinator of the MNCR) complemented the questioning by saying that the group had to 'translate' several times its struggles for itself. He also said that this group needed to work in a spirit of mobilisation and discipline to keep other collectors engaged in more than time-bound or temporary projects. He referred to a permanent process of denaturalisation of political inequality from the engaged discipline that has as guideline of conduct the organisational principles of the MNCR.

The principle of self-management also assists in the denaturalisation of economic inequality, and is very dear to the Movement (Bortoli 2009; Millar 2008). Historically, the concept of self-management has its elaboration associated with the theoretical and militant anarchist Pierre Joseph Proudhon. In short, self-management is for him the radical fusion between intellectual, theoretical, and the practical-productive making, between the political sphere of decisions and the economic instance of the production of wealth. Under self-

5 The MNCR works for the self-management of the collectors [...], with a criterion of direct democracy in which all have voice and vote in decisions [...] (MNCR, 2010, p.18).

management, and through the end of the alienation provided by it, society could consolidate a regime of direct democracy and equal distribution of economic resources (Gallo 1995; Vieta 2014).

The reference to self-management helps to have a vision of the economic process capable of denaturalising the concentration of wealth in recycling. This concentration of political power and wealth has always been one of the main sources of conflict between collectors and businesses. This reveals the following assessment of Fabiano, at the time co-ordinator of the MNCR in Rio Grande do Sul: “Because they dominate, they exploit, they have a monopoly, they are responsible for the fact that we are having this life today, a life of difficulties, of having to kill one lion a day.”

The economic conflict is also perceived by the lack of infrastructure in associations and co-operatives of collectors. This was once again evident in an episode in March 2010. Together with Beto (MNCR member) we went to an association of collectors in a municipality near Gravataí, to summon them to a training course of the Movement. On the way we passed a large glass factory. Beto said that the associations of collectors could not sell the glass they collected directly to the factory because of the lack of containers. Those who have this device could sell glass for BRL 0,11 (USD 0.04) per kilogram directly to the factory. Middlemen pay collectors only three or four cents (USD 0.01) per kilogram. In the recycling groups, the glass is crushed with improvised pylons and an iron bar. The heaviest activity is to load the bottles filled with crushed glass onto a truck, with the aid of only wooden planks. A minimum working structure is lacking both to crush the glass and to transport it.

Regarding the questioning of social inequality faced by the collectors, an example that shows the denaturalisation of this type of inequality occurred in Uruguaiana, a city on the border of Brazil and Argentina. In conversation with Tarsila, co-ordinator of the regional committee of the western border of the MNCR, after a day accompanying her in negotiation processes with the city for the transfer of the collectors from the municipal dump to another structure of work. To the question ‘why she had become a collector’, Tarsila said she became a collector because she could no longer work as a maid. She had to take her kids along to work, because there was no one to leave them with at home. So she was often insulted by her bosses. Until one day she decided to pick up materials, because in this activity she could establish her own schedule. She could leave early while her children slept, and return from work when they had awakened. Or take them with her so that she and her husband could take care of them while they worked. Tarsila’s account exemplifies some of the many motivations that lead collectors to begin their work with discarded materials. Many of these collectors are led by many other factors to remain in the recycling activity, even if precariously.⁶ To many people, a key factor to endure the

6 Several studies show that the entry into the materials collection activity is often done from a condition of homelessness, when imprisoned finish serving their sentence, and due to long-term unemployment (Magni & Günther 2014; Burgos 2013; J. Santos et al. 2013).

difficulties and risks of the activity⁷ is the income obtained from the amount of material collected and pre-classified.⁸

On the work of collecting and pre-classifying, Tarsila says that when she started her work on the dump she was impressed with her income, in the first months, of BRL 600,00 (USD 150.00) a week. Obtaining this income occurred because it is much easier and quicker to work in a dump than to work on the street. In a dump, the material is ready at the collectors' immediate disposal. On the street the collector needs to look for the material. In addition, in the dump classification can happen at the time of collection. Tarsila, however, acknowledged the existence of innumerable difficulties related to day-to-day work on the dump. For example, work done at night when there is no electric light. To get to work in the dark, some collectors burned materials like plastic or rubber. Many collectors know that making a fire with materials can be very risky because of the toxic fumes from the combustion, and methane gas expelled by the garbage, with the danger of explosion. The difficulties of working in these conditions mean that only the most experienced collectors can work at night, thanks to their touch and hearing abilities, which become more accurate over time, and which enable the identification of recyclable materials even in the dark.

Tarsila reports that, at the beginning, working at night was not easy. Nowadays she prefers the nightwork, because there are not so many people working. However, considering health issues, she thinks she has contracted an ulcer because of unhealthy work amid the 'junk bugs.' She also reports that everything gets worse on rainy days because the material gets even dirtier. Some materials such as paper are impossible to collect. Another factor that worsens working conditions is the dispute between the pickers of the dump for the so-called 'special loads', such as the 'bati' trucks.⁹ Tarsila says she eases the dispute by repeatedly reaffirming to those collectors that there is enough food for all.

This leader of the MNCR shares the sense of identity and professional appreciation that is sought by the collectors from the moment they come to understand themselves as workers whose professional activity must be recognised by society. In the daily life of these workers, shame and humiliation stem from discrimination and prejudice (Miura & Sawaia 2013), but the joy of income and affirmation of self come with the possibility of recovering their dignity as honest workers (Mayer 2009). In this sense, it was of fundamental

7 Pickers are very exposed to the elements as well as to other risks such as accidents and various illnesses (Hoefel et al. 2013; Ferraz et al. 2012; Gutberlet et al. 2013), hunger and malnutrition (L. Santos et al 2013). For a review of the literature on the subject, see Binion and Gutberlet (2012) and Coelho et al. (2018).

8 Regarding the classification of materials, collectors who are submitted to scrap dealers (small and medium commercial intermediaries) usually perform a pre-classification, because this is characterised by being too basic and much less diversified than the classification operated by the larger intermediaries. This pre-classification consists of separating plastics into four categories (PET, mixed, white mixed, soft plastic), paper into three sets (cardboard, white paper, and mixed paper) and metals in three other types (aluminum, ferrous scrap, and copper). In some cases, collectors do not even collect many other recyclable materials because the market price does not compensate for this effort. This is the case of Styrofoam, which has a lot of volume and light weight, as well as the very heavy and low value glass, which collectors seldom pick. However, a more thorough classification is made by the many types of intermediaries, or by a few associations of collectors (Lima 2017). The closer one is to the recycling industry, the more classification knowledge one holds.

9 'Bati' is the name given by the collectors to the trucks coming from large supermarkets in the city, which come loaded with fruits, vegetables, meat, yogurt, among others with expired dates (*batidos*).

importance to receive the official recognition of ‘collector of recyclable materials’ within the framework of general solid waste policy in 2010 (De Lorena et al. 2014; Maiello et al. 2018).

This form of understanding provides the denaturalisation of social inequality at the moment they claim their valorisation as professionals. This other meaning is verified by Daniel (collector from Porto Alegre and participant of the MNCR):

At this moment the collector is not recognized by society. ‘Oh! He’s a junkman, not a collector’... That’s an offense to the collector... because he’s not a junkman. This profession of collector should be recognized as a [true] profession, not as simple... I don’t know, casual work or something. Because collector is a profession, only it is not recognised now.

The expectations for the achievement of rights related to professional recognition are shaped by a shared interest among collectors. This is evident when Daniel states that there needs to be “unity, training, instruction for them [the collectors], to become aware of their rights.” He also said that “the movement is aimed at the collectors’ rights. It wants to value this work, and that’s why we fight, that’s why today I speak... because I’m also fighting for it.”

The collectors express the awareness of the historically constructed character of this social inequality through their organisation in the Movement and the claim of rights and appreciation of their activity. But social inequality persists, either because of the relatively low income, of the low recognition of their activity as well as of the difficulties faced by the collectors in the lack of access to public policies. They lack a considerable increase in social support related to the process of subjectivation that causes individuals to become subjects of their own social relations.

Concluding remarks

The questioning of the political, economic, and social inequalities to which recyclable materials collectors are exposed in Brazil occurred gradually and in parallel with the growth of their own organisation, exemplified here in the National Movement of Recyclable Materials Collectors (MNCR). In methodological terms, it was sought, in this text, to evince the construction of this consciousness as a process of research and participation together with actors of the social group. In this long journey, we experienced direct participation in the daily routine of collectors, solidarity accompaniment in the organisation and in the resistance to the hetero-determination of the local associations and groups, as well as partaking in group reflections, and some time off in such involvement for description and interpretation of data. Feedback spaces served to constitute interpretations shared between the actors, whose knowledge comes from empirical experience, and the researcher, whose knowledge comes from observation disciplined through theoretical and methodological study. This latter type of knowledge is produced in the academic field and contributes to the ‘world of research’, being different from the ‘world of life’, since qualitative research reconstructs the world of life by mediation of its presuppositions and its interpretative categories. Taking these differences into account, it becomes possible to elaborate successive questions, which stimulate and deepen the reflexivity to be consolidated from the research feedbacks.

The collector is the point of departure and point of arrival, in studies based on the achievement of a reflexive exercise involved in a hermeneutical circle of recognition, built around social and historical relations between different actors. With the focus on the modes of interpretation of the collectors, the notion of reflectivity of the actors allows the obtaining of a 'second-order observation'. Such a form of observation is made possible by the relations of exchange between the social actor and the researcher. The exercise of mutual questioning between the researcher and the actors becomes possible because of the trust established during the common journey. This is what guarantees the opening of spaces for the gathering and interpretation of empirical data. The reciprocal questions asked in the feedback moments help in the application of a method based on co-operation and reflexivity within the framework of this research.

The study, reflection, and debate based on the knowledge of the actors of the MNCR, and the knowledge provided by the human sciences lead us, the researchers, to deepen interpretative concepts and categories that help understand the Movement and the inequalities faced by the collectors. The visualisation of hegemonic processes and relations that characterise the context of the collectors' action, and the search for new processes and social relations to be generated and matured, through hermeneutic and reflexive models, can lead to a theoretical and political collaboration among sensible social actors, critics and committed to the struggles of those who seek to overcome social inequalities and injustices through their own historical effort.

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Action Research and Teacher Education: the use of research in a classroom for the transformation of reality

Nilda Stecanela, Alessandra Chaves Zen, and Fabiana Pauletti

Abstract

This text aims to provide reflections on an education-investigation experience within a continuing education course for teachers of public schools in a municipality located in the region of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil. The object of this course involved the use of classroom research as a pedagogical tool, which was developed in an action research perspective. The participants of the course were challenged to develop investigative skills on daily school life, based on the construction and development of a research project focused on the concerns related to their contemporary teaching practices. The analysis of the modes of reception and appropriation of those involved in the research, and expressed in the materials produced, suggests how difficult it is to exercise the passage from naive to epistemological consciousness through criticality. This element reinforces the importance of the process of reflection-action-reflection in the teacher's education and his/her performance.

Keywords: teacher education, action research, research in the classroom, reception and appropriation.

Investigación-Acción y formación docente: el uso de la investigación en un aula para la transformación de la realidad

Resumen

Este texto tiene como objetivo proporcionar reflexiones sobre una experiencia de investigación educativa dentro de un curso de educación continua para maestros de escuelas públicas en un municipio ubicado en la región del estado de Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil. El objetivo de este curso involucró el uso de la investigación en el aula como herramienta pedagógica, que se desarrolló en una perspectiva de investigación- acción. Los participantes del curso fueron desafiados a desarrollar habilidades investigativas sobre el cotidiano escolar a partir de la construcción y el desarrollo de un proyecto de investigación centrado en las inquietudes relacionadas con sus prácticas docentes contemporáneas. El análisis de los modos de recepción y apropiación de los involucrados en la investigación y expresados en los materiales producidos sugiere lo difícil que es el ejercicio del paso de la conciencia ingenua a la conciencia epistemológica a través de la criticidad. Este elemento refuerza la importancia del proceso de reflexión-acción-reflexión en la formación y en la actuación docente.

Palabras clave: formación docente, investigación-acción, investigación en el aula, recepción y apropiación.

Introduction

The use of research in teacher education has the potential to promote the transformation of reality as it challenges us to *think right*, an attitude that Paulo Freire (2014) associates with *thinking about*, in other words, the process of reflection on the practice from the gradual overcoming of naive consciousness, towards the critical and epistemological consciousness.

The formative process triggered by the adoption of research in the classroom as teaching methodology moves the teaching trajectory and the school experience with possibilities to develop, respectively, *research on the teacher* and *research on the student*, precepts defended by Pedro Demo.

By means of the investigative skills offered by the presence of *research as an educational principle* in the school, both teachers and students are involved in a posture of openness to the construction of knowledge and the constitution of knowledge, based on the analysed realities, whether they are those that refer to the phenomena of daily life, or those related to the cultural and scientific legacy historically built by humanity. In addition, the problematic and unhappy posture in relation to victimising, blaming and immobilising images covered in *cultures of complaint* (Stecanela 2018), which commonly cross-link the pedagogical relationship, can give other contours to contemporary teaching practices and experiences.

The use of research in the classroom as a pedagogical tool can awaken students' interests in investigating problems of the context in which they are inserted, leading to a polarised education with social demands (Deboer 2006; Alake-Tuenter et al., 2012). The cultivation of students' concerns signals an educational process in which the knowledge base already built acts as an input to problematise the investigation context, formulate problems and research hypotheses towards the construction of new knowledge. And action research is imperative in this formative process, because it allows teachers in training, as well as teacher educators, the constant and systematic opportunity to reflect, implement and improve teaching practice in *praxis* (Tripp 2005).

Faced with this threshold, some questions emerge: To what extent do the teachers' conceptions of the challenges that accompany the contemporary school influence their ways of perceiving and intervening in the daily practice of teaching? How can we give visibility to the affirmative practices carried out inside the school and, often, silenced by the fanfare of the discourses of reproduction of the moaning that paralyses the possibilities of the transformation of reality? How can we involve the group of teachers of the school in the reflection on the practice itself, in order to contemplate the advances and to overcome the evidenced needs? Drawing from these questions and a set of other questions that were part of the process that triggered the education and the investigation, this text seeks to systematise some results.

The research described here is the result of a partnership between the University of Caxias do Sul (UCS) and the Education Department of a municipality in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, for an extension course for teachers of Basic Education, lasting 40 hours. The object of the course involved the use of research in the classroom as a pedagogical tool, which was developed in an action research perspective, aiming at the

development of investigative skills on everyday life, where the initial focus was the re-research on the teacher in order to, in a second phase¹, involve the research on the student.

The theoretical interlocution is established with the concepts of research as an educational principle, action research in the education of teachers, as well as the concepts of *reception* and *appropriation* developed by Roger Chartier to understand how teachers use the content of education in their teaching practices, and to what extent the movement of research routes contributes to overcoming what they consider to be the school's greatest challenges. The empirical material involves narratives of more than a hundred teachers in the training stage, both face to face and online, as well as the texts of the research projects that they developed, systematised and presented the results.

More than a hundred Elementary school teachers from five public schools of the municipality participated in the face-to-face and online meetings through a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) in the Moodle Platform. The stages that contemplate the planning and execution of a research project guided teacher training, at collective moments with the whole municipal network, and also in research groups formed within each school.

Along with this initial contextualisation, we present the structure of this text, organised in four sessions. The first one refers to the theoretical reference on research in the classroom and action research from a critical approach. The second describes the education-investigation process sheltered in the extension course, the context and the subjects of the investigation, the empirical collection with the resulting collective outputs. The third session highlights the categories of analysis that emerged from the data constructed by the course participants. Finally, the reflections regarding the potentialities and limits associated with the use of research in the classroom in teacher education, and as a pedagogical tool in an action research perspective, with a view to the transformation of reality.

Research in the classroom and action research in teacher education and performance

The use of research in the classroom and action research in teacher education and performance articulates with a broader conception, research in school as an educational principle. By adopting this premise, we operated from a critical approach and established a theoretical dialogue with authors affiliated to several areas in interface with education, with which we will have dialogue in the following sections: Dewey 1933; Wells 2001; Deboer 2006; Moraes 2007; Marques 2008; Alake-Tuenter et al. 2012; Galiazzi 2012; Moraes, Galiazzi, & Ramos 2012; Stecanela 2013; Stecanela & Williamson 2013; Demo 2015; Chartier 1990, 2009; Tripp 2005; Franco 2014, among others.

The principles of research in the classroom

Research in the classroom represents a current mode of education in which it conceives the student as the subject of learning, that constructs and reconstructs knowledge in relation to his/her social interactions. The subject of learning knows how to question, elaborate and test

1 We should point out that this text was constructed from the analysis of the first phase of this course.

hypotheses, construct arguments and communicate results (Moraes et al. 2012). In order to do that, making the research the educational principle (*Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais Gerais para a Educação Básica*² 2013) can be a means of coping with the challenges that pervade the daily life of Basic Education. According to Moraes (2007, p. 1), research is analogous to participating in a learning game, since questions are elaborated and answers are constructed and disseminated. “Having the knowledge already built up by the participants always as a starting point, there is a reconstructive game, a gradual elaboration of more solid and grounded, more abstract and scientific knowledge”. It is in this bias of exchanges between participants in the schooling process that questions and answers are continuously and systematically constructed. In addition, according to Deboer (2006), when we carry out research, we seek to know what we do not know, so when the students’ questions are inputs to the research, these subjects can be motivated and interested in the investigative practice. It also allows the development of citizens, with questioning and inquisitive attitudes towards the problems, given the ability to ask questions and seek answers to these questions, being able to ameliorate resources, people and solve emerging problems (Deboer 2006).

Research in the classroom is made up of three fundamental principles: questioning, argument and communication. The first is the *questioning* that applies to everything; knowledge already built, attitudes, behaviors and values (Moraes et al. 2012). It is the subject of learning that must make this systematic questioning, problematising his/her context and reality. Questioning that comes from the student allows the involvement of this subject in a more spontaneous way, since the curiosities and interests will serve as a matrix for the research to be performed. Moraes et al. (2012, p. 13) affirm that “only then will the questions make sense to him/her, since, necessarily, they will depart from his/her previous knowledge. We are thus able to overcome the exercise of trying to answer questions that students have never made (...)”.

Moraes (2007) guarantees that when the student participates in the formulation of the questions, the problems to be investigated will relate to their cognitive possibilities and this will generate their interest. In addition, it is the role of school education to mobilise students’ fields of experience beyond the school walls in order to transcend their physical and temporal boundaries and research “[...] as a question, inquiry, curiosity and creativity is an excellent instrument that helps to transpose the walls of this institution that responds to the invitation and the yearnings of the actors who enter it every day, with their individual and collective trajectories” (Stecanela 2013, p. 8). Alake-Tuenter et al. (2012) carried out a literature review of the skills developed in the initial grades of Elementary school through research practice. The authors emphasised that students’ participation in the formulation of questions may help them to learn and use the evidence of the context, to arouse their natural curiosity. According to the authors, these opportunities should be systematically explored in the practice of research.

The *construction of arguments* is the second principle of research in the classroom and requires the subject of intense learning participation. The construction of arguments requires the student to be able to elaborate, test and consolidate the hypotheses aiming at the foundation of the arguments for the search for answers to the initial questioning (Moraes et

2 Document published by the Ministry of Education – General National Curricular Guidelines for Basic Education.

al. 2012). It is in this process of reasoning of hypotheses and construction of arguments that the students surpass the speech, because, in dialogue with the other subjects, they are challenged to the writing. Marques (2008, p. 27) provokes thinking about the peculiarities of speech and writing as social processes: “in speech, the word I say or escapes is said. There is no way of avoiding this fact. But in writing I can erase it, delete it or replace it. In the act of writing I feel I own my own text”. Galiazzi (2012, p. 220) also stresses that the classroom should not only become a space for oral speech, since “other cultural resources such as reading and writing need to be developed, which will make the widening of interlocutors in the classroom possible. The ability to read and write results from the use of a set of cultural resources”. It is no longer enough to dialogue and discuss a concept or problem and to solve it. It is necessary to look at other possibilities and to the written record. Wells (2001) considers that writing requires a high level of abstraction of the subject, whereas speech fulfills another function. When students produce material on the undertaken research, in order to empirically and theoretically consolidate the constructed arguments, they reconstruct their knowledge and meanings attributed to social artifacts (Wells 2001).

Communication presents itself as the third principle of research in the classroom. The constructed hypotheses “need to be debated, criticized, in order to become stronger in the arguments that constitute them” (Moraes et al. 2012, p. 17) and, therefore, need to be disseminated and shared. It is the communication that legitimates research as it expresses the understanding reached that initially occurs within the internal group, usually in the place where the research was carried out. It is the student’s responsibility to express clearly, and preferably in writing, the results of the research carried out and to submit critical evaluations for internal and external validation. Alake-Tuenter et al. (2012) emphasise that, when research is used as a pedagogical tool, students are introduced in a practical way into the process of making science as they learn to plan, formulate explanations through proof and evidence, connecting their explanations to the scientific knowledge in order to communicate and justify their explanations.

These three principles that underpin research in the classroom lead to the development of *research as a daily attitude* (Demo 2015). To this author, it is “[...] absolutely fundamental to make research the daily teaching environment, on the teacher and on the student, right away to undo the archaic expectation that research is something special, for special people” (Demo, 2015, p. 14). These principles also encompass Deweyan aspirations that research-based learning starts with defining a problem, formulating hypotheses, to simultaneously conjugate theory and practice as concomitant and complementary stages (Dewey 1933). In other words, it is essential to make the school environment the core of research, of the investigation of problems that emerge from that context, according to the interests of students and teachers. The implementation of day-to-day research in school is an alternative to teaching methodologies merely expository (Stecanela & Williamson 2013) and promotes the institution to become an environment in which learning subjects learn to intervene in reality, raise questions, propose alternatives, hypotheses and concise arguments in order to solve the problem that affects them and the wider social context. Making the research the way to teach possibly will arouse interest in the students with their learning

and motivate them (Deboer 2006; Alake-Tuenter et al. 2012), since the threshold of the re-research starts from doubts, interests and knowledge, often dormant and unidentified.

Action research through a critical approach

Action research is defined by Tripp (2005, p. 443) “[...] as any continued, systematic and empirically grounded attempt to improve practice”. The set of procedures and principles adopted in the education-investigation that this text seeks to describe and reflect is close to the characteristics of action research, of pedagogical nature and linked to a critical approach. In Franco’s words (2014, p. 219), “the critical approach of action research commits both to the production of knowledge about social reality and to its transformation in an emancipatory sense”. In other words, as research “it implies rigorous construction of knowledge”, while as education, “it implies active participation of the subjects of practice” (Franco 2014, p. 218).

The author stresses the need to consider some basic conditions in the dynamics of action research in order to fulfill its formative and investigative role. She lists five categories: contract, participation, change, discourse and action. The *contract* must be open, dialogued, negotiated, in order to overcome the rigidity of research, determinisms of the researcher and subjection of the researched ones. For this reason, “it requires processes of involvement, motivation, learning and discipline”, which “are being built on the teacher and that, certainly, will be re-signified and worked in their daily practice” (Franco 2014, p. 220). Although the category of *participation* is still a practice distanced from the paths of teaching action, it is “fundamental that teachers, in the process of action research, overcome the positions of applicators, reproducers and build knowledge in the direction of negotiation, of valuing one’s own knowledge, of collegiate participation” (Franco 2014, p. 221).

The *change* is another basic category in action research, because “when experiencing changes, the participant subject of an action research begins to feel and to perceive him/herself as protagonist of processes of transformation and self-transformation” (Franco 2014, p. 221). This is a process of construction and deconstruction that confers the character of mutation in educational identities and practices. As a result of this movement, the teacher is given the opportunity to “value and express his/her knowledge of experience and link them to the collective, socialize them, and refer them to new presuppositions of change” (Franco 2014, p. 221).

The *discourse* category is equally challenging, since “we are not normally accustomed to a dialogic and symmetrical relationship in communication”. The indicative of action research “presupposes consensus, sharing, intersubjective communication”. It is through the “construction of objective forms of communication, oral and written”, through the collective writing of the products that communicate the processes, that the possibilities for structuring and socializing the knowledge produced are created (Franco 2014, p. 221).

The point of arrival is *action* itself, the fifth basic category of action research dynamics, associated with a “shared, group, collective, community” nature (Franco 2014, p. 221). To Franco (2014, p. 221), “an action that is reflexive, in the sense that it adapts and becomes flexible with the requisitions of the new that emerges at every moment, is a dialogical action that challenges discourse and induces changes, it is a critical action that looks at

itself and gets reorganized, requiring a spiral of revisions that reorganizes thinking and re-reflection". The author adds that "the exercise of these actions requires and produces knowledge. We are not used to working in groups, let alone collectively". School cultures crystallised in individual teacher work and classroom architecture in the "one after another" model are shaken with this education-investigation format. According to this author, "action research, in order to be effective, needs to reorganise scenarios and mechanisms that build the capacity to work together, the willingness to share with and for the collective. There is no *praxis* without the knowledge of collective coexistence" (Franco 2014, p. 220-221).

Concepts of reception and appropriation: support to observe conceptual evolution

Given the descriptive and reflective richness of the collection under analysis, the task is to *follow the evolution of the teachers' conceptions* of each research group formed by each school, explained in the texts produced collectively and posted in the VLE. The narratives constructed and inscribed in the electronic support with the use of the virtual tools allow to observe the elements that *emerge*, that are *repeated* or that indicate *displacements* in the ways of looking, narrating, analysing and interpreting the daily life observed in each research project constructed. The aim is to look at the discourses, to trace the signs of transformation of reality, having as analytical support the concepts of *reception* and *appropriation* developed by Roger Chartier.

The appropriation, as the author explicitly states, "has as its objective a social history of interpretations, sent to its fundamental determinations (which are social, institutional, cultural) and inscribed in the specific practices that produce them" (Chartier 1990, p. 26). As Chartier (1990) asserts, works do not have a universal, stable meaning; it is in the relation established between the text, the support that gives it visibility and the practice that perceives it that the possibilities of assigning meaning to these cultural objects are appropriated by different publics.

In accordance with Chartier's theories (1990, 2009), we acknowledge that reception is not passive, rather it is itself a form of production. This means that the different publics that reach the works: in this case the teachers in training, carried by different supports, under specific conditions of reception, discover in them, or to them they attribute, varied, plural meanings.

However, it must be considered that if, on the one hand, it is possible to argue that reception is creative and does not yield to the protocols they try to impose, to fix a meaning to what was read, on the other hand, freedom of the reader is not free of restrictions either: "it is surrounded by limitations derived from the capacities, conventions, and habits that characterize, in their differences, reading practices" (Chartier 2009, p. 77).

Education-investigation: action research and research in the classroom in dialogue

In this section, it is necessary to describe the methodological pathways involved in the education-investigation developed in the course, that promoted the dialogue between action research used in teacher education and research in the classroom as a teaching methodology. The education-investigation scenario, the affected subjects, the resulting outputs and the empirical data analysed are detailed.

The contact with the field of education-investigation and the establishment of “contracts”

The education-investigation project dealt with in this text started with the contact of the pedagogical assistance of the Education Department of the municipality investigated, to carry out a project of continuing education with all the teachers of the five schools of the network of education. Among the objectives that led to the search for pedagogical support of the professors-researchers from the University, was the desire to promote an education oriented to the use of active teaching methodologies, in order to provide new practices that motivated and raised the levels of learning of the students.

Considering that we are subjects involved in this training, we agreed on the development of the work based on the research in at least two dimensions: (a) as a pedagogical tool, that is, as teaching methodology; (b) and also as a way of reflecting on the practice. Based on Demo's (2015) guidelines, the proposal involved in the first phase *the research on the teacher* in order to, in a second moment, potentiate *the research on the student*. The project provided for an extended training period of at least one academic year, about ten months, so that the participants of the training could implement the practices acquired during the course, as active members of the whole process and accompanied by a team composed of researchers-educators. This procedure intended the triggering of autonomous practices as the unfolding of the education process.

Thus, the *initial contact* became a *contract* anchored in the Project “School and research: a possible encounter”, which was already part of the catalogue of extension courses offered by the University, but without having involved in its scope research on the process experienced, associating education-investigation, carried out in two phases³.

Phase I: Research on the teacher, was developed in the first half of 2015. During this period, the education-investigation team and 142 Elementary School teachers in training of the public network interacted in face-to-face and online meetings, counting on the support of VLE tools in the Moodle Platform, totaling 40 hours. The participants of this phase were

3 For this paper, we use only the Phase I data of the project as subsidy for analysis. Phase II, considered “research on the student”, was developed through the Project *School and Research: a possible encounter*. This phase involves the construction of interdisciplinary projects with the fourth, fifth and ninth grade of Elementary School, totaling ten projects, 42 participating teachers as mentors-mediators of the projects developed with the students and 202 participant students, between 9 and 17 years old. However, our objective of analysis in this text is Phase I: “research on the teacher”.

distributed in five municipal schools of the mentioned municipality, one of them being characterized as a field school, another as a full-time school and three regular and diurnal Elementary Schools.

The composition of research groups and writing as mediator of interactions

The teachers of the Phase I involved in the education-investigation process were linked to five different schools. Each school composed a research group with its faculty and was challenged to build, develop and systematise a research project on their own daily life. The research project planning stages⁴ included support materials, videos, complementary reading texts, guidelines for all stages of planning, execution and systematisation of the results of the research projects constructed.

We emphasize that collective moments within the entire municipal network and in the group of each school took place throughout the training, involving sociability and fraternisation, videos and lectures and, mainly, discussion and reflection around the theme that each school defined for the research. A teacher educator or a pair of teacher educators followed up on each school and a pair of co-ordinators followed up the training procedure. The reflections unleashed in the face-to-face moments, with the presence of the educators, had continuities in moments of online mediation, through the discussion forums made available in VLE. There was also a link to a Virtual Library, containing texts that nurtured the discussions about the methodology as object of the training, the teaching performance and the contemporary school experience and the themes of each project. Many reflections were carried out in the space of the school, accompanied by the directive and supervision team, whose products were posted in the VLE of the course.

The follow-up of the mediation process provided by the teacher educators, which took place in a link called the “Meeting Room”, was carried out by the course co-ordinators, strengthening and challenging them to problematise the explanatory limits that each school group recorded during their own research project and subsequent stages, in order to advance in the common sense narratives drawing from dialogue with the data that emerged from the field work, and from the suggested readings in the scope of the education process, as well as others sought autonomously by the group.

The texts originated in each research group hosted multiple versions and interactions coming from the diversity of conceptions that made up the research group of the school and also welcomed some provocations made by the teacher educator (or pair of educators) assigned to each educational unit.

Thus, the collection that offers the preliminary analyses that we bring in this text, and that makes up the database of the education-investigation, is composed of the following

4 The research project developed in each school was guided by the following stages: (a) collective construction of the project based on mobilising questions; (b) collective construction of a research instrument; (c) conducting fieldwork and ethnographic records on the process; (d) organisation, description, analysis and interpretation of data constructed in the field of research; (e) systematisation in the form of a paper and presentation of the results of the research project.

materials: research projects; data collection instruments; tabulation of results; slides with presentations of results synthesis; partial and final reflection of each participant and the educators; dialogues established in the forums of discussion and in the boardroom of the educators; scripts of the meetings, didactic materials with the orientations of the stages of the research project; supporting texts and videos; papers with the description of the process and communication of the results.

The research on the teacher: concerns of daily school life reflected in research project

As mentioned previously, each of the five groups, one per school, collectively constructed a research project, whose stages were mobilised to search for answers to the following questions about the challenges of daily school life and contemporary teaching: What do we want to know about the subject of our research? What do we already know about the subject we want to research? What do we want to clarify with the research on this topic? What hypotheses do we have on the subject? What information already exists about what we want to research? What are the different aspects involved in the topic of our research? What do we intend to do with the results of our research and to whom they will be disclosed?

When the questions were answered, with the ideas coming from the school's research group gathered and the different points of view agreed, the constituent elements of a research project took shape. It should be noted that more than the product materialised in the text of the project itself is the importance of the process of discussion, reflection and participation unleashed and explicit in different textual supports and genres: minutes of the school meetings, discussion forum and link of the activities of the course VLE, oral discussions and records made in the face-to-face training meetings, among others.

The research process and results were systematised in a paper and presented at a seminar with the participation of all teachers, teacher educators, project co-ordination team and the education secretariat, as well as guests to discuss the results. The research themes defined in each school were as follows:

- **School A Project:** Right to learning: expectations of students' families.
- **School B Project:** School B Students: diversity in movement.
- **School C Project:** Interpersonal relations of School C: the students' view.
- **School D Project:** Full-time school: influence on students' cognitive and behavioral development.
- **School E Project:** The role of the school community in the face of the (dis)interest of the students throughout the Elementary School.

Many hypotheses were formulated within each subject, and research projects developed by the teachers of the five schools involved in the education-investigation. Part of these hypotheses referred to families and students as scapegoats of learning difficulties evidenced in the school paths of children and adolescents. Another set of hypotheses, however, showed an analytical maturity of the teachers' group regarding the role of the school and teachers in promoting citizenship and transforming reality. Some of these hypotheses were:

- The Pedagogical Master Plan is not in accordance with the reality of the school community.
- Pedagogical practices may be distant from the needs of students and the expectations of family members.
- Students are not concerned about life in the long term, there is a lack of perspective with their own life and education.
- There is a great divergence of conceptions about the importance of learning and school.
- The majority of the students come from rural areas, however they present urban habits and have different experiences out of the classroom.
- It is difficult for students and teachers to live alongside each other due to diversity in school.
- Teachers and students are distant in their languages and interests and, therefore, their patterns of relationship are in conflict and they damage the rapport.
- The family commitment to their children's education is hampered by their parents' overworking and the little time spent in a family environment.
- The school assumed functions that were once taken by the family nucleus.
- Professionals who disbelieve the changes adopt the same attitude of students, family and community.

It is perceived, therefore, that the project titles, the problem and the hypotheses express the teachers' concerns about the daily school life, and turn to an exploration for the causes and challenges faced outside the teaching activity that, according to understandings expressed in the education-investigation, affect it directly or indirectly.

Faced with the descriptive and reflective richness of the previously mentioned research collection, the challenge is to *follow up the evolution of the teachers' conceptions* of each research group formed by the school, explained in the texts produced collectively and posted in the VLE.

The narratives constructed and inscribed in the electronic support with the use of the virtual tools allow us to observe the elements that *emerge*, that are *repeated* or that indicate *displacements* in the ways of looking, narrating, analysing and interpreting the daily life observed in each research project constructed. The aim is to look at the discourses, to trace the signs of transformation of reality, having as analytical support the concepts of *reception* and *appropriation* developed by Roger Chartier.

In the wake of conceptions, the signs of transformation: echoing the results

In this section, we focus on the analysis of the texts that communicated the process and the results of the research conducted in each school. We observe the reliefs and absences as indicative of the meanings attributed to different moments of the process. We seek indications of a possible reflexive movement, provided by immersion in the field of

investigation. For this task, we consider each of the texts produced by the school separately.⁵

Analytical categories: the emergence in each school

Our analyzes are anchored, as already mentioned, in Franco's (2014) theories in observance of the same categories of action research that became, under our gaze, on the occasion of this study, analytical categories. It is from these that we sought, above all, to discover indications of a movement of reflection and possible transformation of teaching practices in the school context and we looked at the implications of the practice of research in the classroom. Thus, the first category deals with the anticipations, findings and surprises with the research in School A. The second category highlights the doubts, conflicts and reflections about the pedagogical praxis in School B. The third category characterises the praise to the objective of the investigation approached by the School C. The fourth category addresses the investigative path imbued by the reflection of the subjects of School D. The last category reflects on the identity of the space investigated under reflection of the participants of the School E.

School A: anticipations, findings and surprises with the research

Teachers who participated in the research experience appear to be, considering the text of the paper, enthusiastic and even surprised by the results achieved: *According to the results found in the research, there is a valorisation and involvement of families with the school and learning, but that is different from the expectations that teachers and the school had regarding families.* Practicing the research allowed them to *think about the school in the collective; involving teachers, managers and families, was a formidable experience that generated necessary and urgent discussions,* the teachers wrote in their final paper.

In the first lines of the text *Right to Learning: Family Expectations of School A Students*, teachers announced that the extension course "School and Research: a possible encounter" brought an innovative proposal that allowed a reflection and investigation of our reality, and this idea is reiterated in several parts of the text. What drives the study of teachers-researchers is the desire to know how families perceive the role of the school. These teachers, until the time prior to the research, clearly point out that the students' lack of interest in school education was linked to the expectations and perceptions that the family nucleus, to which these students belong, have of the school. Once the research had been carried out and the empirical material analysed, this hypothesis was not confirmed, and it is with some surprise that the teacher-researchers concluded that *the students' lack of motivation regarding their learning is not related to the parents' devaluation of the school, a hypothesis previously raised by the group.* However, the idea of student disinterest is maintained and generates a new questioning: *If the source of this disinterest is not fed by the family, who is feeding that feeling?*

5 In the text that follows, we will use highlights in italics for the transcriptions of the writings of the teachers participating in the training course.

Once one of the main investigative hypotheses was overturned, the group needed to reflect on the practice itself and, as it seems, to put itself in question: *It is time to look inside the classroom for our methodologies and perhaps find possible answers or new ways.*

As for the legacy of the course, in the records of the participants of this school, a mention of the strengthening of the community as a result of the journey is made: *We may not find all the answers to our school problems, but we have reached a good result as a school group (...). We began to listen to each other; "Collective thinking" for me was one of the great achievements of our school.* However, the sharing of tasks does not reach the whole group, *since it is very difficult to gather all teachers and to affect all to participate in the activities*, one participant evaluated.

These statements lead us to one of the categories of the dynamics of action research, determined by Franco (2014), which is precisely the *action* itself. Teachers practicing research share ideas, produce collectively, perceive themselves as a group beyond discourse.

School B: doubts, conflicts and reflections on pedagogical practice

The need to know who the students that constitute the school are motivates the research whose results are expressed in the text *Students of School B: diversity in movement*. Initially, it is necessary to say that we perceive a certain imprecision as to the object of study of this group since it transits between *investigating the reality in which the students live and interact* – sometimes with reference to the teachers as well: and *who the students that are inserted in School B are*. However, at that moment, we consider the existence or not of a reflexive movement in the study covered during the education process that can be perceived from the written discourse.

According to the participants' reports during the writing activity called "partial reflection", the process of collective construction of the research was not always easy: *from the moment to reconcile a common theme, after the elaboration of the questions and their application; it became necessary for the good sense of the group and even a reconsideration of values of the good coexistence.* Having overcome the initial moment of delineation of the investigation object, a moment permeated by doubts and conflicts: according to the words of one of the participants, *the doubts and the conflicts that preceded the choice of the title for our project were valid, since the group had different visions of the problem in question*, the uncertainties about the results of the research arose: *But I wonder, will we really have the answers to what distresses us? What guarantees that our experiences do not interfere in the interpretation of the research, thus diverting from its essential purpose that is to know the reality of the school universe in order to turn this research into a tool of work.*

It is perceived that the research experience brought tranquility to the group, at least in relation to the reach of the results. Thus, in the final text that discloses the findings of the research, it was recorded that, *after the analysis and interpretation of the data that showed us the voice of the students, we were able, very clearly, to answer the guiding question of our research: "Who are the students which currently belong to School B?"*. In response, the group formulated the following hypotheses: *Most of the students come from the rural area of the municipality with habits of urban areas, but there are also those that come from*

different localities and also with different cultures and customs. Not all students have access to the Internet due to lack of signal or financial resources. There is also a disparity of teachers' knowledge about the reality of the students, since they also come from different localities, with different cultures and customs.

These results, although simple, make us think of the practices, since knowing the profile of the students of the school and realizing that the difference and the socio-cultural diversity is part of the daily life, both in the teachers' group and in the students' group, requires thinking about the to-do modes exercised so far, even if initially this is evidenced only in the discourse that informs that *this whole process allowed us a broad reflection on our pedagogical practice*. For these teachers, in the presentation of the results of the research, the great surprise was that they thought that the students did not like school and teachers; however, it was necessary to organise a listening instrument, listen to the students and realize that they not only have a strong sense of belonging to school, but also recognise and value the work of the teachers. From this discovery and the deconstitution of a prior judgment, teachers announced a new practice, of less dispute and judgment in the pedagogical relation. Thus, the following question emerged: To what extent does this displace practices and re-establish the pedagogical relationship?

School C: praise to the object of investigation

Interpersonal Relationships of School C: the students' view is the text that resulted from the investigation of the group belonging to this school. The research was undertaken with the objective of *understanding how the students of School C have perceived the constitution of the interpersonal relations in the school environment in different segments and also out of them*. However, this research space sometimes appears, in the writing, limited to the space of the school, without any further references. There is, therefore, in the construction of the object certain disparity between the question of research and what is announced as intended to achieve with the research. Moreover, considering the work as a whole, it can be said that teachers did not stick to the theme announced for research, but they distanced themselves from the object investigated and the questions addressed to the empirical subjects, widened the focus of the gaze and reached other objects of the school context.

In the course of writing, the text that discloses the results of the research takes a laudatory and descriptive character, before getting analytical of the school reality and the subjects of the research. The familiarity and proximity of the teachers-researchers with the investigated object, the look from the inside, leaves their marks in the text. This characteristic hinders the perception of a reflexive movement triggered by research, since what is most noticeable in writing is the detachment of the potentialities of that school context.

There is an immense pride of the school C community: parents and students, teachers and community celebrate together the results achieved, because the school has become synonymous with quality and success. It is not difficult to perceive in this passage the inscribed representation that, finally, guides the teachers-researchers' look and aims their appreciations for the investigated object. We take as an illustration the analyses made from one of the questions addressed to the students, empirical subjects, regarding school failure:

As for the question “if they failed a school year”, the vast majority of students did not fail the school year (123 students – 87.2%). We found that some students failed due to learning difficulties and others were transferred from other schools and, consequently, could not follow the content and methodology of the teacher’s work. We consider the percentage above a merit of working together, family and school.

Of the total number of students interviewed (141), only 18 students failed a school year once. We know that many of these cases are due to external factors such as transfers from other schools.

As shown in these parts of analyses, for the percentage of approval there is no indication whether the students always belonged to the school in question, nor whether the disapproval occurred when the student attended that school or another, and the index reached is considered *a merit of working together: family and school*; the failure that occurred in one of the school years, which is not specified, is attributed to external factors: the students who have already failed have come from other schools.

However, the researchers-teachers wrote that the investigation has *led to a new question: Is the pedagogical methodology used in School C helping in interpersonal relationships within the school?* This question, to a certain extent, is not surprising, even though, we questioned ourselves: What is the reason for this new question if, as announced in the analysis, the results are unquestionably positive? In any case, the questioning that emerged indicated evidence that the investigative practice led the group of teachers to reflect on the ways of doing things on a daily basis, situated in the school environment.

School D: investigative walk marked by reflection

What is the influence of the full-time school on the cognitive and behavioral development of the students? This is the research question of the group of teachers of School D, whose results are presented from the text *Full-time school: Influence on the cognitive and behavioral development of the students*. By undertaking the research, the group intended to perceive the positive and negative aspects of this teaching modality and present a proposal for its restructuring, based on the findings achieved.

Once the investigation was concluded, some initial hypotheses were confirmed, others were rejected, whereas, regarding other hypotheses, it was not possible to reach a result with the questions asked, thus *further research was necessary with the students and also with the parents of these children* to reach a more precise response.

Given these confirmed results, it is our interest to know what was maintained and what was abandoned by teachers during the investigation, considering the results achieved. The idea that the parents attributed to the school a sense of *caring* institution for the modality of functioning is abandoned given the answers obtained, because, according to the parents surveyed, *the school was a great place to leave the children while they worked and, at the same time, they had an institution with quality education for their children*. The hypothesis that is established as one of the main motivators of the investigation: that full-time permanence could result in emotional loss due to the family’s prolonged distance between their members was also not confirmed.

The fact that *in terms of cognitive learning the students revealed that they had learned little by attending the full-time shift, confirms one of the initial hypotheses and leads the group* to the perception of the need to change the activities carried out in the pedagogical workshops offered in the school in the extra hour classes compared to the regular teaching: *Drawing up the proposal of restructuring, in the full-time shift, we intend to have a closer look at the activities carried out in the workshops. For the relation between the behaviour, attitudes and the permanence of full-time students in the school,* the research instruments used, in the evaluation of the group, do not allow the achievement of what was sought and, therefore, further research is necessary.

The whole construction and enclosure trajectory of the object of study is marked by the reflection of the group that leads to a movement not only to change pedagogical practices, but also to the restructuring of full-time education in the municipal teaching network of the municipality where it occurs.

School E: the identity of the space investigated under reflection

The interest or disinterest of the students of School E facing the process of teaching and learning is what drove the investigation of this group and resulted in the paper *The role of the school community facing the (dis)interest of students throughout Elementary School*.

The question of research was originated, as said by the teachers, *from the difficulty found nowadays regarding apathetic and little argumentative students*. The main argument was that, *over the course of the years, it was possible to perceive that the students of School E were losing interest in the studies*, implying that the loss is greater as the years of schooling advance, as well as the chronological age of the students.

The results obtained with the research promote a reflection about the necessity of identity affirmation of the school, with respect to its characteristic that is of being constituted in a school located in the fields. As perceived by the group, the Pedagogical Master Project does not contemplate its reality. Thus, the reflexive process triggered by the investigation makes the teachers realise that the school in which they work is characterised by its location, that is, in the field and not by its modality of the field.

The idea of the students' lack of interest in the offered education, as it seems, is not abandoned, although the students point out in the interviews, and the teachers recorded in the final text, that *the acquisition of knowledge* is the main reason why they attend the school. However, the hypothesis that the parents *did not encourage their children in relation to the studies* is not confirmed, because the results indicate that *the parents encourage their children to study by helping them and providing the necessary conditions for the accomplishment of the tasks*.

The research practiced from the interior, from the known, from the lived, requires not only an effort of detachment and estrangement from the investigated object, but also a watchful eye *to observe every detail of school's daily routine, from the most varied points of view*. In addition, it generates expectations for the teaching work as it can be observed: *I hope to have to hand rich material for reflection and growth of the group of our school*.

Indicative movements of the reflection on the practice itself

Going through the texts produced by the teachers' groups, we sought to do it in reverse, to find the steps practiced by them in the process of constructing the research. More than the published results, we were interested in apprehending the indicative movements of the reflection about the practice itself, triggered by the action research: indications of transformation on both the ways of *doing* and the ways of *seeing* the school context.

In their writings, there certainly is the announcement of reflections, propelled by the very dynamics of research. But is it necessary to wait for the second phase of this study to verify whether this change occurred or not? Cautious about the possible changes brought about by the research experience, we return to Franco's tectures (2014, p. 231) when the author warns us that "[...] subjects do not change by decrees or by the will of others. People change when they realise that change will be good and possible. The subject of practice only transforms his/her reality when he/she can look at this reality through different eyes, that is, when he/she has transformed the form, the conceptions and values about reality".

The analysis of all the texts, since the preliminary versions of the research projects throughout the final paper, finds evidence of a lack of familiarity among the teachers (surely not all of them) with respect to the research practice, especially evidenced in the construction and enclosure of the object of investigative attention. From their interlocutions, established in writing with the researchers-educators, in the discussion forums or in the partial and final reflections, it was found the teachers' concern on how to do their own research as well as the research that will be developed with the students. However, when the observation focuses on texts that disclosed the findings of the research, it is noted that how to do it is a concern left behind. At this stage of the process, teachers turn to the results achieved and are absorbed, or rather surprised by their own findings. And it is in this trajectory, that comes from the first discussions to the results found with the investigation, that the teachers show, albeit sensibly, the emergence of a reflective look at the practice itself. But sometimes this view turns more broadly to the school context, which, being so familiar to them, escaped them to a great extent (although it is still not all apprehended).

It seems that it is the unimagined results, the unconfirmed hypotheses in the course of the research that surprise most and trigger more clearly the processes of reflection on the practice, about the school context that has become a stranger in front of what is supposedly known.

Writing as a mediator in the displacements of conceptions

The constructed texts deal with collective productions and are forged, at least in their initial versions; from the VLE and the Wiki6. In this way, those who read also write their idea with authority to make cuts and additions. With this, the text appears on the electronic screen from several different hands, eyes and skills. The text inscribed in the electronic support allows, therefore, interventions of each one that appropriates it, in the same body of the text,

6 Wiki is a tool that allows users to create a collection of documents, collectively.

without distinction between author and reader. Only identified by the different colors chosen by the participants to insert their ideas, when the text is published, it reaches the participants of the research group of the school and captivates the mediator gaze of the researcher-educator. Therefore, it is on the computer screen, in the electronic support, that the texts in question are produced and read, read and produced, appropriated, in a movement that involves each and every teacher in each group of the schools. That is, the texts are based on the findings of the research, but permeated by the different interpretations and understandings of its producing readers and the specific conditions of its mode of reception and production. Initially antagonistic ideas go through discussion and argumentation. Some are abandoned, others enter into consensualities. It is in this movement that the reflection happens and that some conceptions move, not without conflict, because the collective work demands negotiation, resignation and delivery. In the reflective writing of the teachers in training, we found reports of this experience of writing constructed by several people:

We started from a collective work that involved the construction and the collaborative writing, a moment when there were many divergent opinions, and it was necessary to promote the listening of oneself as well as the others.

My biggest problem was to put, to describe in the “collective” text. At different times I tried to do my textual intervention, but I did not feel so comfortable writing my own way in this research.

I found it difficult to carry out the construction of the texts collectively, because we have different opinions and writings, which, in my opinion, caused a text that often lacked coherence or continuity.

However, I found some difficulties in carrying out the construction of the text collectively, because having different opinions and different forms of writing, brought a lack of clarity and coherence in the text.

Aside from the difficulties with collective production, it is noticed that there is, from the part of the teachers participating in the project, a declared embarrassment with the necessary procedures for the development of the research and the intervention of the texts in production. The teachers' lack of familiarity is indicated in the construction of the research object, by the instability that crosses the texts regarding the question of research, by the disparity between it and what is announced as intended to be achieved with the investigation, by the lack of definition of who the empirical subjects are, by the fragile, if not dispersed, manner that surrounds the focus of research in the produced texts. However, this does not mean that all productions individually present all these frailties. Considering this analysis, which has as the main focus the texts produced in Phase I of the education-investigation, we can therefore talk about a timid familiarity of teachers with the practice of research itself and with the treatment of information, coming from different sources, for example, the voice of the project's authors – the teachers, the theoretical interlocutors and the empirical interlocutors.

As for the texts resulting from joint writing, sometimes lacking in clarity, in which a finer articulation between paragraphs is absent, with the use of citations with dislocated or distorted meaning, derives from the way of doing, from the form of writing practice that is

collective and authorizes, or rather, calls for interventions; which encompasses the particular interpretation of each author-reader, but which is also more or less shared by the group, since, considering Chartier's theorisations (2001, p. 20), "each reader, from his/her own individual or social and historical or existential references, gives a more or less singular meaning, more or less shared, to the texts from which he/she appropriates".

The discourse inscribed in different supports and from different textual genres

Whatever the modality in which education-investigation, face-to-face and/or online happens, participants are required to use virtual tools to reach the materials, both for the dialogue with the researcher-educators and for the production of the texts. Therefore, the initial experience with research in the words of one of the participants, *an essay for the work to be developed later*, also implies the relation *with* and *from* the virtual environment.

Taking into account these circumstances, it is interesting to note that the use of communication technology is pointed out by some participants as a limiting factor, either because of the difficulty of access, as this testimony demonstrates: *I only feel sorry for not being able to participate more online due to my conditions: no possibility to have Internet access*, or due the fact that its use requires certain skills by the users:

I think we've all had a bit of trouble starting to interact with the Moodle tool, because it's not part of our everyday life.

At first it was a bit difficult to get familiar with Moodle; but slowly I am getting along.

At one point, the communication tool made this time [the time available for carrying out the activities according to course schedule] even shorter.

I must say that it was never a lack of will, firstly that we are always running out of time, and secondly because I could not access everything that was posted, since I still cannot access media with ease.

On the other hand, the use of virtual tools is pointed out by some teachers as one of the learning experiences considered positive in the course, which, finally, does not distance itself from the questions that involve its use as already mentioned previously. The testimonies of the teachers in training point to the advances made in these virtual tools: *firstly, I learned to deal with the online system, through NEAD⁷ – forums, etc.; during the process of education offered in the course "School and research: a possible encounter", there was a lot of learning acquired. Among them I stress the tools used (information and communication technologies).*

That being said, it is worth remembering that not only the texts that constitute the VLE virtual library of the course are accessed from the electronic support, but also the texts produced by the groups are inscribed on the computer screen (such written production was discussed previously). And these texts, both those intended to be appropriated by reading

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and those produced by collective writing, are recommendations agreed upon in the education-investigation.

Reflective discourses, announcements of transformation?

All of the education-investigation schedule was focused on two perspectives. One of them dealt with the experiences of the procedures on how to work with research in the classroom as an educational principle. The intention on the other perspective was to contribute to the awareness of the pedagogical and political value involved in the work that has the question as a starting point. It is perceived that reflection on the process was stimulated, as a way of approaching what Freire (2014, p. 39) considers essential: “critical teaching practice, implying right thinking, involves the dynamic, dialectical movement between the *doing* and *thinking about the doing*”.

Based on the reflections of the participants, interspersed in the texts produced, in their “thinking about”, aspects that indicate the appropriation of the principles pertaining to education-investigation through reflection and also mobilization in search for the transformation of practices identified as applicants of change emerged.

One of the merits highlighted in the participatory process experienced in the education-investigation was to trigger the “encounter” and the “collective reflection” within the school, even though in some cases the teachers have scored the difficulties of doing this in the group due to differences in conception, postures and motivations. In contrast, in several narratives there are references to “our group”. So we can ask whether the “group” belongs more to the discourse than to the practice, or does it belong to the discourse only? Perhaps, the practice of the teacher in the school is a practice not shared with the group; a practice that is characterized by individuality. However, the mobilisation for the school to think about its daily life adds meanings to “collective thinking”, considered as one of the gains obtained in the education-investigation in one of the schools, with the affirmation that they might not have come to find all the answers with the research, but came up with a good result “as a school group”.

This is an important element to be considered in everyday school practices, because, if learning to live together in diversity and respect for difference is still one of the challenges of humanity, then group work is one way to begin this kind of learning. If teachers do not know how to work together, they will have more difficulty to divide and share with among their students.

The dialogical dimension that emerges in the lived experience also indicates the value attributed to the listening of the school community and the expectation created in knowing their opinions. This only reinforces how much the dialogue provokes the encounter, the reflection, the deconstruction of prejudices and *prior* judgments. Many teachers pointed out that they were surprised by the answers and by what the students think of the school, in a much more positive way than they imagined.

Although not directly, the reflections inscribed in the texts produced underline the importance attributed to listening and to the relationship, as a way of contemplation and an attitude to be cultivated to take care of the relationship. Observing that students have more

positive representations of the school than those assumed *a priori* is a way of deconstruct-deconstructing prejudices and bringing the pedagogical relationship closer, therefore, it constitutes embryos of possibilities for change.

Regarding the challenges of working on the Moodle platform, whether due to the lack of access and/or easiness to deal with and expose themselves in the VLE, as well as the lack of time of these subjects, we identified the destabilisation of the *already known* towards the *still to know*, not for a change in the attitude of distancing Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) immediately, but to raise the doubt and the curiosity to approach them.

The promises of continuity were signaled in meeting the demands that emerged from the results of each project or in the mobilization so that the research is part of the daily life of the school. The incompleteness dimension was evidenced by the involvement of many teachers with the complementary readings and with the theoretical foundation suggested in the training, emphasizing that they were nurtured by the contents of the texts and the videos indicated.

In general, the contract, initially established between the University and the Department of Education, between the secretariat and the schools, and also between the education-investigation team and the participants, seems to have been understood and accepted by the majority, with rare exceptions of manifestation of incomprehension of the proposal and desire not to be part of it.

Although not fully aware or named in the words of the participants themselves, it is possible to identify embryos of didactic transposition⁸ and inverted symmetry⁹. Evidences of this are indicated in the experience of the construction, development and systematisation of the results of a research project, working with significant themes for the group as a whole, and in the course of which many skills were developed: learning in group work; collective discussion on controversial points that add different points of view; systematisation of ideas through the collective; assumption of attitudes of respect to schedules and guidelines; learning about the treatment of information based on different sources; writing improvement, qualified with the confrontation of the readings; promotion of the encounter even at a distance; sheltering the intervention of the researchers-educators as partners and co-authors during the process; assumption of authorship, ethical and aesthetic posture, on the presentation of research results, among other points that could be listed. They are expected to be part of everyday life and reach out to students and the community.

Final considerations

By challenging teachers to observe the reality in which they work, a process of awareness is sought for/on the new educational scenarios of the 21st century. Teacher education based

8 Didactic transposition can be considered the passage from wise knowledge, from the knowledge produced by scientists to the taught knowledge, characterized by the use of books, tools and didactic resources among others, according to Chevallard (2005).

9 According to Oliveira & Bueno (2013, p. 877), the basic assumption of inverted symmetry is “coherence between the training offered and the expected practice of the future teacher”.

on research in the classroom as teaching methodology destabilises the cycle of an apparent passivity that circumscribes school and teachers in a logic of reproduction rather than transformation. Reviewing Certeau's (2011) writing, which states that practices are inventive, not passive, perhaps reproduction is a tactic of teachers. But for what? Perhaps to maintain a system that, despite the discourses (and the results) that put it in a state of crisis, is strong enough to go on for centuries.

The classic attribution to the absence of the family and the engrossment of educational policies such as the great villains of the impossibility of change, only reinforces immobility in search for solutions to overcome the problems signaled in the reading they have made of reality. In other words, sometimes it seems that teachers become hostages (or use their own discourse for the maintenance of the created representation), of the content of their own discourse, because, by reinforcing the difficulties to cause a change, they also immobilize and block actions in the direction of transformation.

In this sense, it is important to be vigilant that, beyond the method that instrumentalizes the use of an active methodology, central point of the established contract, the powers of the dialogical exercise triggered in the experienced investigation are found. Nevertheless, this does not happen naturally and in the totality of the participants. We can say that the movement of knowledge and analysis of reality that the research offers has phases or different dimensions of awareness that: (a) go from the identification/investigation of what worries and considers to hamper the teaching action present in the explanatory limits of teachers about their performance scenarios; (b) go through the reception modalities and the process of appropriation of the teaching method, object of the education; (c) until they slowly approach the analysis and interpretations of the phenomenon or theme they have chosen to analyse.

According to Freire (2014, p. 33), it is fundamental to overcome the naive conscience that is generally "[...] associated to the common-sense knowledge [...]" in order to be based on the epistemological consciousness that also arises curiosity, however, a critical curiosity that approaches "[...] in an increasingly methodologically rigorous form of the knowable object [...]" thus becoming the epistemological curiosity. "Overcoming and not the rupture occurs to the extent that the naive curiosity, while still being curiosity, on the contrary, continuing to be curiosity, is criticised (Freire 2014, p. 32).

The experience of education-investigation narrated in this text suggests how difficult it is to exercise the passage from naive to epistemological consciousness through criticality. However, the perception of these gaps requires the training team and the participants to look attentively to make these "consciousnesses conscient". We can say that the naive consciousnesses is shown by the expression of the word and by the attribution of meanings to justify the causes of what is restless and uncomfortable in the daily life of the teaching activity. Critical consciousness, on the other hand, could be associated with the surprises found in the results of the projects and the lack of corroboration of many of the hypotheses formulated for the attribution of the "scapegoats" on the challenges of the contemporary school. The almost remote echoes of the epistemological consciousness can be associated with the narratives produced in the "thinking about" and in the substantiation and validation of the thought and the named with the words, through the interlocution with the theory and with the subjects implied in the analyzed phenomenon. These perceptions show Franco's

assertions (2014, p. 231), because “consciousness does not always follow practice. Sometimes this consciousness bothers us, and we prefer not to touch it”. The author complements by assigning to the action research processes the possibility of “putting practice and consciousness together, mutually giving meaning to each other” (Franco 2014, p. 232).

Returning to the categories necessary for the basic dynamics of action research, observing the path covered in the process of education-investigation here narrated and analyzed, we can also say that: (a) the *contract* was established on at least five levels, that is, between the secretariat of education and the education-investigation team, the secretariat and the schools, the schools and the teachers, the teachers themselves, and the education-investigation team with the teachers; (b) in relation to *participation*, although the course had a program and a directivity, the process involved an intense participation of the research groups, conferring authorship to the productions and reflections undertaken, in partnership, co-management and cooperation; (c) in the *change* category, the discussion around an umbrella theme involving the daily school life, sheltered the interests and curiosities of the participants, made the appreciation of the perceived in each contribution and indication of changes from the discoveries possible; (d) the *discourse* was stimulated to the expression in different supports and textual genres, imparting a movement that suffered displacements fed by what emerged from reality and also from the articulation of the different sources of information; (e) finally, the *action*, although with the limits of the visualization of practices, it is shown in the ads from the discoveries.

These elements also allow us to associate that the education-investigation in teaching can result in ruptures in “[...] technicist conceptions of teaching, generating the possibility of re-signification of the relations between theory and practice, which can become an important movement in the collective struggle for better working conditions and for reconsideration of the importance of the knowledge produced by teachers” (Franco, 2014, p. 232). And this reinforces the argument of the importance of action research to develop a critical perspective of teaching action, especially, when executed in the action itself.

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Language Education and primary school children: the story of using stories

Christina Nicole Giannikas

Abstract

The present study concentrates on the development of interactive skills in the L2 and the pedagogical aspects of Young Language Learners' (YLLs) through the use of story telling. Such an approach reveals the benefits of encouraging creativity in learning and, as a result, captures the dynamics of the classroom and the progress of the learner. The data derives from an Action Research study carried out as part of a longitudinal study in South Western Greece, where storytelling is a neglected language learning source. The research concentrates on YLLs of a Beginners level, aged 7-9 years old. The results show the advantageous use of Action Research as a tool of intervention to apply necessary change in language teaching contexts.

Key words: action research, language education, early language learning, storytelling

Educación lingüística y niños de la escuela primaria: la historia del uso de historias

Resumen

El presente estudio se concentra en el desarrollo de habilidades interactivas en la L2 y los aspectos pedagógicos de Jóvenes Aprendices de Lenguaje (YLLs, por sus siglas en inglés) mediante el uso de la narración. Este enfoque revela los beneficios de fomentar la creatividad en el aprendizaje y, como resultado, capturar la dinámica del aula y el progreso del alumno. Los datos derivan de un estudio de Investigación-Acción realizado como parte de un estudio longitudinal en el Suroeste de Grecia, donde la narración es una fuente de aprendizaje de idiomas descuidada. La investigación se concentra en el nivel de YLLs para el nivel de principiantes, con edades entre 7-9 años. Los resultados muestran el uso ventajoso de la Investigación-Acción como una herramienta de intervención para aplicar los cambios necesarios en los contextos de enseñanza de idiomas.

Palabras clave: investigación acción, educación lingüística, aprendizaje temprano de idiomas, narración de historias

Introduction

Using stories, in any educational context, is undoubtedly beneficial and rich in pedagogical potential. In language education, the use of stories has been argued to be an effective language learning tool that meets the cognitive, emotional and psychological demands of the Young Language Learner (YLL). Stories offer children meaningful experiences that their imagination can relate to and, as Fillmore and Snow (2000) have argued, can sustain and enhance foreign language growth. Additionally, using stories in the language classroom gives teachers the unique opportunity to provide their YLLs with the motivation to play with language while building an appreciation of its sounds and meaning of words (Rubin & Wilson 1995). The fact that children are familiar with the nature of stories from their L1, makes the process a positive introduction to foreign language education, provided that it is presented in a context YLLs are familiar and comfortable with (Brewster, Ellis & Girard 2002). Despite the positive outcomes that occur when storytelling is included in language education, many contexts do not include it in their curriculum, particularly in teacher-centred educational settings. The objectives of the present study are to 1) define the current language learning situation within the Greek context due to the complexities embedded in teacher-centred approaches in the YLL classroom, and 2) investigate the potential of introducing change through practitioner inquiry and reflections. More specifically, the focus of this article will be on storytelling as a student-centred teaching tool, where there will be a display of the background of storytelling, followed by the implementation of Action Research (AR) and the extent to which the methodology has broadened the potential of storytelling in the YLL classroom.

A Story telling Background

The art of storytelling is known to be as old as time, and is a form of an oral tradition found in all cultures (Nikolov, Mihaljević Djigunović, Mattheoudakis, Lundberg & Flanagan 2007). By including stories in language learning, the power of oral conversations may be exceeded (Dickinson, Griffith, Golnkoff & Hirsh-Pasek 2012) therefore, it is no surprise that stories are preferred by a number of language teachers since they help create a motivating environment, and encourage YLLs to use their imagination and learn while having fun.

The approach of the storyteller could provide a rich literature experience and encourage oral language development (Isbell, Sobol, Lindaeur & Lowrance 2004) while also prompting students to step out of their comfort zone and engage themselves in the literature and culture of the target language. In agreement with this, Nikolov et al. (2007) states that an early and regular exposure to stories can help YLLs enrich their schemata and interpret new information and experiences. Researchers such as Krashen (1981), Zdorenko and Paradis (2007) have reached the conclusion that L2 learning occurs when the input is meaningful, interesting and comprehensible. Furthermore, the comprehensible and meaningful input that stories provide helps activate the Language Acquisition Device (LAD), a hypothetical tool in the brain that helps children learn and understand language (Chomsky 1968). According to Krashen (1981, 1993), learners become able to induce language elements from the data they receive, meaning that storytelling stimulates phonology, syntax, morphology, semantics and

pragmatics. Morgan and Rinvold (1983) list a number of linguistic benefits due to story-telling, such as improved listening comprehension, grammar presented in true-to-life contexts, and numerous opportunities to encourage oral production. Interactionist theories (see Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991) support that language learners must engage in post-listening tasks and language-related activities in which they are encouraged to talk about what they listened to while the story was told (Renandya, Rajan & Jacobs 1999).

Apart from the linguistic benefits, listening to stories is a shared social experience that tends to provoke emotional reactions such as laughter, sadness, excitement and anticipation (Nikolov et al. 2007), which is not only an enjoyable process but can help build a child's confidence and encourage social and emotional development. Stories, as Puchta (2015) argues, are more than mere entertainment, they help children develop an understanding of the world and their experiences. Vale and Feunteun (1995) argue that when YLLs listen to a story, in terms of comprehension, they become involved in different types of mental processes and create mental pictures of what they are listening to.

Of course, there is more than one way to tell a story, and every teacher has their own approach when it comes to delivering one. Some teachers prefer to read the story directly from a book, where the main reference of communication is the text, as it is presented on the page. When storytelling, the words are not memorised, they are recreated through an energetic performance, accompanied by audience (students') participation and interaction (Isbell, et al. 2004). Story reading and storytelling may be similar in content; nevertheless, the process of delivering the story is very different. Story reading does not provide the listener with many opportunities for interacting and spontaneous responses. On the one hand, the approach of the story reader could prepare YLLs for reading (Malo & Bullard 2000) and encourage the young learner to focus on text and accuracy. The approach of the storyteller, on the other hand, could provide a rich literature experience and encourage oral language development (Isbell et al. 2004) while also prompting students to step out of their comfort zone and engage themselves in the literature and culture of the target language.

Despite its advantages, storytelling may seem challenging and intimidating to language teachers. According to Brewster, et al. (2002), the successful storyteller would have to maintain the YLLs' interest and attention, and by telling the story, the teacher would bring out the student's individuality and personality; this is not a simple task.

Research Method

AR is a reflective process in which participants investigate their own practice, by using the techniques of research (Watts 1985). It is a systematic inquiry-conducted research methodology in order to gather data on operations of a school or classroom, reflect on how they teach and how effectively students learn (Mills 2003). With the teacher as the protagonist, the approach used aims to improve education by taking action into changing it and learning from the outcomes and procedure of this change (Kemmis & McTaggart 1992). The fundamental components of AR, according to Kemmis, McTaggart (1988), include 1) developing a plan, 2) implementing the plan, 3) observing and documenting the need for change and the effects of the plan set, and 4) reflection for future plans and action. The fact

that teachers have the opportunity to take action in their research is the most beneficial aspect of the approach. Teachers can focus on small-scale, contextualised, and localised studies where they are to develop or monitor change (Wallace 2000). More specifically, Richards and Lockhart (2009) provide examples of the Wallace's components where the teacher:

1. Selects a matter of concern and investigates
2. Selects the appropriate data collection tools in order to gather information
3. Conducts the analysis and decides on what actions to take
4. develops an action plan in order to bring about change
5. Observe the effects of the plan, and
6. Conduct a second action plan, if necessary
7. According to Mills (2003), AR when applied in a school or classroom can employ change. This allows the researcher to not only describe events, but explore the phenomena when they occur and provide a valid contribution and evaluation, with a view to improving the situation in question. The current investigation introduced a one year AR study, which entailed monitoring, intervention and modification to classroom practice, exploring the perspective of student-centred teaching approaches by integrating storytelling in the YLL curriculum. AR was considered the most appropriate research methodology as it would assist the teacher/researcher to investigate and monitor the effects of storytelling in a teacher-centred education context in depth. The results were to be used as an intervention to propose and apply change in the use of storytelling and teaching YLLs in the specific context.

The researcher of the current study was also the YLL teacher. The study took place at a private language school located in a major city in Southwestern Greece. The specific language school offered afternoon language lessons (English, French and German) to YLLs and adult learners and had approximately 300 registered students.

The purpose for practitioner inquiry and reflection was to underline the significance of storytelling as a student-centred approach that could enhance interaction and effective language learning. The findings were estimated to be particularly valuable as they are generated from an insider, the YLL teacher. In order to collect data, a research journal was kept during the course of the study to keep a record of a rich and detailed account of various routine procedures, phases of daily lessons and record any particularly interesting or theoretically significant events. The Director of the language school (DoS) observed 10 of the researcher's language lessons during the period of the investigation. These observations provide feedback on students' reactions to the nature of storytelling and the interactive tasks that derived from it. The observer (DoS) kept notes on observation sheets and within a twenty-four hour period provided the researcher with feedback sheets where the observer was encouraged to clarify ideas, comment on the children's progress and make suggestions for future development. The information gathered was intended to be read by the teacher/researcher as evidence to produce meaning and an understanding of the situation. Finally, the participant students were given follow-up questionnaires with the aim of gathering data and insights on how they view the foreign language, how an alternative teaching approach has made a difference in their language learning and to confirm validity of

the study. The follow-up questionnaires were distributed two years after the AR study was completed.

The participants of the study were young children ages 7-9 who were at a Beginners level. The story telling sessions were implemented in two different classes of children the same age, and there were a total of 24 students who participated. The participants were accustomed to teacher-centred learning approaches in mainstream schools, which did not prove to be beneficial in language learning as little interaction and communication is encouraged in such environments. All students shared the same native language (Greek), and attended English language lessons at the private language school.

The storytelling design for the needs of the AR study:

The design of a storytelling lesson that encourages interaction in a student-centred environment would involve consideration of the stages of the language lesson. The advantage of applying the storytelling approach is that various designs could be carried out according to teaching styles and preferences. Nonetheless, it is important to plan the lesson so as to deliver an interactive storytelling lesson where the teacher can facilitate L2 development and encourage creativity. Language lessons that encourage storytelling can provide support to students through important learning stages, which are 1) listening, 2) responding and 3) comprehending. In order to implement storytelling in the YLL classroom effectively the following teaching phases were adapted, as displayed in Table 1:

Table 1: The Three Phases of a Storytelling Design

Phases	Sample Options
Pre-task/Pre-teach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pre-teach unfamiliar vocabulary from the story Give a chunk of the story to the YLLs and ask them to work in groups and guess what will happen next
Main Task: the story	Tell the story to the students: consider how you can make this story interactive? How will you involve the YLLs in the storytelling process? Which parts of the story are best for student involvement and which for clear listening?
Ideas for post-story task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use arts and crafts to recreate what the students just heard about in the story Ask YLLs to work in groups and come up with a different ending Ask YLLs to work in groups and continue the story

The first phase ‘pre-task/pre-teach’ included a number of tasks a teacher can engage the YLLs in before the storytelling begins. This phase gave the teacher the opportunity to introduce key elements of the story and help the students develop an early understanding of the second phase and enjoy it. The teacher used this opportunity to encourage YLLs to use their imagination about the plot of the story and what will happen. The second phase was the story itself, the ‘main task’. This phase is crucial as it is the point where the interaction element will thrive and where students thinking and listening skills can develop. The teacher considered the parts of the story where interaction was encouraged, how this will occur and where the students will take part in the process. The final phase is the ‘post-story task’, which gives students the opportunity to follow-up on the story and their understanding of it.

The aim of the AR study was to encourage interaction and communication inspired by the design displayed in Table 1. It was estimated that the children would benefit from a 'storytelling plan', as it would help add meaning to the stories, create a connection to the language lesson, and help the teacher smoothly integrate storytelling sessions to YLLs who were accustomed to a teacher-centred environments in mainstream schools.

Story telling put into Practice

The present section demonstrates how storytelling can be applied through the right resources and has highly satisfying results in children's language education. The focus of the lesson was to promote interaction and spontaneity in a monolingual context where the students' only exposure to the target language was in the classroom. Language learners of this age can engage in projects which demand that they take responsibility for their learning. By including these projects in the language lessons the level of the child's personal involvement becomes higher and can consequently enhance motivation (Philips, Burwood, Dunford & Maley 1999). In the current study there was an effort to introduce games, storytelling, role plays and various other activities that would intrigue the students and help them use the TL in class in a more spontaneous manner. One example of this is a lesson with the beginners' class where students were introduced to storytelling, which was also observed by the DoS. Before the story was told, the teacher/researcher pre-taught some of the vocabulary that students were not familiar with. This was done by writing the unknown lexical items on the board and eliciting their meaning by miming or placing the words in context. According to observation and journal data, the children were recorded to be involved, and all made the effort to estimate the meaning of the words mimed.

For the needs of the article there will be an example of a storytelling activity applied in the Beginners' class, as recorded during the AR. The story told was taken from Vanessa Reilly and Sheila M. Ward's resource book entitled 'Very Young Learners'. The story used and discussed here was called 'Why do Rabbits Have Long Ears?' and its aim was to enhance students' listening skills, enrich their vocabulary and emphasise the phrases 'I am a' and 'You are a'. The story was ideal for beginners as the vocabulary and structure of the story was easy for the students to follow, but also gave them food for thought and new vocabulary to learn (Giannikas 2013).

The resource book suggests that as part of the story, YLLs must be convinced that rabbits have not always had long ears and that the students were going to discover how rabbits changed. Before the story was told, unfamiliar vocabulary was pre-taught by writing unknown lexical items on the board and eliciting their meaning by miming or placing the words in context. This was done to avoid surprises and confusion while the story was being told. When students are not aware of what they are going to encounter they tend to panic, lose concentration, and even give up. A simple introduction of unknown vocabulary brought the students closer to what the story would be about, and also gave them a sense of confidence. The children were involved and felt great pleasure when they correctly estimated the meaning of the word, even though they were out of context.

After all the unknown vocabulary was clarified, the children were asked to sit in a circle whilst their teacher was seated in the centre of the communication network. It was important to create a comfortable environment for the students so that the children could relax and enjoy the experience. This helped them lower their anxiety levels and accept input. Furthermore, having children sit in a circle for story time is something they can relate to, as they may have been in a similar layout when being read a story in their L1 at school. The positive environment in the specific context created excitement, and the YLLs became very eager to hear the story, which provided the teacher/researcher with their undivided attention. As the story progressed, the YLLs became involved in the story telling process during which they were encouraged to mime, pretend to be different animals, and elicit names of animals, which made the plot interesting and challenging, since the sole medium of communication was the target language. Additionally, there was a great deal of repetition in the story which helped students learn the new vocabulary effortlessly and use it in context while interacting. Interaction gradually became increasingly vibrant which was also a positive indicator for the teacher since the students were involved in all parts of the story and were more than willing to participate. This was an interesting change for the students since, according to the data collected in the questionnaires, 67% of the students stated that they do not do any interactive activities in the language classes at school, and only 25% stated that their language lessons at school were interesting. One could argue that the fact that language learners in Greece are not as successful compared to children of other European countries despite their early exposure to the L2 is that they are not introduced with teaching approaches that would be age-appropriate and motivating.

The AR acted as an intervention in this case, and according to the observer:

'The children were very involved in the story since they were the animals (roles) and listened very intensely. During the reading there was involvement and exchange among the teacher and the students'

Additionally, it was important to consider the grammatical points that occurred within the story and how these were to be presented to the YLLs. According to the observation data:

'Since the story included a number of irregular verbs, the teacher first mentions them in present form and then past, shake-shook, see-saw and also translated the words in Greek'

After the story was told once, the students were asked to tell their teacher what they understood from it and what the main point was. This was done not only to verify that children were able to follow the plot but to also give them the opportunity to show their teacher and their peers this ability. All children volunteered to provide the class with the information, giving a sense of confidence as they enthusiastically and impatiently raised their hands. When one of the children was selected to give a short summary, the student immediately asked whether the answer should be given in their L1 or in the L2. Given that the child was a beginner and it would be difficult to deliver the summary in the L2, it was suggested that the summary be given in L1. This way, the child could freely express himself because the key of giving the summary at this stage was to evaluate the participants' comprehension rather than their oral skills. The child selected gave a precise summary of the story, proving that everything was understood even though the story was told in the L2. This is evident in the observation data below:

'The student told the story in Greek and demonstrated that he understood the story throughout. I was very impressed to hear all the details of the story. The students were able to practice their Listening skills, they learnt new vocabulary in a relaxed and pleasant manner and they practiced their comprehension skills'

The teacher/researcher provided the YLLs with a follow-up task which was connected to the plot of the story. The children were requested to work in groups and create masks of various animals that appeared in the story. In their groups, the YLLs were encouraged to communicate to each other in the L2. By the end of the lesson, the task was completed successfully and students wore their masks as they left the classroom and walked out to their parents producing the animal sounds that matched their mask. This experience provided the YLLs with rich language learning, self-confidence of full comprehension of the target language they were exposed to, and an entertaining learning experience.

Story telling recommendations after the AR

Cameron (2001) has found that storytelling is an oral activity designed not only for listening but also for involvement and enhances class participation. A language teacher can become a successful storyteller by applying simple techniques and engaging into the story themselves. In order to gain as much as possible from this rewarding journey, storytelling tips will be presented here not only to present how a story can be told, but how to create an environment that supports interactive learning and vivid student participation.

There can be many learning elements in a story:

- 1) **Creativity and abstract thinking** are an important part of language and literacy development. Stories encourage children to develop these features of their personalities. For this to be accomplished, the language teacher must encourage YLLs to use their imagination.
- 2) **New vocabulary** is often presented and it is important that new words and idioms are spotted in order to pre-teach and prepare learners for what will follow.
- 3) **Grammar points** must also be considered when planning a storytelling lesson. It is important to check the tenses used in the story, whether or not they are complex and if they would be understood by the target audience. Furthermore, structure and word order can differ in stories in order to create effect. This should be identified early on for two reasons. One reason is that it could be confusing for the students, and the second reason would be for the teacher to prepare the dramatic effect used in their voice and gestures as a result of the unusual structure and/or word order.
- 4) **Organising story elements** can help teachers deliver the story and prompt interaction productively. When rehearsing the story, teachers will need to consider the length and complexity of the sentences. If sentences are too complex, they may need to be modified according to the level of the students. Also, teachers will need to make sure the narrative will be comprehensive to the YLLs. If not, some ideas may need to be explained beforehand.
- 5) **Visual aids** are very helpful with young learners. When used in storytelling, visual support can intrigue the YLLs and trigger their imagination. Visual aids could include drawings, flash cards, cut-out figures etc. The teacher can involve the language

learners with the help of illustrations and encourage YLLs to comment on them and the story.

- 6) **Using gestures, mime and facial expressions** are necessary for the progress of the story and reaching the goal of creating an interactive environment. Even if the teacher shares the same L1 with the YLLs, using gestures, miming and facial expressions prompts students to guess and understand what the teacher is trying to say, which simultaneously results to building the students' self-confidence as language learners and motivating them to become more communicative and interactive in class.

If teachers are new to storytelling, it would be useful for them to evaluate their skills which will help them improve as story tellers (Brewster et al. 2002). One approach is to keep a record of each story telling experience, make a note of what could have been done differently and what went well. As Brewster, et al. (2002) suggest, this could be done by keeping a record on a self-assessment sheet where the teacher can comment on various aspects of their story telling, i.e. their pronunciation, rhythm, intonation, YLLs' participation, variation and what needs to be improved.

Preparing a Storytelling Session: the result of reflection

This section is included in the paper as a result of the journal notes and reflection during the AR study. Teacher reflection continues to be part of the teacher education literature and has been recommended as a means of incorporating pedagogical issues into teaching thinking and practice (Howard 2003).

Simply telling a story without the appropriate preparation could lead to undesirable results for both teachers and students. Children may become discouraged and lose interest early on in the lesson or even develop negative feelings toward L2 story telling, and teachers may lose their confidence in incorporating stories in their classes. Preparing the story telling lesson can help teachers avoid such situations.

1. **Selecting the right story:** when choosing the story to present to YLLs, a teacher must consider the audience. It is important to introduce a story that will be suitable to their level and age.
2. **Becoming familiar with the story:** in order to become a good storyteller, it is important to become familiar with the story itself. This will help teachers pinpoint the parts where the students can become more involved and let the student-interaction happen. It would be helpful to read the selected story several times, master its structure, consider the sections of the story and where it is headed and think of the tone and body movements that will be used.
3. **Rehearse, rehearse, rehearse:** It is vital that teachers rehearse their stories before they present them to their YLLs. This will help teachers 1) develop their storytelling skills 2) practice becoming more vivid in their narrating by using gestures and facial expressions 3) practice using eye-contact in order to have the children's undivided attention.
4. **Outline the incidents of the story:** of course learning a story word for word is not practical and is very time-consuming. It is advisable that teachers become familiar with

the incidents of the story and make notes of its structure and how they wish to deliver it.

5. **The story telling technique:** the teacher's voice while telling a story is the most important ingredient to its success. It is important that the story be told aloud and clearly so that all students can hear and follow. The teacher's voice can hint to the students what they should be feeling at a given point, i.e. happy, excited, anxious and/or relieved. The teacher should be prepared where the reading pace will change, where the volume of the voice will change and where to narrate slowly. Students usually follow the teacher's voice and interact in a similar manner when they become involved in the storytelling process.
6. **Encouraging Creativity and Abstract Thinking:** it is important that teachers encourage their students to be creative through the storytelling lesson. one example of creativity work could be to ask YLLs to sit in groups and work on an alternate ending to the story which can be narrated at the end, or encourage children to create a dialogue among the characters of the story and role-play.
7. **What are your language learning goals:** setting goals guides the teacher regarding where the story leads the students, and what should be accomplished by the end of it.
8. **Relax and enjoy:** the advantage of using stories in the language classroom is not only that it is beneficial and enjoyable for the students, but it is enjoyable for the teacher as well. Teachers are given the opportunity to put aside course books and grammar books and present something more creative that will trigger their students' imagination, which is rewarding on so many levels. As teachers tell stories to their YLLs, and interact with them while doing so, they can enjoy this enlightening language teaching approach.

Concluding Notes

The present paper has outlined reflections on the role of storytelling in the early language learning classroom, and how one could apply it effectively in order to bring about the advantages story telling has to offer. Furthermore, the paper has listed a number of techniques that can be put into practice and encourage interaction through tasks that encourage creativity, abstract thinking and language development. The storytelling approach can also give a fulfilling sense of achievement to the language teacher. By presenting YLLs with a well-planned storytelling lesson, teachers can encourage children to step out of their comfort zone and interact with their peers and teacher in the L2, and integrate a certain kind of spontaneity in their thinking and speech. Once they view themselves as L2 users they become more successful learners, take risks when interacting or working on an activity in the L2, and gradually feel more comfortable using the target language. For these reasons, it is important that storytelling is viewed as an essential part of language teaching to YLLs. Through storytelling, a teacher can offer a child a rich journey of language and culture with a language teaching tool that is familiar to the language learner.

The evidence in this article suggests that investigating the gradual change to a student-centred environment via storytelling can provide the practitioner with insights on 1) the needs of the YLL and, 2) the balance to be considered in each stage of storytelling implementation. Furthermore, AR can encourage language teachers to cooperate and

communicate with their students via interactive story telling. Reflecting on the finding that derived from AR gave the teacher/researcher the opportunity to demonstrate how best to integrate age-appropriate tasks, in a manner that would not disrupt language learning or confuse the students. The process and objectives of the study works as an intervention to apply story telling in the YLL classroom, and hope to inspire teachers to conduct their own AR in their context in order to investigate and integrate effective practices.

The Need for Further AR

In education, it should be a teacher's concern how they may improve the quality of learning and teaching in their environment and acceptance of the fact that classroom-based research is required, which must focus on the needs of the language learner and teacher. Dörnyei (2007) has defined research as a method used when one seeks answers to questions and wishes to gain more knowledge of the world around them. Through AR, there is great potential for improving language teaching as the concept of AR in education is to identify problematic situations or issues researchers consider worthwhile for investigation, and to intervene in situations with the intention of producing critically informed changes in practice (Byram 2004; Lundberg 2007).

The field of language learning has emphasised the importance of teaching practices, learning experiences and various other pedagogical matters originating from the language classroom (Nunan 1990). It would be valuable if, Ministries of Education facilitated teachers' professional development by organising a series of AR programmes, where teachers may be given the opportunity to improve their techniques as they adopt different methods of language and teaching via research and reflection.

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Systematisation of experience: theory and practice

Cordero, D. B., & Torres Carrillo, A. (2017). *La Sistematización como investigación interpretativa crítica*. Bogotá: Editorial El Búho.

Carolina Schenatto da Rosa

Systematisation of experience is widely known and discussed in Latin America, and in other parts of the world. However, what does it mean? What is systematisation of experience? Is it a scientific method? Is it a methodology? Who can do it and why? Is it focused on social workers or on theory? Is systematisation of experience related to critical theory and, at the same time, based on the experience of their performers? What is the relation between theory and practices? What is the relation between systematisation of experience, popular education and participatory research? The answers for these and other questions are addressed in *La Sistematización como investigación interpretativa crítica*¹, written by Alfonso Torres Carrillo and Disney Barragán Cordero.

Both authors are acknowledged researchers, who have contributed to the epistemological and methodological foundations of systematisation from a critical approach. They are professors and researchers at the National Pedagogical University of Colombia, working with popular education processes, social movements, and participatory action research (PAR). They also offer courses about systematisation, yielding new scientific and social knowledge and perspectives from the global South. More than merely introduce systematisation of experience as a concept and a methodology, the book is, in itself, the systematisation of their experiences as researchers and educators, presenting how they understand and schematise systematisation of experience in the last 25 years.

The book is organised in four sections. In the first part, *Emergencia, trayectoria y sentidos de la sistematización*², the authors give us a historical overview of the Latin American context, demonstrating how and when systematisation of experience started to be used as a method of scientific investigation. Highlighting the inherent relationship between popular education, PAR and systematisation, Torres & Cordero emphasise the ethical and political commitment that these fields had with the emancipatory perspective to social transformation (Torres 2010).

In the 70s, with the emergence of popular movements and organisations that questioned the imperialist and colonialist character of capitalism in Latin America, the popular culture intensified. This created a breeding ground for the development of different proposals as theology of liberation, philosophy of liberation, and the popular education movement, that

1 Systematisation as critical interpretive research.

2 Emergence, trajectory and meanings of systematisation

resonates in universities. It is from these social, political, educational, ecclesial, communicative, investigative, intellectual and cultural fields that the necessity of co-producing systematic knowledge was highlighted. It is in this context of reflections produced by the protagonists of the experiences that, years later, systematisation of experience originates. In this sense, systematisation of the experiences is considered a legacy of popular education for the field of participatory research. (Torres 2010).

Although the so-called “Systematisation of Experiences” began to be a technique used for the production of knowledge since the mid-eighties, it is in the nineties when this kind of activity gains protagonism. Therefore, its method is taken, adapted, and developed by diverse institutions such as the Centro Latinoamericano de Trabajo Social (CELATS), the Consejo Regional de Fomento a la Educación de Adultos, CREFAL (México), the Red ALFORJA (Central America), the Centro de Investigaciones y Desarrollo de la Educación, CIDE (Chile) and the Asociación Dimensión Educativa (Colombia). Even CEAAL itself created the Programa Latinoamericano de Sistematización, first led by Felix Cadena and later by Oscar Jara. (Torres 2010, p.210).

Currently, systematisation is an established investigative modality that can have different emphasis. So, what are the main features of this methodology? The authors close this chapter bringing six main purposes and motivations: 1: Critical understanding of the changes and knowledge generated through practice, which means a systematic, collective and deep view, enabling to solve real-life situations while learning with them. 2: Strengthening and changing their own practice, through the critical re-appropriation of the experience. 3: Communicating and contributing with other social practices, i.e., to share the learnings and experiences with collectives that act in similar projects. 4: Contributing from formation up to the production of emancipatory subjectivities, allowing the strengthening of the political, organisational and educational dimensions, and self-comprehension. 5: Helping to create bonds and community meanings, together with the sense of collectivity. 6: Promoting emancipatory thinking and participatory methodologies, increasing the critical theory from the South, and bringing together university and community.

Chapter two, *La sistematización como producción de conocimiento y modalidad investigativa*³, presents an epistemological and methodological landscape to define the authors’ methodological approach. Based on the dialectical methodological perspective, and on “a new knowledge paradigm from ‘the South’”, that “has broken down the traditional dichotomies of nature-culture, reason-emotion, expert knowledge-popular wisdom, manual labour-intellectual work” (Jara 2012, p.75), systematisation focuses on the dynamics and movement of the processes, contributing to understanding and transforming the reality as much as to making knowledge dialogues with new theoretical and conceptual elements.

For Torres, Cordero and their work group, systematisation is a strict interpretation of the interpretations that exist in the records made by the actors of the experience. This idea is based on classic authors that, since the popular education perspective, contributed by bringing a participatory character to the investigative proposal. In this sense, they propose seven steps for the systematization process: 1: to create favourable conditions for the research team and the actors developing the research; 2: to be a need and willingness of actors; 3: to outline the research design; 4: to rebuild the historical trajectory of the experience; 5: to read and interpret the collective character of the experience; 6: to produce a synthesis of discoveries and report results; and, 7: the transforma(c)tion of reality.

3 Systematisation as critical interpretive research.

This research approach makes clear the formative aspect of systematisation, because it enables both the self-reflection in the process, as well as constituting the bases for other formative activities through the documents resulting from this formative experience. Thus, systematisation of experience is a methodological process whose purpose is the strengthening of the collectivity of the actors, through the recovery of their relationship with everyday practices and of the changing of their actions and perceptions, both to transform them, as well as to support other experiences. It is a participatory research methodology focused on significant practices of social or educational transformations that, based on narrative reconstruction and critical reinterpretation, aims at potentialising these practices and produce new knowledge that promotes resistances and re-existences in contrast to the hegemonic model (p.49).

The third chapter, *La sistematización desde una perspectiva interpretativa crítica*⁴ has a foundational character, because it presents the ontological, methodological and epistemological assumptions used by Torres, Cordero and the collective of Colombian researchers that work with them. Starting from Popular Education as a guideline, systematisation is enriched by Gadamer's and Ricoeur's philosophical perspective, introducing a hermeneutic theory whose paradigm will be the notion of text, allowing for necessary distancing while not denying belongingness (p.59). The sociological perspective is supported by the interpretivism of Peter Berger, Thomas Luckmann and Clifford Geertz, who develop their theories based on the subjective experience of the actors and their perceptions about the daily life. Highlighting the limits of this perspective, the authors, once again, emphasise the critical character of systematisation that opens up for discussion the contexts and discourses that condition the experience.

The critical perspective is based on the Frankfurt School and the global South, both as an action that allows the emergence of a politics and an ethic for life, as a perspective to analyse the complex relationships of life and power, from the contexts in which these relations take place, and their respective specificities. Therefore, the group's understandings about the notions of reality and knowledge are presented, situating systematisation of experience outside the institutional and hierarchical field of modern research: it is a reflective and participatory practice of knowledge production, that aims at critically rebuilding experiences from the protagonists' point of view. The systematisation contributes with formation and self-reflection, strengthens the emancipatory potential of systematised practices.

The last chapter, *El proceso metodológico de la sistematización*⁵, presents the itinerary of the research, the methodological systematisation steps. This is probably the most important chapter, because in part of the book the reader comes to know the experiences of systematisation that Torres and Cordero made in the last 25 years. The authors start answering when it is possible to systematise an experience, reminding us that it is a collective decision (the group wishes to stop and reflect about their practices): this is the most important condition. It is also advisable that the experiences related to the governmental or international agencies have an institutional link. Another possibility is to produce the systematisation in moments of crisis or doubts about the practices, when the professionals need to re-think or re-elaborate them. A fourth condition is of academic order, when academic researchers using participatory methodologies find an opportunity to reflect on their own experience, with external support.

4 Systematisation from a critical interpretive perspective.

5 The methodological process of systematisation.

Regardless of the reason that motivates systematisation, some initial conditions are required, such as: experiences need to be collective, linked to some group; systematisation should be done collectively and collaboratively by this group and researchers (at least two or three persons of the group need to participate in all systematisation moments); and, it is necessary to have a file (pictures, meeting minutes, videos, notebooks, etc.) that allows the reconstructing the memory of the experience. After that, it is necessary to define the purposes and questions of the investigation; according to the authors, it is more a political than a methodological definition, which is related to the reasons that led the group to systematise their experiences.

Next, the work plan is organised and put into action. More than 20 pages are dedicated to this step, with a well detailed guide for the reconstruction of experiences, that include examples of the authors' systematisation experiences. There are exemplified types of sources, techniques for activating memory and producing narratives, and techniques for recording and analysing these materials. However, how can we critically interpret this material? Models and schemes are presented for interpretation and analysis, coding and decoding, and socialisation of results. At the end of the chapter, the formative character of systematisation is highlighted; not only because the participants obtain theoretical-methodological foundation, allowing the permanent reflection about the practices, but also because systematisation allows a unique form of interaction, that leads to new perspectives on the reality and on the practice itself.

This book is essential reading for both those who work with participatory methodologies, and for popular educators and social workers. With an accessible language, theoretical density and methodological richness, the book allows an initial and deep contact with the subject, serving as a manual for the collective study and development of the methodology.

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CALL FOR PAPERS

For a special issue of the International Journal of Action Research as part of the Conference to take place in San Sebastian in 2020 (October 1-2)

In the context of the “Coping with the Future” Seminar in Agder, Norway on the 10th October 2018 Orkestra, Basque Institute of Competitiveness had an invitation from International Journal of Action Research to host the biennial meeting of this journal in 2020.

Background

The concerns of the editors of the *International Journal of Action Research* go beyond the publication of a good journal. Understanding that the journal has also a pedagogical function, researchers in different sociopolitical contexts are invited to organise symposia to bring together people who share methodological innovations, conceptual discussions, and practical and theoretical developments that fall under the umbrella of Action Research, be they experienced researchers or students in the process of becoming researchers.

The first one took place in Brazil (Porto Alegre, from June 20 to 22, 2011) under the title *International Symposium on Action and Participatory Research*. From Porto Alegre, the forum moved to Denmark (Aalborg University -Copenhagen, from June 5 to 7, 2013) having as theme *Participation and Power in Participatory Research and Action Research*. The third meeting took place in Colombia, Bogotá (Universidad Pedagógica Nacional y Cátedra Itinerante Orlando Fals Borda), from June 23 to 25, 2015) as the *III International Symposium of Action Research: a Homage to Orlando Fals Borda*. Then the encounter went back to Europe where, as part of the conference “Coping with the future: Business and Work in the digital age – A cross disciplinary conference” (Agder University, Norway, on October 8-10, 2018) there was one section dedicated to *The role of Action Research in social transformation*.¹

1 Papers from this conference have been published in a special double issue (IJAR 2018, v. 2+3).

Main theme and possible unfoldings

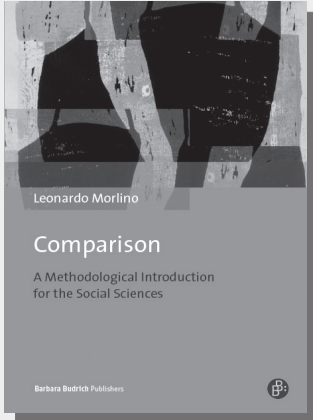
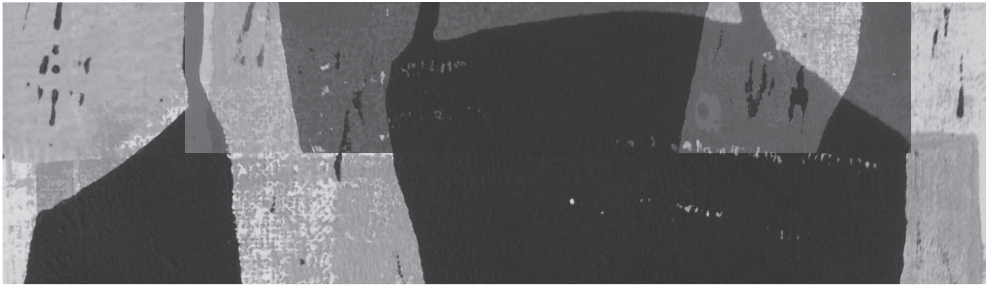
Zubigintza is the name of the AR laboratory in Orkestra. In the Basque language it means “building bridges”. Inspired by this, and following the conversations held in Agder in October 2018, the following is the suggested set of themes that take the form of bridge building processes in various scenarios

- a) Intergenerational bridges
- b) Bridges between Latin American and European perspectives on AR
- c) Bridges between the AR community and policy sciences community
- d) Bridges between AR (*IAP*) and social movements
- e) Bridges between AR (systematisation of experiences) and university
- f) Bridges between Action Researchers and organisations
- g) Bridges between Action Researchers in different contexts, traditions, types of organisations, cultures, experiences

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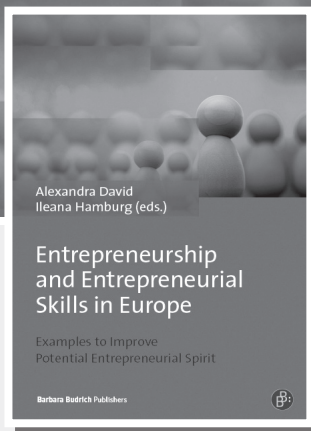
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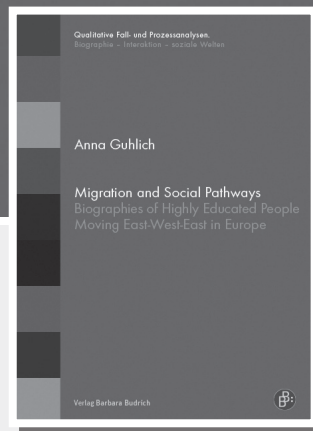
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East-West-East in Europe**

The author researches the phenomenon of highly qualified migration using the example of migration between the Czech Republic and Germany. The book reveals diverse strategies migrants use to respond to the possible de-valuation of their qualification, e.g. by making use of their language skills, starting new studies or using transnational knowledge.

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