ACTION RESEARCH: A CROSS-COUNTRY CHECKUP
An Editorial

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Editor-in-Chief

With this issue, a 12-year effort has now come to a new plateau in its vision and reach. How little did the journal’s founders know where it would lead when the endeavor was first brought to realization at the annual meeting of the Ontario Educational Research Council in 1998. Here, after seeing a thriving action research community at the grass-roots level in the province, they decided that some outlet should be created for the dissemination of its results and recommendations. The title of this resource was christened the Ontario Action Researcher, named for two important reasons: First, their initial intention was to focus almost solely on the Ontario scene to the exclusion of all outsiders. As such, it was hoped that local talent would be nurtured in this diminutive hothouse, and connections could be made in a small geographical area. Second, they hoped that by avoiding a more “academic” title (such as journal, annals of, etc…) it could bridge the gap between the often disconnected populations of teacher and scholar. Based on this belief, equal members of the two groups held positions on the original editorial panel. And with this nascent philosophy, the journal tootled off from the gate to meet its supporters and critics.

As time passed, it became clearly evident that the hobbles set up to keep the journal tamed showed signs of strain and ineffectuality as more readers and submitters became interested. Specifically, it would seem that as action research has, over the past decade, grown in popularity and use, it has ceased to remain a mere fringe practice used incidentally by teachers. Instead, it has come to be seen as a legitimate research method promoted by numerous members of the academy who argue that it promotes necessary inquiry into areas of the educational community that have been woefully neglected in the past. In a strange reversal of populations, therefore, academics presently make up the great majority of our subscribers and reviewers. Another oddity was the geographic location of these people who were interested in action research. They came from across Canada (not just Ontario) and to a lesser extent from around the world. To us, it showed just how mainstream and globally recognized this method (and, dare I say, philosophy) had become. For these reasons, it was decided that the journal was bursting beyond the boundaries that had been originally set, and it should be renamed the Canadian Journal of Action Research.
How little did we know the ramifications of the old adage “what’s in a name?” We had thought that, beyond the name change, the world would still stand still. In retrospect, I now see how naïve we were! With the expanded name came the expanded scope of the journal, as well as a myriad of small changes. And this was a necessary part of its growth. The expanded geographic reach dictated that we had to search for a wider circle of people from across the country to become involved in the journal activities. Not one for rejection, I had dreaded the hunt for volunteers. Once I had begun, however, I was educated on the vibrant and dedicated spirit of action researchers across Canada. The board had sought out the most highly qualified scholars in the field, and I was inspired by their responses: Almost everyone was glad to help and seemingly proud to be attached to the journal.

In the end, the composition of the Editorial Board and Review Panel has now shifted to a greater extent than any recent election could hope to change. Our 5-person Board will now be comprised of members from across the country. Willow Brown (University of Northern British Columbia) and Sharon Murray (St. Thomas University), long-time supporters of the journal, have graciously accepted the new positions, and we are very glad to have them in this time of transition. The Review Panel had grown by 14 new members from across the country: From British Columbia, we welcome Lynn Fels (SFU), Daniel Laitsch (SFU), Marina Milner-Bolotin (UBC) and Victoria Purcell-Gates (UBC); from the University of Alberta we welcome Jill McClay; from the University of Regina we welcome Mark Spooner, Anthony Thompson and Warren Wessel; from the University of Manitoba we welcome Yatta Kanu; from McGill University we welcome Steve Jordan; From Nova Scotia we welcome Gregory MacKinnon (Acadia) and Jane Baskwill (MSVU); from the University of Prince Edward Island we welcome Martha Gabriel; and finally, we welcome Morgan Gardner from Memorial University of Newfoundland. Your support, and the continued support of the present review board, is what give us strength, insight and vision.

Thanks as well to Trudie Aberdeen (University of Alberta) who becomes our new Book Review Editor. Now, in the next year, begins the search for provincial coordinators to find and report on action research projects around the country as we launch our new section “CJAR Checkup”. Not subjected to blind review, this section is intended to stimulate dialogue and allow potential action researchers to locate and ask advice from those in the field who have knowledge and wisdom to impart.

Since the beginning, the journal has been on-line and open access. This was done with the intention of reaching as many people who cared to read it. In so doing, it has hoped to provide leadership in the field of action research and provide a resource for those wanting to undertake this journey. Now, in an effort to make this format more efficient and manageable, we take the next step and link ourselves to “a new generation of journals committed to open access” using Open Journal Systems (http://pkp.sfu.ca/?q=ojs) developed through the Public Knowledge Project (PKP). Thanks to our web support Verdon Vaillancourt and coordinator Deanna Hodgins for leading the charge in this endeavour. Little do they know that now the real work begins!