The Nordic tradition of educational action research
- in the light of practice architectures

Presenters
Karin Rönnerman, Petri Salo, Anette Olin
and Lill Langelotz

University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden,
Åbo Akademi University, Vasa, Finland,
University of Borås, Borås, Sweden
The overall aim is to

(A) articulate, conceptualize and discuss a Nordic tradition of educational action research

(B) with a focus on pedagogical and political influences by anchoring it in

- *bildung* as an ideal and process for human growth,
- *folk enlightenment* as an arena for realizing bildung
- *pedagogy* as an institutionalized and professional form of fostering and preparing citizens.

(C) present three recent case studies
Study- and research circles

are understood as sites and methods for realizing the aims of *bildung* and folk enlightenment; a precursor of the **Nordic tradition of action research**.

The theory of practice architectures

to study the sayings, doings and relatings characteristic to educational practices
to develop the dialogue with Anglo-Saxon traditions of action research.
PRACTICE ARCHITECTURES

STUDY CIRCLES

SAYINGS
freedom, togetherness, equality, voluntary, liberation, guidance

DOINGS
Conversation, dialogue, deliberation, broad range of topics, open-ended intentionality

RELATINGS
Participation, openness, informality, democracy, pluralism, diversity

PRACTICE ARCHITECTURES
NORDIC ACTION RESEARCH

**SAYINGS**
Collaboration, participation, facilitation, partnerships, joint projects, critical friends, democratic dialogue, close to practice

**DOINGS**
Collaborative inquiry, reflecting and questioning, facilitation - formulating questions, producing and analysing data, writing journals

**RELATINGS**
Equality, reciprocity, mutual recognition, empowerment, inclusiveness

PRACTICE ARCHITECTURES
FIRST CASE

THE PRACTICE OF PEER GROUP MENTORING

Traces of global changes and regional traditions

LILL LANGELOTZ AND KARIN RÖNNERMAN
Imposed Peer Group Mentoring enhance professional development

Disciplining process
Democratizing process
Developing process

(Langelotz, 2013)
Zooming out & zooming in the practice of peer group mentoring

Show how:

– the practice of PGM was prefigured by its practice architectures with a focus on historical influences of a Nordic tradition of folk enlightenment.

– traces from these arrangements shaped and came into play in the PGM practice.
Results - zooming out cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements

- Traces of a Swedish tradition of adults’ learning
- A segregated society and the neoliberal principle of user choice: triggers for development
- Discourses of diversity and financial support as prefigurations
Results – zooming in on sayings, doings and relatings

Traces of popular education (i.e. study circles) in the teachers’ doings – fosters democratic practices

Strong collaboration discourses – enable a democratic practice

*The PGM makes us united around the problems or around the same problem and we are united as a tea. A functional team! (T2, Dec. 2009)*

Material-economic arrangements – a threat to a democratic practice

*May be we can cut down the numbers of ‘expensive’ students. There is a huge cost for extra resources like mother tongue teachers or special education teachers... (PGM May 2009)*

Teachers get lost in practice
SECOND CASE

RESEARCH CIRCLES

Constructing a space for elaborating on being a teacher leader in preschools

KARIN RÖNNERMAN & ANETTE OLIN
Purpose of the study

• What factors enable and constrain the setup of the research circles?
• How do the teachers experience the research circle as a space for sharing knowledge?
• How do the practice architectures contribute to the development of different kinds of knowledge?
Themes in the research circle

- Learning for leading – understanding your role as a leader
- Searching for patterns – analysing data from you as a leader
- Professional learning communities
- To find a balance – how to create necessary conditions for learning, as a leader
Dialogue from different perspectives

Scientific contribution
Research articles
Literature
Analytical tools

Experiences from practices
Creating mindmaps
Analysing own information
Written reflections

Research circle aims to develop, share, deepen and produce knowledge
Results

What (practice architectures) enable and constrain the set up of these research circles?

- long-lasting partnership, Education Act, meeting places, time, the Q-course, experienced preschool teachers, dialogues

Sharing knowledge and building up competences for action (analyzed practice)

- gaining, developing, deepening and producing knowledge
- agreements on collective actions in circle B
THIRD CASE
FROM TRANSMISSION TO
SITE-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
- on the art of combining research with facilitation

LISELOTT FORSMAN, GUNILLA KARLBERG-GRANLUND,
MICHAELA PÖRN, PETRI SALO AND JESSICA ASPFORS

Åbo Akademi University, Finland
and University of Nordland, Norway
Purpose of the study
shed light on professional development (PD) in/on educational sites, conducted as collaborative (action) research

Two-sided focus:
acting as researcher-facilitators
our cooperation with teachers

Use of practice architectures
to conceptualize our experiences of being researcher facilitators (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008)
Methodology

Use of a *professional study circle* for collegial reflective deliberation on own experiences:
- professional and personal *narratives* of being and becoming action researchers
- dialogue as meaning making process

Community of researchers: mutual engagement; joint enterprise; shared repertoires of practice

Practice architectures of research, university and school: reconstructing architectures via discussion & reflection
(Hardy, 2010, 133-135; Smith, Salo & Grootenboer, 2010)
SITE-BASED EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT

Social-political arrangements
A transition from transmission to participation

Material-economic arrangements
not given: to be negotiated and sustained

Cultural-discursive arrangements
  a communicative space for collegial professional
  meaning making and identity expression
  -> space to be safeguarded

All hang together, to be continuously reinterpreted and
Understood. Awareness of and sensitivity regarding the
premises and constraints of everyday practices in schools
SITE-BASED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ??

Blair Stevenssons reflections on the chapter:

[the authors] discuss the socio-political arrangements that influence the researcher/participant relationship even going as far to suggest that the outsider/researcher was “always welcomed and highly needed – as an engaged listener, assistant meaning maker or an empathetic mirror”.

Understanding the central role of the facilitators, the authors further recognize that “providing agency is a challenge”. However, their choice of words is instructive: can facilitators provide agency or do the participants themselves establish it?
MACRO LEVEL
Professional development initiated from outside researchers part in the negotiations from the very beginning (aims, foci, resources) to be well-anchored in the everyday practices of the site at hand.

ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL
Responsible organisation: commitment and engagement from school leaders.
Practical obstacles to be taken care of to ensure involvement time constraints, scheduling, technical equipment e.g. for enabling online meetings, substitute teachers.
Researcher’s role: negotiator for resources
Time and space for reflection and meaning making.
TEACHER-RESEARCHER LEVEL

To enhance sustainability of PD participation: voluntary and based on authentic interest content of PD activities: based on the teachers’ needs and interests

Balancing formal and informal together-comings to raise the teachers’ awareness of their own professional needs researcher’s role:

*chairman, secretary, meaning maker, listener, consultant...*

“catalyst” and *external mirror* → shift from spontaneous expression to reflection and analysis