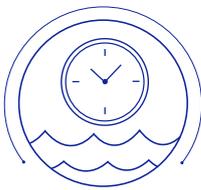


•
P
A
R
T
2
•



BY

Karin Filander,
Tuula Heiskanen,
Hanna Ylöstalo,
Satu Kalliola &
Heidi Kervinen

MOMENTS OF DIALOGUE BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

– cases for reflection

Introduction

The global environment of work systems is changing at an accelerating pace. It is hardly an exaggeration to interpret global economic conditions and labour markets to set to an increasing extent the circumstances and demands of future work organisations and practitioners inside both the public and private sectors. Employees are increasingly treated as competitive entrepreneur-subjects who must be permanently ready for new productivity and flexibility demands. These new demands may also imply aims that are difficult to reconcile.

At the same time, there is an aim to create jobs by increasing consumption and an objective of committing to the idea of sustainable development. Sustainable development is most closely connected with the ongoing environmental crisis, but there are also other global phenomena, such as prolonged armed conflicts and economic recessions, that end up as humanitarian and social crises. Global crises force people to expand their customary living spaces concretely, and they must also expand their learning both in the issues of everyday life and working life. Following Docherty, Kira and Shani (2009, 10–12), we define sustainable

development as a continuous, changing learning process that occurs simultaneously at all levels in organisations and their networks.

In this paper, our aim is to offer space for a kind of *ex post facto* comparative reflection on a few classical case studies in which different kinds of theory and practice related projects were implemented inside the Work Research Centre of the University of Tampere. Our shared aim has been to develop a reflection on approaches and topics that differ in terms of their approach to the relationship between theory and practice and between work and education.

The authors of this article were inspired by the long tradition of action research, starting from the ideas of Kurt Lewin (1948), in both solving and understanding more deeply social problems, which has led to numerous efforts to support problem solving and learning in individual organisations and workplaces (e.g., Bradbury et al 2008), as well as broad-scale studies with a focus on development configurations (Gustavsen et al 2008), learning regions (Pålshaugen 2014) and policy learning (Karlsen & Larrea 2014). In all of these studies, in one way or another, the basic task to initiate the process has been to open a communicative space (Kemmis 2008) between those concerned by the specific issue or problem. Tackling broad-scale problems with a large number of stakeholders and those affected by the problems is a more recent field of study in action research than studies focused on individual-, group- or organisation-level problems. Thus, research methods are also less established in this new field (e.g., Mead 2008). We consider that there is room for adult education to

make a contribution to building communicative spaces that generate learning in broad issues.

Our interest is in examining what kinds of knowledge and theory relationships – and even what kinds of ‘pedagogy’, or rather ‘andragogy’ – were developed and tested in the case studies. Our aim is to develop ideas for future critical spaces of reflection that could be important for facing other sensitive subjects and conditions of ‘new labour’ inside labour markets, including many versions of outsider positions.

There is a need to make sense of what is going on in the surrounding world and what kind of resilience the new conditions require from organisations and individual workers. In particular, this paper concentrates on organisational- and individual-level challenges, but it does not exclude questioning of the cultural and neo-liberal ethos that is present in all these cases.

Through the four different case studies, the paper highlights moments of dialogue between theory and practice as well as the possibilities of finding alternative frames for thinking about the daily and local issues in relation to the broader development trends of the economy, labour markets and society. The original research projects, conducted between 1990 and 2014, are viewed in the framework of their case-specific theories. In addition, they are viewed in the frameworks of experienced or emerging economic and social crises while sustainability is seen as a mean to cope with the crises. The authors of the article commit to a perspective which sees work as playing a key role in the creation of a sustainable society (e.g., Hvid et al 2011). The article

poses the following questions concerning the cases:

- What kinds of processes were developed to produce a better understanding of the broad and difficult change processes going on in work life?
- How were sensitive subjects such as power or gender reflected as topics inside these processes?
- What kinds of developmental methods were used to develop cooperation between different kinds of positions, persons and work groups?

After presenting the cases, we will summarise them from the point of view of today's challenges.

CASE I: Changing frames in the midst of transitions – an interdisciplinary programme as a space for reorientation

The roots of Case I are the planning processes aimed at establishing working life studies in the University of Tampere in a more institutionalised manner, as opposed to the former situation in which separate research projects were executed in different disciplines without linkages to each other. Case I was an attempt to generate studies which take the theory-practice relationship and multidisciplinary perspective as a starting point of working life studies and contribute to approaches with the same aim.

Case I was part of an interdisciplinary action research programme that had a wide-ranging further education programme as one of its elements (Kirjonen, Heiskanen, Filander & Hämäläinen 1996). The general aim of the programme was to build bridges over disciplinary and professional boundaries in order to initiate discussions on the challenges of public sector work in an era when pressures for change to the whole public sector were intensifying (Filander 2003). Information about the educational programme was widely distributed, and it was offered as a vantage point for practitioners in the public sector who might be interested in reflecting on the development of working life and issues of working life research from different perspectives. The research group hoped to contribute to the creation of prerequisites for the sustainable development of working life in a situation in which the practitioners were themselves both targets and central agents of various development projects that followed each other at an increasing pace.

In Finland, a decisive shift and turning point came in the early 1990s at a time that saw an economic depression, mass unemployment, the internationalisation of the economy and Finland's entry into the EU and EMU (Julkunen 2001, 13). Apart from cultural changes, a change in retrenchment policy also meant structural and organisational changes in working practices. The economic crisis affected the development of all levels of the public sector. In public discussion the change demands were justified by citing neoliberal ideas and with the rhetoric of increasing efficiency, greater freedom and responsibility at the same time. Finland joined the other OECD countries in modernising the public sector with

» In public discussion the change demands were justified by citing neoliberal ideas and with the rhetoric of increasing efficiency, greater freedom and responsibility at the same time. »

cuts to public spending, the privatisation of strategies, quality assurance, personnel development and changes to the relationship between the centralised state and civil society (Naschold 1996, 1). This drastic societal transition was taking place during Case I. The participants of Case I who were from all levels of the public sector were, facing new kinds of demands to understand and reframe their work and their identities in the midst of these massive changes (Filander 2003, 30). This time period can be considered as a turning point in the Finnish public discussion occurring when the economic depression had just taken a sudden turn to the worse. The turning point took place in the midst of the interactional processes of Case I. While in the beginning of 1991, the participants of Case I were still speaking about labour shortages affecting certain areas of the public sector, towards the end of 1991, a debate began regarding laying off and dismissing public servants. Very soon, this kind of change in the discourse became common in public discussions (Filander 2000, 219).

The participants in Case I were 26 professionals involved in change and development work in the public sector. The participants included professionals working in customer service in basic level administration and in municipalities, professionals employed in district and provincial admin-

istration and professionals from central administration. Apart from the different levels of administration, different sectors were also represented, from occupational health and safety to education, health and social services. In addition, there were developers of personnel work and personnel training from all levels of the public sector. The educational background of the practitioners varied, including the social and educational sciences, psychology, medicine, the juridical field and the technical sciences. The shared motivation of the practitioners to participate in the programme was to see what boundary-crossing perspectives could provide for their own work. The group of educators was interdisciplinary, representing the social, educational, management and administrative sciences, as well as psychology and social psychology. The basic idea of our programme was to develop a space in which experiences and perspectives could be shared and challenged among this interdisciplinary group of educators and practitioners.

From the point of view of the research group that was responsible for the programme, such an extensive approach came with a risk. The basic educational question to be solved through the programme was how to get a multidisciplinary and multi-professional group of scientists and professionals to work together and find a new

understanding of their work in the midst of diverse personal experiences and theoretical and research-based knowledge.

The solution to the educational problems was based on a loose idea of generating alternative frames (cf. Goffman 1974, Schön 1983). The approach was able to generate an interactive process that proceeded from confusion – and sometimes even fierce challenges in the group sessions – to a turning point of recognition of some shared experiences. The shared experiences and resulting confusion related to the worsened economic situation in the country, which reached the public sector in the form of demands for budget cuts and structural reforms. At this turning point, from the practitioners' point of view, the programme seemed to offer some means to better understand the transition stage and the work of practitioners as responding to the new demands. In such a situation, the practitioners felt it good that they had a space that made it possible to step back from their daily work and the power relations involved in it (Heiskanen 2004; 2007). Practitioners such as those who participated in the programme are typically quite lonely in their work. The interactions during the programme and the evolving frames provided an impetus for them to think about their own work somewhat differently (Filander 2003).

In retrospect, the programme, with its wide range of participants and open interaction structure, was a daring effort. The aim of the researchers might be characterised as an aim to create a communicative and transitional space for learning (Filander 1992), a kind of “space of free movement” (Lewin 1948, 5–6). It was a quite open-minded model for theory–practice

interaction, without a commitment to any specific model for developmental work. Instead, the idea was to introduce the participants to different kinds of developmental approaches present in work sciences both nationally and internationally. It might have failed, for example, because of the pressures and worries that practitioners felt in the transition stage. At the start, there was an expectation that the educators should provide them with some answers and solutions. The idea of a mutual learning process in which the educators would also be learners was accepted only gradually. Only at that stage did the loose idea of alternative frames start to yield results.

All in all, the action research project, to which the educational programme belonged as one part, also yielded results other than those specifically related to the educational programme. It helped to build national research networks, and it functioned as a kind of laboratory for the theory–practice relationship, which has had an influence on the working modes of the Work Research Centre in the University of Tampere. Apart from research work, the ideas of theory–practice interaction and networking have been discussed at the annual national Working Life Research Conference organised by the Work Research Centre.

CASE II:

Promoting gender equality in organisations in an era of marketization

Equality and sustainable work have a converging aim: they both seek to attain a better quality of work. Equality is a human right and thus an important value, but it

can also be seen from another perspective – promoting equality may also promote well-being at work. Therefore, when aiming for a sustainable working life, gender and other social divisions should not be ignored. Case II highlights what benefits action research might provide by addressing gender issues and what pitfalls such attempts to bring forth sensitive and often taken-for-granted topics might face in practice.

Finland and other Nordic countries have practiced an active gender equality policy for decades. Nonetheless, the advance of gender equality has been somewhat slow, and certain equality problems seem quite stable; in Finland, the wage gap between women and men is still about 20 per cent, the labour market remains segregated by gender and glass ceilings that prevent women from advancing in their careers have not been broken, especially in the private sector. Women still use the vast majority of family leave, even though men's rights to family leave have been improved through several legislative reforms.

There are several reasons behind this modest progress of equality. In the EU and Finland, equality legislation is soft. It is based on recommendations and voluntary practices rather than on prohibitions and sanctions (Kantola 2010). Because of this, equality issues often have an 'obligation to yield'. On an organisational level, previous gender equality projects have shown that it is difficult to raise inequality issues in organisations, and it is even more difficult to keep them on the agenda (Leinonen et al 2012; Ylöstalo 2012). The Nordic countries have consistently been ranked as the highest in the world with respect to gender equality. Paradoxically, this relatively good

state of affairs may be a hindrance to improving conditions. In Finland, there is a strong belief that gender equality has already been achieved, and it can be difficult to motivate people to promote it further (Ylöstalo 2013). For this reason, promoting gender equality is not always a harmonious process.

Recently, the public sector has become more market-oriented throughout the Nordic countries, and business-oriented thinking has penetrated activities that have not traditionally emphasised profit making. As a result, gender equality is being presented as an export commodity, and equality policies appear to be closely connected to the interests of the labour market. One outcome of this is project-based activities to promote equality, which represent a form of new governance in that they aim to bring together individuals, organisations, enterprises and state officials to solve the problems of welfare politics through market-oriented interventions. Consequently, promoting gender equality has become a site for mixing public and private interests (Brunila & Ylöstalo 2013).

This case demonstrates how gender equality has been promoted on an organisational level by using action research. Action research is well suited to the aim of advancing gender equality because it is a participatory and democratic process concerned with adding to practical knowledge in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, and it is grounded in a participatory worldview (Reason & Bradbury 2001). It aims at changing certain conditions while also studying the process of change. The aim is to 'put theory to work' by bringing together action and reflection and theory and practice in participation with others

» The networking of municipalities to innovate together was one of the core ideas of the LOM programme. »

and in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern (Brydon-Miller et al 2003). The role of the researcher is that of participant and researcher.

Action research has helped to overcome some of the problems described above, but it has also created new problems. When gender equality is promoted in organisations, the members of that organisation play a crucial role in the process. Action research aims to empower people and give them a voice and opportunity to participate. It seeks to hear and make use of their experiences to generate change (Leinonen et al 2012). Change can be created, for example, through negotiations about gender and gender equality. However, these negotiations have sometimes ended up with weak compromises, and the gender perspective has been lost. When advancing gender equality, gender and equality should be under constant negotiation. Negotiation puts gender and equality in motion, which is a precondition for change. The outcome cannot be known, but it is important to find ways for it to become part of the negotiation. One of the main points of action research is to create room for ruptures, fractures and, eventually, change.

In order to achieve a more equal society for all – for women and men, for young and old, for people of different ethnic backgrounds and so on – and to have a better

quality of working life and productivity in the future, it is essential to keep the equality perspective on the agenda, as is active development work. Action research provides a communicative space which could be used to include the equality perspective in discussions on sustainable working life.

CASE III:

Influence and learning at work – applications of the Swedish LOM programme in Finnish municipalities

In this era characterised by rapid change and numerous humanitarian, social and economic crises, we are nonetheless able to detect some stability, or maybe cyclical movement. The Finnish public sector organisations seem now to face, in part, the same kind of challenges as in the early 1990s, when they were criticised for having organisational structures that were too rigid, resulting in a lack of genuine client orientation, high expenses and problems in the quality of working life. Moreover, the recession of the 1990s turned out to be a severe crisis for the whole country, not just for the public sector. According to Kiander (2002), no other country of the European Union or OECD was hit as hard as Finland. In 2015, Finland was once again in a deep economic turmoil, due both to global and domestic developments. One of the Finnish responses was to completely renovate the

public health and social services. The case of Quality Project and Quality Network below shed light on the programmatic ways not only to survive but also to learn and make changes in a sustainable manner.

In the 1990s, the Local Authority Employers and the most important trade unions cooperated with the Work Research Centre of the University of Tampere in adopting action research – more specifically, dialogue-based and process-oriented Scandinavian communicative and participative action research – as a development tool in the modernisation of municipal organisations in Finland. In particular, the principles of the Swedish LOM programme (Gustavsen 1991) were followed, but the Norwegian activities conducted by the Senter for Bedre Arbeidsliv (Qvale 1994) and an evaluation of the LOM programme (Naschold 1992) were also taken into account in developing a unique multi-methodological approach, called the Laatu (Quality) project (Kasvio et al 1994).

The municipal partners in the development shared an interest in enhancing the quality of services and the voice of the clients, while the employers focused more on productivity and performance issues and the staff on increasing employee involvement. The means to achieving these goals were new working models, or modes of operation, to be produced as a result of dialogue conferences.

The dialogue conferences, an approach adopted from LOM, were the main action research interventions organised by the researchers. The first conferences were theme based (overall productivity, employee voice), with the aim of offering the representatives from many municipalities

the chance to get together and share their views on the visions, problems and possible solutions for a better future. The participants came from all levels of the organisations involved. They were engaged in a process of democratic dialogue, which was guided by a set of principles emphasising the equal right to participate and the significance of the work experience of all participants (Gustavsen 1991). The democratic dialogue served as both a pragmatic tool and a theoretical concept including assumptions about equal communication and interaction leading to innovation. The networking of municipalities to innovate together was one of the core ideas of the LOM programme. However, the municipalities did not co-operate with each other spontaneously, without the input of the researchers, and participated in the research meetings on invitation only.

Along the lines of Lewin's (1948) action research cycle, where evaluation-based learning leads to new type of interventions, this was taken into account in the next phase of the action research activities, which were organised as the Quality Network. Starting around 1995, dialogue conferences were used to start and evaluate the development processes within one municipality or its specific service sector. However, the researchers continued to invite the municipalities to come together to discuss common issues or modify further the development and research methods, with action researchers from other research institutions (Kalliola & Nakari 2004).

Other arenas for democratic dialogue were also set up to secure more profound changes in organisational culture, such as participatory management, shared decision making, autonomy and discretion at work.

These arenas were task forces characterized by performance expectations, steering groups with supervisory roles, study and research circles and department- or shop floor-level workplace meetings.

With 25 projects by 2001, and many others that followed, it is important to ask how and why dialogue interventions worked. What is the explanation for the documented improvements in client satisfaction and in the quality of working life from the new organisation of work life and often also for productivity gains? (cf. Kalliola & Nakari 2004)

According to the results of some case studies (Kalliola 2003; Kalliola, Nakari & Pesonen 2006), one of the crucial factors is the concrete practical outcome: the realisation of the plans made together in the dialogue conferences. The prerequisite for this is committed managers who have the authority to make decisions. Decision making involves power that can be shared, or re-distributed, in a functional way during the process of democratic dialogue. The re-distribution of power can be seen as embedded in the design of LOM-type projects through dialogue at all hierarchical levels of an organisation, and thus the design contributes to the increase in employee influence.

In addition, the project design contributes to the mutual learning of the participants. When everyone takes their turn expressing new ideas, or sometimes doubts, about the issues under investigation, a lot of information is shared and processed.

This enables mutual learning across organisational, hierarchical and occupational borders.

If the idea of democratic dialogue is fully realised, the dialogue fora offer participants both a voice and a choice in the formulation of sustainable organisational change, which is pushed forward by any kind of crisis. This feature is also important from the point of view of gender in organisations. The Finnish labour markets were (and are) so strongly divided by gender that the concept of 'labour market segregation' is appropriate (Kolehmainen 1999). The majority of the employees in the public sector as a whole, but also in municipalities, are women. In addition, the participants in the action research projects described here were mostly women. Their voices and choices in the process contributed to a more solid and sustainable basis for working life.

Nowadays, the changes in the funding policies of the Finnish Work Environment Fund and the Ministry of Employment and Economy constrain the maintenance of the networks. However, the researchers – and to some extent, the new generations of researchers in the Work Research Centre of the University of Tampere – continue and develop the tradition. Among the new initiatives, and as one example of a new action research cycle, is the use of dialogue conferences as a tool (combined with individual methods) to promote professional agency at work (Paloniemi, Hökkä, Vähäsantanen, Herranen, Eteläpelto & Kalliola 2014).

CASE IV: Renegotiating organisational order

The effects of the international economic crisis began to appear in the operation of Finnish companies in 2008. Business declined quickly, especially among companies operating in international markets, as their credit supply became more difficult. Despite a small recovery in Finland's total production, growth remained modest during 2010–2011, and the second downturn in 2012–2013 showed that several Finnish companies, regardless of sector, faced a long-term period of severe uncertainty. In addition, sectors that typically tolerated economic downturns well were not safe either. Consequently, between 2008 and 2014, several Finnish companies in different sectors reorganised.

In a study called 'Sustainable means for adaptation in enterprises during economic downturn', administered by the Work Research Centre in the University of Tampere, 13 Finnish companies operating in different sectors were followed in the time subsequent to the economic crisis. In 2010–2014, one to three rounds of semi-structured, qualitative interviews were carried out in all the companies. During each round, both employer and employee representatives were interviewed. Typically, the local manager and the head of the human relations department or production manager represented the employer, while the shop stewards represented the employees. The interview data were supplemented by additional data, such as annual reports and information gathered from newspapers and the Internet. In addition, a one-month ethnographic observation was carried out during 2014–2015 in one company. This case

can be positioned as a first fact-finding and diagnosis phase of the action research cycle, as formulated by Lewin (1948).

For economic and production reasons, all 13 companies participating in the study carried out several organisational changes during the following period. Eleven companies carried out staff reductions. The first strategy to be applied was the decision not to renew temporary employment and freelancer contracts. In some of the companies, voluntary retirement, including incentives, was also used. In most of the companies, layoffs and/or dismissals were carried out.

In addition to staff reductions, production systems were developed in all the companies. The companies in the service sector and newspaper industry also increased cooperation with their competitors. In nearly all the companies, customers' needs were attended to more sensitively, and products and services were tailored according to the customer demands as far as possible. While maintaining a loose connection to customers' expectations or the conglomerate level, the decisions framing local negotiations also added internal freedom of action on a local level in a few companies. In half the companies, the significance of internal cooperation was emphasised and resources were targeted to improve the preconditions for mutual communication and cooperation.

In short, organisational change manifested diversely but with certain similarities in the cases. When the permanent staff redundancies were wide or temporary layoffs lasted longer than expected, the changes affected all parts of the organisations. Staff redundancies were carried out relatively swiftly and disrupted internal communica-

» The networking of municipalities to innovate together was one of the core ideas of the LOM programme. »

tion, particularly if the legitimization of the negotiation process or its outcomes were questioned by the employees. As such, staff redundancies may be seen as a revolutionary change. However, with regard to the other means of adjustment, the time subsequent to the economic crisis appears as a period of fine tuning and constant reorganisation, thus resembling a convergent change.

Applying Luhmann's (2002) ideas on autopoietic systems and Herne's (2004) boundary work theory, the study focused on the issue of how boundaries regarding organisational membership, skills, responsibility and commitment were reconstructed and renegotiated during the organisational changes. The study also examined how organisational actors applied various power resources when participating in the emergence of the renegotiated organisational order in both formal and informal arenas.

The results suggest that firmly established cooperative practices seem to contribute to the acknowledgement of diverse perspectives and various possibilities during renegotiations. When emerging from diversity and multiplicity, the renewed organisational order affords complexity and a new normality based on constant self-renewal. In order to adapt to the long-term economic downturn, and in an environment shaped by megatrends such as globalisa-

tion and digitalisation, organisations need to sustain constant, convergent change. It may be crucial to adopt a system that is self-renewing, communication and cooperation based and autopoietic. Nonetheless, the cases show that it is demanding to construct an autopoietic system because of the powerful and long history of the traditional understanding of organisations and leadership, which celebrates separation, segmentation, one (economic) hegemonic rationality, hierarchy and managers instead of multiplicity, diversity and contradictions.

Discussion

The central idea of this analytical reflection was to collect together new and older cases that open up the strong tradition of action research at the Work Research Centre in the University of Tampere. These projects have grown out of doing research on, discussing, teaching and writing about action research projects at the Work Research Centre of the University of Tampere over the course of 25 years. In this article, we have collected some most interesting examples and reflections in four cases that have responded to large-scale societal challenges in order to develop sustainability at work.

Case I creates a framework story of challenging and confronting maximally

different viewpoints during times of extreme economic hardship. The discussions among the participants of the educational programme within the built communicative spaces in the conditions of maximal diversity can also be connected to the system-level challenges for change that we are currently facing. The challenges are actualised in working life as, for example, new productivity and flexibility demands, for which both individuals and work systems have to be permanently ready.

The equality and gender project, our Case II, has created spaces to meet sensitive, gendered practices and structures that are often difficult to verbalise. In today's crises, these types of gendered phenomena arise especially in the female-dominated fields of the public and service sectors. Austerity policies that cut public expenditure are applied in a number of countries, including Finland. There is some research knowledge suggesting that austerity measures actualise inequality issues (e.g., Evans 2015). This is also a challenge for research. One challenge is to identify the approaches and methods by which the multiple and co-constituted effects of austerity measures can be detected. Another matter for reflection is how the researcher builds his/her role within the wider social discussion around the adverse effects of the austerity policies that hit some social groups more than others.

The dialogue- and negotiation-based reorganisation projects in the public and private sectors, as presented in Cases III and IV, were confronted by severe economic recessions, the former in the early 1990s and the latter in the 2010s. In the former case, the projects supported concrete improvements in conditions that were found to be

problematic in the target organisations; in the latter case, the interactive method helped the workers in the organisation to articulate for themselves in a better way their own situation in the context of organisational turmoil. When the participants, along with the researchers, continued to carry out their interactions in the changed conditions, renewal turned out to be possible. This is a worthwhile thought for consideration in the context of the numerous present reorganisation challenges. In both cases, the theory-practice interaction took place in the framework of participation and learning in communicative spaces (democratic dialogue; autopoietic systems), where the actors analysed their changing organisational environments and created new modes to work or at least to adapt.

Action research has been described as an interactive and solution-seeking inquiry between the researcher and those who participate in it (e.g., Reason & Bradbury 2001). This description applies to the cases I, II and III. The authors of this article want to emphasise that talk is also action that changes the world. This is not an emphasis that would be shared by all the action research traditions. In the cases, joint sessions of talk contributed to the translation of unconscious and practical theories into discursively shared knowledge. The role of the researcher in Case IV differs from that in the other cases as it has to do with solution seeking. In Case IV, the researcher used an ethnographic method in the interactions with the organisation members and focused on the question of self-renewing communication and cooperation in the autopoietic system.

We have shown how different studies carried out at the Work Research Centre of

the University of Tampere have addressed issues related to the sustainable development of working life at different times and in somewhat different ways. However, the common characteristics are a multi-disciplinary and dialogue-based approach combined with the balanced use of theory and practice in action-oriented research. We hope that our empirical examples will generate insights for the construction of communicative spaces on matters that deal with pressing social issues related to both work and other social fields. Many researchers, facilitators, initiators and adult

educators of change management are just now confronting similar global transformations, such as facing a new wave of massive unemployment, worrisome problems of climate change or many problems and challenges of integrating great numbers of migrants to Finnish culture. There is a very topical need to find and develop broad approaches (e.g., Gustavsen et al 2008; Mead 2008; Torbert & Taylor 2008) that could help tackle very broad-scale problems, especially those present in current European everyday life.

References

- Bradbury, H., Mirvis, P., Neilsen, E. & Pasmore, W. 2008. Action research at work: Creating the future following the path from Lewin. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (eds.). **The Sage Handbook of Action Research**. London: Sage Publications, 77–92.
- Brunila, K. & Ylöstalo, H. 2013. Challenging Gender Inequalities in Education and in Working Life – A Mission Possible? In **Journal of Education and Work**. Published online, 14.6.2013. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2013.806788>
- Brydon-Miller, M., Greenwood, D. & Maguire, P. 2003. Why Action Research? In **Action Research**, vol. 1(1), 9–28.
- Docherty, P., Kira, M. & Shani, A. P. (eds.). 2009. **Creating Sustainable Work Systems**. London: Routledge.
- Evans, M. 2015. Feminism and the implications of austerity. In **Feminist Review**, vol. 109, 146–155.
- Filander, K. 1992. Siirtymätila aikuiskoulutuksen itseymmärryksen välineenä [Space for transition as a tool of self-understanding in adult education]. In **Aikuiskasvatus**, vol. 12(4), 216–220.
- Filander, K. 2000. **Kehittämistyö murroksessa. Sitoutuminen, sopeutuminen ja vastarinta julkisella sektorilla 1990-luvulla**. [Development work in transition: Reconsidering commitment, consent and resistance in the public sector in the 1990´s.] Tampereen yliopisto: Acta Universitatis Tamperensis 777. <http://uta32-kk.lib.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/67061/951-44-4947-9.pdf?sequence=1>
- Filander, K. 2003. **Vocabularies of change**. Roskilde: Roskilde University Press.
- Goffman, E. 1974. **Frame analysis. An essay on the organization of experience**. Boston: North-eastern University Press.
- Gustavsen, B. 1991. The LOM Program: A Network-Based Strategy for Organization Development in Sweden. In Woodman, R. W. & Pasmore, W. A. (eds.). **Research in Organizational Change and Development Vol. 5**. Greenwich, Connecticut and London: JAI Press, 285–315.
- Gustavsen, B., Hansson, A. & Qvale, T.U. 2008. Action research and the challenge of scope. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (eds.). **The Sage Handbook of Action Research**. London: Sage Publications, 63–76.
- Heiskanen, T. 2004. A knowledge-building community for public sector professionals. In **Journal of Workplace Learning**, vol. 16(7), 370–384.
- Heiskanen, T. 2007. Pursuing theory and practice ‘when everything is moving’. In **Journal of Adult Continuing Education**, vol. 13(2), 175–191.
- Hernes, T. 2004. Studying Composite Boundaries: A Framework of Analysis. In **Human Relations** vol. 57(9), 9–29.
- Hvid, H., Bergholm, T., Gonäs, L., Juul, I., Kamp, A., Karlsson, J., Kasvio, A., Klemsdal, L., Salomon, R. & Skorstad, E. 2011. Nordic working life research – Continuity and renewal. In **Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies**, vol. 1(1), 3–21.

- Julkunen, R. 2001. **Suunnanmuutos. 1990-luvun sosiaalipoliittinen reformi Suomessa.** [A change in policies. Social policy reform in Finland in the 1990's]. Tampere: Vastapaino.
- Kalliola, S. 2003. Self-Designed Teams in Improving Public Sector Productivity and Quality of Working Life. In **Public Performance & Management Review**, vol. 27(2), 109–121.
- Kalliola, S. & Nakari, R. 2004. **Yhteistoiminta ja kuntien työpaikkojen kehittäminen. Laatu-verkoston arviointitutkimus.** [Labour-management cooperation and the development of municipal workplaces. An evaluation study of the Quality-Network.] Tykes raportteja, vol. 38. Helsinki: Työministeriö 2004.
- Kalliola, S., Nakari, R. & Pesonen, I. 2006. Learning to Make Changes – Democratic Dialogue in Action. In **Journal of Workplace Learning**, vol. 18(7–8), 464–477.
- Kantola, J. 2010. **Gender and the European Union.** Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Karlsen, J. & Larrea, M. 2014. The contribution of action research to policy learning: The case of Gipuzkoa Sarean. In **International Journal of Action Research**, vol. 10(2), 129–155.
- Kasvio, A., Nakari, R., Kalliola, S., Kuula, A., Pesonen, I., Rajakaltio, H. & Syvänen, S. 1994. **Uudistumisen voimavarat. Tutkimus kunnallisen palvelutuotannon tuloksellisuuden ja työelämän laadun kehittämistä.** [The resources for renewal. A study on the development of the performance and the quality of working life in the municipal services.] Sarja T-julkaisuja 14. Tampere: Tampereen yliopisto. Yhteiskuntatieteiden tutkimuslaitos.
- Kemmis, S. 2008. Critical theory and participatory action research. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (eds.). **The Sage Handbook of Action Research.** London: Sage Publications, 121–138.
- Kiander, J. 2002. **Subproject 10: The Finnish macroeconomic policy and performance in 1995–2000 in Impacts of the EES.** National evaluation of the effects of the European Employment Strategy. EES evaluation project. Final Report. Helsinki: Ministry of Labour.
- Kirjonen, J., Heiskanen, T., Filander, K. & Hämäläinen, A. 1996. **Tila ajattelulle. Asian-tuntijatyön kehikset julkisella sektorilla.** [Space for thinking. Frames of expert work in the public sector.] Jyväskylä: Kasvatustieteiden tutkimuslaitos, Jyväskylän yliopisto.
- Kolehmainen, S. 1999. **Naisten ja miesten työt. Työmarkkinoiden segregoituminen Suomessa 1970–1990.** [Women's jobs and men's jobs. Labor market segregation in Finland in 1970-1990.] Helsinki: Tilastokeskus.
- Leinonen, M., Otonkorpi-Lehtoranta, K., Ylöstalo, H. & Heiskanen, T. 2012. Feministinen toimintatutkimus ja tutkijan rooli [Feminist Action Research and the Role of the Researcher]. In **Naistutkimus-Kvinnoforskning**, vol. 25(4), 5–15.
- Lewin, K. 1948. In **Resolving Social Conflicts: Selecting Papers on Group Dynamics.** New York: Harper & Row.
- Luhmann, N. 2002. **Theory of society. Volume 1.** Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

- Mead, G. 2008. Muddling through: Facing the challenges of managing a large-scale action research project. In P. Reason & H. Bradbury (eds.). **The Sage Handbook of Action Research**. London: Sage Publications, 629–642.
- Naschold, F. et al. 1992. **Evaluationsbericht in Auftrag des Board des LOM-Programms**. Berlin und Stockholm: Science Center Berlin WZB.
- Naschold, F. 1996. **New Frontiers in Public Sector Management. Trends and Issues in State and Local Government in Europe**. New York: Walter de Gruyter.
- Paloniemi, S., Hökkä, P., Vähäsantanen, K., Herranen, S., Eteläpelto, A. & Kalliola, S. 2014. Työkonferenssi työyhteisön toimijuuden kehittämisessä. In Hökkä, P., Paloniemi, S., Vähäsantanen, K., Herranen, S., Manninen, M. & Eteläpelto, A. (eds.). **Ammatillisen toimijuuden ja työssäoppimisen vahvistaminen – Luovia voimavaroja työhön**. [Promoting professional agency and learning at work – Enhancing creative resources.] Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto. 195–211.
- Pålshaugen, O. 2014. Dialogues in innovation: Interactive learning and interactive research as means for a context sensitive regional innovation policy. In **International Journal of Action Research**, vol. 10(2), 213–234.
- Qvale, T. U. 1994. The Case SBA, the Norwegian Work Life Centre: a 5 year program on participation, productivity and institutional change (1988–93). In Kauppinen, T. & Lahtonen, M. (eds.). **Action Research in Finland**. Labour Policy Studies 82. Helsinki: Ministry of Labour, 65–70.
- Reason, P. & Bradbury, H. 2001. Introduction: Inquiry and Participation in Search of a World 'Worthy of Human Aspiration'. In Reason, Peter & Bradbury, Hilary (eds.). **Handbook of Action Research. Participative Inquiry and Practice**. London: Sage, 1–14.
- Schön, D. 1983. **The reflective practitioner**. New York: Basic Books.
- Torbert, W. R. & Taylor, S. S. 2008. Action inquiry: Interweaving multiple qualities of attention for timely action. In Reason, P. & Bradbury, H. (eds.) **The Sage Handbook of Action Research**. Participative Inquiry and Practice. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 239–251.
- Ylöstalo, H. 2012. **Tasa-arvotyön tasa-arvot** [Equalities in Gender Equality Work]. Tampere: Tampere University Press.
- Ylöstalo, H. 2013. Feministisestä teoriasta käytäntöön – feministinen pedagogiikka tasa-arvokoulutuksessa [From feminist theory to practice – feminist pedagogy in gender equality training]. In **Aikuiskasvatus**, 33(2), 118–127.