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Editorial

This issue of the *International Journal of Action Research* (IJAR) follows a very challenging IJAR Symposium hosted by Orkestra, the Basque Institute of Competitiveness, at the University of Deusto, in San Sebastian (Spain). The first issue of 2020 already introduced the basic theme of the conference: bridging. Articles on action research and social movements, action research and universities and organisations opened the discussions which were followed in the conference with various others connections to be understood and developed. There will follow a special issue on action research, policies and politics, an issue of action research papers originated in the PhD seminar held as part of the symposium, and still a further issue on key concepts of action research. All this to say that action research is a dynamic field that is expanding in a diversity of directions, and takes roots in different social and political contexts.

In this issue, we are pleased to offer to our reader five inspiring papers. The first one, Norman Chivasa analyses the role of action research for village savings and loan associations in Zimbabwe. In his perspective, these institutions have become, especially in developing countries, one of the critical survival strategies amidst poverty and inequality, thus helping low income communities to make their savings, and to eke out a living. One of the comparative advantages of using action research, according to the author, is that it creates spaces for ordinary people to share their experiences, reflect, and come up with context-specific solutions, as they take responsibility for their financial wellbeing, thus helping to meet their socio-economic needs and aspirations. This is particularly relevant in the context of COVID-19, when social inequalities and poverty all over the world are tending to increase.

Ronaldo Akiyoshi Nagai and Alvair Silveira Torres Junior investigate if it is possible for restaurant owners and chefs to implement innovative processes and product development based on consolidated practices such as Lean Product and Process Development (LPPD). Moreover, if it is possible to identify similarities in the product development process of renowned chefs, like Michelin-starred chefs, and LPPD approaches. Their findings, based on a five step action research process carried out in São Paulo (Brazil), suggest that the Michelin chef's creational process is the closest and most adherent model for small to medium size scaled restaurants, with a high frequency of seasonal products launched during

a year, but with the prominent possibility to introduce good practices from the LPPD model.

The next article, by Corinne Butschi, Guillermina Chabrillon and Ingeborg Hedderich, is based on experiences with children in the international participatory research project called “Learning together, Living diversity”, which was carried out using the photovoice method to involve the children in the process as co-researchers. The authors put into writing the reflexive processing of the cross-border research experience of the two co-operation partners, from Argentina and Switzerland, who planned and organised the field work in two Argentinian kindergartens together. They highlight the challenges of carrying out research with participants from different language and cultural background. The paper presents an important contribution in two aspects: a) for planning and developing participatory action research at an international scale, and b) for considering children as stakeholders with their own voice in research.

Lise Billund and Poul Nørgård Dahl (Aalborg University, Denmark), present a new action research tradition: *Recognition-based Action Research*. This new tradition is based on a dialectic understanding of the connection between individual and society, where mutual recognition, both psychologically and sociologically, is seen as a condition of individual and collective development. This recognition perspective is rooted in the thoughts of philosopher Georg W. F. Hegel and links psychologist Anne-Lise Løvlie Schibbye's dialectic relationship theory with sociologist Axel Honneth’s third generation critical theory (The Frankfurt School), even though neither Schibbye nor Honneth are action researchers. The authors analyse, based on examples from their research practices, the complexities of the double relationships in action research: between the researcher and the practitioners, and on the problems of the practitioners.

A report article from the 7th conference of the Action Research Network of the Americas, by Sandro de Castro Pitano, Rosa Noal and Cheron Zanini Moretti, brings to attention the relationship between politics and action research. Based on the assumption that there is no neutrality in research, how should action researchers deal with the undeniable political dimension of action research? The authors’ present a systematisation of some key themes of the conference, among them, the commitment with the rupture: in relation to the traditional practices of research, the role and the social responsibility of the universities and the transforming character of participation, with emphasis in the effort for its repoliticisation and activism.

You are welcome to join us!

Danilo R. Streck
Editor-in-chief

Instituting village savings and loan associations scheme through action research in Zimbabwe

Norman Chivasa

Abstract
Village savings and loan associations schemes have become one of the critical survival strategies amidst poverty, inequality and financial exclusion thus helping low income communities to ride out poverty and make their savings and to eke out a living. However, the use of scientific procedures by ordinary people when establishing such initiatives in their villages is under-reported. This study, therefore, sought to test the utility of the action research (AR) methodology in establishing a low-cost village savings and loan associations scheme intervention, with a view to assessing the extent to which the scheme can improve the livelihoods of members of the scheme, and draw lessons for future interventions. The process involved planning, designing, establishing and evaluating a village savings and loan association scheme initiative involving 15 individual members (inclusive of the researcher) in ward 8 of Seke district, Zimbabwe. Results showed that creating village savings and loan associations is possible using action research, as community participation in the design, implementation and day-to-day operations of such initiatives guaranteeing ownership and control of the initiative by the host group scheme are almost natural to action research. One of the comparative advantages of using action research is that it creates spaces for ordinary people to share their experiences, reflect, and come up with context-specific solutions, as they take responsibility for their financial wellbeing, thus helping to meet their socio-economic needs and aspirations. The strength of village savings and loan associations is that they can be replicated. The study recommends that in the era of COVID-19, social distancing rules and regulations introduced to contain the virus should be observed.

Keywords: Action research; COVID-19; village savings scheme; Zimbabwe

Instituyendo un esquema de asociaciones de ahorro y préstamo en las aldeas mediante la Investigación-Acción en Zimbabue

Resumen
Los esquemas de asociaciones de ahorro y préstamo de las aldeas se han convertido en una de las estrategias de supervivencia fundamentales en medio de la pobreza, la desigualdad y la exclusión financiera, lo que ayuda a las comunidades de bajos ingresos a superar la pobreza, hacer sus ahorros y ganarse la vida. Sin embargo, el uso de procedimientos científicos por parte de la gente común cuando se establece este tipo de iniciativas en sus aldeas no se informa. Este estudio, por lo tanto, buscó probar la utilidad de la metodología de la Investigación-Acción (IA) en el establecimiento de un esquema

de intervención de asociaciones de ahorro y préstamo en aldeas de bajo costo, con miras a evaluar en qué medida este esquema puede mejorar los medios de subsistencia de los miembros del esquema y extraer lecciones para futuras intervenciones. El proceso implicó planificación, diseño, establecimiento y evaluación de una iniciativa de esquema de asociación de ahorro y préstamo de una aldea en la que participaron 15 miembros individuales (incluido el investigador) en la comuna 8 del distrito de Seke, Zimbabue. Los resultados mostraron que la creación de asociaciones de ahorro y préstamo en las aldeas es posible usando la Investigación-Acción ya que la participación de la comunidad en el diseño, la implementación y las operaciones diarias de tales iniciativas, que garantizan la propiedad y el control de la iniciativa por parte del esquema del grupo anfitrión, son casi naturales para la Investigación-Acción. Una de las ventajas comparativas de utilizar la Investigación-Acción es que crea espacios para que la gente común comparta sus experiencias, reflexione y presente soluciones específicas para el contexto, asumiendo la responsabilidad de su bienestar financiero, lo cual ayuda a satisfacer sus necesidades socioeconómicas y aspiraciones. El punto fuerte de las asociaciones de ahorro y préstamo de las aldeas es que se pueden replicar. El estudio recomienda que en la era del COVID-19, se deben observar las reglas y regulaciones de distanciamiento social introducidas para contener el virus.

Palabras Clave: Investigación-Acción, COVID-19, esquema de ahorro de la aldea, Zimbabue

Introduction

In low-income communities across southern Africa, informal economic initiatives, such as self-help groups have often provided a buffer against the vagaries of broader economic and social circumstances. Village savings and loan associations (VSLAs) scheme is one such example of a self-help group scheme. It involves a self-selected group of people pooling cash funds together. The scheme does not require outside capital or on-going financial/administrative support, but exclusively depends on group membership contributions to sustain it (Masiyiwa 2016; Mphambela 2016; Zimbabwe Microfinance Fund 2016). Through this scheme, members are able to meet their immediate basic needs such as money to buy sugar, cooking oil, bathing soap and school fees for children. It promotes co-existence, tolerance and social cohesion between different stakeholders working in the community (Chivasa 2018).

VSLAs scheme is one of the Accumulating Savings and Credit Associations (ASCAs) varieties widely utilised by individuals and groups in resource constrained low income communities world-wide. ASCAs scheme are known world-wide with varieties of names. For example, in Germany and Austria the scheme is called *Bausparkassen*, in China and Taiwan it is called *hehui*, in Japan and Korea the scheme is called *ko* and *kye* respectively. In India the scheme is called *Bishis*. In both Cameroon and Senegal it is known as *Tontine* while in Ghana they call it *Susu*. In Nigeria the scheme is popularly known as *Esusu*. In Zambia it is called *Chilimba* (Bouman 1995; Masiyiwa 2016). In Kenya the scheme is called merry-go-rounds, in Mozambique, it is called *Xitiques* (Vanmeenen 2006). In South Africa, stockvel is a generic name for *mohodisa*na, *gooi-goois*, *kuholisana,* and *makgotlas* (Dohyun et al. 2016). In Zimbabwe, it is called *mukando* (singular), *Mikando* (plural)-maround and VSLAs scheme (Chivasa 2018).

For developing countries, like Zimbabwe, VSLAs scheme have become one of the critical survival strategies amidst poverty and inequality, thus helping low income communities to make their savings, and to eke out a living. In addition, these VSLAs schemes are becoming an informal social security, in response to the fall in value of Zimbabwean dollar against United States dollar (USD), and the erosion of confidence in the banking system owing to the lifetime savings by depositors that evaporated overnight in 2008 (Musarurwa D 2018).

At the time of writing this report, Zimbabwe is faced with economic hullaballoo due to rising inflation, and skyrocketing prices of basic commodities, decreasing the value of people's meagre income. The continuous devaluing of the Zimbabwean dollar against the USD is eroding people's purchasing power, and making it harder for ordinary citizens to meet their daily needs (Mandikwaza 2019). The 2018 statistics on informal economies positioned Zimbabwe on number two with 60.6% after Bolivia with 62, 3% standing at position number one across the globe. The growth of the informal economy in Zimbabwe is due to rising unemployment, poverty, and inequality (Musarurwa T 2018). Typically, the July 2019 estimates by World Bank showed that food prices rose by 319% with an estimated 5.7 million people across the country living in extreme poverty in Zimbabwe by October 2019 (Wiggins 2020; World Bank 2019). Statistics on levels of inequality, unemployment and poverty are building on from the preceding years. FinScope Zimbabwe (2011) reported that about 61 per cent go without cash at some stage while 36 per cent skip a meal due to lack of money or food.

Supportively, Fowler and Panetta (2010) noted that agriculture, which forms the basis of food production especially for the majority of rural people in Zimbabwe, has declined sharply due to persistent droughts and economic crisis in the past decades affecting food production. Remarkably, in Seke district, where the current study was conducted, as at 2015, the average poverty prevalence in all 21 wards stood at 56% (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF 2015). The decline in food production has propelled some rural people to devise livelihood strategies one of which was the adoption of VSLAs scheme. Against this background, this study tested the utility of the action research (AR) in establishing a low-cost VSLAs scheme intervention, with a view to assess the extent to which the scheme can improve the livelihoods of members of the scheme, and draw lessons for future interventions.

Between 2014 and 2015, the researcher collaborated with a group team of 14 adults, seven males and seven females, and embarked on a research project to create a VSLAs scheme. The establishment of a VSLAs scheme followed AR methodology, traditionally defined as involving two change agents; the external and internal that are involved in a research process, on equal footing in order to find a solution to the identified problem. At the heart of AR is learning and service provision to the community, that seeks to understand the context in which a practice takes place, how well a practice is working and coming up with modalities to scale up the practice (Bradbury 2015). In this study, the whole research process was collaborative from sample selection, planning, designing, implementation and evaluation. The intervention was tested in ward 8 of Seke district, Zimbabwe. The purpose of the intervention was to test whether, and under what conditions, the VSLAs group scheme can be an effective socio-economic improvement mechanism taking Seke district as a point of reference.

To address the central argument, the study is structured as follows: Firstly, location of the study, methodology, the data collection methods and ethical issues appended by procedures employed in testing the VSLs scheme are described. Next is a discussion on the significance of VSLAs scheme, followed by some reflections on the researcher's positionality in the research process. The contributions of action research are then presented, followed by Conclusions and recommendations.

Study location

The study was conducted in ward 8 of Seke district, which is predominantly Shona and all respondents were from the Shona cultural grouping. The researcher is a native Shona, and is not only familiar with people in Seke, but has lived and intimately shared experiences on regular basis for the past two decades since 1997. Seke district is one of the nine districts in Mashonaland East province, Zimbabwe. It has 21 wards consisting of eight communal and 13 commercial wards.

Crop production is the primary means of livelihood in Seke district. Crops include maize, groundnuts, sweet potatoes, small grains (such as millet), cow peas and beans, while livestock includes traditional chickens, goats and cattle. Ward 8 which is the focus of this study is a communal area, which largely relies on subsistence crops and livestock farming. Proximity to Harare and Chitungwiza agricultural markets has propelled market gardening, involving crops such as tomatoes, onions and other vegetables grown as cash crops providing livelihoods for households. To supplement their livelihoods, some sections of rural people in ward 8 have adopted a VSLAs scheme (Chivasa 2015).

Ward 8 was selected based on two considerations, firstly, because of its proximity to the researcher. Second, of all the 21 wards in Seke; ward 8 took the initiative to create an association called Seke rural cluster in 1998. This association was instrumental in the creation and proliferation of *Mukando* scheme across the various wards in Seke rural district. The experiences of ward 8 on *Mukando* scheme which spans to more than two decades, was the impetus for the present study to conduct this study. All other VSLAs scheme were established without an academic component. This study was an attempt to address the identified gap. As a scientific method, AR was considered appropriate for this intervention due to its potential to assist the group that the researcher collaborated with, to better understand problems affecting VSLAs scheme and generate solutions to those problems. The researcher was building on the basic assumption that scientific methods are seen as a reliable guide towards informed and effective action (Lisa 1984). Consequently, academics and practitioners consider AR as a strategy that brings together different actors involved in addressing development challenges (Johannsen 2001). It is also considered a useful strategy to address immediate and practical problems, with a view to contributing to theory and knowledge, and to improve practice (Lisa 1984).

To conform to scientific requirements, ethical responsibilities in the context of this study were identified and observed. In the first place, ethical issues had to be discussed and debated. Although rural communities were more open than they were prior to 2014, due to political polarization there was still fear among some members of being labelled as sell

outs. The concept of sell out was prevalent during the liberation war in Zimbabwe and it denoted individuals or groups who were not in support of the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) freedom fighters. As from 2000, it came to mean any member of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) who were seen as misguided sell outs *(zvimbwasungata*-in Shona language*)* needing political re-orientation. As such, in rural Zimbabwe, public perceptions on associations such as self-help groups considered them not of political nature.

Despite the positive public perception on self-help groups, as a research team we knew that there were possible risks associated with bringing people to form an association, but we were prepared to deal with any possible risks. For that reason, we were careful in the way we carried out our meetings. For instance, we made it a point to conduct our meetings at a local church, building on the notion that Christianity and development issues are cousins. Securing a church venue was not a hassle, because one of the committee members happened to be the minister of religion in charge of the church building where we conducted our meetings for nine consecutive months. We also, made it a matter of principle to conduct meetings during day time, to avoid the perception of being labelled otherwise. With all these precautions in place, the research team made informed decisions to participate in the creation of VSLAs scheme, as well as participating as co-researchers in the context of my post-graduate studies. At the end, my research team felt empowered to participant in this socio-economic initiative, since it was meant primarily to serve the perceived interests of the community, and secondarily to meet my research requirements.

Methodology and data collection

This study was predominantly qualitative, because of its propensity to rely on people's experiences, perceptions and beliefs. As such, one set of data on procedures to establish VSLAs group scheme was solicited from documentary review on reports and field guides on VSLA schemes. Another set of data was solicited from planning meetings and procedures that we used to establish the group scheme and lastly, from monthly meetings, and group discussions by group scheme members.

Using documentary review, the researcher examined components of VSLAs schemes, namely group formation, fund development, ownership, governance, self-regulation, transparency and accountability. However, due to space restrictions, this study reflects on three primary components namely; group formation, fund development, and management of the scheme. Specific works with a world-wide application on components of VSLAs scheme consulted were Vanmeenen (2006); Allen (2002, 2006) and VSL As scheme field guides (Allen and Staehle, 2006; International Rescue Committee, 2012; Vanmeenen & Bavois 2010).These field guides did a service to this research, in that they added some weight on the need for community participation in the design and creation of VSLAs scheme, in which case the researcher got the inspiration to adopt the AR research methodology.

In the current study, AR was employed as an innovative measure to intervene for purposes of improving socio-economic conditions of the poor and disadvantaged people in ward 8 of Seke district. The overall goal of adopting AR in the current research was to cre-

ate low-cost, self-sustaining intervention to reduce levels of vulnerability to poverty and hunger in some sections of the population in ward 8. AR afforded ordinary people in the ward under review spaces to take responsibility for their own socio-economic wellbeing and empower themselves through collective efforts, information sharing, and in producing solutions to their socio-economic challenges. This culminated in the establishment of a ward-level VSLAs scheme representing 10 of the 29 villages in ward 8. Procedures employed are summarized in the Table below with more details in the subsequent section.

Table 1: Procedures for the establishment of the VSLAs scheme in ward 8

Action research stages	Steps taken
What we did	– Researcher made use of existing networks to secure buy-in from one minister of religion; – We purposively selected individuals that we had prior contacts with and recruited them into a circle of would-be participants; – an information meeting was convened to secure buy-in on the need to form a group scheme.
How we did it	– We started with identification of problems that warrant group scheme – The group created a cash fund through individual contributions on both weekly and monthly basis – A steering committee of seven to assist in the day to day running of group scheme was established
What we have achieved	– A group scheme was in place and operational – we acknowledged that the process leading to the establishment of a group scheme was participatory in that members were consulted – we conducted a self-evaluation through which we learnt that challenges such as absconding meetings, an non-representation of youth groups needed urgent attention.
What we have learnt	– one of the outcomes was that individuals can form self-initiated groups without capital from a donor – another was that people can take responsibility for their own wellbeing by means of such low cost yet empowering initiatives

Source: Data from the field

In terms of sectoral composition, the 15-member group scheme comprised of security, religion, traditional leadership, politics, business, subsistence farming, civil society, education, and health sector. The ages of group scheme members range from 40 to 70 years, and there were eight females and seven male adults inclusive of the researcher.

Procedures for the establishment of the VSLAs scheme

This section explicates procedures employed by a 15-members team to establish a VSLAs scheme in ward 8 of Seke district using the AR methodology.

What we did: To ensure collaboration with local community members, the researcher's first port of call was to purposively identify one minister of religion he had prior contacts with. Both of us had attended a conflict resolution workshop facilitated by ecumenical church lead-

er's forum (ECLF). One of the topics that was covered during the workshop centred on livelihoods, and the role of income generating projects in improving socio-economic conditions as a pre-requisite for conflict prevention. The researcher considered working with people who already had some knowledge about ways of improving their livelihoods, rather than dealing with raw community members. Before securing buy-in from the minister of religion, the researcher explained the purpose of his research, and showed an ethical clearance letter from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In preparations to create VSLAs scheme, we established the criteria that would-be VSLAs scheme members were participants that had attended the conflict resolution workshop facilitated by ECLF. Our target group for the VSLAs scheme were the 30 individuals that attended the workshop. We started with an appeal to our memories to identify those whom we knew had participated in the workshop. We targeted individuals within close proximity to each other, to ensure convenience for everyone in attending meetings. We purposively selected four would-be group scheme members, of which two were males and two females. After securing buy-in, we recruited them into a circle of would-be group scheme members. We then asked them to individually recruit their peers using the snow-ball sampling technique, and a total of eight participants (six female and two male adults) was achieved.

From the outset, we had it in mind that the councillor was a key stakeholder in development issues at ward level. As such, we co-opted a councillor as a committee member. To attain a 15-member target we added the two of us, plus four that we recruited, councillor plus eight members recruited by their peers. The idea of a 15-member committee came about after we had made some consultations with other members of VSLAs scheme in other villages that these formations comprised of a membership ranging from 10, 20, 30 or more. We settled for a15-member group, borrowing from focus groups concept in which a group of six is considered a small number while 15 is a larger group.

On the actual day when the VSLAs scheme was to be created, the minister of religion called for an information meeting, in his capacity as the ECLF district focal person. Prior to the information meeting, the minister of religion and researcher, had agreed that he was to take up the interim chairperson position, appoint one woman as deputy chair and researcher was to hold the position of the secretary. The other posts such as treasurer and committee members were to be self-selected by their peers. Of the 15 would-be group scheme members, only 10 members turned up. As such, during the course of the information meeting, members in attendance endorsed the minister of religion to take up the interim chairperson, the deputy and the researcher was also appointed secretary, with endorsement by would-be group scheme members. The other posts such as committee members we used a voting system. Would-be group scheme members who did not turn up were voted and seconded by their peers to occupy positions in the group scheme. Accordingly, a 15-member VSLAs scheme was created on the day of the information meeting.

How we did it: The process leading to the establishment of the VSLAs scheme followed five subsequent stages of AR according to Coghlan & Brannick (2014). These were problem identification; action planning; taking action; evaluation and re-planning.

Problem identification and action planning: The first and second stages involved problem identification and action planning. To test the VSLAs scheme, the researcher made use of

prior contacts with other stakeholders and the minister of religion who played the role of the interim chairperson, while the researcher facilitated the process. Conflict issues that prompted us to establish a VSLAS scheme involved financial vulnerability of the poor and unbanked ordinary people, poverty, hunger and food insecure households, and the unavailability of finances to pay school fees. These variables emerged from baseline data drawn from informal and formal interviews and discussions with key stakeholders prior to the establishment of the intervention. Some of these conflict issues emerged during the planning stages, while others were identified after the VSLAs scheme was already established. Since a ward-level VSLAs scheme was witnessed first time, the researcher regarded the process of designing and implementation of the scheme as a learning curve, because in AR a practitioner provides service to the community through expert knowledge (theoretical), as well as seeking to understand how well a practice is working while members of the community provided experiential knowledge.

Taking action: In creating a VSLAs scheme, we followed three components: group formation, creation of cash fund and management of the scheme.

- *Group formation*

The chairperson called for a day of information meeting. The interim chairperson consulted with would-be group scheme members that turned up, and we agreed to form a VSLAs scheme using the self-selection process in which individuals volunteered to occupy certain positions while at the same time the entire group approved their appointments. The researcher was appointed secretary of the group scheme. The minister of religion was endorsed to take up the position of chairperson by all group members.

Our 15-member group comprised of individuals who already had close contact, but also with similar characteristics. The group involved a closed community of friends, relatives or people with a common bond. Our group comprised of women and males who had prior contacts and trusted each other. Membership into the group scheme was based on attributes such as honesty, trustworthiness, responsibility, patience, considerate to mention but a few. These criteria were specified in VSLAs scheme field guides by Allen & Staehle (2006); International Rescue Committee (2012); Vanmeenen & Bavois (2010).

- *Creation of cash fund*

The group created a cash fund through individual contributions in the first two month a weekly in seven month on or monthly basis, which accumulated on the basis that money was loaned out to members at an agreed interest of 10% with all members borrowing on a rotational basis. At the end of a nine month circle the cash fund was shared out equally (Chivasa 2015).

- *Management of the scheme*

Following the formation of the group scheme, a meeting was convened in which the chairperson deliberated on how we were going to form a partnership in the context of my research, to which all group members agreed. The group held weekly and monthly meetings on every last Friday of every month for a period of nine months, during which period the cycle ended. In Seke district, Fridays are sacred days in which people rest at home from their daily routines in the fields and other activities outside their homes. The primary role of

holding meetings was to facilitate regular group meetings, balancing of books, enforcing by-laws, ensuring that money that is loaned out to members is paid to keep the cash fund revolving, and making sure defaulters charged with cash penalties are paid up. Over a period of nine months after its formation, the group scheme engaged in a self-evaluation process.

Evaluation and re-planning: Prior to evaluation, we designed the evaluation guide with input from all participants. In the evaluation we examined '*procedures used for setting up the VSLAs scheme'*, '*challenges experienced'*, '*knowledge gained'* and '*lessons learnt'*. We conducted self-evaluation which van Niekerk & van Niekerk (2009, p. 138) defined as a process in which "individuals assess their own behaviours by simply recalling, examining and reflecting on their own actions with the help of other members or individuals." Self-evaluation gave a sense of ownership to members of the scheme. The evaluation process was facilitated by the chairperson of the group scheme, while all participants were seated in a circular format. The chairperson read each question, and everyone participated in analysing the accompanying responses, and as secretary of the scheme, I was involved in recording the proceedings manually and complemented by a voice recorder to capture all that transpired. In the process, all members shared their experiences, and listened to one another in an atmosphere of openness and mutual understanding. At this point, group discussion was the primary data collection instrument, which captured shared experiences and perceptions of procedures employed in forming the group scheme, challenges faced and lessons learnt. To gain perspectives from different participants, where appropriate the direct words of participants were used for the purposes of this research. Also, to protect confidentiality of participants, the researcher identified them according to their sectors in the section: *What we have learnt?*

What we have achieved: We developed an evaluation tool in the form of an interview guide as a team. The self-evaluation was a learning curve, in which we assessed our practice with a view to draw lessons on what worked, and what did not work for us.

- *On procedures*, we acknowledged that the process leading to the establishment of a group scheme was participatory, in that members were consulted, and they participated in approving individuals who were appointed to positions on the day of the information meeting.
- *On challenges*, we identified the non-regular attendance at meetings by certain members of the scheme. This was because, after the creation of the group scheme, members agreed to meet ona weekly and a monthly basis to discuss matters pertaining to the sustenance of the scheme, and to receive funds loaned out to members. The biggest challenge was that attendance was sometimes below half, and sometimes it was half the full membership. Regarding the fluctuation in membership attendance, we resolved that those who were determined to attend monthly meeting, should not be deterred by defaulting members, as this was a common characteristic occasionally found among human beings to take a wait-and-see attitude, whenever the initiative is in its infant stages. Another challenge raised was the non-representation of youth in the group scheme. However, participants acknowledged that the non-representation of youth in the group scheme was not deliberate, but a coincidence in that only elderly men and women were the ones who availed themselves for the information meeting.

- *Resolutions:* We resolved that, to ensure youth representation, we were going to encourage the creation of other group scheme in which case they were going to advocate for one or two youths (male or female) in each group scheme to represent the interests of youths in self-help schemes. Self-evaluation was not overly ambitious or beyond our reach considering that after a period of nine months we were able to evaluate monthly activities and came up with recommendations and plans of action, which include among others starting another cycle. Of all the identified challenges, non-regular attendance by some members appeared to pose a threat to the sustainability of the group scheme. To discourage non-attendance, the group scheme members applauded those who were determined not to be deterred by defaulters. This encouragement demonstrated collective efficacy among members of the scheme, which could facilitate the sustainability of VSLAs scheme intervention, particularly if the members continues to be united by a common purpose, and an interest to improve their livelihoods in their villages.

What we have learnt: One of the outcomes of the VSLAs intervention was new knowledge gained through the scheme. Interestingly, we learnt that an individual or a group can start a project with what they already have in their homes, instead of looking for a donor or borrowing money to fund a project. One member of the scheme was quoted as saying:

> *It was out of this knowledge that I became interested in resuscitating my project, which I had long forgotten, because I held to the view that a project becomes a project only when I have received money from a donor* (Traditional leader, Female, early 70s).

Another member insisted that through the VSLAs scheme we learnt a number of lessons when she said "people learn that money has other functions besides buying meat and beer" (Ward co-ordinator, Female, mid 40s). For her, "VSLAs is about learning to save" she insisted. The overriding view held by all members in attendance was that the struggle against poverty is won when people work together and start embarking on saving initiatives for purposes of starting income generating projects to improve their livelihoods. Although we all were of the view that most people do not want to be innovative, and start income generating projects which leads to poverty and underdevelopment, all members agreed that individuals should come together and start projects such as VSLAs scheme to improve their socio-economic conditions.

Another outcome of the intervention was the knowledge that through the VSLAs scheme community members are able to take care of their own needs by addressing challenges such as hunger, provision of school fees, and construction of houses. Typically, on the side-lines of the committee meetings, many women that the researcher occasionally talked to expressed sentiments that the scheme was central to their day-to-day lives, and was increasingly becoming part of their occupation. They pointed out that some young women in their villages were increasingly becoming interested, and were joining the scheme in their respective villages, in order to develop their skills in entrepreneurship and improving their livelihoods. The majority of women made public declarations that they were committed to the scheme in order to be self-sufficient. One woman was quoted as saying "the scheme chased away conflicts in my house because we no longer fight over money to buy vegetables at home with my husband" (Health, Female, mid 40s). The issues raised by

these women were mainly to do with conflicts over insufficient basic needs, squabbles over money for sugar, cooking oil, bathing soap and school fees for children. They believed that development cannot be achieved on empty stomachs. For them, development involved having enough to eat in the home and community.

The researcher observed that although members of the scheme did not mention development, they were in fact involved in development, through the improvement of livelihoods of rural women and men. However, it was only after the researcher had listened to stories by some members of the scheme as we conversed, that the primary aim of VSLAs scheme was to promote not only social-economic conditions, but also cohesion, trust and relationships, thus promoting development in their villages.

Finally yet importantly, the intervention enlightened us to begin to understand the significance of the VSLAs scheme.

Significance of VSLAs scheme

The merits of instituting VSLAs scheme include that it:

- Provides convenient ways of saving and credit provision to rural and disadvantaged communities, the youth and women in low income communities;
- Delivers financial services and poverty reduction to the poor and financially excluded people;
- Supplements monthly income, builds the capacities of women to buy assets, pay for children's school fees, general upkeep in the home or pay for traditional ceremonies;
- Serves as start-up capital for income generating activities as well as an insurance against uncertainties and emergencies. It builds the capacities of the poor to ride out poverty, assists the poor to build up financial assets through savings, and enhances women's social and economic status (Chivasa 2018);
- Provides spaces for scheme members to participate equally within their scheme than they would with other institutions;
- Prevents over-reliance on government for financial services;
- Encourages local groups to deal with development challenges within their scope at their local level;
- Enables development challenges such as poverty and hunger to be dealt with at local village level where they erupt, rather than having to wait for local government to discuss the matter with its bureaucratic structures, and forward its recommendations to national government to decide on those matters;
- Allows ordinary people, in particular women, youth and the elderly to creatively deal with their financial vulnerability that arise within their local contexts;
- Allows local group scheme to be self-regulatory to address problems affecting their wellbeing at the local level;
- Builds up financial assets and creates solidarity groups, peer-to-peer learning, provides psycho-social support, financial education and business development skills and the creation of support network systems (Zheke 2010);
- Creates a platform for non-violent conflict resolution amongst members of the scheme

- Enables young girls and women to explore issues of concern affecting the girl child (Miller, Swayer & Rowe 2011).

In spite of the above, the downside of VSLAs scheme is that it heavily relies on trust and friendship, as such, other members after reaching their turn to receive the lump sum may pull out before the circle is complete breaking the chain thereby making the VSLAs scheme ineffective.

Reflections on the researcher's position as secretary

The researcher's entry into the social space to set up a VSLAs scheme in Ward 8 occurred within the context of prior contacts with members that he collaborated with. In the context of a research study, prior contacts can pose some potential risks to the shared social space. The risks border around over-familiarisations or manipulation of the process by the researcher which can potentially distort the results (Burns, Harvey & Aragon 2012). Being cautious of these possibilities, I had to be honest with my co-researchers as to why I preferred to work with people I already knew, rather than with those I had no prior contacts with. One of the major reasons was that I wanted to understand how and to whar extend VSLAs scheme can improve people's livelihoods from an insider's point of view. The merits of gaining access to individuals I had prior contacts and interactions with outweighed the interactions with individuals with whom I had no prior contacts. Thus, this report was written from an insider's point of view (Chivasa 2019).

Regarding the establishment of the VSLAs scheme, ordinary people in ward 8 had no intention of taking on board the AR methodology, because the creation of the VSLAs scheme had no academic component from the outset. I was not the only one who came up with the idea of creating a VSLAs scheme: the idea came from my research team which included myself, after having undergone a three-day conflict resolution sensitisation workshop which was administered by one civic organisation called ECLF. After the workshop, members were urged to decide what to do next to ensure their community addresses and development challenges such as poverty, hunger and food insecurity. The 30 participants, including myself, resolved that creating a VSLA scheme was a worthwhile intervention. The creation of a VSLAs scheme coincided with my study in Seke district which had already secured ethical approval from the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The objective of my study was to test whether and under what conditions self-initiated interventions can be effective in promoting the improvement of livelyihoods. AR was my proposed methodology. Two interventions were concurrently established in ward 8 namely; a ward peace committee (see Chivasa 2017) and a VSLAs scheme, which is the focus of this study.

There was no standing committee to spearhead the creation of the VSLAs scheme. Two months after we had made a resolution to create an intervention, I approached the minister of religion who was co-ordinating the workshop, and later became the interim chairperson of the VSLAs scheme. I explained the purpose of my research to him and asked for possible collaboration, and he agreed. During the planning sessions, I appointed myself to the position of an under-secretary for planning purposes. Two factors contributed to the adoption of the AR methodology prior to the creation of the VSLAs scheme by the research team.

Firstly, it was my brain child, in line with my research and my involvement in the planning process that led to the use of AR in setting up the VSLAs scheme. Prior to the creation of the group scheme I took time to explain to the chairperson, and to highlight to him the advantages of using the AR method that it was going to benefit us all. Among the benefits were that the AR was going to help us assess the processes used for creating group scheme, provide us with insights to understand procedures for establishing a VSLAs scheme with a view to learning from our practice, so as to improve similar interventions in future. Since the interim chairperson was conversant with reading English I did not experience any hassle after explaining and illustrating to him by way of pictures using some pictures of the AR to get him on-board. I borrowed the idea of sharing the AR pictures to co-researchers from van Niekerk & van Niekerk (2009) who also shared pictures with co-researchers that they worked with, using AR methodology in South Africa.

Secondly, the adoption of AR, resulted in the use of a structured interview guide in the evaluation process, nine months after we had established the VSLAs scheme at ward level. A companion article, has examined the evaluation process undertaken by the group under review (see Chivasa 2019).

My insider position gave me the legitimacy to keep the minutes, as well as collecting data and the process of designing and implementation of the intervention. Because of the flexibility and open-endedness of the process, I was appointed deputy chairperson at first, but I declined that offer, and opted for the secretary's position, and all the members who were present approved my self-appointment. I opted for the secretary's position, because I was hoping to continue documenting events and processes which I had begun prior to the creation of the peace committee. The position of the secretary was helpful for me, because I had access to data, and I could easily do member checking during meetings to validate data. However, although I (as secretary) held a position of power on the committee (in charge of taking minutes), local dynamics on the ground and the participatory engagement of the entire process at the end led to a process where committee members did not just participate, but influenced the whole process.

In other words, members of the scheme influenced the research process, including the writing process of the manuscript in the context of my post-graduate studies. This was so because at first, being guided by research time-frame, I wanted the intervention to be evaluated three months after its establishment. However, this plan did not materialise as the group members did not have a date for evaluation until after nine months, when the cycle was complete. That being the case, a point has to be made that participation often results from very different, not always open nor always fully compatible with, individual interests. Thus, the experience of collaborating with local people as an insider was a learning curve for me. From this hands-on, one of the lessons learnt was that when one is dealing with local community members, there is need to learn how a community works. The reality in the context of ward 8 of Seke district is that life in the community is more habitual than cosmetic, and therefore adjustment, patience, focus, commitment and courage should be embraced to achieve any desirable goal.

Overall, the position of the secretary was a distinct advantage, as communities are somewhat sceptical of outsiders to get involved into their daily activities, and therefore their involvement and access to sensitive data may be restrictive. It provided me with an

understanding of how communities work, when it comes to variables such as gender dynamics in decision making and shift in gender stereotyping that women can hold positions of authority and chair a VSLAs scheme. Some of these dynamics would certainly have been difficult for an outsider.

Formal and informal meetings and discussions were convened, presided over by the chairperson. Given that I was the as secretary of the group I was studying, a trustful relationship was established and sustained during the period under review. A trustful relationship was facilitated, because the position of the secretary gave me the opportunity to discuss both formally and informally with fellow VSLAs scheme members, regarding what worked and what did not work during meetings and in other fora. As a matter of fact, this relationship has outlived the nine months period we worked together in the VSLAs scheme.

Reflections on the contributions of action research

Results of the study indicate the power of AR to facilitate interactions between individuals from the bottom-up, in which case people experiencing problems become innovative by creating partnerships to share experiences, knowledge and work together to learn from their experiences. However, VSLAs scheme is not traditional or government-led but a third way. It is not meant to replace mainstream financial systems, but to come up with hybrid forms of addressing the plight of the poor, unbanked and financially vulnerable people. Given that participation lies at the heart of AR, this study argues that multi-stakeholder participation can serve as the prime means to bring mainstream financial institutions and bottom-up initiatives to come together to help promote hybrid systems that serve the interest of local people. This is so because AR allows individuals and groups working as a collective to learn from their experiences and participate equally in coming up with solutions to problems affecting in their wellbeing. As such, the implications of AR for mainstream financial institutions is that as a social group specific methodology, AR can facilitate collective participation as individuals and groups become adoptive and innovative, by forming partnerships and joint ventures to address development challenges. Thus, without the involvement and participation of all relevant social groups and constituencies in development issues, the question that arises is whether we are experiencing development at all.

Over and above this, the AR process reported in this study showed that ordinary people in Seke district demonstrated the ability to resist traditional or government-led initiatives, to adopt a third way through the creation of a VSLAs scheme in their villages. VSLAs scheme is a third way in that it comprises of various stakeholders, such as the elderly, women, youths or specific religious groupings. It is inclusive of all social groups, including the vulnerable and marginalized groups such as women and youth. The merits of inclusivity and gender sensitivity of VSLAs scheme offers it a very strong niche in development discourses. Any woman or man can chair the group scheme. For that reason, women can occupy strategic positions, such as that of chairperson, deputy or secretary, which are usually a preserve for men in traditional structures (Chivasa, 2018). Thus, the formation of a VSLAs scheme by ordinary people in their own villages and subsequent evaluation marks a slight shift from top-down/elite driven development initiatives, which often come with already laid down objectives and templates. This form of local agency sets a pace worth emulating, which other communities can learn from and replicate.

Conclusion and recommendations

The overall goal of adopting AR in the current research was to create low-cost, self-sustaining intervention, to reduce levels of vulnerability to poverty and hunger among other social problems to the group members. Out of a hands-on experience of working with small advisory team of 14 members in Ward 8 of Seke district, the researcher learnt that low-cost, self-initiated interventions are often small and simple. Community-led initiatives are small, in that they are not complex. One of their distinguishing characteristics is that usually they do not involve official bureaucratic structures, but local structures that are within the community. A case in point is the setting up of the VSLAs scheme which involved ordinary people both men and women, sometimes sitting under a tree, but creating initiatives that embrace their common interests and needs. Such initiatives are usually guided by culture specific norms and values, and that is what makes them more informal but legitimate in their host communities.

Typically, at village level in rural communities, although the village head is hereditary, he/she is expected to embrace the participatory approach where people have opportunities to participate and discuss matters together, and come up with common agreement ,whenever there is an issue that calls for collective efforts or not. From this point on, the researcher began to understand that the VSLAs scheme operating in rural communities is another formation which replicates the village assembly in one way or the other. This participatory dynamic was played out from the planning stages, implementation and evaluation of the intervention.

In addition, the researcher had learnt that community-led initiatives, although they may not carry a scientific component, are in fact participatory, in that they are locally-owned and involve ordinary people with common interests and taking responsibility for their well-being, through planning, designing and implementation, and that is what makes the initiative more sustainable. However, the important thing about community initiatives is that, although they are small and simple, they address the community's basic needs and challenges. One of their biggest challenge centres on poverty stricken, gender-inequality and they lack resources. Notwithstanding these challenges, community-led initiatives are participatory in nature, and are designed to meet the needs of the host community.

Regarding the sustainability of the work started, it is important to note that among the members of the VSLAs scheme, social capital was a critical factor, and in fact it was instrumental in the creation of the scheme. It was the existing social networks, obligations, expected behaviours and privileges between members of the scheme that facilitated the establishment of this self-help group scheme. The availability of social networks suggests possibilities of sustainability of the scheme both in the short and long term. The features of sustainability include ability by members of the scheme to meet regularly for a period of nine months that we worked together, and a sense of community which were demonstrated when members of the community took responsibility for their own wellbeing, through the creation of an intervention to address their socio-economic conditions without any external agency.

Through this hands-on, the researcher came to understand the benefits of the VSLAs scheme are compatible with AR, in that VSLAs scheme seek to empower the disadvantaged

by creating spaces for collaboration, reflection and coming up with context specific solutions. To this end it is logical to argue that AR methodology is compatible with the routine activities by members of the scheme, which involves discussion of various topics, some of which spilled over into issues beyond the monetary, such as conflict resolution, reduction of domestic abuse, increased community policing, and other community issues.

However, the emergence of COVID-19 has put VSLAs scheme at risk, and continues to impose uncertainty on its survival, as the widespread lethal consequences of the virus on socio-economic, political and cultural lives is being felt world-wide. As such, there are speculations that the imposition of social distancing has already disoriented VSLA schemes, as they rely on close-face-to-face contact to sustain their operations. Human contact is hugely important in establishing and maintaining trust. This is also true for many other activities, including social ceremonies, worship services and academic institutions. These social contacts offer the group a unique opportunity to provide a supportive environment for social harmony, trust, co-existence and social networks.

While it may be too soon for VSLA schemes to have made any significant changes in response to the COVID-19 virus, they are faced with only one option, that is to discuss about how they must do things differently during this era of the COVID-19 virus.

The following measures can help to sustain the scheme both in the short and longer term:

- Individuals protecting one another, thereby reducing group transmission
- Observe social distancing rules and regulations introduced to contain COVID-19;
- To prioritise safety precautions such as avoid holding hard cash but adopt electronic transactions to prevent the spread of the virus;
- Improvise innovative ways to maintain a form of contact without spreading the virus, such as widespread use of cell phones as a vehicle to maintain social distancing; and prevent the spread of the virus.

It is widely accepted that there was not enough time for preparation and re-orientation to all self-help schemes about COVID-19 on one hand. On the other, if social distancing is not adopted, the number of cases and deaths are likely to skyrocket in low income communitie,s due to the spread of COVID-19. What is clear is that current approaches to VSLAs scheme are not only ethically problematic, but also highly risky to individual members of the scheme.

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Lean Product and Process Development and Set-Based Concurrent Engineering in the Dining Industry: the experience of an American-Asian fusion restaurant

Ronaldo Akiyoshi Nagai and Alvair Silveira Torres Junior

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to investigate the implications of a culinary innovation process when adopting manufacturing industry concepts such as LPPD: Lean Product and Process Development. The action research structured in five steps (semi-structured interviews, process mapping, training, and implementation of a new process, process observation, and compilation/feedback of results) allowed the introduction of the LPPD in the culinary innovation process. Results showed that despite the innovation process of a restaurant being based on tacit knowledge, concepts from the manufacturing innovation process could be adopted. Findings can contribute to the multidisciplinary studies involving innovation, the hospitality industry, and the action research application on operations management.

Keywords: Dining innovation, Culinary innovation, Lean Product Development, Set-Based Concurrent Engineering, product development

Desarollo de processos y productos Lean y ingeniería simultánea en negocio gastronómico: el experiencia de un restaurante de fusión americano-asiático

Resumen: El propósito es investigar las implicaciones de un proceso de innovación gastronómica cuando se adoptan conceptos de la industria manufacturera como LPPD – Lean Product and Process Development. La investigación-acción estructurada en cinco pasos (entrevistas semiestructuradas, mapeo de procesos, capacitación e implementación de un nuevo proceso, observación del proceso y recopilación / retroalimentación de resultados) permitió la introducción de la LPPD en el proceso de innovación gastronómica. Los resultados mostraron que a pesar de que el proceso de innovación de un restaurante se basa en el conocimiento tácito, se pueden adoptar conceptos del proceso de innovación manufacturera. Así, esta investigación puede contribuir a los estudios multidisciplinarios relacionados con la innovación, la industria de la hospitalidade y la aplicación de investigación-acción sobre gestión de operaciones.

Palabras clave: Innovación gastronómica, innovacíon culinaria, Desarrollo de product lean, Ingeniería Concurrente, Desarrollo de productos

1. Introduction

Continuous improvement methodologies and practices in the hospitality industry are at the core of the development of new products and processes. The food industry particularly has several examples of innovative product development that are part of society's life, to name a few: pasteurised milk, infant formula, canned food, and gluten-free foods (Mishra 2016). However, scholars have been neglecting studies involving both products and process areas (Farrington et al. 2018). Product and process development are critical activities employed by most companies to remain competitive, regardless of the industry type or size. Through the new product development processes, companies seek commercial viability, competitiveness, profitability, and effectiveness, and therefore innovation plays a central role (Hébert and Link 2006).

Among different product and processes development approaches, those improved by the Toyota automaker gained prominence (Liker 2004; Monden 2011; Shingo and Dillon 1989). The Lean Product and Process Development (LPPD), based on Toyota's Product Development System and introduced in the early nineties, focused on a tripod, based on value, knowledge, and improvement (Womack et al. 1990). Also, Set-Based Concurrent Engineering: SBCE played an essential role in the development and design of new products in Toyota (Ward et al. 1995). In this latter approach, creators explicitly communicate and share their set of alternatives, instead of presenting a single *point to point* design, in which the designing process moves step by step. The success of these models helped Toyota to reach the leading position in the car manufacturing industry in the last decade.

Despite the significant contributions of these models to improving efficiency in the manufacturing sector and increasing academic production, their implementation in other industries is scarce. Recent studies discuss the application of lean principles in health care, (Drotz and Poksinska 2014; Poksinska et al. 2017; Tay 2016; Vinodh 2018), financial services (Delgado et al. 2010; Vashishth et al. 2017) and public sector (Antony et al. 2016; Antony et al. 2017), but none in the dining industry.

According to Harrington (2004), in the dining business innovation has not been clearly articulated regarding products and processes. Restaurant business owners recognise the importance of innovation. However, they find difficulties in establishing a systematic practice to create and design new menus (Ottenbacher and Harrington 2007). The food and hospitality businesses require a continuous innovation process, in order to attract consumers and thereby create a sustainable business model (Chattopadhyay and Shah 2014; Cho et al. 2018).

Levitt (1972; 1976) criticised the transference of manufacturing logic for servicing operations. Notwithstanding, a sequence of works, especially in the 2000s brought the universal contribution of lean thinking for organisations: Middleton (2001) in software development, Comm and Mathaisel (2003) in the context of academia, Swank (2003), Leite and Vieira (2015) and Smith et al. (2017) for servicing business. Those authors suggested that principles of lean thinking are universal, and can bring benefits to the organisation. Therefore, service companies can improve efficiency implementing manufacturing principles in their operations, mainly due to the *mass customisation* effect: – the use of flexible processes and structures to produce varied and individually customised products at the low cost of a standard product. (Bowen and Yiungdahl 1998).

Thus, is it possible for restaurant owners and chefs to implement innovative process and product development, based on consolidated practices such as LPPD, and SBCE? Recommendations of LPPD practice could be added to the chef's innovative process, so that product development would create more value for the customer. (For example, how SBCE could improve the screening process and consequently the trial and error process?) Likewise, is it possible to identify similarities in the product development process of renowned chefs, like Michelin-starred chefs, and those concepts?

The innovative process in an American-Asian fusion restaurant in the City of Sao Paulo, Brazil, will be studied based on those questions. Through an action-research approach, it aims to contribute with the theoretical basis of the innovation process in the dining industry (which can also be found as a *food service industry* in the literature), adding knowledge to the past works of Harrington (2004) and Ottenbacher and Harrington (2007).

Simultaneously, this paper contributes to strengthening the literature of action research application in operations management, as the examples of Westbrook (1993), which developed a classification scheme based on complexity for priority management, and Karlsson and Åhlström (1996) which studied the implementation of lean product development in a company.

The paper structure comprises a Literature Review in Section 2, followed by the Research Method in Section 3. Results and Discussions are described respectively in Sections 4 and 5.

2. Literature review

The following section reviews the classical literature regarding LPPD and SBCE, as well as the application of the innovation process in the dining industry. Additionally, due to the scarce literature related to innovation in the dining industry, we took into account some old as well as recent literature, but focus on two significant contributions to our understanding of the industry, the research of Ottenbacher and Harrington (2007).

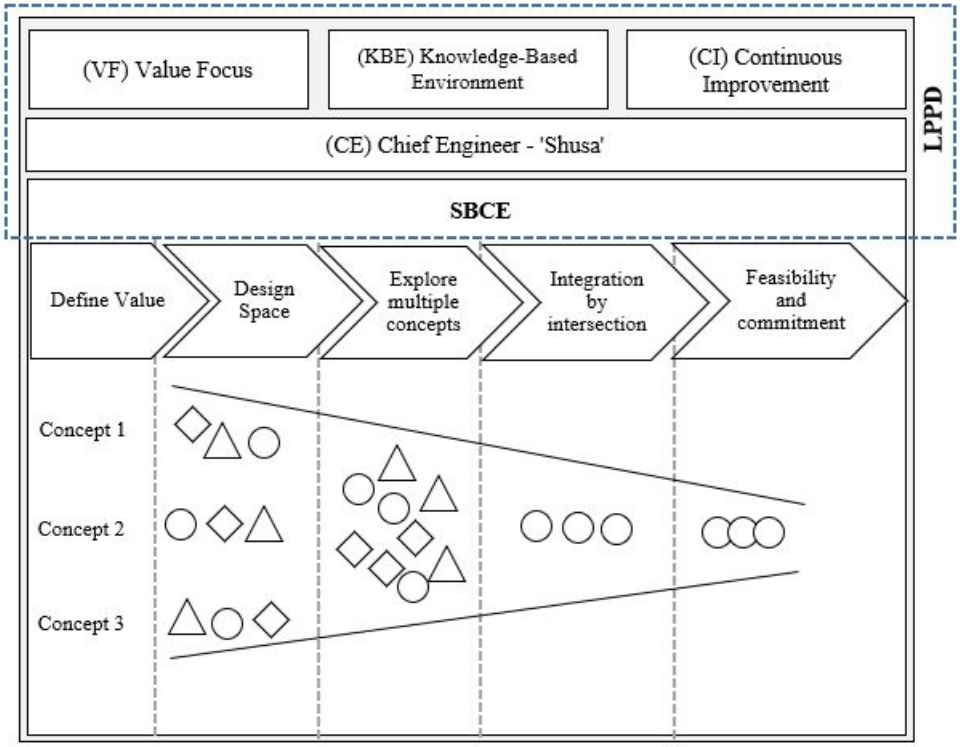
2.1 LPPD: Lean Product and Process Development and SBCE: Set-Based Concurrent Engineering

The term Lean was coined by Krafcik (1988) and most popularised through the Womack et al. (1990) best-selling management book *The Machine that Changed the World*. It is *Lean* in terms of outputs as the process that *compared to mass production it uses less of everything – half the human effort in the factory, half the manufacturing space, half the investment in tools, half the engineering hours to develop a new product in half the time* (Womack et al. 1990 p. 13). Researchers involved in the MIT International Motor Vehicle Programme discovered that Toyota Motors trained and empowered its workers to implement the Kanban and Just-In-Time system, solving any problem related to the flow of production. They found that the lean concept demands more communication in all directions to improve quality, reduce costs, and production time.

Based on the Toyota lean production system, the LPPD has its roots in the maximisation of value while minimising waste. According to Khan et al. (2011), the LPPD has been addressing the needs of European manufacturing companies for going beyond lean manu-

facturing and incorporating lean thinking in the product design development process (Khan et al. 2011). Companies had been applying this practice to improving manufacturing processes (Baines et al. 2006; Khalil and Stockton 2010), but just a few applied lean thinking to product and process innovation (Al-Ashaab and Sobek 2013). This model is based on five concepts: value focus (VF), knowledge-based environment (KBE), continuous improvement: Kaizen (CI), chief engineering (CE) and Set-Based Concurrent Engineering (SBCE), being the latter the guide of the LPPD model as shown on Figure 1.

Fig 1: SBCE and LPPD concepts and processes



SBCE is defined as a process where sets of solutions for different sub-assemblies and components are developed in parallel (Ward 2007). The parallel development starts narrowing according to the progress of testing and prototyping, generating a knowledge base, which will support coherent opinions in the decision process (Al-Ashaab et al. 2016; Sobek et al. 1999). Based on the works of Morgan and Liker (2004), Sobek et al. (1999), Ward et al. (1995) and Ward (2007), we can propose that SBCE has five categories and a set of principles which are i) Strategic value research and alignment; ii) Map the design space; iii) Create and explore multiple concepts in parallel; iv) Integrate by intersection and v) Establish feasibility before commitment.

Strategic value research regards the capture and identification of customer value and innovation, reflecting those in the company strategy. *Map the design space* defines frontiers

between feasible and infeasible aspects of the development, which can be related to the definition of the scope. *Create and explore multiple concepts in parallel* regards the capacity of the development team to utilise acquired knowledge to evaluate the different sets of design solutions and constraints. *Integrate by intersection* is the exploration and testing of different sets, eliminating weaker solutions. Finally, *Establish feasibility before commitment* will wrap-up the findings, decide the final set, and release the team commitment. Along with these five principles, there is the concept of *Trade-Off Curves* (ToC), which is a crucial tool to support decision-making in the product development process. For example, ToC can support identifying the feasible area of development, generate a set of designs, compare alternative design solutions, trade-off, and narrow down the set of solutions (Morgan and Liker 2006; Oosterwal 2010; Sobek et al. 1999; Ward and Sobek II 2014).

2.2 Innovation process in the dining industry by Harrington (2004) and Ottenbach & Harrington (2007)

The traditional view of the innovation process was proposed by Utterback (1971) and consisted of a set of steps and practices which are i) idea generation, ii) problem solving, iii) implementation and iv) diffusion. Other authors like Wheelwright and Clark (1992) contributed to the development of the funnel concept: generation and screening a broad range of inputs with further refining selection of subsets to reach the product concept. Cooper (1990; 1993; 2008) coined the concept of product development organised in sequential stages, or as he called stage-gates, which is a system or process that maps out *what needs to be done* as well as how to do it, in order *to win the game*. In the idea of Cooper, the innovation process has predefined phases: idea and discovery stage, scoping the case, business case, development, testing, and launching.

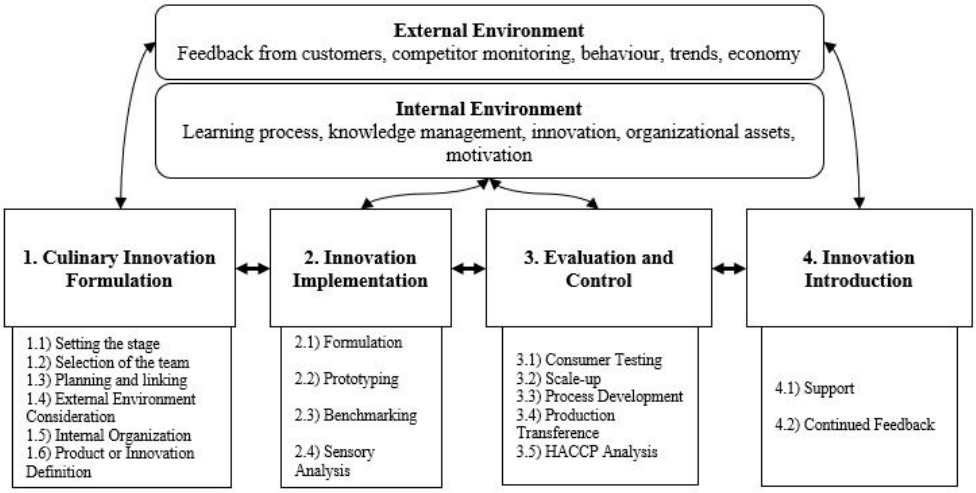
A stage-gate process, if well implemented, can boost-up the organisation's product development and innovation process (Trott 2005). However, the stage-gate process received some criticism, being considered time-consuming, bureaucratic, and restricting learning opportunities (Grönlund et al. 2010). Pich et al. (2002) and Rice et al. (2008) proposed that projects and product design have a high level of uncertainty, and consequently, traditional approaches may not be adequate. Besides, in the specific case of Project Management literature, Shenhar (2001) proposed that a standardised process or system like the prescriptive-type of a stage-gate system may find some challenges to the innovative processes.

Based on those pieces of evidence, it seems that there is no consensus in the literature on what model or idea should be implemented to innovate products and processes in the industrial sector. In the food product development, disagreements are more apparent. For Rudolph (1995), Pyne (2000), and Stewart-Know et al. (2003), the current models of innovation in the food product development are based on manufacturing concepts, which do not reflect the peculiarities of a food service operation. Food service is unique, since it requires efforts in the areas of service and product innovation process (Ottenbacher and Harrington 2009). Moreover, innovation in food service occurs in several areas, such as products, services, processes, management, and marketing (Lee et al. 2016) and, therefore, an organic model integrating strategic planning, marketing, food science, and operations is required.

There is evidence that innovation can help food service businesses to improve quality and reputation and, at the same time, improve profitability (Ottenbacher and Gnoth 2005).

Furthermore, speed, interaction, and iteration are needed to imitate a difficult competitor's imitation (Fuller 2011; Harrington 2004; Lee et al. 2018; Ottebacher and Harrington 2007). Harrington (2004) proposes an innovative model for the food industry, broken into four main phases: i) culinary innovation formulation; ii) innovation implementation; iii) evaluation and control; and, iv) innovation introduction. To visualise these four main phases, we adapted Figure 2 from the work of Harrington (2004).

Fig 2: Culinary product innovation process



These four main phases are composed of 17 elements in a process. According to Harrington (2004), culinary product innovation is the conceptualisation, development, launch, and ongoing management of new culinary innovation. Six elements summarised below compose this stage:

i) *Setting the stage*, which is the process to align firm objectives with external environment demands, plan organisation, and potentialise the communication tools and plans in order to have the best interaction with consumers and suppliers.
ii) *Selection of the team* looking for members from different functions.
iii) *Planning and linking* customer needs and innovation with technical and functional demands.
iv) *External environment considerations*, which considers competitors' actions, regulation, markets, seasonality, and trends.
v) *Internal organisation*, which analyses the capability of the available resources, knowledge and experiences, understanding strengths, and weaknesses; and,
vi) *Product or innovation definitions*, which gather and link prior elements to define the concept and the innovation-line proposed by the business.

The innovation and implementation phase is composed of four elements, which are: i) *Formulation*; ii) *Prototyping*; iii) *Benchmarking* and, iv) *Sensory analysis*. A key point in

this phase is the iterative process of the four elements because the characteristics of food service business require a dynamic approach and quick response. Accordingly, the formulation and prototyping of a new product may be tested during a seasonal menu. At the same time, similar competitor's menus can be benchmarked while customer experiences and feedbacks are collected either internally or externally.

The evaluation and control phase consists of an iterative process in which customer feedbacks feed the innovation process so that a product can be adjusted quickly. *Consumer testing* is a necessary procedure to create a direct feedback link with the innovation formulation process. The following three elements are related to the stability and robustness of the production. *Scale-up*, similar to a traditional manufacturing process, consists of the process of increasing the production volume, on a larger scale, ensuring that quality and productivity will be constant. *Process development and production transference* will ensure that developed products will have a minimum variation during the mass-production process. Therefore, aspects like the consistency of the production process, quality loss of the product under a sort of circumstances (e.g., box condition, weather variation and served plate), easiness for employees to reproduce the original recipe; and, availability of ingredients in all locations (in case of branch stores, for examples) are analysed carefully (Harrington 2004; Schonberger 1994).

The final step is the rollout of the process, which is similar to the development of any other standard product. In this phase, the product will be *introduced in the market* to compete against other products, and therefore, frontline employees must be adequately trained (Rudolph 1995). Food service businesses are represented by hosting and serving staff, bartenders, *maîtres*, and managers. The role of those employees is essential for the iterative innovation process because they will be the link between the customer and product developers.

The food service innovation process designed by Harrington (2004) was further improved by Ottenbacher and Harrington (2007), based on Michelin's innovation model, which has seven main steps: idea generation, screening, trial and error, concept development, final testing, training, and retail.

Idea generation is based on pillars like inspiration sources, product considerations, and complemented by the tacit creativity skills of the chef. Inputs of this process can be, for example, the literature, chef personal experiences, education, visiting, and being in contact with new technologies, concepts, and other restaurants.

Screening is related to making projections of the idea being concretised. It means projecting if the creation will fit the operation, chef style, customer demands, and acceptance. It is a distinct process, which also occurs in the later stages of the creational process, serving as a *check gate.* However, unlike the generic innovation process, the screening of chefs is an informal process (Ottenbacher and Harrington 2007).

Two main sub-processes comprise trial and error, which are a mental trial and error (*cooking in your head*) and a practical trial (*giving a shot*) giving inputs to *Concept Development*. This process will provide improvements to the creation by introducing ideas coming from market research (formal or informal, regarding pricing and customer needs), preparing formal recipes, thinking about differentiation factors (for example, an authentic cooking style, distinct harmonisation, or concept).

Final testing is performed through the preparation of the creation and testing it on one or more sources like trusted employees, partners, and regular customers. It may consider the entire aspect of the experience a part of the taste and appearance of the creation, considering the atmosphere of the experience and the service provided.

Training and Retail (or commercialisation) processes are essential to assuring the stability of the innovation process, since the former will assure the quality level of the production in a "mass production" situation. At the same time, the later will give essential inputs for iteratively to improve the product development process.

3. Research method

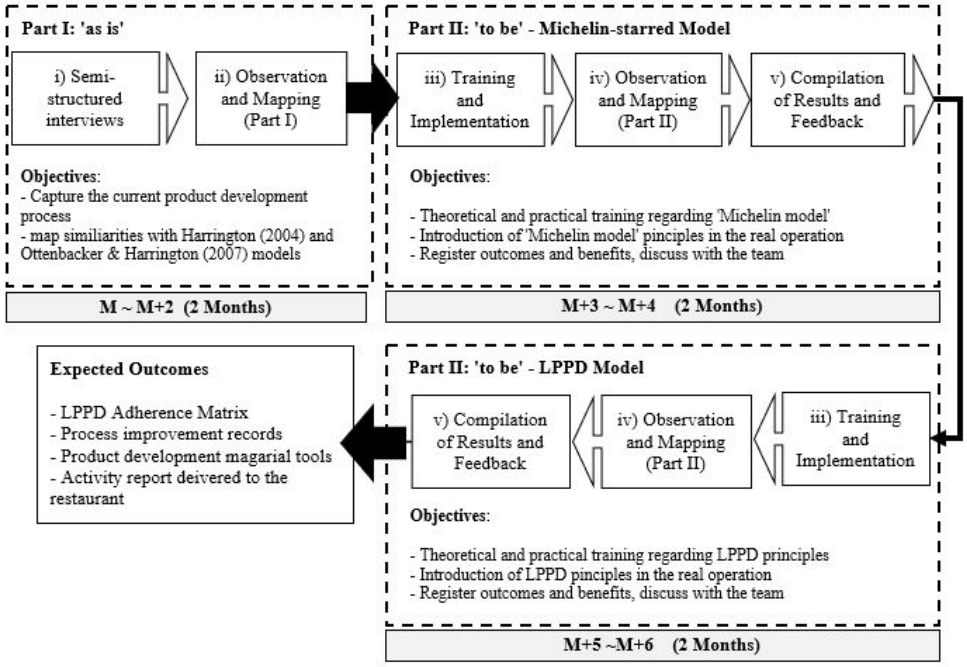
For this study, we employ the action research method, understanding that this is the best approach to integrating theory and practice in the work. In general, action research is appropriate to unfold actions over time in a given group, understanding how and why their action can improve the work system, and understanding the improvement process to learn from it (Coghlan and Brannick 2001). Action research goes beyond the notion that theory can inform practice, and a theory can and should be generated through practice (Brydon-Miller et al. 2003) and should influence social changes. Dining (food service) business innovation and production are mostly practical activity, where the *learning by doing* system is very present. Consequently, the action research comes as a new method to search the possibility for restaurant owners and chefs to implement innovative process and product development, based on consolidated practices such as LPPD, which also includes SBCE. Furthermore, if it is possible to identify similarities in the product development process of renowned chefs, like Michelin-starred chefs, Harrington's Culinary Product Development Model with those based on the LPPD approach commonly used in the manufacturing industry.

To look for answers for these questions, we developed action research divided into five phases: i) Semi-structured interviews and ii) Observation and mapping that comprises the Part I of the study. In this part, the focus of our investigation is to understand the as-is process of the restaurant's product development. Part II of the study comprise the iii) Training and implementation, iv) Observation and mapping: Part II; and v) Compilation of results and feedback. The focus is on understanding the to-be enhanced process and assessing the benefits and improvements in the creation and launching of a new product. A schematic view of the method and action research phases is shown in Figure 3. These phases are aligned with the action research cycle proposed by Coughlan & Coghlan (2002), which comprises a pre-step (to understand context and purpose- aligned with Part I, phase i); six main steps (to gather, feedback, and analyse data: aligned with Part I, phase ii , and to plan, implement and evaluate action: aligned with our Part II, phases iii, iv, v; and a meta-step to monitor: aligned with phase v. This cyclical approach, along with more rigorous inquiry and documentation processes, and the search for theoretical justifications rather than empirical justifications, distinguishes the action research from a consultancy activity (Gummesson 2000).

Moreover, an adherence matrix of the restaurant's product development process and LPPD components, which are value focus (VF), knowledge-based environment (KBE),

continuous improvement (CI), chief engineer (CE), and set-based concurrent engineering (SBCE) is proposed.

Fig 3: Action research phases and scheme



These five phases intend to cover ten significant characteristics of action research laid out by Gummesson (2000):

(1) *Action researchers take action*: researchers are not limited to observe the phenomenon, and therefore, actively participated in the menu creational process with the chef, trained and collected the feedback of new creational models, discussing the outcomes of the process implementation with the stakeholders;
(2) *Action research always involves two goals*: in the present research, the outcomes are twofold: solve a problem of knowledge management and product innovation process in an industry that relies on the tacit knowledge of the main actor (chef) while contributing to the theory of building in a cross-knowledge area;
(3) *Action research is interactive*: the interaction is observed through the co-operation of the researchers, chefs, investors, and other stakeholders, who are considered co-researchers. This process is evidenced during the two sessions of training and implementation, collection of results, feedback sessions, raising unfolding and unpredictable events during the study;
(4) *Action research is fundamentally about change*: action research applies to the understanding, planning, and implementing change (Nadler 1998; Coghlan and Brannick

2001). The research created the need for change, articulated the desired outcome from change, and actively planned and implemented that desire.

(5) *Action research aims at developing holistic understanding*: researchers navigated through the several subsystems of the organisational structure, working with the dynamic complexity of the culinary innovation process, business processes, and stakeholder relationship processes.

(6) *Action research can include all types of data gathering methods*: although interviews and surveys are commonly used, the critical aspect is the use of these tools integrated with the action research process, and thought out with the members of the organization. Thus, researchers had to be skillful about capturing not only the collection of data but also feelings, anxiety, suspicion, hostility, to increase the success of the study, like the perceptions of the chef, investors, and staff about the implementation of a new creational process.

(7) *Action research requires a breadth of pre-understanding of the environment*: as suggested by Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), action researchers in operations management need to know organisations' systems and the dynamics of the operation, not just go out into the field. In this sense, researchers used their academic and professional background to bring relevant contribution to the pre-understanding of the environment and used, also in Part I phase ii, the mapping and observation as tools to know the dynamics of the operation;

(8) *Action research should be conducted in real-time*: although action research is traditionally a live case study, it can also assume the form of a retrospective formal case study. The written case is used as an intervention promoting the learning process in the organisation, as proposed in the framework and the expected outcomes;

(9) *Action research requires an understanding of the ethical framework*: address a key operational aspect of the research involving the relationship between researchers and members of the organisation. It was observed during the pre-study of the organisation, and along with all the phases of the study;

(10) *The action research paradigm requires its quality criteria*: Reason and Bradbury (2001) pointed out questions for quality in action research. From the perspective of developing a praxis of relational participation, the research involved the stakeholders during the process of building a solid infrastructure for the organisation. The iterative process of training, implementation, discussing, and gathering feedbacks created an inclusive and welcoming environment for stakeholders' reflections, which was essential for the success of the research.

The entire investigation process took six months to be completed, corresponding to an entire cycle of three creational processes in the selected restaurant, from product conceptualisation to customer feedback. The application of the three methods explains the selection of three creational processes: Harrington's Culinary Product Development Model, Michelin-starred model, and LPPD model.

We selected an Asian-American fusion restaurant, located in Sao Paulo – Brazil, which has the concept to serve, on top of the regular menu, a monthly variable menu. This type of *fast-moving* and the *fast-changing* menu is adequate for our research purpose because, in practice, the innovation, product release, and market evaluation process occur at least 12

times per year. Among all the items in the restaurant's menu, we selected the burger because the concept of this dish: composed by several *sub-assemblies* like the bun, the burger, topping, cheese, sauce, vegetable, is very close to the concept of the innumerable components to manufacture a car. Details of each phase with some discussions of respective findings are considered in the following items.

4. Results

4.1 Results of part I – interviewing and mapping

The first step of this research consisted of semi-structured interviews with the chef in charge of a restaurant's creation and the operations manager, who are also the owners and partners of the restaurant. The chef had formal education in gastronomy and worked for famous restaurants in Brazil, including the only two-star Michelin restaurant in the city of Sao Paulo until 2017 (The Michelin Tire Corporation 2017). Also, he is a professor at a gastronomy school and investor in other restaurants and burger shops in the city. His partner at the Asian-American fusion restaurant has formal education in business. He worked in the automotive industry in finance and marketing areas. He is the manager in charge of operations, finance, and administration of the restaurant.

Each semi-structured interview took about 90 to 120 minutes and was performed at the interviewee's place of business. The interviews had the objective to gather information regarding the experiences of the interviewed persons, to understand their current practice of innovative product development, as well as the current process of menu and dishes creations. Additionally, in this interview, we tried to capture intangible and essential aspects of the creational process: like their inspiration source, their influences, style of the chefs, which may contribute to our research in further steps.

We analysed the content of the interviews using VOS Viewer content analysis software to find a response pattern, as well as to identify the recurrent terms and concepts in the dining innovation process. We also reviewed the transcribed interview and responses in order to elaborate on a *road map* or process flow of the innovation process in the restaurant. This step was essential to sketch the process, which was further confirmed through the observation on the actual floor.

The interviews were essential to draw the flow of product creation but also to note that in the concept, idea, and supplier search phase, the chef mentioned focus on concept, customer's *experience*, and *happiness* while the manager focused on costs, processes' stability and training. Both said that the following phase, *trial, and error* concentrates on *the main conflicts between the creational process and the controlling process*.

The observation and mapping process consisted of the record of the situation before the implementation of new processes, which can be considered the as-is situation. It was divided into two main sub-processes, according to the stage of the product development process. First, related to the conception, creative process, trial, error, and testing, which occurs outside the restaurant environment, usually at the Chef's residence. Moreover, the second one, which is composed of the trial and error, production preparation, training product launching, and product sales and feedback process.

For the first sub-process record, we collected samples of recipes and registered the trial and error process performed by the chef. A recipe book drafted by the chef was also observed, aiming to find relevant inputs for our process mapping. We accompanied the chef in some dinners and shopping at food markets, to observe how the creational process of chefs receive interesting inputs interacting with other environments. This process was inspired in the study made by Ottenbacher and Harrington (2007, p.449) in which *visiting colleague's restaurants* was identified as the most popular source of ideas, according to Michelin-starred chefs, and *Visiting food markets* was also mentioned as one of the inspiration sources.

The current creational process of the restaurant is very similar to the one prescribed by Ottenbacher and Harrington (2007) Michelin-starred process. Table 1 summarises the current adherent practices.

Table 1: Adherence to current operation with Michelin model

Concept			Currently Applicable?	Comments
Michelin Development	1. Idea Generation	1.1. Product Consideration	Yes	- Food product is the basis of strategy and idea. For example, chef keeps strong ties with "Canastra" famous cheese producer in São Paulo, Brazil. - Creativity skills based on seasonal products and Japanese / American sports theme influence (e.g. ingredients from the city of Word Series champion)
		1.2. Inspiration Sources	Yes	
		1.3. Tacit Creativity Skills	Yes	
	2. Screening	2.1. Screening Criteria	Yes	Seasonality of products, quality, fit with cooking style (Chef's specialty are meats), cost (controlled by operations manager), were observed.
	3. Trial and Error	3.1. Cooking in your head	Yes	Individual parts of the creation are intensively tested. There is an image training of the harmonization and presentation. Though, *amuse guele* (free appetizer) practice is not common.
		3.2. Giving it a shot	Yes	
	4. Concept Development	4.1. Informal Market Research	Yes	Informal market research performed through visits. Concept is not formalized utilizing recipe date file. Operational issues and differentiation factors (presentation, for example) are developed.
		4.2. Formalize Concept	**No**	
		4.3. Differentiation Factors	Yes	
		4.4. Operational Issues	Yes	
	5. Final Testing	5.1. Operational Issues	**No**	Although operational issues are mapped in previous stages, during the test they are not performed. Multiple sources of testing involves partners, trustful employees. Customers are not considerer in the process.
		5.2. Multiple Sources of Testing	Yes	
	6. Training	6.1. Operational Issues	Yes	Training occurs, but interviewees recognize that training time should be longer than current the current one.
		6.2. Communication & Testing	Yes	
	7. Retail	7.1. Assessment - Satisfaction	**No**	A target sales quantity is fixed and popularity is measured by achievement of target. Customer satisfaction in not measured formally, just a tacit knowledge.
		7.2. Assessment - Popularity	Yes	

Like the outcomes suggested by Ottenbacher and Harrington (2007), the success of the process comes from the chef's tacit skills. Thus, essential processes of knowledge management, storage, and formalisation are weak. This process is twofold: while the chef in charge gains agility in the development process, the knowledge basis is not shared among key per-

sons in the business, which interferes negatively in the innovation process. Thus, from the mapping process, it was possible to assess that the model proposed by Harrington (2004) *culinary product innovation process* had low applicability to the case studied, mainly due to the following factors:

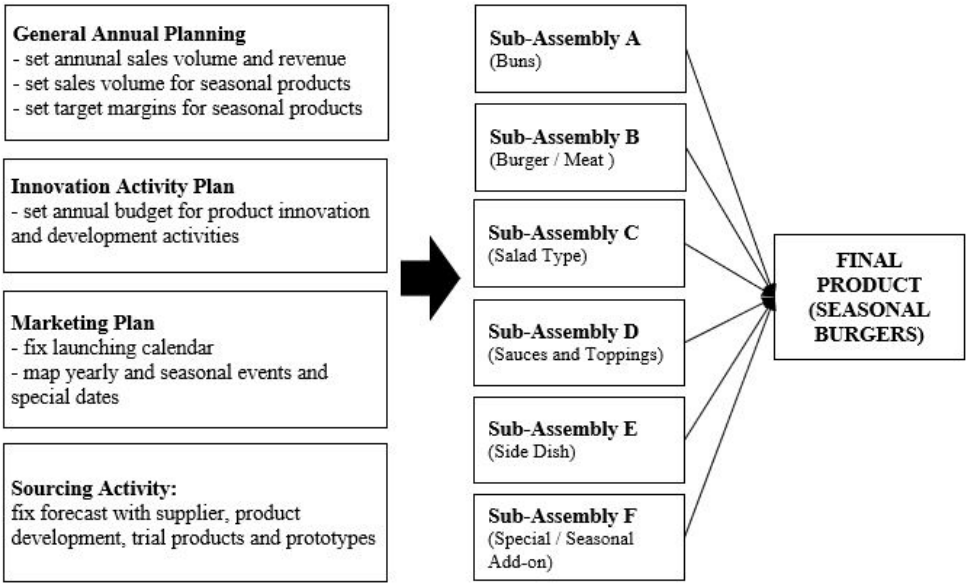
- As for internal factors, the process to select and conduct the team is unfeasible, especially in the following aspect: *the culinary innovations team in a real-time setting will be involved in every phase of the process and closely tied to continuing daily operations* (Harrington 2004), because the extraordinarily fast-moving and fast-changing menu, and the human resource constraints, create barriers for activities allocation;
- According to the chef and his partner, the culinary innovation formulation as the preliminary step of this model is very *difficult to implement*, because the short lead time required to develop a new product (maximum two months in the case) is not sufficient to adequately capture external environment variables like seasonality, regulations, competitors' actions, customer preferences, in a participative and iterative way as prescribed by Harrington's (2004) work. The process relies more upon a sequential process, usually centered in the figure of the chef;
- The same happens with other processes, *which seems to be more appropriate for businesses with a larger scale developing serial products* according to the chef and partner-manager.

Finally, as one last outcome from the mapping process, it was possible to define the six *patterns of sub-assemblies* and development flow of each component of the seasonal burger, which is detailed in Figure 4.

For each sub-assembly of the final product (burger components), the chef in charge, the partner-manager, and the operations manager oversee the product development. The product-launching calendar is shared and discussed with each sub-assembly supplier in advance, so that those suppliers can have sufficient time for their development process. For example, the restaurant shares the product-launching calendar, which can include commemorative menus and seasonal thematic burgers. The supplier, in turn, prepares a basket of products, for example, a variety of cheese blends, which are candidates to match the seasonal product launchings. This practice favours the chef's creational process, giving him the flexibility to make different combinations as well as providing sources of inspiration.

However, some processes, which are very common in the LPPD, and Process Development, were missing. Because the innovation process of the restaurant relies on the tacit knowledge of the chef, the level of formalisation is deficient. For example, the catalogue of main suppliers for each sub-assembly was not available; there was not a database registering developed and underdevelopment sub-assemblies (for example, a sauce list, a list of cheese blends). Thus, although the criteria to select the best combination of ingredients (sub-assemblies) occur in order to maximise customer satisfaction and stable profitability, the entire process lacks formal procedures and methodology, meaning that an essential part of the value capturing may be lost. For example, in the case of sub-assembly 'B' (Burger / Meat) the selection criteria of the best meat blend and receipt were not uniform, and not in alignment with the objectives of that product (i.e., prepare a burger which lowers the bottle necks in the production process through reduction of the grilling time).

Fig 4: Sub-Assemblies and sourcing activities



Such aspects were explored during the second part of the research, where we provided theoretical and practical training of product creation and innovation process based on the work of Ottenbacher and Harrington (2007) and the LPPD model. The training was followed by the observation of the process, implementation, and feedback activity.

4.2 Results of part II – training, observation, and feedback

These steps consisted of the instruction and training of innovative product creation process based on three approaches: LPPD product development processes according to the literature and as shown in Figure 1; Culinary Product Development approach as shown in Figure 2 and proposed by Harrington (2004), and Michelin-starred process as proposed by Ottenbacher and Harrington (2007). The primary purpose of applying those product development approaches to the creative process of our sample was to observe how chefs, managers, and employees would react when a new process is introduced. Therefore, we aimed to observe if successful cases of those creational process would improve the performance of the restaurant, concerning product development lead-time, quality improvement, and customer value creation improvement.

The literature of action research proposes that working collaboratively with others leads to community and organisational changes in which participants grew to appreciate how their interrelatedness creates a power greater than a sum of individual powers (Kasl and Yorks 2002; Reason and Bradbury 2001). In this study, the training activity took four hours, divided into two hours of theoretical training (seminar format) in which every staff of the restaurant learned the basic concepts of Michelin-starred creational process and Culinary Product Development, as well as LPPD model. One-hour *hands-on training* consisted

of self-evaluation of the current creation, production, and customer service process, in which every employee was encouraged to revise his process and propose efficiency improvements. Finally, a one hour feedback session was promoted, where employees, chefs, owners, and researchers discussed the results, findings, and contributions of the activity.

The feedback activity was recorded, in order to support the construction of the mapping process in the following step, and gathered directly from the chef and the manager, through social communication application. Interesting points to note from this phase were the opinion of the owner-chef contrasted with those of the manager. For the first, *such a formal process is sometimes challenging to apply in the actual floor, especially in our business, where we have to be very agile in the creational process. I believe that the customer demands novelties and seeks new gastronomic experiences. Of course, a well-prepared classic is essential, but the novelty is the key to have your business in evidence in a fast-moving market like the one we are experiencing, while for the second, introducing established concepts from other industries will always bring some positive contribution. In our business, we are informal with processes, and innovation usually wastes too much time with the trial and error process*.

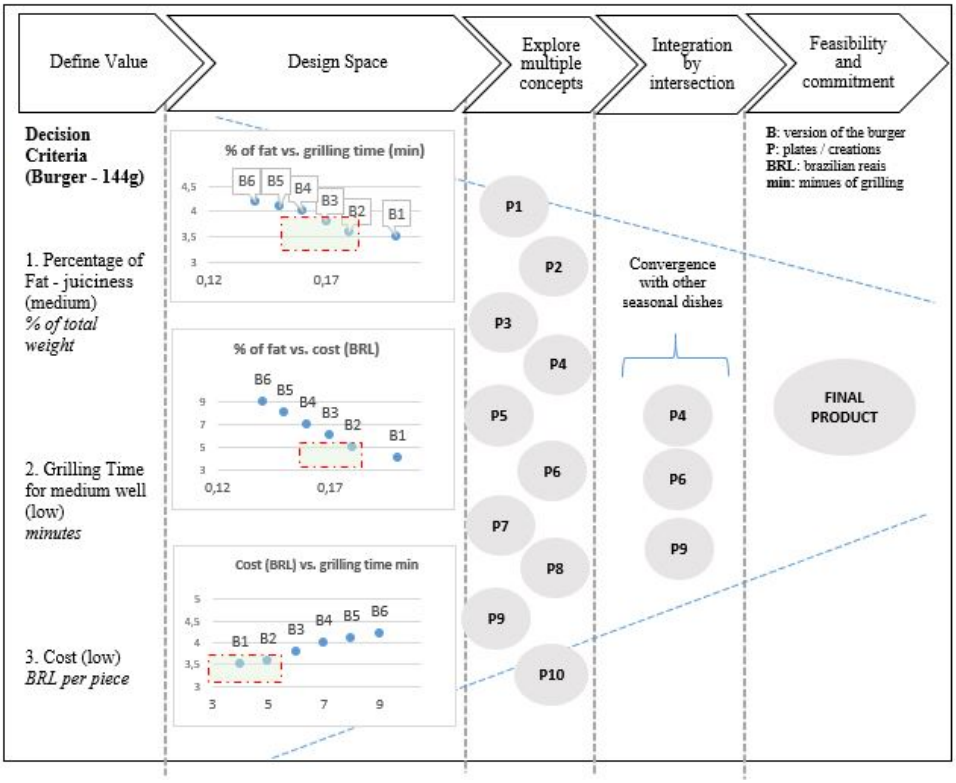
Also, we compare the perceptions, pros, and cons, of Michelin chef's creational process, Culinary Product Development model, and LPPD model from owner-chef and owner-manager point of view. Table 2 summarises the perception of the product development model from the owner-chef and owner-managers point of view. During the process mapping works, it was stated that concepts like *knowledge-based environment*, *continuous improvement*, and all principles of SBCE except *define* value were not adopted. Still, after the implementation of *to-be* process based on LPPD and the presentation of positive achievements, the owner-chef showed concerns about the *knowledge-based environment* and *feasibility and commitment* concepts, believing that both practices would slow down the product development process and consequently lose the timing of new launches.

Table 2: Introduction of LPPD – adherence, and comments

Concept / Principle			Reference	Existing during as-is mapping?	Owner-Chef	Owner / Operations Manager
					Favorable for implementation	
1. LPPD	1.1	Value Focus	Khan et al (2011)	Yes	Yes	Yes
	1.2	Knowledge-Based Environment	Maksimovic et al. (2014)	**No**	Neutral	Yes
	1.3	Continuous Improvement	Mohd Saad et al. (2013)	**No**	Yes	Yes
	1.4	Chief Engineering	Al-Shaab et al. (2013)	Yes, owner chef as "Shusa"	Yes	Yes
	1.5. SBCE	Define Value	Morgan and Liker (2006) Sobek et al. (1999) Ward et al. (1995) Ward (2007)	Yes	Yes	Yes
		Design Space		**No**	Yes	Yes
		Explore Multiple Concepts		**No**	Yes	Yes
		Integration by Intersection		**No**	Yes	Yes
		Feasibility and Commitment		**No**	**No**	Yes

During the training process, it was also possible to create an overall approach using Trade-off Curves (ToC) within the SBCE model, as shown in Figure 5.

Fig 5: ToC within SBCE approach



In this example, the step called *Define Value* aligned the product development with company strategy and tentatively translated customer value to the product. Once those values are fixed, the product developers moved to the *Design Space* step, where essential characteristics of the product and which improvements on those characteristics were needed. Then, developers defined a feasible region, called product acceptance area, in order to select the best product. Considering the selected values of percentage of fat, grilling time and cost, product B2 was the only suitable for the project because the intersection of attributes will increase the possibility of customer satisfaction (taste of the product – juiciness of the meat), efficiency in the preparation time (best grilling time) and profitability (lower cost).

As mapped during the phase I mapping process, the annual plan sets the target indicators and targets for each launch. In the studied case, the product had to improve the grilling time (due to some workforce and training time constraints), achieve better profitability compared with other seasonal products planned for the year (because the launch month has a historically lower volume of sales). Finally, from the *technical* point of view, the meat had to achieve an appropriate percentage of juiciness to harmonise with other sub-assemblies. Therefore, the percentage of fat in the meat blend must be introduced precisely.

The following step, called *Explore Multiple Concepts*, consisted on combining the selected burger type (B2) with other innovative sub-assemblies, as shown in Figure 4, such as buns, salad type, and sauce type, to finally propose a basket of product alternative which we called P's (P1 to P10). Then, in the *Integration by Intersection* phase, the development team proceeded with the evaluation of this first basket of developed products, in order to look for intersections or convergences with other seasonal dishes in the restaurant's menu, seeking for synergy gains in the sourcing and production. A final set of three plates (P4, P6, and P9) formed the set of final products, finally moving to the *Feasibility and Commitment* phase. In this final phase, the final specification of the product is defined as satisfying customer requirements and decision criteria. Furthermore, the knowledge stored during the entire decision process could be reused in future projects; hence, discarding knowledge would be prevented.

Observation and mapping aim to observe the real operation running after the training of chefs, managers, and employees. Unlike the previous *Observation and Mapping*, Part II consisted of the record of the situation after the implementation of new processes, which aims to achieve the *to-be* situation trained in the previous step. As presented in Figure 3, we promptly discarded the *Culinary Product Innovation Process* due to the lack of adherence processes, and therefore advanced with the application of the *Michelin product development* process and LPPD model. Each model demanded two months of a development cycle. The chef's creational process was observed and registered, so it is compared with the creational process before the training session and therefore processes efficiency gains, as well as improvements in customer value. The same process was conducted with trial and error, production preparation, training product launching, and product sales and feedback process.

For the results compilation process, we analyse the lead time of a creational process, from the first idea generation until the filing of customer feedback (if there are any); which is measured in days and divided into the several steps involving the development of a new product in the food service business. Improvement in the process is perceived when the restaurant can reduce the total days demanded to create a new dish and reduce the waste. In terms of lead-time improvement, it was possible to reduce by eight days in the conceptualisation and formation of the idea for a new dish, through the reduction supplier search process. The lead-time reduction considered the actual lead-time of the restaurant, which was more similar to the Ottenbacher and Harrington (2007) Michelin model versus the new model proposed by LPPD.

The maintenance of a knowledge basis regarding under-development dishes, as explained during the Training phase, allowed the chef and operational manager to optimise the combination of ingredients in the best season available. Part of the gain in the total lead-time, four days, was converted to the production preparation and training process, which was one of the owners' concerns. However, it is essential to mention that the eight-day reduction was not entirely a result of the introduction of LPPD. Since we conducted the LPPD experiment after the two-month development cycle of the Michelin model, some gains from the improvement of the knowledge curve should be considered.

Finally, as for the Culinary Production Development Model, despite the relevant work of Harrington (2004), the application in our concrete case showed that in business with a smaller scale, which at the same time requires more dynamic responses and sometimes in-

formal practices, the adherence is low. For example, prescriptions of *Planning and Linking Process* like *food safety and dietary issues, regulations, culinary identities, consumer research* are not performed by the book: it occurs in such a small scale and intensity that is implicitly executed during other activities of the product development process.

5. Discussion and considerations

In this work, we aimed to investigate if it is possible for restaurant owners and chefs to implement innovative processes and product development based on consolidated practices such as LPPD. Moreover, if it is possible to identify similarities in the product development process of renowned chefs, like Michelin-starred chefs, and LPPD approaches. Our findings suggest that the Michelin chef's creational process is the closest and most adherent model for small to medium size scaled restaurants, with a high frequency of seasonal products launched during a year, but with the prominent possibility to introduce good practices from LPPD model.

In the list of adoptable practices, we can include the improvement of the product development process through the implementation of SBCE practice, as shown in the *training*, *observation*, and *feedback* section. It includes the preparation of decision flow based on Trade-Off Curves (ToC's), definitions of values, analysis of intersections, and creation of a product development knowledge database in order to improve the concurrent engineering process of the menu. From the outcomes of our action research, we propose that SBCE can be the ideal enabler to start the introduction of LPPD model in the culinary innovation, because despite the uniqueness of the developed product (artisanal culinary product), the concept of sub-assemblies and assemblies, which is present in the industrial production, the process is similar. We could note the adoption of concepts like Trade-off curves and the analysis of different intersections of feasible sets of products, as described in Figure 5. Therefore, the five SBCE principles proposed by Kahn et al. (2011) and described in section 2.1 can be applied to decide on a product based on avoidance of educated guesses, and grounded on a knowledge base gained from simulations, prototyping, and tests. Other LPPD principles such as Value Focus (VF), Knowledge-Based Environment (KBE), Continuous Improvement (CI), and Chief Engineer (CE) were noticed during the action research, though we could not collect sufficient evidence in the application of those concepts. For example, the Chief Engineer (CE) role could be attributed to the restaurant's chef, because he is responsible for technical leadership throughout the entire product development process. Though the chef does not consciously recognise this function, nor does he have the interest to assume such responsibility. This lack of self-consciousness is a thick barrier to be surpassed before considering this enabler as fully adopted by the restaurant.

Value Focus (VF), which has the objective to increase the value of the process through the satisfaction of stakeholders' expectations, is performed at an informal level, as perceived on the statements of the chef and operations manager during the interviews, as explained in our *training, observation and feedback* section. In sum, the necessity to be dynamic and agile in the development process imposes an obstacle to introducing 'less practical and tangible' tools, which will not bring concrete and immediate outcomes. The same

notion is perceived in the enablers Continuous Improvement (CI) and Knowledge-Based Environment (KBE). Therefore, the application of those principles in the culinary innovation process is highly recommended for further studies.

The expanded meaning of this action research, in addition to its immediate context, is to introduce into the 'extremely chef-centered' gastronomic industry, the participative element of listening, and considering the other in a process. There are several reality shows that demonstrate this autocratic social system in gastronomic environments, and as the action research introduces the portion of the interaction of voices, and all validated by experimentation, it ceases to focus only on opinion and validate by evidence.

In turn, in the most immediate element, the signifier is to introduce structured experimentation combined with the record of objective data, but also the fundamental tacit knowledge in gastronomy. It also covered social relevance because the research improves knowledge about people, communities, cultures, and people as agents.

The adoption of new tools and consolidated practices from car manufacturing by the chef, manager, investors and restaurant's employees: in other words, the changing process of the organisation practices, was grounded in an interactive, co-operative, and integrative approach which allowed to introduce new and enduring 'infrastructures' in the organisation. Thus, even not adopting other LPPD principles allowed the organisation to create a self-evaluation culture to evaluate its organisational processes continually. These outcomes aligned with what Reason and Bradbury (2001) point out to be choice points and questions for quality in action research.

Limitations of this work consist of the size and location of the business, as well as the action research duration, which considered three complete product development cycles. Distinct culinary styles in other locations may bring different outcomes. Thus, increasing the number of product development cycles may influence the learning curve of the participants, which may also lead to distinct conclusions.

Finally, this work opens the way to creating a new Product Development Model focusing in the food service industry, a hybrid model, which can concatenate the agile and dynamic practice of using the tacit skills and knowledge from renowned chefs with the precise and sober process of the manufacturing industries relying on LPPD principles.

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International research: challenges, limitations and conditions for success

Reflections on a participatory international project with children

Corinne Butschi, Guillermina Chabrillon and Ingeborg Hedderich

Abstract: International research is common practice in many fields of science and a variety of international projects from the most diverse fields of research can be found through the major academic search engines. However, expanding the search in the direction of metaperspectival reflection on international participatory research might be unsuccessful, as there is scarce literature on the topic. This article is based on experiences with children in the international participatory research project called "Learning Together, Living Diversity", which was carried out using the photovoice method to involve the children in the process as co-researchers. As international research differs considerably from national research, many challenges may be encountered, especially in field research and mainly in regards to getting in touch and interacting with the foreign country, its people and culture. The aim of this paper is to put into writing the reflexive processing of the cross-border research experience of the two cooperation partners Guillermina Chabrillon (Argentina) and Corinne Butschi (Switzerland), who planned and organised the field work in two Argentinian kindergartens together. The challenges which they faced and the role of both language and cultural background will be described in a practical way. It will be shown that reliable and good cooperation partnerships become even more important when the logistics of international research projects is not only complicated by distance, but also by language and cultural barriers. Examples of the major challenges and the role of culture and other contextual factors in project planning and logistics when crossing linguistic and cross-cultural boundaries will be included, with the purpose of contributing to stimulating further research and a greater number of successful international cooperation partnerships.

Keywords: International participatory research, intercultural co-operation and understanding, photovoice.

Investigación internacional : desafítos, limitaciones y condiciones para el éxito. Reflciones sobre un proyect internacional participativo con niños

Resumen: La investigación a nivel internacional es una práctica muy extendida en una variedad de campos disciplinares y, a través de los principales buscadores académicos en Internet, se pueden encontrar numerosos proyectos internacionales de las más diversas áreas de investigación. Sin embargo, la búsqueda de trabajos que provean una reflexión metaperspectiva sobre métodos de investigación participativa podría no ser exitosa ya que es muy escasa la literatura sobre este tema. Este artículo se basa en las experiencias con niños y niñas en el marco de un proyecto internacional de investigación participativa llamado "Learning Together, Living Diversity" ("Aprendiendo juntos, viviendo la diver-

sidad"), que se llevó a cabo utilizando el método Fotovoz para involucrar a los niños en el proceso como coinvestigadores. Como el proceso de investigación a nivel internacional difiere notablemente de uno llevado a cabo en un contexto nacional, pueden surgir numerosos desafíos, principalmente en la investigación de campo y, en particular, al ponerse en contacto e interactuar con el país extranjero – con su gente y cultura. El objetivo de este trabajo es describir el proceso reflexivo de la experiencia de investigación transnacional de dos investigadoras asociadas en un trabajo cooperativo: Guillermina Chabrillon (Argentina) and Corinne Butschi (Switzerland), quienes planificaron y organizaron en conjunto el trabajo de campo en dos jardines de infantes argentinos. Se detallarán los desafíos que enfrentaron y el rol tanto de los sustratos lingüísticos como culturales. Se mostrará la gran relevancia que cobra un trabajo cooperativo bueno y confiable cuando la logística de un proyecto de investigación internacional se complica no sólo por distancias sino también por barreras lingüísticas y culturales. Se presentarán ejemplos de los principales desafíos y el rol de la cultura y otros factores contextuales en la planificación y logística de un proyecto cuando se cruzan fronteras lingüísticas y culturales con el objetivo de intentar estimular nuevas investigaciones y un mayor número de exitosos trabajos cooperativos internacionales.

Palabras clave: investigación participativa internacional, cooperación y entendimiento intercultural, Fotovoz.

1. Introduction

This contribution is based on a practical example, namely the project "Learning Together, Living Diversity", which was carried out from July 2016 to July 2019 by the University of Zurich (Institute for Educational Science, Chair of Special Education: Society, Participation and Disability) and financially supported by the Stifterverband der deutschen Wissenschaft (Leopold Klinge Foundation).

This international participatory project aimed at researching on the topic of diversity from a child's perspective, by working with children of kindergarten age (4 to 6). Two kindergartens with a total of 32 children in Switzerland and two others with a total of 52 children in Argentina took part. It was carried out using photovoice, a method which attempts to engage community participants: here, children , "as active research participants by giving them cameras and inviting them to take pictures dealing with various aspects of their lives" (Jorgenson & Sullivan, 2010, p. 1). Later, the photos were used in the interview process to explore the subjective meaning of the images, and children were asked to explain their photographs in little groups.

Discussions about research with children as central informants of their own life worlds has been uncommon for a relatively a long time (Christensen & James, 2008, p. 1).

> "Traditionally, childhood and children's lives have been explored solely through the views and understandings of their adult caretakers who claim to speak for children. This rendered the child as object and excluded him/her from the research process. In part, this perspective has been challenged by the perspective in which children have different cognitive and social developmental traits that the researcher who wishes to use children as informants needs to consider in their research design and research methodology" (Christensen & James, 2008, p. 2f).

In recent years, however, this view has changed, so that the focus is now more on research *with* children rather than on research *on* children. The photovoice method is considered a

possibility to include other forms of expression in research in addition to verbal expression. Therefore it is seen as having potential when it comes to including groups for which verbal communication could be rather difficult (e.g., young children or people with disabilities).

Primarily, the project "Learning Together. Living Diversity" aimed at visually capturing the world's view of young children from their own subjective perspectives, in order to find out which aspects of the child's life world are of particular importance in his/her point of view. A second goal of the project was to further involve children of pre-school age in the process of research in a participatory way, by giving them a voice. The collected findings should serve as an aid in developing a didactic medium for early childhood education in the field of sensitisation in dealing with diversity.

Participation here has a dual meaning: firstly, kindergarten children took part in this research project, produced photos and talked to their classmates and the researchers about their pictures. Secondly, two different countries took part in the project, which made the organization very exciting and enriching, although, unfortunately, the children of the two countries could not come into contact with each other. This text is not about the actual field research with the children, but about the whole process of organising and implementing it in an international environment.

This article focuses mainly on the international part of the project, and aims at illuminating the practice of international participatory research from a metaperspective. What does it mean to carry out international participatory research? The article is structured into five sections including a final concluding section. In section 2, the question of how international research can be understood and defined, and types of international research will be discussed, although, as there is a research gap in reflecting on international participatory research, it is virtually impossible to draw on a pool of literature. In section 3 participatory research, especially the photovoice-method, will be shortly described. In section 4 the role of language and intercultural understanding is addressed. The question which is posed is to what extent communication across linguistic boundaries and national borders is possible. Based on the experiences gained in "Learning Together. Living Diversity", special features in the process of cross-cultural understanding and the relevance of good co-operation partnerships are discussed. A general consideration of international field research and, in particular, of moments potentially susceptible to failure is also included. Experiences will be critically reflected on and supported by a dialogical exchange between the Argentinian co-operation partner Guillermina Chabrillon, who made a major organisational contribution on site beforehand, and Corinne Butschi, who later conducted the field research in Argentina. On the grounds of their first-hand experience and their critical analysis, the factors which are most relevant for international field research are exemplified and explained. In the concluding 5th section, the key points are summarised and a conclusion is formulated.

2. International research: an overview

International research can take different forms, so central questions are what kind of research is involved, and what methods are used. The homepage of the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI) provides information on the concepts of international research and innovation work:

> "By their very nature, education, research and science have an international dimension. In all its variety, quality and constant need to develop further, knowledge thrives on global exchange" (sbfi.admin.ch/sbfi/en/home/research-and-innovation/international-cooperation-r-and-i.html).

This rather general statement nevertheless illustrates the relevance of international research and cooperation in today's globalised societies. The international exchange and development of knowledge is essential for a global world, since it does not not only involve networking, but it also enables sharing and developing innovations, experiences and knowledge. Furthermore, through different thought structures and views, it opens up paths that might otherwise remain hidden. When people carry out research together, it always entails getting to know others and sharing views and ideas, understanding and enthusiasm for something new and unknown. This process presents a constant confrontation. And if this confrontation takes place in an international setting, it may be even more intense because people are shaped by cultural context and the country in which they grow up (e.g., due to its political or economic structure). However, there are always two sides to a research process: it is a passage to new knowledge, but also a journey to oneself, as experiences become formative parts of one's own biography. The following definition of international research and development can be found in the Springer Gabler online business dictionary:

> "International research and development is characterised by the fact that the project actors come from different countries and/or project activities are carried out across borders with a division of labour using resources from several countries"[1] (translation of the author according to https://wirtschaftslexikon.gabler.de/definition/internationale-forschung-und-entwicklung-40825/version-264201).

This definition is also very general and formulated from a metaperspective, which is why it also fits various disciplines. If one wants to go into international research in more detail, it becomes more difficult, as there is very little specific literature on that subject. If the keyword «international research» is entered into the major academic search engines, countless literature suggestions for international research projects from a wide range of disciplines appear: apparently independent of the combination and variation of the input. Nevertheless, there is not, to our knowledge, an article which takes up and reflects the topic of international research as its starting point and main theme. International research apparently just 'happens' within the framework of an internationally-oriented project. And yet it is obvious that it cannot merely occur, since research, in general, and international research, in particular, requires a great deal of organisation, and researchers are often confronted with challenges and aggravating conditions. Even more so when it comes to participatory international research, in which actors from specific groups and cultural backgrounds (e.g., children here) actively participate in the research process as co-researchers. It is clear that the requirements and challenges will be very different depending on the discipline, research question and project. A distinction can also be made between international research which takes place on a purely university level (e.g., in laboratories), and research which involves

1 Original quote in German: „Internationale Forschung und Entwicklung zeichnet sich dadurch aus, dass die Projektakteure aus verschiedenen Ländern stammen und/oder Projektaktivitäten grenzüberschreitend arbeitsteilig unter Einsatz von Ressourcen aus mehreren Ländern durchgeführt werden" (https://wirtschaftslexikon.gabler.de/definition/internationale-forschung-und-entwicklung-40825).

other actors outside the university framework in a participatory way (e.g., children in field research).

The countries participating in the research also play a major role. Thus, political, socio-economic, technical, environmental, religious, cultural, and other factors should be taken into account as conditions may vary greatly. Moreover, the research project's design, hypotheses, etc., have an equally relevant influence on the overall situation. For instance, is it a project that has already been developed in international cooperation or is it a centrally, nationally implemented project that is being conducted in different countries? Furthermore, questions of clarification arise, which may be quite different depending on whether one wants to carry out research with animals, humans or (inanimate) materials. Also, as soon as aspects of ethics become part of the research, the issue becomes more complex, therefore, clarification and agreement are required. Country-specific differences need to be taken into account and the whole process becomes more susceptible to interference 'from outside', as researchers have no direct influence on many planning and logistics variables. Consequently, cooperative relationships play a key role as processes of communication and interaction gain greater importance.

And finally, what kind of project is this paper based on? As the world becomes more and more interconnected in the course of processes of 'globalisation', and societies move closer together, the interest in comparing social developments, and the demand for internationally comparable data, is becoming more and more central (Pfau-Effinger, Magdaleni? & Wolf, 2009). Thus, many studies of international social research have a comparative character. This assumption also had to be combated within the framework of this project. Initially, it was assumed that the study aimed at comparing the growing up conditions of children in Argentina and Switzerland. However, "Learning Together. Living Diversity" does not have a comparative character at all and instead – as the name already indicates – it is about diversity, which is perceived as richness, and should not serve as a basis for comparison. Consequently, the data generated together with the children were not analysed comparatively, they represent diversity from a child's perspective and are used in this way: ultimately as images of a memory game, which portray the world from a child's perspective and enable international education.

International education is often discussed in connection with the related field of comparative education, but a different understanding of the term has also developed in connection with the theory and practice of education for internationality. Comparative education emerges from a strong theoretical tradition of academic studies that make comparisons between national systems. International education, in contrast, is "more explicitly applied and action-oriented" (Crossley, 1999, p. 255). Similarly, Watson (1999) identifies comparative education with theoretical studies on the one hand, and international education with application and practice on the other. International education should make it possible to "develop an understanding of different countries and good relations with people of different nationalities and languages" (Crossley & Watson, 2003, p. 14). Accordingly, "Learning Together. Living Diversity" sees itself as a project that focuses on international education, with the aim of contributing to the understanding mentioned by Crossley and Watson (2003) through participatory research. "*Participatory*" research therefore refers mainly to the act of children exploring their lives and communicating this to other children. The term

"*international*" refers to the participation of two countries. Finally, the aim of this article is to reflect on the act of international research from a metaperspective, since an international project involves a great deal of organisation and challenges.

Since the examples illustrated in this article are based on the experience of a participatory project, a brief overview of participatory research follows in the next section.

3. Participatory Research & Photovoice with children

Participatory research is a generic term for a research approach. It explores social reality on a partnership basis. Thereby it influences and changes social reality (von Unger, 2012). Participatory research is therefore not a method in itself, but it encompasses a broad spectrum of different methods, and it is used in various fields of research. The following small selection of different projects is intended to show how versatilely the approach can be used and to illustrate why language and local knowledge in particular play a central role. For example, Riecken, Strong-Wilson, Conibear, Michel and Riecken (2004) give an insight into a project conducted using the participatory action research (PAR) method with aboriginal teachers and youth in Canada. von Unger (2012) writes about participatory health research and Pfeiffer (2013) reports about a participatory video project conducted with young people aged 15 to 19 in Tanzania. Participatory research with active involvement is also used in the field of school development, as the work of Wöhrer (2017) and Feichter (2015) shows. This approach is also discussed in a handful of prestigious publications and reviews in respected journals. The introductory article written by Bergold and Thomas (2012) in the FQS focus issue "Participatory qualitative research" provides an excellent overview of participatory research. Thiollent (2011) also provides a good description of the emergence and development of action research and participatory research. The author describes the different origins of the two approaches, whereby participatory research "comes […] from consciousness raising practices and the liberation theory developed especially in Latin America, from the 1950 and 60's, in social, religious and educational contexts and, in particular, under the impulse of Paulo Freire" (Thiollent, 2011, p. 161). Participatory research (as well as action research) has found applications in several sectors (social science, rural extension, organisation, communication, political practices, collective health, etc.) and has a political component because the method contributes to nourishing the hopes of change (Thiollent, 2011). A central point, which the author names, and is also of great importance in this article, is the cross-border nature of the approach: "It is not a matter of demanding a single body of knowledge, with closed borders, because we are dealing with a family of proposals and procedures that have a common democratic will, with participation and co-operation between the parties involved, sharing a vision of social transformation" (Thiollent, 2011, p. 161). In participatory research in general, and in international participatory research in particular, it is therefore extremely important to always take the 'the other''s view, to engage with other ways of thinking and cultures and to be aware of linguistic differences. As the preceding explanations show, participatory research is often conducted together by groups that have a different cultural background or dissimilar ways of thinking or exhibit both characteristics. In our case, for example, they are children from Argentina, with anoth-

er way of thinking than that of an adult, and having a differing cultural background from that of a researcher from Switzerland. In order to understand how these children think, it is important to get involved with their way of thinking, slowly and without any time pressure, but also to know about certain cultural backgrounds in order to be able to classify statements. The authors Streck, Eggert, Sobottka, Adams and Zanini Moretti (2011) describe participatory research based on reflections of their research experience at the same time as a social, a political and a pedagogical practice: "It is a social practice, since it is part of the movement of society, and as such is marked by the provisional character of human action. It is a political practice, since the production of knowledge occurs within a context of power disputes, which require taking sides. Participatory research is a pedagogical practice, in as much as it is based on interpersonal relations of persons who, together, intend to understand and transform their reality" (Streck et al., 2011, p. 193). This statement also illustrates the complexity of participatory research, and if the international component is also present, it makes the situation even more complex. They describe the process of research as a "collective production of knowledge" that requires "mobilised subjects" (Streck et al., 2011, p. 176). It is therefore also a pedagogical and formative process (see ibid.). The role of mutual understanding is essential in such processes.

Photovoice is one of several qualitative and participatory methods. It enables researchers to have a greater understanding of the issue under study (see also Nowell, Berkowitz, Deacon & Foster-Fishman, 2006; Wang, 2006) and its "utilisation in conjunction with both community knowledge and best practice evidence can lead to the development of effective and comprehensive strategies to address complex […] issues in a way that is also meaningful for the community involved" (Nykiforuk, Vallianatos & Nieuwendyk, 2011, p. 104). Wang and Burris proposed the term "photovoice" originally in the early 1990s (Wang & Burris, 1994, 1997). Their methods included a number of distinct steps, outlining participant and policy-maker recruitment and data collection (see also ibid.; Wang 1999). There is a desire to position children as social actors who are subjects, rather than objects of investigation (Christensen and James 2008). In this approach, participants take photographs of things which are meaningful for them and then the key photographs selected by themselves are shared and discussed in a group setting through a facilitator-guide (for details, see Von Unger, 2014; Wang, 1999). The method can be adapted depending on the research question, time and cost factors, special characteristics of the research group or the research context, etc. Usually a photovoice process consists of seven phases (Picture 1: von Unger, 2014, p. 71):

Figure 1: von Unger, 2014, p. 71, optically modified by Butschi, Chabrillon & Hedderich

Research with children has not only grown in volume, in doing so it has also generated a more engaged discussion of the particular methodological and ethical issues that this raises for social researchers" (Christensen & James, 2008, p. 1). The reflection about these issues brings some new conceptual and theoretical problems into the methodological debate. In re-

lation to the methods, the authors argue that "what is important is that the particular methods chosen for a piece of research should be appropriate for the kind of research study, for its social and cultural context and for the kind of research questions that are being posed" (Christensen & James, 2008, p. 3). When researching with children, the reality they themselves experience and the position of the child within society is in the centre of interest (Heinzel, 2012, p. 23). The author noted that in research with children it should never be forgotten that adult researchers can only articulate the experiences and interests of children on this basis, even though the children themselves are involved in the research (Heinzel, 2012, p. 24). Fuhs (1999) goes a little further in saying that even a child-appropriate research is based on those images of childhood that adults have from the child. Davis et al. argue that it is important to form relationships in which children feel comfortable and to give them a feeling of control (Davis, Watson & Cunningham-Burle, 2008).

There are already some methods that are successfully used in research with children. Methods such as qualitative interviews (Vogl, 2019), including puppet interviews (Weise, 2008; 2019) or picture based interviews (which are also part of the Photovoice method), but also a number of participatory approaches such as the Photovoice method (von Unger, 2014; Wang & Burris, 1997), the mosaic approach (Clark & Moss, 2011; Schütz & Böhm, 2019) and the MacArthur Story Stem Battery (MSSB) (Emde, Wolf & Oppenheim, 2003; Mögel, 2019).

From a methodological point of view, the use of photos as well as the self-production of them offers some advantages. By allowing participants to photograph their surroundings themselves, researchers can gain a context-sensitive, comprehensive and authentic insight into a field of investigation. This insight might not be possible with other methods or from a researcher's position. Photographs are well suited to the study of emotional processes because they facilitate access to cognitively less filtered information (Adolphs, Damasio, Tranel, Cooper & Damasio, 2000; Paivio, 1986). The data quality of photographs is high: photographs are a rich source of interpretation. The information on photographs is characterised by implicit assumptions and ideas, which are often not verbalised (Moser, 2005). A further advantage is that photography is not language-bound and different language groups can be reached simultaneously. This is a fundamental reason why this method has considerable potential in involving groups for whom exclusive verbal and written communication poses difficulties, such as young children but also people with disabilities. Photographs are rather associated with automatic processes like low abstraction, psychological proximity and primary emotions. Verbalisation, on the other hand, is more related to controlled processes such as high abstraction, high psychological distance and secondary emotions (Amit, Wakslak & Trope, 2013). Therefore, the combination of photography and verbalisation is expected to result in deep individual psychological exploration processes. Also, when researching with children, it may be assumed that the observation of one's own images promotes verbal processes. On the level of narrative and discussion, implicit knowledge can be made accessible through effects of form-closure, condensation, and detailing. Thus, a narrative can take on a life of its own and reveal latent structures of meaning (Flick, 2011). Although Photovoice is a time- and resource-intensive method that requires flexibility and empathy, its openness to the views of children can provide important information for the production of didactic media tailored to the target group or – depending on the interests at

stake – for planning measures appropriate to the particular interests of the target group. In addition, the creation of a symbolic object such as a photograph and a high level of participation can be accompanied by the experience of pride, social influence and authenticity (e.g. Csikszentmihalyi, 1995; Malafouris, 2013; Wegner & Sparrow, 2004).

Adults seeking to understand the lives and experiences of children are frequently confronted by the asymmetries of age, height and verbal skills between them and their interlocutors. Bridging these social and communicative distances, investigators have increasingly adopted innovative approaches such as drawing, mapping, diary keeping, photography and video documentation (Jorgenson & Sullivan, 2010). Task-based activities of this kind, involving young children as active participants in the research process, are not only more enjoyable for them than traditional methods, but are also assumed to enhance their ability to communicate his or her perspectives to the adult researcher. Futhermore, children's rights have become a significant field of study during the past decades, largely due to the adoption of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1989 (Reynaert, Bouverne-de Bie & Vandevelde, 2009). Participation is one of the key children's rights, and this methodology could facilitate reaching younger children, who are often ignored because they are not able to participate in written and verbal research.

Even if there is already a certain repertoire of methods for studies with young children, there is still the need for a broader testing of different (participatory) methods, taking into account the child's peculiarities and capturing the experiences, environments, perceptions and positioning of the children.

In this project, the photos made by the participating children were talked about in groups of between four and six of them. With the key-photographs as well as their statements, a memory game which is intended to estimulate speaking and philosophizing about the theme of diversity will be developed. The topic *diversity* is very abstract for children and it may be difficult to discuss it with words alone. So the photovoice process provided an opportunity for the children to present this topic visually and to describe experiences. After all, diversity was obvious in the many photos taken by the children's perspective. Therefore it was possible to jointly explore the subjective meaning of the images.

The method can be used and adapted in various fields and under very different conditions. Kolb (2008) reflects on the use of the photovoice interview as a tool for inviting local residents to participate in a study within the framework of inter- and transdisciplinary research. Jorgenson and Sullivan (2010) researched how children's competence with information and communication technologies is constructed within the family and Woodgate, Zubra and Tennet (2017) explore the advantages, challenges and opportunities in working with the Photovoice method in qualitative research. Mark and Boulton (2017) explain an adapted photovoice methodology used in their research investigating Maori (the Indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand) patients' perspectives on rongo? Maori (traditional Maori healing method) and primary health care, while Mata Codesal, Pereira, Maiztegui-Oñate, Ulloa Chevez, Esesumaga and López del Molino (2018) report on a project aimed at giving a voice to women who, with their migration processes completed to varying degrees, shared a precarious reality of labour integration challenges, and developed a process of reflection on their daily practice, views and contributions to the society in which they newly live.

These examples demonstrate the possible scope of the field of application of photovoice. However, there is a still the need to conduct more research on other possible areas of application using participatory research methods. More complete and accurate understanding of the perspectives of the child is of enormous importance for the development and design of didactic materials of the future.

As it has been shown, participatory research can take many different forms, but in an international project, planning and logistics and effective communication in the foreign language in the field are always of central importance, which is why the following section is devoted to crossing linguistic and cultural borders in an international research context.

4. Language and Culture in International Participatory Research

In international participatory research, communication between the researchers and with the participants is not only dependent on the language used, but it is also "shaped by the underlying values of the cultures involved" (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012, p. 24). Communication and culture mutually influence one another, therefore it is essential to address the question of intercultural communication in this kind of research.

Ting-Toomey and Chung (2012) define intercultural communication as: "the symbolic exchange process whereby individuals from two (or more) different cultural communities attempt to negotiate shared meanings in an interactive situation within an embedded societal system" (ibid., p. 24). The authors also list the major concepts included in that definition: "symbolic exchange, process, different cultural communities, negotiate shared meaning, an interactive situation and an embedded societal system" (ibid., p. 24).

Language, communication and culture are dynamic elastic concepts. Some examples of their importance in the project "Learning Together. Living Diversity" are described below.

4.1 Linguistic and cultural sensitivity and awareness

In international participatory research with children, the question of understanding is essential. Hülst (2000) poses the question of whether and how scientific understanding of children by others is even possible. Mead (1973) emphasises the ability to put oneself in the perspective of the other person as a prerequisite for cooperative behavior. This fact applies to both children and adults, although it can be assumed that the prerequisites are different in each case (e.g., due to older age, adults may have more knowledge/experience, competencies, etc., which can facilitate the adoption of a perspective).

Particularly across linguistic and cultural boundaries, the question arises as to whether it is possible to thoroughly understand meaning in diverse environmental conditions. It is important in an international context to understand the emergence and characteristics of meaning as a social category, and to consider it methodically, especially when planning a participatory research project, which requires various arrangements with cooperation partners in advance. Full sensitivity and awareness that meaning is not static, but is constructed in many different ways and under the influence of contextual factors (e.g., social, political,

geographical, economic, environmental, cultural factors, among others) should be present on all sides. The real meaning and/or connotation of words and phrases can vary significantly from one language to another or in different cultural contexts, which can lead to misunderstandings. Therefore, all communication must always be considered and interpreted in regards to its context of origin. If both co-operation parties share this awareness, it may be easier to identify and foresee misunderstandings in advance, or to clarify them rapidly.

Moreover, in the case of this project, the researchers deal with an overlap, namely, understanding the children on the one hand, and understanding a foreign language on the other (as the children speak a different language from that of the researchers in this case). This process is made even more difficult by the fact that this question is posed not only in terms of reciprocity of perspectives, but also in relation to the other mother tongue and the meaning of words. According to international research, linguistic and cultural factors play a highly relevant role in communicative processes when it comes to understanding one another. In addition, depending on the kind of research cooperation, other challenging factors can influence the communicative process. In participatory research with children, for example, developmental psychological factors play another important role.

The role of language and local knowledge is crucial, especially when research is conducted in a participatory manner. Tiollent's statement also shows this:

> "I think that, from the perspective of […] participatory research, one should focus on the work that constitutes the research, creation or production of local knowledge. It is clear that in times of globalisation, we cannot confine ourselves to our own islands of conviviality, speaking only the local dialect. However, there is undoubtedly an effort to be made so that we may have a dialogue in tune with our [...] Participatory Research interlocutors. In order to work with indigenous people, for instance, I think that we must know the languages they use in their own cultural background. This principle must be extended to all linguistic communities, in the name of a respect for cultural diversity" (Thiollent, 2011, p.172f.).

Within the framework of "Learning Together. Living Diversity" the linguistic issue was central. The field researcher had a very good command of Spanish, in particular of "Río de la Plata" Spanish, and was totally familiar with Argentinian culture, as she had lived a couple of intercultural educational and family experiences in the city where the research was to be carried out for a year each. Those experiences were of great value for the project's planning and accomplishment in regard to linguistic and cultural approximation to the foreign participants. Nevertheless, even if the researcher has a good command of Spanish, for example, as in this case, it will always be a foreign language to him/her. Experience has shown that, paradoxly, sometimes it can be particularly tricky when a foreign language is well mastered. Namely, if someone speaks it without practically any grammatical mistakes, it is obviously a great advantage, but it is easy for the local native speaker to relax and forget, or miss the fact, that it is still a foreign language for the non-native speaker. Therefore, when the foreign language speaker makes a "use of language" or non- grammatical mistake the native speaker may take things literally, which might lead to misunderstandings. Phrases or metaphors that are appropriate in one's own language / culture may not be so in the other, they might sound impolite or offensive, for instance. In such a case there may be less understanding on the part of the participants if something is formulated incorrectly or inappropriately. On the other hand, if a person speaks a foreign language with obvious mistakes, that will usually hinder mutual understanding, but as the native speaker is totally

aware of that fact, he / she will probably show more empathy or forgiveness for inappropriate remarks. This is an issue that C. Butschi and G. Chabrillon have often discussed as G. Chabrillon, from her foreign language and intercultural teaching experience, has always pointed out this fact when working in an international or bilingual context. Therefore, a certain sensitivity towards foreign languages should be present between cooperation partners, which ideally will make an international research project a truly engaging cultural mediation experience.

4.2 The role of culture and other contextual factors in project planning and logistics

Planning an international research project requires various arrangements with co-operation partners in advance. Sharing views and goals is as important as mutual trust and reliability. Moreover, the factibility and success of participatory research in a foreign country are shaped by culture and other contextual factors.

The preliminary work for the international deployment in the project "Learning Together, Living Diversity" already brought cultural differences to light. A considerable part of the preparatory work took place in the form of 'distance coaching'. G. Chabrillon was asked to establish contact with institutions and organize meetings with the teachers and parents, where she would present the project, and try to convince all of them to participate and the parents to sign the consent forms. Those signed forms had to be in the hands of the researcher by the time she travelled to the country.

Country-specific differences were already apparent at this stage of the planning, and made the priceless value of a good cooperation partnership for the first time. In international projects, the first stumbling blocks can be found, for instance, in the way a form is formulated or designed. What is common or polite in one country may not be appropriate in another. For example, the declaration of consent was translated 1:1 from German into Spanish and e-mailed to Argentina in the same format. G. Chabrillon immediately drew our attention to the fact that with this form we would be ignoring both informally and formally a few relevant issues. Firstly, it is common practice in Argentina to always display the logo of the institution on important school forms. This gives a more academic or professional impression, and makes the form and process more trustworthy to parents. Secondly, while in Switzerland the consent of one parent is sufficient, in Argentina, shared parenting or co-parenting of minors was established by a federal law in 1985[2] in Argentina, which means that both guardians must sign forms for most activities involving minors. Therefore, as the local partner pointed out, it was better to have both parents sign the consent form as is customary, and also as this was a new kind of project for them and the school. Otherwise it may not be valid and cause inconveniences to the researchers and the school.

This example is intended to show how, due to multiple factors, things can be handled, understood or apprehended differently and that there are different ways of looking at things. It always requires an understanding of meaning and culture in the given setting, also taking into account the time axis. From this perspective, cooperation partners in both countries also function as gatekeepers or cultural mediators- regarding cultural mediation in the sense

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of monitoring what is exchanged in the form of (written / spoken) language so that it will be appropiate and / or it will not be misinterpreted. On site in Argentina, it was precisely this cultural mediating role of G.Chabrillon between the headmistresses and C. Butschi that was very valuable. As far as the selection of institutions was concerned, besides her familiarity with the schools, the local cooperation partner was also able to consider several practical aspects that proved to be beneficial and of great relevance for the project implementation. This is illustrated by the following statement by G. Chabrillon:

> G.Ch: *"Apart from the fact that I had already been in contact with both institutions that first came to my mind before the project, I thought that it could be exciting, especially in terms of diversity, that is to say, for the project to capture the most diverse perspectives of children, to have as different institutions as possible. So I decided to look for familiar contacts and present the project […]. It was kindergarten A , which is part of a semi-private catholic school, and kindergarten B, which belongs to a public non-fee paying school. The second thought that confirmed this choice was the logistical aspect; the fact that the children would be taught in the morning in one kindergarten and in the afternoon in the other would make things easier. And this was confirmed at the implementation of the project, as it gave you the opportunity to visit both kindergartens on the same day, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon. So you did not have to struggle with any overlapping of the study plans"* (translation of the authors according to Butschi & Chabrillon, 2019, p.266).

The fact that in Argentinian kindergartens and schools teaching is often done on a morning or afternoon rotation, would have been completely missed, if G. Chabrillon had not pointed this out. If the institutions which participated delivered morning classes, it would not have been realistic to implement the project in such a short time. It is often seemingly small unimportant things, e.g. structural differences, that are hardly noticeable at first glance and from a distance, which can complicate or simplify everything. Apart from that, it inspires confidence among parents and institutions if their contact person lives in the same city and speaks the same language. The cooperation partner pointed out that it was easy for her to convince the local institutions to participate, as they knew her and her long involvement in intercultural activities and projects. However, even though the parents were 'flattered' to have been chosen to participate in a project carried out by a Swiss university and with Swiss kids, they were curious and wondered why they had been invited to be part of it, and what relationship the researchers / university had with the local partner and Concordia and/ or Argentina. To present the project to teachers and parents, with the help of information material translated into Spanish by the researcher, the local partner had prepared a PowerPoint presentation which was shown in the meetings (one per school involved). In the presentation she also included personal photos of the Swiss researcher and herself together in Switzerland and Argentina, and she told anecdotes to illustrate their relationship and their mutual interest in children's education and interculturality. She believes that was very helpful as 100 % of the parents in one school, and all parents present at the meeting in the other one, agreed for their children to take part in the project at the end of the meetings.

There have been numerous situations in which the value of this intercultural networking has been recognised. The following quotation also clearly shows how decisions can be made differently on the basis of dissimilar views. The fact that foreigners are often not aware of country-specific (or location-specific) issues in advance makes it impossible to take them into account when planning an international project:

> G.Ch: *"So basically I can say that the reaction of the headmistresses as well as the kindergarten teachers was very similar to that of the parents. They also felt the whole thing as an 'honour' as it was precisely the*

> *children of their institution who were chosen to participate. It even seemed to me that they felt important. It should also be mentioned that Switzerland is perceived worldwide and also here as the 'first world' where 'everything is perfect' etc. So, the fact that the children could participate in a project from Switzerland was a big plus. […]. Everyone liked it when I told them that the project would also be carried out with children from Switzerland and that the project would be funded by a German foundation in addition to the University of Zurich. It also seemed serious to them that I explained and distributed the declaration of consent to them so that they could think it over and then sign it. What surprised me at first was that the consent form only required the signature of one parent. In Argentina parental authority is shared and forms regarding children´s participation in events always require the signature of both parents, except for something unimportant. Therefore it seemed important to me to request the signature of both parents and I completed that on the consent form"* (translation of the authors according to Butschi & Chabrillon, 2019, pp. 271f).

The excerpt illustrates the cooperation partner's views, which did not always coincide with the researcher's pre-conceived ideas or plans. This is why it is also very enriching to reflect on an international research process in retrospect.

Another factor that can have a central (positive or negative) influence on the logistics and implementation of the field work is the *unpredictability of events*. Clearly, this is an issue which is present in all kinds of research, but in international research it manifests itself in two ways: it often goes hand in hand with lack of information or the factor of ignorance, since one is often not fully aware of country-specific characteristics such as holidays and local customs. To give a clear example of things unaccounted for beforehand, the fact that in Concordia and other places in Argentina, little children often do not attend school when it rains heavily – mainly in public schools – mostly due to transport complications, or that whenever there are provincial or national elections they always take place in public schools on Sunday and on the following day the schools are closed for cleaning. Obviously, such unforeseen occurrences are not taken into account in the planning stage as 'extra time'. Precisely, the *unpredictability* factor concurs with a *time component* that could, in the worst case, endanger the project. This is because time pressure is often even greater for field operations abroad than at home. Therefore, the *unpredictability of events* must be taken into account in particular in the preparations regarding time calculation, for instance ("How many extra days do I have or do I want to plan for").

In order for the project to be successful, the dialogue partners must thoroughly understand each other, which, according to Stegbauer, is possible if they have similar experience:

> "The reciprocity of perspective is a prerequisite for successful direct reciprocity. At the centre of the concept of perspective reciprocity is the question of which circumstances must come together in order for understanding to become possible in the first place. Understanding is dependent on knowledge in many ways. For knowledge, which is central to understanding, is of no use as long as only one of at least two communication partners has it"[3] (translation of the authors according to Stegbauer, 2011, p.100).

Evidently, the fact that the cooperation person is familiar with the local conditions means that certain factors can already be taken into account in preliminary planning, for example, with regard to specific school schedules, procedures or holidays, Also, in the field work, particularly in the case of limited time, which is often the case with assignments abroad, it

3 Original quote in German: „Die Reziprozität der Perspektive ist eine Voraussetzung für gelungene direkte Reziprozität. Im Mittelpunkt des Perspektivenreziprozitätsbegriffes steht die Frage, welche Umstände zusammenkommen müssen, damit Verständigung überhaupt erst möglich wird. Verständigung ist in vielfältiger Weise von Wissen abhängig. Denn das für Verständigung zentrale Wissen nutzt nichts, solange nur einer der mindestens zwei Kommunikationspartner darüber verfügt" (Stegbauer, 2011, p.100).

is extremely helpful to be able to benefit from a local person's acquaintance with practical essential information, such as 'Where can printing be done?', 'Where can we produce a photo booklet?', 'Where can we get Internet access?'. They might seem minor details or banal questions, but when one is under time pressure on the spot, it is really valuable to be informed about such things first-hand and not to have to do all the local logistics oneself. Clearly, little unforeseen things can endanger the end result of a project on site, this is one of the reasons why effective intercultural networking is of utmost importance.

In the following section, the main points are summarised and a conclusion is formulated.

5. Conclusion

International research can vary significantly, depending on the field of study, research question, type of project, etc. The fact that "Learning Together. Living Diversity" is a participatory project which specifically used the photovoice method means that it entailed engaging people (children in particular, in this case) closely and actively in the research. As we have seen, participatory research in particular has a social, a political and a pedagogical dimension with a collective production of knowledge (Streck et al., 2011). Mutual personal understanding and comprehension of the respective language are essential in such a process of collective knowledge building. When it comes to close research collaboration, not only thinking styles and views, but also structures and formalities differ between countries. Contextual factors (historical, political, economic, socio-economic factors, among others) must be analysed and considered beforehand. All actors involved in the project should also share the same motivation, commitment and reliability to ensure successful collaborative work.

In international cooperation, establishing contact with potential institutions which may be willing to participate is not an easy undertaking, especially from a distance. Having a reliable local cooperation partner who speaks the same language, and shares the same culture, inspires confidence in the institutions and/or those involved in the research (parents, children, school principals, etc.). The participants feel better understood and the project has a face, which would not be the case if the project was exclusively done by e-mail and telephone from abroad. Good cooperation partnerships also have a culturally mediating aspect: the local co-researcher acts as a kind of cross-cultural mediator in the exchange between institutions and researchers, bridging any possible intercultural communication gap so that misunderstandings could be anticipated and avoided or cleared up at an early stage.

The whole process is marked by many challenging moments. Research can often be overshadowed by the *unpredictability of events*. In the international setting, this factor manifests itself in two ways: 1) The risk that an unforeseeable event will occur is greater, because the researcher is unaware of certain things (e.g. class cancellation due to rain), 2) *When unpredictable events* occur, they usually have a *time component*. Since field missions abroad are often subject to relatively high time pressure, this *unpredictability of events* must be taken into account, in particular in initial planning with regard to time calculation and project schedule. Counting on a reliable informational contact person is of central importance to ease the process and prevent the emergence of inconveniences and stumbling blocks in the logistics of the field work.

The fact that in "Learning Together. Living Diversity" – even over a distance of 12,000 km! the researcher and the cooperation partner shared the same views and goals, and had experience in intercultural communication and education besides their mutual reliability and trust, was essential for a successful international partnership.

No research is the same as any other and therefore the experiences in the international setting are likely to be very diverse. The fact that apparently little is reflected and written about this process makes it impossible to draw on existing literature and compare whether others have had similar experiences. Therefore, this article has attempted to put into writing the reflexive processing of this enriching international research experience, and to encourage international social research to increasingly reflect and write about this process and the role of co-operation partnerships. Further research work will probably contribute to a greater number of successful international cooperation partnerships.

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Recognition-based Action Research

Inspired by third generation critical theory and dialectic relationship theory

Lise Billund and Poul Nørgård Dahl

Abstract: In action research the quality of the interpersonal relationship between the researcher and the practioners is significant, as it affects which knowledge about the problem explored it is possible to obtain, just as the problem itself affects how that relationship evolves. The problem and the interpersonal relationship are thus dialectically connected. Therefore, the action researcher must have a dual focus concerned with generating knowledge and development in both areas. With that in mind, this article develops Recognition-based Action Research, where Axel Honneth's critical, sociological perspective on society is combined with Anne-Lise Løvlie Schibbye's dialectical relationship perspective on interpersonal relationships: with both perspectives grounded in Georg W.F Hegel's thoughts on recognition.

Keywords: Action research, recognition, interpersonal realationship, mutuality, dialectics.

Investigación-Acción basada en el reconocimiento
Inspirado en la teoría crítica de tercera generación y la teoría de la relación dialéctica.

Resumen: En la investigación-acción la calidad de la relación interpersonal entre el investigador y los sujetos involucrados es significativa, ya que afecta qué conocimiento sobre el problema explorado es posible obtener, de la misma forma que el propio problema afecta la evolución de esa relación. El problema y la relación interpersonal están, así, conectados dialécticamente. Por tanto, el investigador-acción debe tener un doble foco de preocupación: la generación de conocimiento y el desarrollo en ambas áreas. Con eso en mente, este artículo desarrolla una Investigación-Acción basada en el reconocimiento, donde la perspectiva sociológica crítica de Axel Honneth sobre la sociedad se combina con la perspectiva de la relación dialéctica de Anne-Lise Løvlie Schibbye sobre las relaciones interpersonales: con ambas perspectivas fundadas en los pensamientos de Georg W.F Hegel sobre el reconocimiento.

Palabras clave: Investigación-Acción, reconocimiento, relación interpersonal, mutualidad, dialéctica.

Action research: a normative research practice

Action research is development-oriented research in a field of practice, and is characterised by two related aspects. Firstly, action research is carried out *with* the subject area: not *about* or *on* the subject area (Heron & Reason, 2001, p. 179). This implies a different relationship between the researcher and the practitioner than the subject-object relationship traditionally found between researcher and research objects. Secondly, action research starts with the normative idea that knowledge about the problem the researcher and the practitioners are working on can contribute to a more free and democratic development of individual practitioners and of society (Nielsen, 2004, p. 522).

In action research, the practitioners become involved with the research, just as the researcher becomes involved with the practitioners. Action research is grounded in a participative world view:

> action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowledge in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview, which we believe is emerging at this historical moment. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice while participating with others in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individuals and their communities (Reason & Bradbury, 2008, p. 4).

Thus, the normative aspect of action research aims to foster growth for both the individuals and for the community (the social institutions), and considers participation in the processes together with other people the way to growth.

Recognition-based Action Research: a third tradition

In this article, we present a new action research tradition: *Recognition-based Action Research*. This new tradition is based on a dialectic understanding of the connection between individual and society, where mutual recognition, both psychologically and sociologically, is seen as a condition of individual and collective development. This recognition perspective is rooted in the thoughts of philosopher Georg W. F. Hegel and links psychologist Anne-Lise Løvlie Schibbye's dialectic relationship theory with sociologist Axel Honneth's third generation critical theory (The Frankfurt School), even though neither Schibbye nor Honneth are action researchers.

Recognition-based Action Research can be seen as a further development of two action research traditions which, according to Nielsen and Nielsen (2006) and Tofteng and Husted (2014) are also inspired by critical theory: The critical Utopian tradition of first generation critical theory (Adorno and Horkheimer), and the dialogue tradition of second generation critical theory (Habermas).

In the first tradition, the focus is on awakening critical consciousness and on changing societal power structures. Therefore, the dialogues set in motion by the researcher are "understood as scenes for critical re-orientations in a reified everyday life" (Nielsen & Nielsen, 2006, p. 68). The researcher plays an active role in this critical reflection, by contributing with her[1]

1 For readability reasons we use 'she' and 'her' when referring to action researchers and practitioners.

knowledge about the problem (Nielsen & Nielsen, 2006, p. 67). By using methods such as experiments, creation of free space, and future workshops, the practitioners can obtain knowledge about the societal conditions and power structures they are subjected to, and about the collective Utopian emancipation prospects[2]. This approach can be seen as an expression of a "communitarian" understanding of freedom (Raffnsøe-Møller, 1999, p. 142), which considers society-level emancipation (from capitalism) as a precondition for individual freedom, and can thus, be criticised for having too little focus on the individual autonomy of the practitioner.

The dialogue tradition is often described as focusing less on the reifying and dominating societal conditions, and instead more on the particular organisational context in which the action research takes place. According to Tofteng and Husted (2012, p. 71), the idea is to give a voice to those that otherwise struggle to be heard in the dominating discourse in an organisation. The role of the researcher is to design and facilitate dialogues in which these voices can be heard, and where the practitioners get the opportunity to speak together and reflect on a common problem, in order for them (and *not* the researcher) to develop new discursive constructions: or, as Nielsen and Nielsen (2006, p. 76) formulate it: "methodological knowledge about how to manage reorganisation of discourses in the organisational world". The role of the researcher, in this tradition, is not to bring her own perspectives forward but: as Pålshaugen and Gustavsen are cited in Nielsen and Nielsen (2006, p. 75): "action researchers should concentrate on methods and the construction of arenas for dialogues". According to Nielsen and Nielsen (2006, p. 77), the researcher apparently does not bring her own experiences into play as: "the researchers only concentrate on procedures for dialogue"[3]. This approach can be seen as an expression of a 'liberalist' understanding of freedom (Raffnsøe-Møller, 1999, p. 142), that sees society as a result of the actions of autonomous individuals. It can thus be criticised for only seeing reality as something participants can construct discursively, and thereby overlook societal power structures and conflicts of interest, as well as the psycho-dynamic aspects of interpersonal relationships.

Recognition-based Action Research, which this article introduces as a new third tradition, is inspired by the critical Utopian tradition, in that action research can contribute to a critical awareness of the dominating societal conditions (for recognition) and of the possibilities for emancipation from this. The critical Utopian assumption, that researchers can and should bring their own knowledge and moral attitudes into play, is another source of inspiration. At the same time, Recognition-based Action Research is inspired by the dialogue tradition's view that the researcher can and should facilitate processes, in which the different voices of the practitioners are heard with the aim of changing practice. However, the two traditions offer no suggestions for how the researcher relationally can recognise individual practitioners as subjects on a psychological level in relation to the problems that

2 Bladt and Nielsen (2013) is an example of critical Utopian action research in a Danish prison.

3 The dialogue tradition is reduced to a question about changing (constructing new) discourses, when the researchers, from the critical Utopian tradition, describe it (e.g. see Nielsen & Nielsen, 2006, p. 76; Tofteng & Husted, 2012; Nielsen, 2004, p. 534), just as they add to the entire dialogue tradition a consensus perspective (e.g. see Tofteng & Husted,, 2012, p. 70). In the meantime, the dialogue tradition also includes perspectives that are neither occupied with discourse alone, nor have a consensus nor have a consensus perspective (see Kristiansen, 2013; Alrø & Dahl, 2015a and 2015b).

the practitioner encounter in their organisational context. It is here, that Recognition-based Action Research offers a particular contribution.

Inspiration from Honneth's concept of recognition

According to Honneth, mutual recognition is at the core of social institutions and it is a prerequisite of individual development:

> … all forms of individual freedom depend in an elementary way on practices of mutual recognition. After all, we can only grasp ourselves as being 'free' to the extent that we are addressed and treated as such by others. Therefore, we can distinguish between various forms of individual freedom according to existing forms of mutual recognition, depending on how we are treated as being 'free' and how we regard others as being 'free' (Honneth in an interview with Willig, 2012, p. 148).

The individual freedom Honneth refers to in the quotation is about developing a positive relation-to-self, understood as "the consciousness or feeling that a person has of him- or herself with regard to the capabilities and rights he or she enjoys" (Honneth, 2007, p. 235). A positive relation-to-self depends on being recognised as a fully individuated person (Honneth, 1995). For Honneth, it is not only about cognitively recognising an individual's presence, but also about emotionally recognising individuals as having worth in themselves, and also as being valuable to the social institution:

> Only those who see themselves as having been taken cognisance of positively, in the mirror of the expressive behavioral modes of their counterparts, know themselves to be socially recognised in an elementary form (Honneth, 2001, p. 120).

Involving practitioners is a given in action research, as the practitioners by definition already are recognised as valuable in and to the particular context and problem of the research.

But the way the action research processes are managed determines whether or not the practitioners *experience* themselves as being recognised; i.e. whether the practitioners experience that the researcher is involving herself *in* them, and in the problem they are focusing on. One must, in Honneth's own words: 'take positive note of the other'; i.e. the researcher must have a recognising stance in the relationship.

Honneth (1995, p. 92-130) describes three types of practical relation-to-self: *self-confidence*, the consciousness of being loved; *self-respect*, the consciousness of being acknowledged as a morally respectable being; and *self-esteem*, the consciousness of possessing valuable and unique abilities in relation to social institutions. With Hegel as a point of departure, Honneth links these three types of relation-to-self to three different spheres: the private sphere (the close and family-related relationships), the legal sphere (The State), and the solidarity sphere (the cultural, political and work-related communities). The extent of one's positive relation-to-self

> … increases with each new form of recognition that individuals are able to apply to themselves as subjects. In this way, the prospect of basic self-confidence is inherent in the experience of love; the prospect of self-respect, in the experience of legal recognition; and finally the prospect of self-esteem, in the experience of solidarity (Honneth, 1995, 173).

Denial of individual recognition amounts to a moral injury that can destroy fundamental self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem, and lead to a negative relation-to-self (Honneth, 1995, p. 131-139). The development of a positive relation-to-self is not an individual undertaking, but rather takes place in relationships with others:

> The freedom associated with self-realisation is dependent on prerequisites that human subjects do not have at their disposal, since they can only acquire this freedom with the help of their interaction partners (Honneth, 1995, p. 174).

Thus, human self-realisation (freedom) is brought about in recognising relationships in a dialectic tension between, on the one hand individual autonomy and, on the other hand dependence on others and on social institions. Humans cannot realise themselves without being in a relationship with others; i.e. without also recognising others.

Honneth's understanding of society is, therefore, also normative, as it focuses on the recognition conditionalities needed for human beings to lead a good life and realise themselves.

> … morality is the quintessence of the attitudes we are mutually obligated to adopt in order to secure jointly the conditions for our personal integrity (Honneth, 2007, p. 137).

The individual is, therefore, morally obliged and responsible, not only for their own, but also for the other's development. The moral duties and attitudes do however vary, depending on the specific inter-subjective relationships, and the institutions people are a part of. It is through the intersubjectively binding rules and symbols of social institutions that individuals become aware of their mutual dependency. "Institutions of recognition are thus mere addenda or an external condition of intersubjective freedom" (Honneth, 2014, p. 49). Human self-realisation (freedom) cannot merely be individual *negative* freedom from external obstacles or *reflexive* freedom of self-determination, but should also be *social* freedom, where social institutions enable mutual recognition. With Hegel as a point of departure, Honneth (2014) concludes "that individuals can only experience and realise freedom if they participate in social institutions characterised by practices of mutual recognition" (p. 49).

Applying this line of thinking to action research, the challenges and problems of practitioners will also always be about relationships of, and institutional conditions for, recognition, and they will be connected with specific spheres of recognition. This will be the case regardless of whether the action research project is about involving citizens in regional development, about leadership development, about the development of personal, professional qualities in working with other people, or about something else entirely. Additionally, the way the researcher relates to the practitioners' challenges will also take place in relationships, where the recognition aspect is key, if development is to take place.

Although Honneth argues that recognition must be lived out in interpersonal relations (inter-subjectively) he does not address how individuals actually can be helped on an interpersonal and relational level, in cases where there is an absence of recognition. He does however mention that absence of recognition forces a person into a form of emotional tension that can only be relieved when one regains "the possibility for active conduct" (Honneth 1995, p. 138). However, how one through recognition can help the individual to deal with the absence of recognition, and regain the possibility of active conduct, is psychologically only addressed briefly by Honneth. Instead, this can be adressed by applying Schib-

bye's (1993, 2002; 2010) dialectical relationship theory, which gives an insight into how, by recognising the practitioner's experience, a helper (researcher/colleague) can contribute to the other persons' (personal professional) development.

Inspiration from Schibbye's concept of recognition

Dialectic relationship theory is a theory about how relationships have a decisive influence on people's possibilities for developing themselves. A key point is that a person's internal processes are dialectically connected with the processes of that individuals' interaction with others (Schibbye, 2010, p. 37). This means that, what happens inside the individual, affects what can happen when interacting with others, and vice versa: and for this reason, the quality of interpersonal relationships is so important in development contexts such as action research.

As is the case with Honneth, recognition is a cornerstone in Schibbye's thinking, and a key phenomenon in relationships between people. To her, recognition is closely connected with meeting another person as a subject, which, involves meeting this individual as a complete person with an internal world of experiences that should be taken seriously:

> The individual has his/her own internal, experiential world of feelings, thoughts and opinions. The individual has his/her own interpretation of the world, his/her views and discoveries, and realises that it would be humiliating to have this internal experience ignored (Schibbye, 2010, p. 33, our translation).

This world of internal experiences: the 'inner-side' of individuals (Billund & Zimmer, 2004), includes feelings, thoughts, perspectives and needs and differs from their 'outer-side'; their appearances, which refers to observable behaviour. Recognition then means taking other peoples' inner-sides into account in your attitude towards them, and in the way you relate to and interact with them: this is what we describe as 'meeting the other person as a subject'. This line of thinking implies that the researcher needs to consider the pivotal role the quality of the interpersonal relationship: the mutual recognition, between herself and the practitioners plays in fostering development. The researcher must be capable of entering into a subject-subject relationship with them, that is characterised by qualities of respect, acceptance and human equality, and where one views the other as a complete person (Schibbye, 2010). Subject-subject relationships are the opposite of subject-object relationships, in which the subject is not affected by the other person's (the object's) experience-related perspectives or, as Schibbye puts it: 'overlooks the inner experience'.

At the same time, we are all both subject and object (Schibbye, 2010, p. 32), and the subject-object relationship will, therefore, always be present in action research. As a researcher, one must maintain a certain distance from the outer world of events. This is the case both while she interacts with the practitioners in the actual situation, and when she later analyses the interaction on her own. But the main point here is that, recognition, and thus development, can only take place in a subject-subject relationship. Development, in this respect, is closely connected with reaching new realisations.

Recognition thus refers to relational processes in which new realisations can arise, when individuals' support each other in 'gaining awareness of that, which is'. To 'gain awareness of that which is', has to do with developing awareness of and connecting with

the 'inside matters of oneself': a person's own experiences, perspectives, intentions etc.; that, which Schibbye (2010), referring to Heidegger, describes as the individual's 'Befindlichkeit'. The reason this is key in development contexts such as action research, is according to Schibbye (2010, p. 237) that when a person is 'allowed' to have an experience, that alone can make it possible to change that experience e.g. by letting (it) go. Recognition is thus a precondition for new realisations and thereby also for development. Following this, inviting the practitioners' *inner experiences* into the dialogue about their practices becomes an essential part of the understanding of development that Recognition-based Action Research represents.

Recognition as a way of being

For both Schibbye and Honneth, recognition is connected to an emotional engagement with the other person, that reaches beyond simply keeping to the cognitive aspects of the interaction. Schibbye argues in an interview with Christiansen (2011, p. 16) that while thoughts are naturally important: without an emotional engagement they will hardly lead to significant change. One can find similar thoughts from Honneth: Recognition is primarily about

> … an affectively neutral, cognitive stance toward the world but rather that of an affirmative, existentially coloured style of caring comportment (Honneth, 2008, p. 38).

Recognition holds in itself a demand for an existential involvement in the other person's emotional world. We must, therefore, make ourselves available to the other person, also on an emotional level. This is something we e.g. do when we meet the other person with an explorative or curious mindset, with empathy and with an eye for the other persons' experiences.

This approach to relating oneself to another person entails moving away from understanding recognition as merely a method or a technique.

> ... communicative techniques are *not* sufficient. In order to create a common reality, we have to enter into relationships involving feelings, face the treats, and recognise or acknowledge others (Schibbye, 1993, p. 186).

Recognition is a way of being, a lived out view of human nature. As Schibbye (2010, p. 234) underlines, recognition is not something you do. It is something you are.

In that respect, basing action research on a stance of recognition also means including processes of compassion between humans, something which is closely connected with the way the researcher sees and lives out her profession. This is what we refer to as the personal professional dimension (see Billund, 2016; Billund & Alrø, 2017, Billund & Zimmer, 2018).

A common theoretical background: Hegel's concept of recognition

Recognition is a compound phenomenon of a complex nature. A deeper understanding of the concept can be found in its roots in Hegel, whose concept of recognition has been the basis of both Honneth's and Schibbye's theories.

Even though Honneth and Schibbye base their theories on different parts of Hegel's thinking, they are both fundamentally inspired by his ontological point of departure: that human beings are driven towards development, and that development occurs in and by virtue of the relationships into which they enter.

Hegel argues that humans are subject to a paradoxical inner tension. This is a tension between on the one hand having a desire for autonomy and independence, and on the other hand having a desire to be recognised by others, thus being dependent. As humans need recognition in order to become whole persons (develop a positive relation-to-self), humans depend on others, and consequently it is impossible to both receive recognition from others and also be fully independent. Recognition can only arise in relationships that are mutual; i.e. where both parties recognise each other. This implies that I must recognise you, in order for you to be able to recognise me. But this recognition is accompanied by feelings of anxiety, as it involves the risk that recognition given is not reciprocated, and here the paradoxical inner tension between independence and dependence shows itself: in order to be independent, we must be dependent. Hegel (1977, p. 111-119) uses the relationship between lord and bondsman to illustrate how the non-mutual relationship congeals in its own rigidity. The bondsman (i.e. a person which is held in bondage by a lord; who has no choice in working for the lord) has to recognise the lord (by attending to the lord's needs), but as the lord does not reciprocate the recognition, the lord receives recognition from a person who is not worthy of being recognised, as a result of which, the given recognition loses its value. When the bondsman, as the non-recognised, recognises the lord, the lord himself ends as non-independent; i.e. in a contrast. Recognition thus becomes bondaged. If the recognition received from others is to have any value, it is first necessary to recognise these other persons.

The way out of this paradoxical inner tension is *mutual recognition*. Recognition in a sense becomes the answer to the question of how people in spite of the inner paradoxical tension still are able to realise themselves.

To achieve that, we need a constructive and recognising relationship with others. According to Schibbye (2010, p. 46), we cannot reason ourselves out of this contrast. It can only be solved in practice, in a directly emotionally experienced, respectful encounter. It requires an affective interaction in which the two partners are simultaneously separate and a complete whole.

Recognition in action research

We argue that action research has great potential for being such a practice, and for facilitating a directly experienced, meeting of emotions. But we also argue that this requires that the researcher herself is recognising within the interpersonal relationships, and in relation to

the problems which are addressed as part of the process. That is easier said than done, as Recognition-based Action Research faces at least two challenges. Firstly with regard to the relationships with the practitioners where, as stated, recognition must be reciprocal, meaning that the action research depends on the practitioners recognising each other as well as the researcher herself. And this cannot be dictacted by the researcher. Secondly, regarding the problem, the researcher cannot pre-determine what the practitioners will experience as mutual recognition during the course of their work.

The problem: Recognition of the practioners work

Let us first look at the last challenge, which reflects the idea that the experience of mutual recognition depends on the individual's subjective experience, and the values of the social institution to which the individual practitioner belongs.

During the action research process, the researcher must continuously explore what the practitioners see as recognition in their work (their problem) and allow the process to adjust itself according to that. Basing action research on a stance of recognition thus means also allowing that, which seems relevant for or affects the practitioners, to affect the action research process. From this it follows that the action research process should not only advance the scholarly interests of the researcher, but also constitute a common sphere of solidarity for both the researcher and the practitioners. The common sphere indicates that the researchers and the practitioners have a shared objective with the action research: and that neither party is forced into the relationship or forced to accept a particular objective. The solidarity aspect indicates that the researcher and the practitioners recognise each other's distinctive qualities and care for these.

The relationship: How do the researcher and the practitioners relate to each other?

The challenge concerned with recognition as a mutual phenomenon has to do with the fact that the researcher cannot (and should not) dictate mutual recognition, but may only invite participants into such a relationship. It is here that the researcher has a central, and challenging task. When we speak about recognition in the relationship between the researcher and practitioners, it is played out in a professional and asymmetric relationship, in which the researcher has a distinctive role with the responsibility of being helper and process manager. The researcher is morally obliged to promote the practitioners' relation-to-self "according to the universal principle of respect" (Honneth 2003, p. 20) and is, in addition, also responsible for putting 'recognition on the agenda'; i.e. to be a role-model by practicing an attitude of recognition towards the practitioners. The practitioners have no reciprocal responsibilities of that nature. Mutual recognition is nonetheless key to the development made possible, as the practitioner, confer Hegel's lord-bondsman metaphor, must meet the researcher with recognition. This in order that the recognition the researcher brings to the relationship can hold any significance for the practitioner.

This means that the professional relationship between the researcher and the practitioners at the human level must be based on regarding each other as being of equal worth, and likewise that their exploration of the problem must be based on a stance of mutual recognition[4]. In spite of this necessary mutuality, the researcher thus has a different set of obligations than those of the practitioners.

Problem and relationship

Recognition-based Action Research involves taking on this set of obligations, and with them also follows the potential for better access to distinctly experience-based aspects of the practitioners' problem. This differentiates Recognition-based Action Research from other types of research, where experiences are not included, and these risk reducing the practitioners to objects. Honneth (2003) speaks of that risk, when there is an "expanding distance between interaction partners" (p. 20). In traditional research, where the researcher with distance cognitively analyses his material composed of questionnaires, statements and interview responses, or video recordings of discussions, this risk is obviously present. The risk of objectification is also present in action research in the critical Utopian tradition and in the dialogue tradition, as both are primarily concerned with the problem, and avoid describing or addressing the quality of the relationship between the researcher and the practitioners. In these two traditions, the practitioners tend to be seen as societally determined and discursively constructed beings respectively. By contrast, Recognition-based Action Research requires and makes it possible for the researcher, throughout the process, to emotionally recognise the practitioners as actual situated subjects, and that reduces the risk of objectification.[5]

Recognition-based Action Research thus involves a consciousness and awareness of the meaning of *both* the recognition, made possible when people meet each other on equal terms *and* the potential for development and change that follow a recognition of the needs, conditions, resources and problems of the practitioner; the problem of the action research. The researcher must thus be concerned with the inner experiences of the others (subjects), in order to be able to connect with them and, through that, also be aware of the recognition needs and -spheres that are relevant for the practitioner. In other words, this type of action research involves a double recognition perspective.

4 On the contrary, the relationship is asymmetrical in the process plan, because the researcher will typically adopt a professional helper role in relationship to the practitioner, and thereby be responsible for establishing the framework and conditions necessary for the shared relationship to arise.

5 The practical examples in this article were analysed and interpreted based on a hermeneutically grounded analytical model (Alrø, Dahl & Schumann, 2016) where the action researcher does not only take on a stance of distance, but also seeks to be involve herself, by drawing on her intuition and innner experiences, in order to lessen the risk of objectifying the prison officers. Both the relation with the practitioners and the subsequent analytical work is thus grounded in critical hermeneutics (Juul, 2017).

The double recognition perspective: practical examples

Recognition-based Action Research thus focuses on both the relationship between the researcher and the practitioners, *and* on the problems of the practitioners[6]. By combining Honneth and Schibbye, Recognition-based Action Research includes both the 'here and now' relationship between the researcher and the practitioners7[7], a more distanced and analytical perspective on the individual problems, and a combination of both.

In the remainder of the article, Recognition-based Action Research will be discussed with reference to practice examples taken from an action research project.

The action research project concerns the prison officer profession, with focus on their relationship with inmates in a high-security prison (Billund 2016). This focus involves that the prison officers, as part of the project, see themselves as professionals and reflect on their interactions with the inmates (and with each other) with the aim of understanding their own practice better, and of developing new ways to practice their profession. In Recognition-based Action Research, the researcher's role, among other things, is to contribute to the creation of a collaborative environment within the action research group, which is conducive for a desire to learn and which, includes recognising the individuals' inner experience-related dimensions that are brought into play in this personal professional arena. To focus on the inner-side is a way of meeting the individuals and the group, with an eye for relevant spheres of recognition, and needs for recognition which will support development in the interaction.

If, for example, a prison officer experiences significant conflicts between colleagues, or a lack of managerial support and brings these experiences into the action research process, the researcher must, through recognition, address and acknowledge these experiences in order for all the involved prison officers to develop on a personal professional level. By bringing the prison officers' experiences into the dialogue, all the officers are given opportunity to reexamine and explore these. Through that, they can develop a greater reflective capability that strengthens their ability to maintain an overview, and see situations from several different angles, and to differentiate between their own experiences and those of the inmates etc. In that sense, this can support a professional approach.

6 We have not found any action research that involves such a double recognition perspective. The closest we came were the following two examples: The first is an action research project where the problem is acknowledging communication in the health sector, taken from Schibbye (Vatne, & Hoem, 2008; Vatne, Bjornerem & Hoem, 2009). The second is a practical research project where the problem is recognition within the social sector, taken from Honneth (Moe, Tronvoll, & Gjeitnes, 2014). However, neither of the projects reflects further on the relationship between the researcher and the practitioners.

7 Focus on how the relationships between researcher and practitioners in an action research process can be actualised, refers to what, Torbert (2001) describes as Second-person action research, and is concerned with how the collaboration processes play out practically in action research. The turning point is the researcher's role and contribution to the interaction and the level of collaboration. Second-person action research shows how the communication evolves in the real processes. The conditions necessary to create development-supportive relationships between the participants in action research processes are closely connected to how the researcher operates personally; i.e. First-person action research: "Indeed, as listening through oneself both ways (towards origin and outcome) is the quintessential first person research/practice, so speaking-and-listening-with-others … is the quintessential second-person research/practice" (Torbert, 2001, p. 253). That perspective is revealed by Billund and Alrø (2017).

In what follows, we will now demonstrate how a perspective that also focusses on experiences can manifest itself, and how it links into Recognition-based Action Research.

The recognition perspective: on a macro and a micro level

Honneth's sociology focuses on how historical-societal features become conditions for the given (poor) recognition relationships and thus negative relations-to-self. It thus takes a macro perspective on recognition. We will seek to demonstrate how recognition manifests itself interpersonally and how it in practice develops on a micro level. Here, we draw on Schibbye's psychology, where focus is on how a (positive) relation-to-self can be supported, in and through interpersonal relationships of recognition.

In the following, based on Schibbye, we will look at how the researcher on a micro level, seeks to practice a stance of recognition in her relationship with the practitioners in the action research process. Then, based on Honneth, we will discuss how the practitioners' problems can be understood from a macro level of recognition perspective. Finally, we will discuss how *relationship and problem* can be seen interacting with each other.

Recognition in *relationships* in the prison project

The following is an excerpt from the action research project[8] that illustrates how the micro level perspective can be brought into play in the action research interaction. In the excerpt, the focus is on one female prison officer (Sanne) who, a few days earlier had experienced observing a female colleague (Malene) being physically intimidated by an inmate, and where this colleague (Malene) merely reacted by laughing. The prison officer has just described how she saw one of the inmates approach her colleague and touch the colleague inappropriately. The officer continues:

Sanne: Then there was another one, who also did it [had too close physical contact] and my legs really just started to shake, and I just closed down.
Peter: So that brings us beyond the point where this is just an accident.
Sanne: What did you say?
Christian: But maybe they were just about to lose their balance
Sanne: Yeah, that could be [ironic tone]
Christian: So they find support

…

8 The conversation is managed with the help of an audio recording. The sequences are written to Danish standards for statements and the registration of verbal accounts (Dansk standard for udskrifter og registrering af talesprog, 1992). However, signs have been added. Words that are expressed strongly are written in CAPITALS. Overlapping speech is underlined. Pauses of more than 3 seconds are indicated in round brackets; e.g. (3 sec). Our explanatory comments on the content are given in square brackets; e.g. [ironic tone]. Unless something else is specifically indicated, the statements come from the person speaking. Where part of a statement is missing, it is indicated by dots ... With the exception of the researcher, all names are made anonymous. If we, in our analysis wish to highlight a particular word, it is written in Italics.

Lise: So your legs just started to shake?

Sanne: Yeah, they just started to shake, because then I of course knew there is something COMPLETELY wrong here, which is inappropriate and so and gone too far. And I somehow manage to get all the inmates checked, and whats it's called. I check with Malene, if there were a couple of them, I couldn't exactly remember having seen. And then she said "Yeah, they all came home [to their cells]". Yes, fine, and I say nothing to her, uhmm. I simply didn't know how to handle it, what I should say to her, so I decided to go to the manager, and, well, then that train left the station.

Lise: What happened then?

Sanne: I end up spending the whole day at work, not being able to pull myself together to do anything at all. I am just there, can't do anything; just sitting there trying to look as if I'm doing something.

At first the colleagues responded partly by confirming that this was a serious situation ("So that brings us beyond the point where this is just an accident") and partly by joking about the situation: "But maybe they were just about to lose their balance so they find support". Seen from a recognition perspective, the researcher (Lise) attempts to get the prison officer's inner-side into the conversation by, in this case, asking questions in a reflective-paraphrasing way ("So your legs just started to shake?") towards the experience that the prison officer herself had introduced ("and my legs really just started to shake").

Sanne connects her emotional experience (her shaking legs) with the acknowledgement ("because then I of course knew") of the inappropriate behaviour that had gone too far. Through that, she stays with what she has been through; she 'gains awareness of that, which is', and that is a condition for her being able to understand and reflect upon the experience, as she does in the example above. Recognition-based Action Research involves that the researcher in the relationship (also), asks about the inner-sides of the practitioners, in order to help the individual (Sanne) explore the practice: the problem, of which she is a part.

As we shall see later, in this way Sanne and the other participants gradually through recognition-based mutual relationships, gain greater local knowledge about the problem: which in the end can also contribute to more general knowledge.

The practitioners' recognition *problem* in the prison project

The following illustrates how Honneths' macro level perspective can contribute to understanding how the given poor recognition conditions affect Sannes need for recognition. In this example, where an inmate has too close physical contact with a prison officer, the perspective can help us understand that action as a physical violation connected with the private sphere, which according to Honneth (1995, p. 133) is "accompanied by a dramatic breakdown in one's trust in reliability of the social world and hence by a collapse in one's basic self-confidence". Moreover, it is a breach of the prison's regulations and norms and, therefore a violation within the legal sphere, that is connected with "the feeling of not enjoying the status of a fully-fledged partner to interaction, equally endowed with moral rights" (1995, p. 133) and is, therefore, also connected with loss of self-respect.

The "inappropriate" and the "gone too far" are not just happening between the inmate and the concerned prison officer, but also affect the officer (Sanne) who observed the incident and as it rendered her helpless: "… I just closed down … I say nothing to her, uhmm. I simply didn't know how to handle it, what I should say to her … I end up spending the whole day at work, not being able to pull myself together to do anything at all. I am just there, can' do anything; just sitting there trying to look as if I'm doing something."

In Honneth's understanding, it is a moral violation or moral injury that harms the prison officer's (Sanne's) self-confidence and self-respect: and also her self-esteem so much so that she is restricted in doing her work (in the solidarity sphere) because she cannot depend on a colleague, who demonstrates such a lack of respect for the prison norms by allowing herself to be intimidated. The violation illustrates how the prison officers depend on each other, and raises very basic questions about the norms of their social institution.

Using Honneth (1995, p. 138) this dynamic can be explained by, the subject (Sanne) "being oppressed by a feeling of low self-esteem", when "a real or imaginary interaction partner" (the colleague) oversteps a moral norm by not reacting:

> Hence, the moral crisis in communication is triggered here by the agent being disappointed with regard to the normative expectations that she or he believed could be placed on another's willingness to respect him or her (Honneth, 1995, p. 138).

Sanne's possible disappointment could be caused by her feeling deceived by a colleague, which results in a feeling of shame, that paralyses her. This type of shame:

> … represents the emotion that overwhelms subjects who, as a result of having the ego-claims disregarded, are incapable of simply going ahead with an action. In these emotional experiences, what one comes to realise about oneself is that one's own person is constitutively dependent on the recognition of others (Honneth, 1995, p. 138).

The violation is thus not based in Sanne feeling that she acted improperly herself (a feeling of guilt based on the super-ego), but instead, the violation stems from Sanne *feeling* that she herself is wrong (shame feeling because of the ego-ideal):

> In psychoanalytical terms, this means that what is negatively affected by the action-inhibiting violation of a moral norm is not the super-ego, but the subject's ego-ideals (Honneth, 1995, p. 138).

Honneth's approach makes it possible to understand how ordinary human dynamics associated with recognition and moral injury can have an effect in complex vocations, as e.g. the work of prison officers. It shows how relationships are built in to the norms of social institutions, and that a violation of those norms will negatively impact both the relationship and the individual (here Sanne's relation-to-self). In that way, Honneth's perspective can contribute to action research processes with an understanding of central problems related to local practices, and it can thus give access to knowledge that goes beyond these problems. The problems highlight elements of the profession that further enlighten us about what *kind* of profession it is, what challenges and conditions characterise the profession, and what the emotional consequences of practicing the profession can be.

Potentials in a double recognition perspective

In the following we will see how *relationship and problem* can be seen in interaction, and how this double recognition perspective makes it possible to design action research processes that both have an eye for the importance of recognition in the development of the practitioners (local, practical knowledge), and for insights into the connection between individual development and institutional development (general theoretical knowledge).

We return to the action research project in the prison: From a follow-up question from the researcher about what management did with regard to Sanne, it becomes evident, that it is unclear, how the process will be handled in the future. The other prison officers continue discussing what happened in the ward on that particular day after Sanne went home; among other things, that the concerned officer was confronted with the situation. The prison officers focus on that chain of events, and on intentions and causes. Sannes experiences and feelings fade out of the conversation, which quickly shifts to addressing a problem like this in their daily work: to how they can ensure that the inmates get less power and how they can increase the feeling of security within the ward. It is discussions like these, that can help generate ideas for new practices and, therefore, they are entirely relevant to the action research project. It does however also mean that the immediate focus drifts away from the experiential aspects, that can often be seen as 'difficult subjects'. Such a problem-related displacement can mean that the process also drifts away from the development potential inherent in personal professional reflections. Because the researcher and the practitioners have agreed to focus on the personal professional aspects of their job, the researcher subsequently attempts to include Sanne's more experience-related sides back into the conversation:

Lise: I just wanted to ask you, Sanne, now that you are sitting here and hearing about what happened in the ward yesterday. How does that feel? What happened, and Malene and?

Sanne: Well I, I, yes, well I know that I did what I was supposed to do. What I'm thinking about now is: can I stay in this ward?

Lise: Hm, hm.

Sanne: Because I do realise that they [the inmates] will go after me now.

In Honneth's terminology, Sanne assesses cognitively that she acted like a morally dependable person by keeping the appropriate rules, and by going to the management. However, she continues by telling what is also on her mind, which is whether she can stay in this ward when the inmates now will go after her: because she is seen as having 'grassed' to the management (which results in a tightening of the rules and changed conditions for the inmates). To 'go-after' in the prison context means that the inmates will get revenge on her through different forms of harassment. This can be interpreted as Sanne beginning to talk about her inner-side; i.e. what worries her. This can be whether she will be allowed to stay in the ward (if, for example, management decides that she is now a hazard to her own safety and to that of her colleagues) and that she is threatened by the inmates. Seen through a recognition perspective, Sanne is not expressing doubts about the way she cognitively sees herself (and is seen) as a morally dependable person (the legal sphere), but can with good reason be worried about being violated (possibly both physically and mentally) by the in-

mates and, thereby lose her self-confidence (private sphere), and for not being allowed to stay in the ward and thereby losing her self-esteem (the solidarity sphere). Therefore, Sanne is weighed down with some particularly difficult recognition conditions; possibly made even worse by her uncertainty about the future actions of the management.

That the managerial actions related to the vulnerability of the individual are unclear in crisis situations like these, can be connected with the prison culture, where the 'hard' is typically given priority over the 'soft' (Minke, 2010; Nielsen, 2010; Billund, 2016). In prison there is no culture of expressing feelings, neither directed towards inmates or between employees, as that can be seen as a weakness with regards to doing your job. In that perspective, Sanne is very open about her worries and vulnerability.

After Sanne has expressed her worry, a few minutes of discussion between the officers follows. They focus on what happened, how grotesque the situation is in the ward, and also on sympathies and concerns for the officer who has now been revealed in, what the others understand as having her boundaries violated. Again, these discussions are important for handling and reflecting on the situation back in the ward, but at the same time Sanne's experiences fade out of the conversation, and with that, also the development potential connected with being helped to embrace and reflect on these. In order to maintain a balance between problem and relationship (the double recognition perspective), the action researcher again brings up Sanne's situation: this time by including the other participants:

Lise: What do you think about Sanne's situation?
Lotte: I don't think they [the inmates] dare. I don't think they will be allowed to [by the strong inmates].
Peter: But that changes nothing if you are feeling uneasy about being here.
Sanne: Yes, yes, yes.
Christian: Yeah, but definitely. It affects both your health and then.
Sanne: I just want to be allowed to continue to do my job, and that is all there is to it.
Peter: Yeah, but you must feel OK while you are doing it.
Sanne: Yeah, I know.
Peter: Also, even if there is no obvious pressure or harassment, you must
Lotte: feel confident in the people you work with.
Peter: But you are not alone: I am also one of those who has put his name to something.

The sequence shows that the other officers, in a sense, take over or continue the action researcher's recognition of Sanne's inner-side where, earlier, they had joked ("maybe they were just about to lose their balance so they find support") and had their focus on the outer-side (the inmates). The colleagues help underline that emotional experiences should be taken seriously, by insisting that Sanne's health is important; "even when there is no obvious pressure or harassment, you *must* feel confident in the people you work with". Her colleague says indirectly that the emotional aspects *must* be included: "you *must* feel OK while you are doing it (your job)". In contrast with the prison culture, the action research process seems to enable mutual recognition (*social* freedom). It can be argued that officers are expressing the view that the problem is not only Sanne's, but common to all of them. The conversation is not only about Sanne's *negative* freedom (the inmates won't dare to go after Sanne), or her *reflexive* freedom ("I just want to be allowed to continue to do my job"), but

also that the prison as a social institution: and not only the action research process, must provide means for mutual recognition (*social* freedom) and that this includes an inner-side that has to be recognised. In that sense focus is on both the relationship between the participants in the action research process *and* on the problem of the practioners and their social institution (the double recognition perspective).

The support Sanne receives from the action-researcher and the colleagues can, in addition to supporting her self-esteem, also help to build her self-confidence, thereby functioning in a quasi-therapeutic way.

> One can, for example, also build self-confidence with the help of certain groups that function as therapeutic agents. … Groups very often have the power to function as quasi-therapists so that, inside the group one gets exactly the stimulations that one needs in order to cope with the traumas one has had. (Honneth's answer to Jensen, 2006, p. 87, our translation).

Honneth does not elaborate on what he means by "stimulations", but if following Schibbye's line of thinking, this would include emotional recognition of the inner-side. Similarly, Honneth (2009) (referring to Freud) argues that self-appropriation cannot only be about the subject cognitively recognizing the repression, but also allowing for possible emotional inclusion:

> we should … understand affective acceptance of repression as the goal and endpoint of self-appropriation. … it is the only way that we can learn after the event to mentally reorganize the content locked within it and to give this a propositional form (p. 114).

After the group supported Sanne, the researcher continues:

Lise: When I ask about things concerning Sanne, I think that the system also has responsibility for you, and the system also has responsibility for ensuring that you are looked after in this situation and receive the help that you need. Because you can certainly risk needing help.
Sanne: Hm hm.
Christian: Certainly.
Lise: And I'm also thinking with the history of pressure you have been under for the past year, and this simply adds to it.

The researcher meta-communicates about why she has asked about Sanne by bringing the social institution's co-responsibility into play in relation to the outer-side ("that *you are looked after*") and inner-side ("and receive the help *you need*"). She acknowledges that Sanne has vulnerable sides ("you can certainly risk needing help").

In Schibbye's understanding, recognition from the researcher and the colleague can support development for Sanne. The same is the case in Honneth's understanding, as the group practices – and confirms – the social institution's norms by giving "quasi-therapeutic aid" (Honneth, 2012, p. 212), which supports Sanne's self-respect and self-esteem: "Neither self-respect nor self-esteem can be maintained without the supportive experience of practicing shared values in the group" (p. 214). This can be seen as "a case of solidarity", as the group demonstrates "felt concern" for Sanne, as well as sympathy, which is a condition for realizing shared goals (Honneth, 1995, p. 129).[9]

9 This is in agreement with the dialectic view of the relationship between individual and social institution, which also appears in Honneth's (2012) basic understanding of groups as "a social mechanism that serves the

The researcher brings the problem into a wider organisational context by introducing the co-responsibility of the social institution ("the system also has responsibility"). With that, she acknowledges that the social institution (i.e. management) has a responsibility, which can be seen as recognition of the prison officers' right to demand something from their management. *This is recognition in relation to the problem*. The researcher underpins her opinion by referring to the difficult conditions that all officers have been faced with during the past year ("the pressure you have been under"), and thereby setting their difficult recognition conditions in a historical context.

The sequence thus demonstrates the double recognition perspective: The action researcher meets Sanne's inner-side with recognition and recognises the problem of the practioners and their social institution.

When the researcher introduces the management's co-responsibility, it is not about recognising the prison officers' inner-side (in Schibbye's understanding), but about the researcher (in Honneth's understanding) bringing her own moral perception to light in relation to the recognition conditions of the social institution to which the officers are subjected.

In terms of action research, this is then criticism of the existing recognition conditions that can bring about increased awareness, and lead to collective action. This can be seen as an indication that the researcher's use of the "recognition framework in, for example, thematic stimulations in group discussions" can lead to "a certain conscious expansion effect around the dimension, which is often under-stated or neglected", according to Honneth (in an interview with Willig and Petersen, 2001, p. 105, our translation). In that sense, one can say that the researcher's inspiration from 3rd generation critical theory comes into play here, as an expression of recognition of the institutional *problem* that is being addressed.

In a follow-up group interview, one year after the action research processes had taken place, the prison officers explain how they benefited from the double recognition perspective. Christian says that the action research processes: "always were about us and our ward. The things that concern us in our daily life, those were the themes", i.e. the *problems* of the practitioners. The officers explain this has to do with the *interpersonal relationship* between them and the action researcher: "It's because Lise always let us choose for it to be that way". Lotte elaborates by explaining how the action research processes gave new and different positive conditions for recognition than those usually found in the ward, as they together openly could reflect on their own concerns and feelings, without this becoming an individual problem:

> There was room for saying what you were thinking and feeling, in contrast with how things are on the ward. I had the feeling this was a place where you could unload and also discuss things, so you weren't just thinking: "Oh, I feel sorry for myself" but that you actually took something away from it. It was actually nice to hear it from the other side as well. You really talked things over with both you [the action researcher], but also the colleagues and this is in contrast with the supervision we have now, where I, like Peter, am thinking about what I want to say and what I don't want to say, and I never think that here. So I have gained a lot from it, that's for sure.

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interests or needs of the individual by helping him or her achieve personal stability and growth" (p. 203) and "a primary 'source of humanity'." (p. 214).

Peter adds that it was the "safe environment" of the action research processes, where the officer's problems were taken seriously in the interpersonal relation:

> You knew that what you said was reflected on. And you weren't made a fool of. You could say what you wanted.

The prison officers' experiences with the action research process thus relates to both how it prioritizes the problems that were important to them (*problem*): even though it was sometimes at the expense of the research interest of the action researcher, and it relates to the interpersonal interplay between them and the action researcher (*relation*). And finally, it points to the conclusion that the knowledge and the experiences the prison officers were motivated to share in the action research processes, were closely connected with a feeling of interpersonal security and trust.

Conclusion

Recognition-based Action Research sees the relationship between the individual and the social institutions as dialectic. The individuals' development towards freedom is inseparably bound to relationships with mutual recognition. The individual cannot develop a positive relation-to-self (to be free and 'flourish') without being acknowledged, and without acknowledging other members of the social institution. Recognition relationships are not individual undertakings. They are part of, and dependent on, the norms and practices of the social institution; i.e. the organisational and institutional recognition conditions. If the social institution is to develop itself in a emancipatory direction, its practices and norms must enable and support mutual recognition relationships.

Therefore, Recognition-based Action Research is about the development of the individual practitioner, and of the social institution, being inter-connected. The researcher helps the practitioners by exploring a problem that is important to both the individual and the social institution. She does this by creating a space in which the practitioners' experience-related aspects of the problem are explored by the researcher and the practitioners, through relationships based recognition. In this way, the practitioners obtain local, practical knowledge about which recognition relationships and conditions will support their development, just as the researcher can obtain a more general knowledge through analysis and theorising. This knowledge can be about the connection between relationships and problems in the action research process, and in the practitioners' work-related praxis (solidarity sphere).

Recognition-based Action Research thus argues that mutual recognition between the researcher and the practitioners, and between the practitioners themselves, is crucial to ensuring that action research can lead to development and new knowledge: both practical and theoretical. Recognition-based Action Research makes it possible to reflect experience-related dimensions both in the relationship between the researcher and the practitioners, and in the problems so that the essential recognition potential in relation to human individual and social institutional existence is not missed. It is precisely here the combination of Schibbye and Honneth is powerful.

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Repoliticising Participatory/Action Research: From Action Research to Activism: some considerations on the 7th Action Research Network of Americas Conference

Sandro de Castro Pitano, Rosa Elena Noal and Cheron Zanini Moretti

Abstract: The seventh conference of the Action Research Network of the Americas (ARNA) took place in Montreal, Canada, from the 26th to 28th of June, in 2019. Having as title "Repoliticising Participatory/Action Research: From Action Research to Activism", the event gathered people from different areas of practice coming mostly from the North American countries: Canada, United States and Mexico. The discussion presented here is based on notes made by the authors in the course of the conference, in which 40 words/keywords were identified, serving as a base to debate the validity of the principles of participatory research and action research in its repoliticisation and activism. Thus, we presented a systematisation of some key themes of the conference, among them, the commitment with the rupture: in relation to the traditional practices of research, the role and the social responsibility of the universities and the transforming character of participation, with emphasis in the effort for its repoliticisation and activism.

Keywords: ARNA (*Action Research Network of the Americas*); Participation; Action Research; Activism; Repoliticisation.

Repolitización de la investigación participativa/acción: de la investigación en acción al activismo: algunas consideraciones sobre la 7a Conferencia de la Red de Investigación Acción de las Américas

Resúmem: La séptima conferencia de la Red de Investigación Acción de las Américas (ARNA) se llevó a cabo en Montreal, Canadá, del 26 al 28 de junio de 2019. Con el título "Repolitizando la Investigación Acción Participativa: de la Investigación Acción al Activismo", el evento reunió a personas de diferentes áreas provenientes en su mayoría de los países de América del Norte: Canadá, Estados Unidos y México. La discusión aquí presentada se basa en registros realizados por los autores en el transcurso de la conferencia, en los que se identificaron 40 palabras/conceptos, que sirven de base para debatir la vigencia de los principios de la investigación participativa y la investigación acción en su repolitización y activismo. Así, presentamos una sistematización de algunos temas clave de la jornada, entre ellos, el compromiso con la ruptura – en relación a las prácticas tradicionales de investigación, el rol y la responsabilidad social de las universidades y el carácter transformador de la participación, con énfasis en el esfuerzo por su repolitización y activismo.

Palabras-clave: ARNA (*Red de Investigación Acción de las Américas*); Participación; Investigación para la Acción; Activismo; Repolitización.

Introduction

The *Action Research Network of the Americas* (ARNA) presents itself as a network of university researchers who work with research and teaching in different contexts and levels. Among several initiatives, it aims at promoting the different research methodologies: in local, regional, national and international contexts, by supporting a democratic and sustainable society and disseminating critical knowledge in the Americas (ARNA, 2020). In this regard, recognising the multiple voices and experiences contained in complex realities in this continent, ARNA has as one of its goals the investigation of perspective diversity from its members in relation to the socio geopolitical challenges in the present time, through action/research and participatory research. (ARNA, 2020).

Since 2013, ARNA has held annual conferences aiming at the creation of bridges of solidarity in America and in the world, "while walls of intolerance are publicly displayed" (ARNA, 2020). Its seventh conference took place at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, from the 26th to the 28th of June, 2019. Having as title "Repoliticising Participatory/Action Research: From Action Research to Activism", the event gathered people from different areas of practice coming mostly from the North American countries: Canada, United States and Mexico1[1].

As participants of a Research Group[2] that has Popular Education and Participatory Action Research as theoretical and practical reference points, we seek to follow some discussion forums about these two fundamentals: locally, in our universities and through the relation that we established with popular movements; regionally, in the Studies Forum: works by Paulo Freire; nationally, in the Work Group 06: Popular Education in the National Association of Post-Graduation and Research in Education (Anped) and in the Freirean Network of Researchers (PUC-SP); and internationally, in the *Latin American Studies Association* (LASA) and in the *Action Research Network of the Americas* (ARNA) – the latter, an object of discussion on this article.

The discussion presented here is based on notes made by the authors in the course of the 7th Conference, and through these notes, around 40 categories/keywords were identified and served as base to the systematisation of some central themes from the referred event and to our analysis. Thus, we aim at presenting the validity of the principles of participatory research and research/action in its movement of repoliticisation and activism.

1 On this occasion, we could observe a minority of participants deriving from South American countries, which in part, can be explained by the high cost required to an on-site participation (registration fee, plane tickets and accommodation); due to insufficient financial resources, on the part of teaching and research institutions for research communications in international scientific events; as well as for the limits imposed by the official languages of the event: French and English.

2 In Brazil, we formed a network of researchers who originated from the Grupo de *Pesquisa Mediações Pedagógicas e Cidadania* (Pedagogical Mediations and Citizenship Research Group), sited at the Vale do Rio dos Sinos University (UNISINOS). From this group emerged: Popular education – Action and Research, linked to the *Universidade de Caxias do Sul* (UCS), led by Sandro de Castro Pitano; and, *Educação Popular, Metodologias Participativas e Estudos Decoloniais* (Popular Education, Participatory Methodologies and Decolonial Studies), linked to the Santa Cruz do Sul University (UNISC), led by Cheron Zanini Moretti.

Action Research with participation: solidarity and co-creation

To take action in research under the perspective of participation and action consists: from the early stage of the project, in taking on innovative point of views before the dominant epistemological paradigm. The participant methodologies, especially in the Latin American strand, express a deep dissent in relation to the neutrality defended by positivism.

The research developed according to this paradigm, even in its variants, constitutes itself as an action that only brings closer external individuals to others' problems, those who experience them on a daily basis. However, being part of the problem, why they cannot accept themselves as responsible agents for building confrontations and searching for solutions?

It is considered dominant epistemology, the conception of knowledge that we call conventional, in which researchers are subjects and participants are objects. In a conventional research, the results are in service of a more bureaucratic enterprise, at least in relation to social problems. Transformation is not the emphasis of projects. Principles like scientific neutrality, isolation and variable control; and, researchers' lack of interference in the object are typical of a tradition marked by a Cartesian methodical doubt.

On the opposite end, we highlight the fundamental characteristic of action research: it will always display an empirical base, associated with an action or solution of a problem perceived by the participants, which must involve confrontation and the involvement of the researchers in a solidary way. As methodology, it has been used in several areas with reformist purposes for administrative and functional principles, such as private companies and public institutions. The search for higher levels of efficiency in management is very common in action research, especially for European countries.

The criteria of truth in participatory methodologies are settled in the collective and solidary process that allows the building of knowledge. A renewed knowledge emerges, thanks to the lack of exclusion of different perspectives, in which the conflict and the difference are valued, tensioning and qualifying the group reflection and the construction of an authentic epistemic thinking.

According to Brandão (2014), qualitative research forces the researcher to trust himself/herself: that is an important leap when we consider quantitative research, whose referent is external to the researcher just as well as the individuals involved in the processes: in other words, it means the same as: "I doubt myself and the other. And, for this reason, I arm myself not only with 'objective' instruments, but with strict procedures and relations ruled by impersonality" (Brandão, 2014, p.44), as a way of protection from the subjectivity of those who research. Now, the participatory research requires a leap that goes beyond the qualitative, that is, it has as its "objective substance the extension of a fundamental act of trust". Thus,

> *"(...) I (researcher), who trusted myself before the other, trust the other before me (...) as a co-participant of the solidary creation of knowledges. (...) before a social research that suits me or the academic world of my origin and destiny, it suits the individual-other and the world of life where he/she is willing to accept me as partner of a participatory research."* (Brandão, 2014, p.45).

In this conception resides the pedagogical dimension of participation in relation to research. This dimension also responds to a social demand, expressed by the historic fragility of par-

ticipation in different political and social contexts in our field. Participating shapes itself as a learning that depends on experiences capable of consolidating a participative culture. The interactive character of participation before the concreteness experienced, involving different individuals, generates a fruitful pedagogical process. In such process, teaching and learning are undeniably present, settled in the trust provided by the collective and dialogical dimension that reshapes the individuals' view in relation to their daily lives.

One of the main characteristics of action research is, according to Thiollent (1988, p. 15), that it necessarily implies the participation of the people involved with the outlined objectives. This participation arises from the purpose of identifying the problem in a clear way, evaluating the confrontation of possibilities and acting in a planned way. Therefore, it is closer to tangible social actions when the subjects (researchers and other participants) play a decisive role in the reality experienced, directly seizing and interfering in the problem. The solution of problems, followed by a deepening of the knowledge about them, is the ideal of action research aimed at social realities, avoiding the simple activism. Finally, it comprehends a practical objective: the solution of problems and a pedagogical objective, constituted by the enhancement of the knowledge on the matter in question.

In 2012, a Circle of Learning was carried out by the *Work Group on Action Research* (AR) from the American Educational Research Association (AERA), in order for them to have a better comprehension of this type of research, preserving the diversity and coverage presented by 30 researchers and members. Among the considerations presented by this community, we highlight the knowledge that,

> *"(...) The nature of action research places the researcher in the middle of the problem and not on the outside as an observer and/or experimenter. Action researchers do not claim 'neutrality' but rather account for their position in the action and inquiry. A strength of action research is that the researcher studies what she or he does in concert with others. Therefore, the knowledge created through action research is inevitably dialogical in nature, and is thus always a negotiated and co-created knowledge. This knowledge is not inert, but serves to improve the quality of life by engaging participants in a quest for deeper understandings that lead to improvement."* (Rowell; Polush; Riel; Bruewer, 2015, n.p).

And, to this end, sharing the results found is an important part of the knowledge co-creation process. "The action researchers also expect these findings to be examined by other professionals, including professionals whose knowledge and belief system can be very different from those of the action researchers", as studies from Rowel, Polush, Riel and Bruewer (2015, n.p) showed in the scope of the AERA/AR.

We can observe that this comprehension is going to guide the ARNA foundational concept, and that in each international conference to be carried out, the network will be aiming at leaping forward[3]. Moreover, the role of the universities has also been a recurrent concern

3 Subsequently, we can follow how action research has been discussed by ARNA, particularly, by looking at the central themes of each of the annual conferences. In 2013, the first one and that took place in San Francisco, California (USA), and had as main theme: *The Invention and Reinvention of Knowledge: Action Research across the Americas*. In 2014, in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania (USA), *Enacting our beliefs: The So-What of Action Research*. In 2015, the conference happened in Toronto, Ontario (Canada), and the main topic was *Joint Action – Learning with and from one another*. In 2016, the conference returned to the USA, to Knoxville, Tennessee, and had as main focus the theme: *Making a Difference: Action Research for a Change*. In 2017, for the first time an ARNA conference was hosted in South America: it took place in Cartagena, Colombia and had as main discussion theme, *Participation and Democratization of Knowledge: New Conver-*

among ARNA members, insisting on the reflective direction upon social responsibility of higher education institutions. Questionings and problematisations on this subject area inquire about the traditional and innovative ways, and even the subversive ones of producing knowledge, followed by their purposes. What draws the distinction in a traditional research: of positivist foundation, from the participant methodologies, mainly those which integrate action as a practical challenge? If we consider the multiple aspects of academic teaching, how can participation impact on the formation of professionals as of its fundamental principles? Will there be differences in the performance of these professionals, in their scope of work, in relation to others trained under the traditional perspective? Which one can be considered more committed to a performance considered socially responsible? These are some of the emerging problematisation, many of which, although they induce an answer, they seek to trigger a reflection, and seize the differential represented by the participation in the process of professional formation. As proposed by popular education, it is worth taking on as an elementary challenge for a liberation project, the active involvement of subjects in confronting their problems with solidarity, and through the co-creation of knowledge.

Politics and Activism: principles on the move

The central theme of this annual Conference focused on the *repoliticisation and activism* of participation and action research, considering them to be fundamental tasks in the current international educational and political context.

From the observation and systematisation of our participation, we highlight nearly forty words and keywords during the event, they are: research, action, emergence, community, change, inclusion, collectivity, social transformation, collaboration, activism, popular education, interdisciplinarity, social responsibility, interculturality, teacher training, resistance, politicisation, ethics, criticism, mobilisation, reflective rationality, the role of university, engagement, participation limits, democracy, critical thinking, gender inequality, coloniality, action research, empowerment, participative pedagogical planning, research impacts in the community, identity, deficiency, power, hope, youth, oppression, teaching and learning.

And, from the same observation, we identified an emphasis in the search for references to think and make a repoliticization of the participation and action research, where the names of Paulo Freire and Orlando Fals Borda were highlighted. These two Latin American intellectuals still are held as the main authors, both for debates during work presentation sessions and in the texts submitted and approved for the event communications.

However, what does the repoliticisation of the action research and participation mean? Repoliticising opposes the intense process of depoliticisation imposed by the systemic logic all over the planet, which has been remarkably escalating in the last years. It is possible to see that citizenship, for example, that the status of a person in the political and social con-

gences for Reconciliation; as well as hosting the 1st *Global Assembly for the Democracy of Knowledge*. In the following year, the conference returned to the USA, in San Diego, California, with the theme: *Knowledge Mobilization for Equitable and Peaceful Social Progress*; and, lastly, in 2019, in Montreal, Quebec (Canada), the conference that we based this manuscript, which focus is the object of our analysis: *Repoliticizing P/AR: From Action Research to Activism*.

text is summed up by the right to consumption; the participation is replaced by representation and, in the educational scope, the popular is replaced by the social, directed to the cultural and less political dimensions of the human existence. Therefore, to repoliticise participation and action research means to put back in the scope of investigative practice the concern with issues such as inequality, apathy and anti-personification in society in the contemporary period. This period was marked by an apolitical movement, wisely and broadly used by right-wing political parties and their representatives.

Activism, in this context, is understood as a concrete position taken, interfering in reality, based on the knowledge produced by research practice, socially and politically committed. The interference involves not only the fight for certain causes or against a given reality, such as gender, race or creed oppressions, the environmental issue or against social inequality. It implies permanent and engaged action towards denunciation, making certain problems and its causes clear. There is great affinity with the Freirean posture of denunciation and announcement: denunciation of the oppression in its various faces, the causes and the conditions of sustenance; announcement of resilience possibilities, through hopeful struggle and problematising education. Activism is linked to many issues that are fundamental and relevant to participatory research and action research, such as the argumentative and critical skills, openness to dialogue, attentive listening and respect to differences.

For decades the works of Paulo Freire (1981): starting from his early experiences in cultural and literacy movements, stand out as references for participatory methodologies in education. Identifying the people with their precise conditions, Freire (1981) promotes as the base of his educational conception the dialogue among the different through formative processes in the liberating perspective. Investigating their own reality, deepening the comprehension about the problems imposed by their reality, individuals will be able to fight for transformation based on their reading of the world.

In the works of the Colombian sociologist Orlando Fals Borda, participation and action are definitely close to participatory action research. In Latin American, the conception was disseminated mainly by the progressive catholic movement called Liberation Theology, and it was globally broadened through the interaction among researchers from the South and North contexts (Thiollent, 2014).

Participatory action research, considered for the transforming perspective of the reality, was widely present during the debates of the seventh conference. It was considered a rather pluralistic approach, explored from various contexts, such as secondary schools, universities and communities. The perspectives covered the impact of the processes developed in participatory research, for example, to allow the reflection about real problems and the respective overcoming. Participation is understood as an attitudinal principle in relation to the educational professionals' formative issues, and to the fight against school violence. Regarding youths, some presentations about this subject, usually referred to politicisation, sought to emphasise the need for political education as an educational process among young people.

The adherence to approaches with real dimensions of the phenomena should be highlighted, reflecting one of the main characteristics of participatory methodologies: it has as starting and arrival points the specific environment experimented by the participants. The changes or transformations (these are considered to be more decisive than changes) will be

authentic, the more collectively they are thought and executed, involving a radical identification with the materiality of the place.

Accepting the risk of contradiction, one questions if the classical statement from the empiricist Francis Bacon, "knowledge is power" could be embodied by the powerless, by the socially exploited in their fight for liberation. We understand that it can, because when the statement is embodied in its conditions, needs and world perspective, the premise is transformed in power by knowledge. It is knowledge that enables transformation and not reproduction, producing critical and problematising knowledge of contexts and people, transforming them in a permanent process.

Some of the highlighted categories/keywords have a dense articulation among themselves, like, for example, collaboration, collectivity, inclusion and community. There was noticed a concern to comprehend what can be common in particular groups, reinforcing its identification and belonging from the traits that bring them together. People will feel, and they will even be included in the dimension of collectivity if there is a collaboration based in common interests for the community. The very notion of critical thinking, explicitly featured in dialogues also overarches such perspective. After all, thinking about common problems collectively in search of alternatives is a way of knowing the causes in a fuller and deeper manner, besides allowing the setting of alternatives.

Concerns were manifested during the event from researchers of areas like education, due to the limits of classical methodologies for the production of knowledge, settled in positivism, which instigate the search for methodological alternatives. Such concerns are mainly motivated by the dissociation caused by the positivist inclination, between science and its results in face of the social conditions of the participants. Participants who in general are considered objects of study, and are analysed as things through the scientists' lenses, the knowledge owners who seek to deepen their knowledge. In this perspective, the social problems experienced are investigated and interpreted by the skilled look, and will produce interpretations in which the results will generate solutions. Reproducing the classical logic, the positions in the research process are maintained unchanged: researchers remain subjects, participants and their problems remain objects. In other words, active subjects act on passive objects.

It was perceived through the panels, tables and works presented that knowledge was mainly themed through analyses aimed at the valuation of the process, without detracting from the product. It is emblematic to consider what is known, although, rarely one wonders how something is known, or how this particular knowledge was obtained. The matter of validity of the knowledge in relation to the respective forms of construction would be implicit in this dynamic, which refers to the potential of interaction and convergence among the differences. Knowledge produced in isolation, represented by the scientist's action, in contrast to the knowledge socially built: which one is more 'real'? What would be real for the participants involved in processes of this nature? Moreover, what represents a greater capacity of appropriation by the participants, taking part of the production or passively receiving its results, and facing the need to conform to what is said from the outside, from a third party? In this perspective, a criticism in relation to the authenticity of the knowledge is perceived.

Participatory research has as its greatest characteristic participation in the process. As it does not necessarily involve a real action like action research does, it can be better identi-

fied with the academic normative principles, mainly in terms of deadlines, team definition, etc., and with research in education. Although it does not involve the solution of a real problem, like in action research, participatory research places the knowledge it intends to build collectively at service of this same collective, and in connection with a liberation project: communities, popular groups, unions, associations, and so on. According to Brandão (2014, p. 66), "the practice of participatory research has been considered as a critical and humanist instrument of dialogical knowledge production". If you consider it in the long term, it is possible to notice that participatory research also involves the solution of real problems, bounded to broader contexts in relation to the local level.

Even if the results of participatory research are related to a local demand or need, it cannot be untied from a broader context. It constitutes its utopian dimension, understanding that through participation the social transformation will be possible, beginning with the transformation of the individuals in a local level. A direct relation between participatory research and the work developed by Paulo Freire (1981): since the end of 1950's in the Northeast of Brazil, can be observed, connecting political education and appreciation of popular culture. Freire developed a literacy project in which people actively participated in the definition of learning principles and contents.

In education, the main focus of the series of reflections developed during the ARNA (2019) conference, action research is constituted as a rather rich process for the development of research professors, able to provide a permanent improvement to one's professional practice. In general, action research is considered a movement, in order to search for improvement through investigation, in a solidary manner with the group of individuals involved in the research. In this movement, the knowledge production process is simultaneous to the qualification of practice, that is, the learning is about doing and researching, which are inseparable within a process.

Taking on participation as a methodological alternative to the conventional processes to approach reality involves defining what one conceives as knowledge, as well as reality itself. If the intent of research is getting to know reality better, it is necessary to define an aspiration to a specific truth, from which one operates in a given epistemological perspective. In popular education, this perspective will always be identified with a project of social transformation, outlining the political character constituted by it, refuting the principle of neutrality.

When we state our position in favor of transforming a reality, we refer to a specific comprehension that considers it inadequate in the way it is being done. Hence, our purpose will not be reproducing it, neither only changing reality, but rather transforming it (although we consider sequential changes, connected as a means of transformation).

Aiming at defining reality, it is important to take on as starting point that all the things around us, objects and phenomena, both natural and human, do not have an existence in themselves. They exist as long as they are related to individuals according to their countless ways of apprehending. They are countless, since each individual is the outcome of a single story full with experiences and perceptions (what was experienced and what was built in the scope of subjectivity). It is also a decisive factor of such multiplicity the way each one of us is in the world, a material and symbolic expression of the place one inhabits. Historicity and the place in the world constitute the individuals, who perceive and interact with others in a singular way with objects and phenomena. Reality and consciousness form a com-

plex relationship, suggesting the need to conceive the existence of realities, in the plural (Duarte Junior, 1994).

The daily reality involves us in a way that we naturalise the events and the particular dynamics which characterise them. We call this dimension of the real routine. On the face of it, it seems that we know everything we need to continue and to go ahead, without major concerns. This is an aspect that we can consider not to be problematic in daily reality, on which there is a difficulty of critical perception, due to the naturality in which we experience and reflect. The other aspect is the result of the problematisation of reality by the individual's action. That is when our look registers, nurtured with curiosity and strangeness, a certain dimension of reality, comprehending what before was considered natural in another way. Once the problem is dimensioned, there remains the search for its in-depth comprehension, and for the respective confrontation that necessarily includes the construction and reconstruction of knowledge.

The elaboration of transformative alternatives is not the work of isolated individuals, but rather of groups that are identified by their worldviews, projects and ideologies. Isolated confrontations, in addition to causing little impact, can be framed as absurd or marginal, that do not provide the necessary support. However, in the collective dimension, the situation changes considerably, the problematisation and the confrontation shared add quality, reinforcing actions, aside from raising the adherence of other individuals with similar positions. Let us not forget: we are rarely willing to change, let alone facing transformations.

The comprehension and confrontation of perceived problems by different individuals may occur parallelly, structuring the same process. Participatory research is based on these principles, above all in education: collective solidarity, concomitant comprehension and confrontation of problems. They are part of the transformative trends in research methodologies addressed during the congress: action research, participatory research and participatory action research. Not intending to conceptualise or establish paradigms, it is important to check how they are characterised individually, and how they are close enough to be identified as transgressive methodological, as alternatives to the mainstream epistemology, how it was addressed in the congress (ARNA).

Also, it is essential to highlight that the event enabled, as it has happened in all its editions, the exchange of plural experiences after they have been systematised. It was a fruitful procedure with respect to the knowledge produced. When one shares, a gathering of knowledge is promoted with individuals who have endured similar experiences, where their own reflections meet, strengthening learning in a collective dimension. For instance, in face of a similar problem, how did the individuals react and perceive the problem after the systematisation? The sharing brings together doubts, desires and allows the elaboration of more complex solutions than the individual scope does. Still, it is important to emphasise that the reflection on the experiences gathers practice and theory, for thinking critically about the practice promotes its theoretical development.

The experiences are unique, that is why the records: which are sources of information and data, are essential (notebook notes, pictures, videos, meeting minutes and other documents). The same experience lived by multiple individuals will have, thanks to systematisation, a critical, complex and promising approach for collaborative learning, which will be able to promote the individuals' qualification and their future practices.

The reflection on practice in education and participatory research involves the construction of a concomitant autonomy to the construction and reconstruction of knowledge, without a unilateral direction, normally imposed by researchers. The participatory dimension reduces this possibility, yet without cancelling the qualified view that researchers have in relation to the phenomenon. It is about a research conception that reflects the political, epistemological and social posture of the researchers who undertake such conception. Namely, their worldviews are materialised through the investigative practice. According to Streck and Adams (2014, p. 117), in this Direction the research involves a social, political and pedagogical practice,

> We argue that it is a social practice as long as it takes part in the construction of meanings and in directions that guide a society; it's a political practice when the production of knowledge implies on decisions with political and ethic nature, which reflect the power games and actively participate in them; finally, it is a pedagogical practice as long as the research relations: among researchers, research participants, object of the investigation and knowledge produced, are inserted in the teaching/learning to be humans, one way or another.

In short, what identifies the three denominations: action research, participatory research and participatory action research is, no doubt, the participative base which pervades them. That is why it is considered that they form a set of participatory methodologies in (popular) education and in research, offering a transgressive horizon focusing on social transformation. The set of reflections that pervaded the dialogues from the ARNA conference in Montreal pointed in this direction, anchored in repoliticising the participation and in theoretically based activism.

Final considerations

In accordance with the considerations throughout the text, the projects which take on participation as a political, epistemological and social foundation, arise from the individuals' engagement and from their conception of reality. The defiant posture of whom undertakes such perspective clearly manifests itself, in relation to the traditional approaches of reality, that reproduce positivist normativity. In another dimension, it confronts the colonialist culture historically rooted in Latin American societies, mainly in the Brazilian. As proposed by popular education, in the face of vertical and antidialogical relationships, it affirms the horizontality of dialogue. Against the competition and individualism, it assumes the solidarity and the collective work. Confronting the belief that culture and popular wisdom are inferior, it chooses them as the foundation of a different epistemology, focused on social transformation.

That is how the development of participatory projects resulted in a fruitful field of reflection, whose characteristics point to a fidelity concerning the principles mentioned in the introduction. Especially in relation to the defiant character of the participation, which maintains itself thriving till the end of the experiences. Without tracing a rigid set of normative principles, doing research and education in a participatory matter is a brave bet on an uncertainty that permeates permanently open processes, bringing movement to them. Without a single direction, these processes can easily contradict and depart from the institutional arrangement, especially the academic and the main way of producing knowledge. For this

reason, often they are academically marginalised, taking their protagonists to other mazes of transgression, their trademark.

The examples of participatory research and action research exposed and discussed in the event, show the dimension of the complexity resulting from the integration of multiple perspectives. Its processes, originally identified as research, are constituted in formative praxis for all the participants. The very conception of learning ends up subverted by denying the polarisation of learning, which is located in everybody, and in the relation of the individuals with objective concreteness, even when one considers a greater or lesser level of politicisation. At the same time, participatory research and action research, in their different ways of implementation, mainly stemming from the North American context, are struggling with institutional limits, real obstacles to be confronted. In any case, we identified a search for principles such as politicisation and activism in the research for the confrontation of real problems from these realities.

In 2021, ARNA national conference will remain in North America, but this time in a Latin American context, in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. Possibly, some issues like social inequality, violence, oppression and participation will continue as main concerns, under the theme: co-creating knowledge, empowering the community. A greater attendance of Latin American researchers and students is expected in relation to the 2019 edition, reinforcing the network of action research and participatory research of the Americas as a collective which is effectively American.

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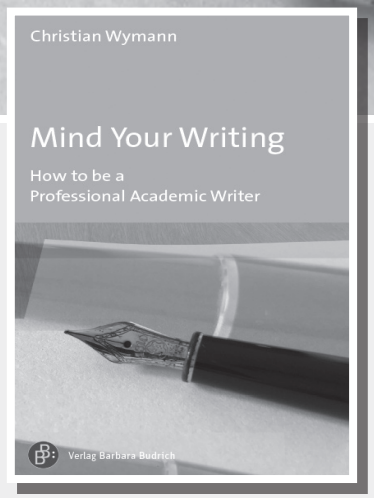

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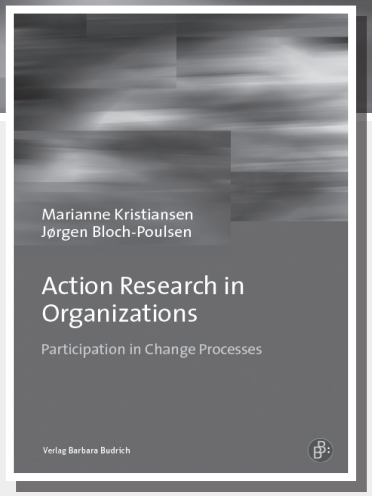

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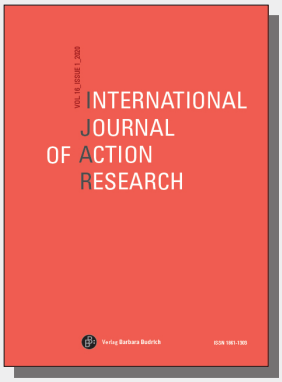

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