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Herausgegeben von
Rudolf Leiprecht, Inger Petersen, Winfried Schulz-Kaempf

Martin Kuhlberg

Research-Based Learning in Teacher Training in South Africa and Germany

A Contrastive Analysis

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Wolfgang Fichten/Hilbert Meyer

Learning to research together: An Introduction[1]

1 Cooperation on equal terms

In 1999, an intensive scientific cooperation between educational scientists of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) in Port Elizabeth/ RSA and of the Carl von Ossietzky University in Oldenburg/Germany was established.

For us in Oldenburg it is always a great pleasure to welcome students, teachers and lecturers from Port Elizabeth and to exchange our experiences:

- The South African students and teachers enrich our seminars with interesting contributions.
- In return students and teachers from Oldenburg visit Port Elizabeth.
- Some similarities in the action research approaches of Port Elizabeth and Oldenburg can be found.
- Master and PhD students from Port Elizabeth come in exchange to Oldenburg to deepen their research questions.
- Students of the University of Oldenburg decide to write their Master Thesis about this cooperation project.

Port Elizabeth and Oldenburg have some aspects in common: Both universities promote action research projects with students and experienced teachers to reach necessary social developments. Instead of simply copying the British and American beginnings of action research both universities created new concepts.

1 Translation by Simona Selle.

The volume "Action Research and Teacher Education in Germany and South Africa" edited by Fichten/Holderness/Nitsch (2008) contains a detailed description of the action research of both universities. Further results of this cooperation are being published now:

- In the *introduction* we analyse the current action research discussion in German-speaking countries with a main emphasis on Oldenburg.
- *Wolfgang Fichten* supplies a historical reconstruction of the beginnings and the current state of South African action research in schools and teacher training. He presents the specific problems caused by the Apartheid system in the development of an action research culture. But common roots and motives of the action research movement in South Africa and in Germany can be identified as well.
- In his Master Thesis *Martin Kuhlberg* compares the action research approaches of Port Elizabeth and Oldenburg and conveys their specific characteristics as well as their strengths and weaknesses.

2 The international action research movement and the beginnings of action research in Germany

In many countries action research is a well-established constituent in school and educational development as well as in initial teacher training and in-service teacher training.

- In Great Britain "teacher research" is very common and a component of the local school culture (McLaughlin 2011). Beginning in Cambridge/ Great Britain a trans-European network of action researchers has formed: the Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN).
- Also in China there is a growing perception of this approach (e.g. at the East China Normal University in Shanghai).
- In Austria an extensive practical and theoretical knowledge concerning action research, initiated by Peter Posch and Herbert Altrichter at the University of Klagenfurt, can be found (cf. Messner/Posch 2011). By now a network of action researchers in schools has been established.

In Germany this international tradition has not been fully established yet (cf. Altrichter/Feindt 2004; Hollenbach/Tillmann 2011). In comparison to the

English-speaking countries we have a considerable need to catch up. Therefore, the intensive attempts of some universities and state institutes for school development to close the gap to the international tradition are particularly welcome:

- The *Laborschule (Laboratory School)* and the *Oberstufenkolleg (higher secondary college)* have established teacher research in Bielefeld – initiated by Hartmut von Hentig and elaborated by Klaus-Jürgen Tillmann, Josef Keuffer and others (cf. Terhart/Tillmann 2007; Hollenbach/Tillmann 2011). These two experimental schools run by the government were modelled after John Dewey's Laboratory School in Chicago. The concept requires teachers to work as researchers at the same time. Since 1992 there are no automatic exemptions from lessons in favour to research. The teachers must get the permission for their research and development projects from the school management in agreement with the advisory board of the laboratory school and implement them within two years.
- The *Forschungswerkstatt Schulentwicklung* (Research Workshop for School Development) in Hamburg belongs to the department of education of the university (Bastian/Combe et al. 2003). Initially, the students of the two-semester programme are prepared for their following projects in terms of content and method. Teams of students contact schools or vice versa: the schools express their needs. For the next semester clear and concise research questions are developed by lecturers and students. The research projects close with a written report of the results (often as a Master Thesis) and a feedback to the schools.
- The *Schulbegleitforschung (school accompanying research)* in Bremen is established at the Landesinstitut für Schule ("State Institute for School"). Accordingly, it has strong references to in-service teacher training. The multi-annual research projects are realised by teachers, who are supported by scientists (Kemnade 2007).
- In Oldenburg Wolfgang Fichten and Hilbert Meyer have developed the *Oldenburger Teamforschung* ("Oldenburg Team Research"). Starting point for our activities was the book by Peter Posch and Herbert Altrichter with the programmatic title: "Teachers Research their Teaching" („Lehrerinnen und Lehrer erforschen ihren Unterricht", 4th ed. 2007). But we have varied the Austrian model: Not the single teacher, but small

teams consisting of student teachers and experienced practitioners work on a research question raised by the teacher. This is shown in detail in Kuhlberg's contribution (cf. also Fichten/Meyer 2011).

3 Similarities and aims of action research in German-speaking countries

Different traditions as well as common basics can be found in German action research (cf. Altrichter/Feindt 2004). These include:

- the acknowledgement of the expertise of teachers,
- the double role as researcher and as active teacher,
- the gradual understanding and expansion of the professional knowledge base in an action-reflection-spiral,
- a methodical collection and evaluation of data,
- the frequent combination of research and development projects,
- the work in professional learning communities,
- the connection to an ethical code of researching and teaching,
- and the implementation of the gained knowledge for school development and improvement of lessons.

A further aspect can be found in almost all action research approaches – also in South Africa and in German-speaking countries:

- At its core action research considers itself as a political strategy for the democratisation of the educational system and for increasing opportunities for teachers to participate (Carr/Kemmis 2009; cf. also Fichten/Feindt et al. 2011).

The idea of action research is to turn merely affected people into people actively involved by turning the usual top-down movement in school innovation by administrative requirements into a bottom-up movement or at least by changing it into a more balanced mixture of top-down and bottom-up movements.

Three closely related objectives of action research approaches in German-speaking countries arise on the basis of these shared features:

1. We want to gain *local knowledge* about schools and teaching which is collected in a methodically controlled way and which can provide an-

swers to practical teaching problems and development prospects for the respective school. It is supposed to satisfy scientific claims through generalisation after verification.

2. We want to contribute to the *professionalisation* of teachers, students and student teachers that reinforces the self-esteem and the satisfaction of the actively involved, but encourages also the development of a permanent research attitude or inquiry orientation.
3. We want to give feedback on the gained knowledge to the actively involved to support *teaching and school development.*

We have visualised these three aims of Team Research in an illustration (see the contribution of Kuhlberg, p. 83). The different elements are explained in detail by Fichten/Gebken/Obolenski (2008).

4 The development of research competence

People who want to research need research competence. Research competence enables the independent preparation of small and greater research projects, their methodical realisation and the reflection of the consequences (cf. Fichten/Meyer 2008, pp. 34–35; Fichten 2010, pp. 164–166). This is a demanding task with following challenges:

1. Action researchers must recognise the systematics and the process structure of research.
2. They have to recognise the various roles of researchers and research subjects, of clients and contractors and have to ensure that the rules of conduct are obeyed.
3. They have to get an overview of suitable research methods, select one or two methods and acquire the needed method competence.
4. They have to develop a reflexive distance to their own thinking and acting routines.
5. They have to consider the perspectives of other involved persons and must include them productively into the research process (Fichten 2008).

6. They should be familiar with quality criteria of research and must discuss possible ethical conflicts between research interests and educational tasks.

Some strategies which have proven themselves in the practice of action research support these tasks, e. g. working in a team, being coached by critical friends, the integration of research in a „professional community“ (Altrichter 2002), the establishment of partnerships between schools and universities as well as the formation of networks for researching teachers (e.g. the German Nordverbund Schulbegleitforschung (“North Association for School-Accompanying Research”) and the European network CARN).

5 Professional model

The work of action researchers in school is based on a demanding professional model developed by professionalisation theorists. In Oldenburg, we aim to be in line with the *model of the “reflective practitioner”* by Donald Schön.[2] South African action researchers take a similar position (Reed/ Davis/Nyabanyaba 2002; cf. also Fichten in this volume). The reflective practitioner has at his/her disposal a successful combination of reflection and action competences that are used to master difficult situations in class.

How is reflection competence acquired? According to Donald Schön the answer is clear: by a regular alternation between action and reflection phases. This interchange promotes the readiness for reflexive distance towards own behaviour and the ability to review and develop the available subjective theories of the practitioner with the help of theoretical and empirical knowledge. Thus knowledge based on experience can turn into a “practitioner theory” (Altrichter/Posch 2007, p. 330; Meyer 2007, p. 225), which helps to interpret the own professional practice, to explain the own successes and failures and to handle new and difficult situations confidently.

Of course, these practitioner theories are still not as thoroughly proven as the theorist’s theories. But in principle they must and can satisfy the same quality criteria as the theories produced in the scientific community:

2 Schön (1983, p. 49, p. 68, p. 276); cf. Altrichter/Posch (2007)

- They contain hypotheses about the coherence of teaching quality and learning success.
- They are valid for the time being, that means they are examined by specific criteria which are defined and revised according to the data if necessary, before or during the process.
- They follow an ethical code. We do not just want to produce knowledge, but want to create and further develop human schools and lessons.

The reflective practitioner does not only reflect about oneself, but also draws conclusions from gained insights and develops new challenges (Hericks 2006).

We claim: The participation in action research projects is a strategy to increase the reflection competence of students and experienced professionals, because it is based upon the interchange of action and reflection phases. The principles of action research and the demands on a modern professional model of teachers complement each other perfectly.

6 Standards of the research

Since the beginning of action research in the German-speaking area it has been exposed to the reproach not to suffice the usual standards of empirical research. We contradict this. Action research is no 'light' research. It must and can satisfy the same standards as every other research (cf. Altrichter 2011).

Therefore action research has developed into a "normal science" as described by Thomas Kuhn. It fulfills the usual characteristics of established sciences. There are shared convictions about the core of tasks and the ethical code, and efforts are being made to professionalise the research staff; other efforts to institutionalise action research in the long run can be found in magazines, conferences and networks, etc. (cf. Altrichter/Feindt 2004, p. 429; Altrichter 2011, p. 30).

Quality criteria determine whether the standards of research have been met or not (cf. Zeichner/Noffke 2001). They also apply to action research. Therefore, at the Oldenburg action research approach, we emphasise that serious research is undertaken and no "test research for teaching purposes". In doing so, we adopt the principle of Steinke (2000), that quality criteria must always

be adjusted according to every single research project. We suggest the following criteria for the research teams (cf. Meyer/Fichten 2009, p. 56):

Quality criteria of research

Transparency: We ensure transparency regarding the aims, the methods and the use of the research results within the teams, but also between the team researchers and the "data donors".

Reliability: The process of data collection and data evaluation can be repeated by another researcher with the same results.

Validity: The topic of research corresponds to the claim.

Practical compatibility: We make sure that the teaching and the intended education processes in schools are not disturbed, but, if possible, supported by research activities.

Relevance: We pay attention that a problem that is relevant for teachers, pupils and schools alike, is examined.

Fruitfulness: Differing from basic research we strive to formulate research questions that deliver results we assume will provide fruitful perspectives on new solutions.

Ethical compatibility: We have formulated ethical rules that are to be taken into account by all teams and that can act as guidelines for a solution in research-based ethical conflicts.

We conclude: A general rejection of action research as unscientific is senseless. There is good and bad conventional research just like good and bad action research.

7 Action research as a component of teacher training

In the sections (2) and (3) we have outlined that action research is integrated into the basic academic teacher education at several German universities – partly into the bachelor's phase, however, more often into the master's phase. At these universities students becoming teachers can participate in seminars that introduce action research approaches and support action research pro-

jects with teachers in schools. Small teams work on questions that in most cases emerge from specific school development projects, therefore the research results can be used directly for school improvement and educational development.

Research in a team setting has implications for the learning process and the competency acquisition of everyone involved. The benefits of participating in an action research project for the student teachers include:

1. They can gain *insight into the reality of teaching* which has a different quality than school internships as a practical approach to their future profession. During the practical trainings in school respectively the internships students can review their choices of studies and career and prove themselves for the first time in the role of a teacher. Whereas, in the context of an action research project, they can consider and analyse schools and teaching from a distant position without pressure and with an "outsider's view". In contrast to the practical trainings in school, in which they stick to the school form and grade according to their chosen degree, the action research allows them to receive insights into school contexts for which they are not trained. In addition, they encounter school innovation and development projects due to the thematic orientation of most research projects, an immediate access that is in general prevented during the practical trainings in school. The insight into the dynamics and conditions of realisation of school development processes can strengthen the own willingness to innovate. That way the students are prepared for a profession based on innovation.
2. In the context of the research accompanying conversation with the teacher belonging to the team the students get to know the *subjective theories*, the views and perspectives *of experienced professionals*. They receive insights into the knowledge of the practitioner and its foundations. Here we have another difference: The relationship between student and mentor during the internships is formed latently by judgement and explicitly by advice and instruction. In the action research projects experienced teachers and trainee teachers meet "on equal terms".
3. The students get the chance to develop an *attitude of inquiry* respectively an inquiry orientation which leads to an experimental attitude towards

their own (future) teaching practice. [3] It is part of the model of the reflective practitioner (see section 5). Participation in research can encourage self-critical and distanced reflection, which prevents the development of inflexible routines in teaching that are appropriate in standard situations, but not in new or seemingly contradictory situations, where they might fail.

8 Action research in postgraduate teacher education

Action research is not very well established in postgraduate teacher education and in the in-service teacher training of German-speaking countries – except for a few exceptions, e.g. in Austria. Primarily it can be found, where teachers are being offered programmes for the acquisition of certified additional qualifications after their initial teacher training, like in South Africa (cf. the contribution of Fichten in this volume). Action research initiated by such in-service training courses or corresponding university courses follows the teacher-as-researcher concept.

The establishment of action research in in-service teacher training leads to different constellations in the staff than its placement in initial teacher training. In general, there are no research teams. Although the teachers are supported and advised by university lecturers in their research and can communicate with other teachers concerning research related problems during their courses, they are on their own during the research process and when writing down the research report.

9 Port Elizabeth and Oldenburg in comparison

While reading *Martin Kuhlberg's survey* (in this volume), the different constellations due to action research being embedded into different institutional contexts – initial teacher training and postgraduate in-service teacher training – have to be kept in mind.

3 In the German-speaking countries also the term "inquiry disposition" according to the habitus theory of Pierre Bourdieu is common. It means: inquiry as stance.

- Starting point of his essay is the reflection on his own experiences made during his studies in Oldenburg. The author emphasises the vocational preparatory function of university education that has to manifest itself in a clearly recognisable practical orientation of the training programme. The main question is: Where and how do student teachers get in contact with practice during their studies? This happens primarily during the practical trainings in school that are part of the study programmes and contain – in accordance with the model of a research oriented teacher education – also elements of research-based learning. However, those have, as Martin Kuhlberg notices, no lasting influence on and offer no recognisable contribution to the development of an attitude of inquiry towards the professional practice. He only developed this attitude during the participation in the master's seminar "Introduction to school-based action research".
- Martin Kuhlberg critically approaches his experiences and acquired knowledge made during the course at Oldenburg's university by confronting the concept of Team Research with the variant of action research practiced at the NMMU. This is done in two steps: In the first step, the theoretical foundations and orientations of both action research practices are represented and each illustrated by a research example. In the second step, the two attempts are compared by a set of analysis criteria and assessed with regard to their meaning for a practical and research-based teacher education. In conclusion, the author favours an enhanced anchorage and use of action research in teacher education.

The comparison shows the potentials but also the limitations of the two approaches. Due to the missing action component the students participating in Team Research cannot completely undergo the action-reflection-circle that is characteristic for action research. Regarding the action research at the NMMU it can be said that the professional development of the teachers on the basis of research remains in its core restricted to the own sphere of influence. At present, the team setting cannot be implemented at the NMMU, due to a not fully developed school-university-network and the missing integration of cooperating teachers into the regular study programmes. Therefore the formation of teams with members from different status groups is not possible, although the exchange between researching teachers might be reinforced.

The comparison illustrates that the preference for a particular action research concept depends on the respective institutional setting and personell constellations.

Action research projects, in which students participate during their university education, have to be analysed regarding their learning and competence acquisition processes as well as their qualification ability. Even if the students in Oldenburg cannot implement actively the consequences resulting from the survey, the projects intensify the practical orientation of university studies. A developing inquiry attitude can be transferred into future professional behaviour.

However, the revision and questioning of own assumptions and convictions in a research project have a great significance for practitioners who, like in Port Elizabeth undergo further qualification, because the self-reflection is based on own practical experiences and the results have immediate and tangible effects on the professional behaviour. Since in this setting the surveys are in general carried out by the teachers themselves, possibilities to compensate the lack of social exchange have to be found (cf. the manifestations of teacher-university lecturer-co-operations in South Africa as well as the Action Research Unit founded at the NMMU described by Fichten in this volume).

10 We need more Second Order Research

In Germany, in contrast to English-speaking countries, the question, which effects the participation in action research projects has on the professional practice of teachers, is still not empirically well researched (cf. Hemsley-Brown/Sharp 2003; Hall 2009; Fichten/Meyer 2008). Of course, the assumption of positive effects seems reasonable. The slogan "professionalisation by research" has finally become commonplace in academic discourse (cf. Roters/ Schneider et al. 2009).

In the first sections of this introduction we have already named the desired effects of professionalisation by own research:

– The participation in action research projects supports the creation of knowledge on professional practice.

- It promotes a better understanding of non-transparent and difficult professional situations.
- It helps to be aware of and to include the perspectives of other persons involved.
- It encourages changing routines of thinking
- and to establish a permanent attitude of inquiry.

However, solid data that could confirm these assumptions are rare. The German models of professional development of teachers neglect the question of the contribution of teacher research to competence development. We recognise a lot of reasons that explain this thin empirical basis:

- There are – at least in the German-speaking area – on a pure quantitative level simply not enough teacher researchers.
- The perception of competency development requires a post-action self-observation that is difficult for many teachers.
- There is still no research on classroom effectiveness that analyses the effect that teacher research has on the learning success of pupils.[4]

There is still not enough second order research concerning the motives, the methods, the conditions for success and the effects of action research (cf. however Hemsley-Brown/Sharp 2003). However, based on our repeatedly evaluated cooperation with researching teachers we formulate four hypotheses on the mechanisms of competency development through research.

1. Research is primarily experienced as enriching, if it refers to own teaching.
2. It is particularly productive for everybody involved, if difficult problems with no immediate solution are the object of the research.
3. Own research encourages the self-confidence and convictions on the self-efficacy of all persons involved.
4. It facilitates the ability and willingness to change the perspectives. However, this is only possible, if the adoption of perspective is consciously practiced and reflected (as in our Team Research).

4 Stephan Huber (2005, p. 62) summarises a small, international expert survey conducted by him about the influence of practitioner research on the learning success of pupils: There is no piece of evidence, but all experts consider positive effects to be probable.

11 Conditions for Success

We draw a conclusion: Action research does not work automatically. It can only be established permanently and develop its effects, if certain conditions for success are fulfilled. They differ according to the varying types of institutionalisation and settings (cf. Fichten in this volume), but they share a common core that is obviously essential to obtain research that satisfies standards and triggers the desired effects of professionalisation:

1. A clearly structured *concept of research* is required.
2. *A training* for the acquisition of research competence is needed, especially for the collection and evaluation of data.
3. The action researchers are entitled to *personal training* (offered by coaches).
4. The action researchers must have the willingness to *work in a team* or should develop that during the research process.
5. The action researchers need a definite agreement on the aims with the head of the school, the school administration and the service facilities of the university.
6. The action researchers must get the opportunity to integrate themselves into a *professional learning community*.
7. The construction of a *supporting system* is essential (e.g. the establishment of research labs).

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Wolfgang Fichten

Action Research in the South[1]

1 Introduction

By now action research has evolved into an accepted and – as a glance into the 'Handbook of Action Research' (Reason/Bradbury 2001) shows – widespread research approach around the world. The historical roots though lie in the North: Drawing on the works of Kurt Lewin and John Collier action research concepts were devised in the 1950s in the US. In Great Britain the teacher-as-researcher movement was established by Lawrence Stenhouse and John Elliott in the 1960's and 1970's as an independent tradition of action research (cf. Zeichner/Noffke 2001). Practitioners and scientists from less-developed countries of the South who wanted to do action research had to look at the action research concepts of the North which initially served as an orientation. However, one cannot speak of a mere copying process. The Latin American action research, for instance, added the ideas of the pedagogy for liberation (cf. Fals Borda 2001; Flores-Kastanis et al. 2009) and obliges to the greater goal, which is "to bring about a more just and humane society" (Zeichner/Noffke 2001, p. 305).

In order to acknowledge the wide range of contents and concepts of action research the term practitioner research has prevailed. This terminology highlights the specific feature of the research approach. It is the practitioners who research, though often not alone but with the help of scientists. Practitioners are researchers, and practice is not scrutinised by outsiders but insiders so that one can speak of research "of the people, by the people, and for the people" (Park 2001, p. 81).

1 Translation by Martin Kuhlberg

So, research is not merely reserved for scientists any more, but an activity which in principle is open to all. The practitioners, who traditionally were only research objects in research, now have a subject status with which they make appearances in research projects and thereby gain a voice. This complies with the view of the practitioner as an epistemological subject: The belief is that practitioners possess a genuine knowledge, derived from practical experience, which they may not always be able to articulate. In the course of research this knowledge is being extended so that they can further develop and improve their practice through an enriched knowledge base. The practitioner holds a central position concerning the initiation of the research as well as the research process and the formulation of the results. Not least, this is legitimated by the fact that the practitioners are after all the ones to deduce consequences from the research and independently and self responsibly take adequate actions.

Action research is applied research which is deviating from theory governed basic research (cf. Richardson 1994). Applied research, and thus action research, is grounded in and refers to practices. It not only acknowledges it and refers to it as a research object but is also determined by the contexts it is situated in. Opposite to a social research following the positivistic paradigm for which a universal validity of methodological suppositions and procedures is compulsory, practitioner research is research sensitive to context. Depending on the social, socio-economical and cultural environment it knows various differentiations and specifications. Therefore the central thesis is: Since action research is bound to and affected by the respective contexts of practice, action research in industrialised countries of the North differs from action research in the developing and threshold countries of the South in multiple ways. The research projects vary not only concerning their demands, goals or reach but also show differing stresses on a conceptual level.

This thesis is supported by voices from South Africa. Walker (1993) states: “At issue is the point that the lessons and experience of action research as it has evolved in the developed North cannot simply be transposed to Southern context, without considering what condtions made action research feasible, and how it might need to be adapted in diverse locations” (p. 95). Zeichner et al. (1998), drawing on their experiences in Namibia, agree. They state “that the models of the action research process that have been proposed in more industrialised societies need to be modified and adapted to work in countries like South Africa and Namibia” (p. 192).

The following study picks up this reasoning by working out which modification for action research will occur when conducted under different environmental conditions as in the North and when it engages in the professional practices and ways of life of the South.

2 Approach and goals of the overview

This overview concentrates on action research in South Africa which holds a fairly well documented tradition of action research. Herein, the overview is limited to action research projects in the area of school and education. Almost all essays are electronically available and therefore can be easily accessed. Monographs and collected works concerning South African action research have not been taken into account but have partly been pointed out in articles from magazines (e.g. Adler 1997).

The study follows the logic of a historical reconstruction by going back to the beginnings of South African action research and by outlining its development. It does not deal with the present status of action research in South Africa. Between the article by Walker (1988) and the one by Gravett (2004) lie 16 eventful years which brought the country the replacement of the apartheid regime with the first free elections in 1994. With it came the task of social transformation. Hence the question arises, whether the transition from an apartheid regime into a post-apartheid society and the connected political, societal and socio-economical changes had an influence on action research projects.

The overview is oriented at the leading thesis that action research concepts of the North cannot simply be employed in Southern countries but has to be modified. This process is characterised by a dynamic tension of reception and creative self dependent designing or rather further developing. Consequentially following questions arise:

- On which of the action research traditions established in the North do the South African action researchers draw? Which understanding of action research do they follow?
- Which modifications and further developments of received concepts are being undertaken? Which independent action research tradition has formed under the political, social and economical conditions in South Africa?

The analysis does not follow the perspective that the action research of the North is the "correct" one or even "superior" and that of the South an "inferior derivative". A hegemonic consideration would obstruct the view on the South African researchers' creative adaptations. Contrary to this a reciprocal relation is suggested, and the point of view is uttered that the South African action research means enrichment for action research internationally. Concepts for action research developed in the South could be fertile ground for the North. Thus, additionally the question arises:

– Which contribution to the international discussion of action research comes from South African action research?

Walker (1988)	University of Cape Town, School of Education	Curriculum-Project with teachers from a Township primary school
Walker (1993)	University of Cape Town, School of Education	Curriculum-Project (1987-1989) with 34 teachers from Township primary schools
Walker (1995)	University of the Western Cape, Academic Development Centre	Theory based article with three examples for action research projects
Adler (1997)	University of the Witwatersrand, Department of Education	Primary mathematics INSET course run by the Mathematics Education Project in Cape Town in 1994
Winkler (2001)	Catholic Institute of Education, Paarl	INSET-course for 15 primary school teachers in rural regions with the main topic "children with learning disabilities"
Reed/ Davis/ Nyabanyaba (2002)	University of Witwatersrand/ Assumption Convent School, Johannesburg/ Joint Education Trust, Johannesburg	University in-service-FDE-Programme for teachers in rural and urban primary and secondary schools comprising the subjects Mathematics, Science and English
Winkler (2003)	University of Natal	Theory based article, reference to an observation of three primary school teachers working on the implementation of new curricula

Robinson/ Meerkotter (2003)	Cape Technikon, Cape Town/ University of the Western Cape (UWC)	Action research Master's degree programme at UWC
Gravett (2004)	Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg	Action research in a curriculum and development of teaching approach about transformative learning with secondary school teachers.

Nine articles, all written by college teachers, were included in the analysis. They can be characterised as follows: Besides theory based articles (Walker 1995; Winkler 2003) there are articles which focus mainly on describing further training for in-service teachers, and on university advanced training courses (Adler 1997; Winkler 2001; Reed/Davis/Nyabanyaba 2002; Robinson/Meerkotter 2003). Some articles give reports about action research in connection with the development of curricula built on base of a college teacher-teacher-cooperation (Walker 1988, 1993; Gravett 2004). Quite some articles (Walker 1993, 1995; Winkler 2001, 2003) can be counted as self-study, identified by Zeichner/Noffke (2001) as an independent action research line in which "college and university faculty members conduct research on their own practice" (p. 304).

3 The political context of education and the context of school structure

Almost all of the authors of the herein considered articles say something about the contexts concerning educational politics as well as school and college structures in which the related projects are situated. Hence they agree with the outlined belief of the significance of the contexts for action research. The contextual horizon will be summarised in four keywords.

1. Situation of school: Melanie Walker (1988) presents numbers concerning the situation of schools in the apartheid regime and points out existing disparities. Schools for Africans were equipped worst, and the pupil-teacher-ratios was 41:1 against 19:1 in schools for whites. Serious regional differences still exist in the post-apartheid era, as shows the article by Adler (1997): "Teacher-pupil ratios vary dramatically across different regions in the country. Overcrowding is common, particularly in rural areas where primary classes

can have as many as 100 pupils" (p. 94). In view of the lack of secondary school teachers a pupil-teacher-ratio of 35:1 as aspired by the government will not be possible to reach for the time being.

Concerning the equipment of the schools Adler (1997) explains: "[…] most teachers face schools which have no electricity, inadequate toilet facilities, no staff rooms or libraries, damaged and poorly equipped classrooms and insufficient textbooks" (p. 94) (cf. also Reed/Davis/Nyabanyaba 2002). This generalised scenario has to be differentiated: Besides relatively well equipped township-based black schools there are schools with little resources originally intended for whites. The differences partly originate from the organising institution for the schools: "Historically white, state-aided schools are relatively well resourced. Such schools are now controlled by one department, and increasingly racially integrated. In the new order, they have maintained their relatively better conditions through an increased fee-structure. They have become schools for a minority of township-based black pupils whose parents are able to get them there on a daily basis and afford their fees" (Adler 1997, p. 95). In view of these circumstances it seems obvious that approaches for the development of teaching rely on changes to the labour conditions of the teachers (Adler 1997, p. 95). It is plausible that teachers are first of all interested in doing something about it before they are willing to have a try at action research.

2. Qualification of teachers: The majority of teachers in South Africa were trained in racially segregated colleges of education, which, according to Adler (1997), accounted for a wide range of qualification and distinct differences in qualification. A considerable percentage of teachers were underqualified (cf. Walker 1988). This is true especially for teachers of rural primary schools (Winkler 2001).

In the low level of the teachers' education and qualification Stuart/Kunje (1998) see a decisive factor that has to be taken into account concerning the realisation of action research in the South. They state that the action research concepts developed in the USA and in England (e.g. teacher-as-researcher-movement) were designed for well qualified teachers. The concepts need motivated teachers ready for innovation who are granted more influence and opportunities for participation in the development of curricula and freedom for experiments than teachers in South Africa are granted.

3. Teaching style: South African teachers are affected by their own school experiences. As pupils "they were passive and inert, restricted to receiving, memorising and regurgitating the official textbooks" (Walker 1988, p. 150). In their own teaching they reproduce the teaching style they experienced in their own school years. They have internalised a specific idea of the teacher's role, which according to Walker is not considerably altered during the pre-service training: "So the dominance of transmission teaching with its concomitant emphasis on teacher-talk, drill and practice and rote-learning continues to hold sway and few questions are consciously posed by teachers 'regarding what and how they teach" (Walker 1988, p. 150). This is still true in the late 1990's (cf. Adler 1997). A teacher centred tuition is dominant (cf. Mokuku 2001).

A change is made difficult or even prevented by a mentality problem. South African teachers "see themselves, and are perceived by others, as government servants, as 'deliverers' of a nationally-decided curriculum, rather than as 'reflective practitioners'" (Stuart/Kunje 1998, p. 379). Reed, Davis and Nyabanyaba (2002) point out that the teachers are used to following and putting the specifications of the administration for education in action. They do not see themselves as change agents. On the one hand here the effects of the apartheid era show, when teachers were excluded from the development of curricula (Walker 1995; Adler 1997). On the other hand the passively-receptive stance is owed to the predominant hierarchical-authoritative cultural tradition (cf. Stuart/Kunje 1998).

Against this background it is comprehensible that the focus of numerous reported action research projects is to change the teaching-learning culture. The teachers are being familiarised with a different teaching style and teaching methods which have not been used much so far (e.g. Walker 1993; Reed/ Davis/Nyabanyaba 2002). The aim is to substitute teacher-centred teaching with learner-centred dialogue-based teaching forms. Attached research projects are about involved teachers having exchanges with colleagues about the testing of alternative teaching-learning concepts and the joint reflection of the collected experiences (cf. Gravett 2004).

4. *Research situation*: For evaluation of action research in South Africa the general research situation, to which Walker has made some remarks, has to be looked at. In her article from 1995 looking back on the apartheid era she states that "South Africa has one of the lowest ratios of researchers per head of population in the world. Our educational research traditions are fragile,

distorted by a past in which conservative white Afrikaner intellectuals supported the social engineering of apartheid by constructing educational philosophies which justified segregation and the domination of white over black" (Walker 1995, p. 13). Especially for action research it applies: "For South Africans interested in action research at that time, there were no precedents for local school-based research projects. This was further compounded by the relative absence of an extensive and vibrant educational research community – a further consequence of apartheid education. Moreover, a decades-old academic boycott by democratic educators meant that the only way I could access international thinking around action research at that time was through available texts." (Walker 1993, p. 97)

For the reconstruction of the origins of South African action research both quotations give revealing clues: They illustrate the starting position. Without this information we would not be able to appreciate the development of a discrete action research tradition in South Africa appropriately. Due to the lack of a progressively oriented researcher community the South African action researchers held a marginal position with their first projects and could not count on support. They had to rely on the reading of action research literature from the North. This is a situation that has conspicuously changed through the establishment of the action research movement in South Africa and the publication of handbooks giving overviews, in which South African researchers also have their say (e.g. Robinson/Soudien 2009).

Summary: The reconstruction of early action research in South Africa and its contextual conditions may seem static, particularly, if one takes into account the transformation into a democratic society that happened at that time and to which the majority of intellectuals had attached high expectations. The transformational process, however, was more complex and long-winded than expected. Still there are a lot of poorly equipped schools under the new government (Winkler 2003), which goes to show the consistency of old disparities. Robinson/Meerkotter (2003) record that the political landscape has changed fundamentally after the 1994 elections while "the implementation of full-scale social and economic transformation has been slow" (p. 448).

The explanations concerning the school-related situation, the educational level of teachers and their teaching style make it clear that the conditions for the realisation of action research had originally not been very favourable. The improvement of the working conditions for teachers and the increase of their qualification would have promoted the initiation of action research. If one is

in favour of this view, corresponding contextual improvements would have had to come before the beginning of action research projects. This, however, is not the case in South Africa. Under the described environmental circumstances action research was begun by some college teachers because they saw in it an instrument for societal and pedagogical transformation (cf. Asimeng-Boahene 2004). The motto by Walker "In a very real sense we build tomorrow today" (Walker 1988, p. 149) was the guiding theme of the South African action researchers of that time. The teachers were seen by them as the determining agents of the transformational process: "A post-apartheid South Africa will need post-apartheid teachers able to participate together with pupils and parents as the makers and implementers of educational policy" (Walker 1988, p. 151).

With that the emphases of the first action research projects, with regards to content, are already sketched out. The professionalization of teachers and the change of the teaching culture were paramount. A second column consisted of the establishment of advanced training courses for teachers at the university which were aimed at those goals. In these courses action research concepts were also conveyed, so that all participants were able to explore and further develop their professional practice in a researching manner.

4 Action research in South Africa

4.1 Action research during the apartheid regime

The beginnings of action research in South Africa can be traced back to *Melanie Walker*. She describes the process and results of a project on which she worked together with 34 teachers from four township primary schools (Primary Education Project, PREP) from 1987 to 1989 residing at the University of Cape Town's School of Education. The project had a critical and emancipatory claim and aimed at exploring "what was educationally possible within current school frameworks" (Walker 1993, p. 96). It was Walkers intention to support teachers in changing their practice through a process of reflective curriculum development and self-evaluation.

Concerning this standard, two action research traditions of the North are of relevance for Walker: (1) the critical and emancipatory type advanced by Carr/Kemmis (cf. Kemmis 2001; Kemmis/McTaggart 2005; Carr/Kemmis 2009) and (2) the teacher-as-researcher-concept founded by Stenhouse and

Elliott. Both approaches contain a reflective component through which the factors influencing practice are made aware of, so that alternatives for action can be considered.

There were two strands of reflection in the process: On the one hand the reflection by the participating teachers, on the other hand the reflection by Walker concerning her own practice as an university-based facilitator. Within the frame of the in-service-teacher-education (INSET)-project she organised workshops "to introduce methods different from the dominant drill and practice, chanting and rote learning that prevailed in all the teachers classrooms" (Walker 1993, p. 99). She supported the teachers when introducing new teaching methods and with collecting data through audio and video recordings of lessons which were reviewed and reflected in group meetings.

Walker comes to the following conclusion:

1. Due to their training and long-time practiced teaching routines the teachers cannot live up to the critical and emancipatory standard of a systemic transformation. Since additionally they often lack technical teaching skills initially it has to be about the presentation of successful models (model-learning) and about the acquisition of technical and practical knowledge as defined by Habermas. Reflection alone does not bring about significant changes in practice. The acquisition of practical skills and reflection of classroom activities are not sufficient conditions for the development of an emancipatory education when a critical analysis of the contexts of practice, i.e. factors and cause variables of education policy and school structure is missing.

2. The constellation of personnel determining the project is analysed by Walker with the terms 'participation' and 'involvement'. The teachers were involved in a participatory development process for teaching, but in the research, i.e. in the accompanying process analysis they were included only marginally. While the change in practice was carried out collaboratively, the research was not designed as to be participatory but was carried out by Walker. What for Walker was a research project, was for the teachers a development project for curricula.

3. Walker poses the question whether you can term that which she was able to observe on side of the teachers as research or whether one should rather speak of "reflection on action" or "reflective conversation". The fact that, compared to action research standards, less than the expected was achieved leads to the conceptualisation of a reflection-research-continuum "where all

points of engagement along the continuum contributed to professional development, along which practitioners will enter and exit at different points" (Walker 1993, p. 105).

4. Stenhouse (1981) defines research as "systematic enquiry made public" (p. 9). If one takes this criterion as a basis, then one cannot literally speak of research since the teachers did not write research reports. Walker is of the opinion that the involvement in the reflection process alone and the adjustment of the teachers' self-concept who saw themselves increasingly "as reflective, flexible learners" were to be seen as sufficient features of action research and that the criterion of publication played a subordinate role (cf. Adler 1997, p. 89).

Walker draws two conclusions from her enquiry: 1. "The first is that more rigorous and sustained research efforts (…) need to be supported by changed working conditions (…) and a teaching culture that welcomes and values innovations" (p. 106). 2. Although the passing on of technical skills for teaching is of great importance for the development of teacher professionalism, one must not limit oneself to it but should act on the assumption that "a post-apartheid society demands a more holistic, flexible and reflective view of teaching practice" (p. 106).

Jill Adler (1997) picks up Walker's train of thought, so that a beginning of a research tradition becomes apparent. This justifies the inclusion of the article in this chapter. In the centre of her depiction there is the qualification of mathematics teachers that is to be improved through research involvement. Adler relates to the teacher-as-researcher movement (cf. Zeichner 2001) but she points out that one has to be aware that it originated in contexts "where the professional identity and practices of teachers are more developed and widely distributed than in the South African educational context" (p. 88). For the purpose of verification, whether action research in South Africa does justice to the elaborate concepts of Stenhouse and others, she refers to Richardson (1994), who distinguishes between formal research and practical enquiry. This can roughly be equated with the distinction of theory-governed basic research and applied research, respectively research of practice: "Formal research is undertaken by researchers and practitioners to contribute to an established and general knowledge base" (p. 88). Practical enquiry on the other hand is being conducted by practitioners with the aim to improve one's own practice without taking part in the academic discourse. Due to the lacking

theoretical standard of the studies conducted by the South African teachers, they are to be classified as practical enquiry and Adler advises to speak of "teacher as inquirer" instead of "teacher as researcher". With this she also associates Walker's idea concerning a reflection-research-continuum.

These considerations are made more concrete by means of a case study from an anthology in which primary school teachers recorded and demonstrated their enquiries which they conducted during an INSET course within the framework of the Mathematics Education Project in Cape Town. This is actual teacher research. In effect, the analysed study can, for the lack of theoretical considerations, not really be called research. According to Adler it is rather "ad hoc reflections". The non-compliance of the criteria mentioned in the teacher-as-researcher literature, would exclude the enquiries of the South African teachers from the circle of action research. Adler argues for including the South African studies in the field of teacher research respectively action research. The South African teachers with their enquiries should have a place in the action-research-movement "in such a way that there is recognition of the limits imposed by their conditions, as well as the nature and creativity of their contribution" (p. 99).

Finally Adler advocates an involvement of the mathematics teachers in the development of curricula, and, for further professionalization, the expansion of the methodical repertory. One device to reach these goals are research-based activities: "Any and all mathematics teacher development activity in South Africa should include, if not be organised around, a component of inquiry, which over time becomes more extensive, building reflective capacity and research skills" (p. 99).

4.2 Action Research in the Post-Apartheid Era

The first years after the 1994 election were characterised by a complex constellation of factors: On the one hand the old structures continued to have an effect, and on the other hand new educational topics were being introduced through reform programmes. This is reflected in the emphasis concerning the content of the action research projects (e.g., implementation of the new curricula at schools).

Not unlike Adler (1997), *Gisela Winkler* (2001) places the focus of her essay on the qualification of the teachers, which is described by her as still insufficient. The basis for her analysis is an INSET course of several weeks, spon-

sored by the Catholic Institute of Education of South Africa, which was about children with learning disabilities. "The residential training course in the Northern Cape (…) aimed at primary school teachers and had been advertised as a course that can help teachers understand what learning difficulties exist and give practical ideas about how to manage them in class" (p. 438). Winkler like Walker is interested in the matter of how a teacher's expertise can be developed. While Walker proposes to establish a basis for teacher development through model-learning and the passing on of technical skills, Winkler is in favour of another solution.

She makes the case that the reflective processing of practical professional experience alone is not sufficient for the professionalization of teachers (not unlike Walker 1993). In her opinion significant changes respectively improvement only occurs when practical experience is confronted with theoretical concepts.

The prime interest of the 15 teachers participating in that course was to receive practical solutions for current teaching problems. However, it showed that "[t]his practical orientation (…) turned out to have a limiting impact on the opportunities for development presented by the course (…) (The teachers) did not seem keen to explore alternative ways of thinking about learning and stayed on a 'how to' level of reflection, which relied on their existing theories about learning" (p. 441/442).

In order to break open the limitations of the learning process caused by the focus on practical solutions, Winkler is of the opinion that theories have to be introduced and consulted that make an objective and critical discussion about the reality of teaching possible. The reflectional processes that come about this way have a different quality since they question practical experience, and thus opportunities for action are being revealed.

Another article by Winkler (2003) belongs to the genre of self-study research. The author reflects her role in the framework of a classroom-based research conducted with female teachers at two primary schools. Both the primary schools were concerned with implementing the new post-apartheid curriculum and wanted to introduce pupil-oriented teaching. Winkler accompanied the teachers for more than a year. Regularly she visited classes and interviewed the teachers. "It was very important to me that the partnership would support teachers in their attempts to come to understand and teach the new

curriculum, while the structured reflections would also contribute to personal growth" (p. 395).

In the centre of her process analysis there is the constellation of the personnel, which proved to be partly complex and difficult. The decisive point was that the teachers were not involved in the analysis and interpretation of their stories, but that this was reserved for the author alone. Resulting from this was a tension between the approach intended by Winkler to be collaborative, and of the teachers' view for whom the collaboration had the character of an external evaluation. That made the situation similar to that which Walker (1993) circumscribed with the distinction of 'participation' and 'involvement'.

Sarah Gravett (2004) too is concerned with the implementation of the new curriculum and with the development of adequate teaching methods. As a result of several requests by higher education institutions from Greater Johannesburg she conducted a three months course concerned with the development of teaching. 60 voluntary teachers participated in the event that consisted of four workshops. Basis to this course was the transformative learning theory, and the matter conveyed were concepts for pupil-oriented teaching and dialogic learning.

Gravett refers to Carr/Kemmis in the action research which was linked to the course and „aimed first at changing teacher perspectives and practices (…) to an approach that would engage learners and teachers in (…) learning-centred dialogic teaching (…) The research further aimed at improving my practice as a higher education practitioner involved in teaching development" (p. 259/260). So, there is a constellation similar to Walker's (1993), though in this case the research component on side of the teachers was realised because throughout the course and the following months they were asked "to keep a reflective journal in which they recorded their feelings, problems and success regarding their implementation of dialogic teaching. They were expected to share their reflections regularly with other participants at a meeting" (p. 264). A research journal, questionnaire data, the recordings of the feedback circles and one-on-one interviews form the basis for Gravett's process analysis.

The data underpin that in the workshops the basics of dialogic teaching had been conveyed to the participants and that they tried to realise corresponding concepts in their teaching. However, this general result needs a twofold differentiation: 1. Some teachers tended to stick with their former style of teach-

ing, which offers them a sense of security, while they fear a loss of control with the employment of the new forms of teaching and learning. The rising insecurity is amplified by comments of pupils who look at the new approach critically since they are not used to it and since it demands more responsibility from them for their own process of learning. "Faced with these implementation problems, many of the teachers confessed that they often felt discouraged and were tempted to revert to their old way of teaching" (p. 268). – 2. Against this background support by colleagues proves to be a decisive factor for a successful implementation and for its sustainability. Similar to Walker (1993) Gravett reaches the conclusion "that teaching models for teachers (…) could provide vital security and allow confident experimentation with a new way of learning" (p. 269).

4.3 Action Research in Teacher Training

The following is concerned with courses for the achievement of university certificates.

Reed/Davis/Nyabanyaba (2002) describe an in-service Further Diploma in Education (FDE)-programme for primary and secondary school teachers of rural and urban regions who teach the subjects mathematics, science and English, begun in 1996 at the University of the Witwatersrand. It is about knowledge transfer in three domains: subject knowledge, pedagogic subject knowledge and educational knowledge. The course was done in a mixed-mode format, meaning that it was a combination of Open University course material and compulsory attendance activities quarterly.

The concept of the teacher as reflective practitioner is authoritative for the course; the aim is for the teachers to replace the transmission-style of teaching, dominant during the time of "Bantu Education", for a discursive or rather a reflective teaching style. One concern of the course is the establishing of team-based working structures concerning the teachers, and connected with it, the intensified employment of group work in classes: "(…) there are generations of teachers who have little or no experience in learning collaboratively, or of facilitating group learning experiences. (…) (the) course materials include discussions of possible benefits (…) of small group work for learning, descriptions of strategies for implementing group work and examples of group work activities" (p. 258).

The concomitant enquiry conducted by Reed/Davis/Nyabanyaba refers to the examination of the aspired goals of the course. In particular it is about identifying the level of reflection that the teachers can reach through participation in the course. For analysis the reflection modes (reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action, reflection-for-action) differentiated by Schön (1983) are being used and taken as a basis. The emphasis is on employment of group work in classes "because the most visible change that the research team observed (…) was the increase in group work in almost all classrooms "(p. 254). Class observations, video recordings of lessons, teacher interviews, data from questionnaires, and samples of work by learners serve the authors as data base.

The increase of group work in classes indicates that the teaching style has changed throughout the years, which is to be seen as a success of the course. This general conclusion, however, has to be put in perspective in some respect: 1. Group work had been exercised in most classrooms, but considerable differences concerning the quality of realisation were detectable. – 2. Some teachers looked favourably upon the idea of increasing phases of group work in class, but did not implement it: "(…) there was a marked difference between teachers' espoused and enacted practices" (p. 259). The discrepancy between theoretical approval concerning group work and practical realisation relies on the competence for reflection of the teachers: Teachers, who talked enthusiastically about group work but did not think about the learning possibilities opened by it for the benefit of the pupils, did not employ this work arrangement often. In reverse, teachers who saw the benefits and who had clear learning objectives were those "who were most able to reflect-in-action during lessons" (p. 265).

As the authors established, the ability for reflection is connected to the extent and diverseness of the subject knowledge and the pedagogical knowledge. A small basis of knowledge limits the competence for reflection. With teachers having a broad foundation of knowledge all three modes of reflection were detectable and their teaching was of high quality. The analysis of the capability for reflection was conducted through interviews and thus the language problem has to be taken into account since the teachers were not native English speakers. Therefore the authors self-critically point out that one cannot dismiss the assumption that the teachers' ways to express themselves in an interview conducted in English are limited so that more abstract notional constructions cannot be communicated.

Reed/Davis/Nyabanyaba point out, similar to Gravett (2004) and Stuart/ Kunje (1998), the importance of support concerning the implementation of teaching-related innovations: "(…) the finding that support from colleagues was an important factor in promoting reflective practice, indicate that school-based support could make an important contribution to teachers' professional development" (p. 271). The extent of support in the schools as well as the intensity of the exchange between colleagues varied a lot and was smallest in rural schools. Discussing own development approaches for teaching with colleagues is an occasion for reflection so that there is a connection between the capability for reflection and the extent of exchange among colleagues.

Through the accompanying research the authors wanted to obtain hints for improvement of the course. In the near future they intend to develop case studies which take into account the teaching contexts of South African teachers (cf. Ebbutt/ Elliott 1998) and most of all they want to increase the conversational elements of the course. The modified course is also going to include guided small-scale research projects with which teachers can analyse and further develop their practice, as in accordance with the concept of the reflective practitioner.

Maureen Robinson and Dirk Meerkotter's article (2003) too, talks about action research in teacher training. They go into the origins of a Master's of Education programme of the Faculty of Education at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), by putting the programme in the context of education-related political developments. Point of origin was the belief of the developers of the programme that teachers play a central role in the democratic change in South African educational institutions. This notion was based on the close relation between college teachers and oppositional organisations as well as on the observation that even teachers with democratic views do not constantly organise their teaching according to democratic principles. Although anticipating only a limited range of the academic project it was seen "as an important political strategy to educate mainly those who had been previously disenfranchised by the apartheid government" (p. 449).

The programme implemented during the time of repression and discrimination claims an emancipatory standard and aimed at getting teachers to take responsibility for the overcoming of racism and oppression by consciously noticing the existing restrictive general living condition, in order to bring about a democratic change in the schools. "[T]o educate students and teachers in such a way that they could become increasingly able to free themselves

and others from disempowering political, cultural and personal shackles" (p. 449), was the leading aim. Corresponding to this aim the developers of the programme drew on the emancipatory and participatory action research version represented by Carr/Kemmis and others (cf. Zeichner/Noffke 2001; Carr/Kemmis 2009).

The orientation of the programme has to be seen against the background of the participation of teachers of the Faculty of Education in the civil rights movement and their commitment in the political resistance against the Apartheid regime. Robinson/ Meerkotter emphasise, among other things, the importance of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) in which teachers of the university were represented and from which came impulses for a restructuring of the educational system on a national level. In the 1990's the belief shaped in this organisation „that change in education could not remain at the level of education governance, and that classroom politics of oppression and liberation also needed serious attention" (p. 451).

At the end of the 1950's the UWC was built for coloured people by the Apartheid government. "Almost from the beginning there was student opposition to this racially defined institution. Students came to UWC under protest and later, as political consciousness grew, to protest" (p. 452). The academic committees and the decision-making bodies too opposed the political and ideological bases of the founding of the university and positioned the institution as "home of the intellectual left" (p. 457).

The concurrence of various factors – the commitment of college teachers in the anti-Apartheid movement and the critical-emancipatory self-concept of the faculty – have lead to the development of an academic action research programme which has to be seen as a project that was started by the People's Education Movement, and which is in accordance with their aims. The Master's degree programme for action research implemented in 1987 had the goal to increase the number of highly qualified black intellectuals which would be able to expedite changes in the schools of the area. The programme followed the concept of the transformative intellectual who is able to overcome the racist education and replace it with a practice based on democratic values. "The programme stressed the view that it is not the `expert` from `outside` that would, or could, transform authoritarian practices in schools, but, rather, the teacher as classroom practitioner" (p. 454).

Furthermore the authors address contents and results of dissertations which developed within the programme. An additional three works are presented by Walker (1995). From the explanations one can gather that here an independent corpus of research has developed which is marked by the emancipatory and political orientation, and of which the contents refer to South African contexts and to relevant problems of the educational system of the country.

There were other projects beside the Master's degree programme: The Teacher Action Research Project aimed at supporting teachers with the analysis of their own practice. The Materials Development Project served the purpose of distributing teaching material developed by teachers. The projects merged to become the Teacher In-service Project (TIP) with the emphasis on school development.

Apart from these bigger contexts of the project a seminar called "Emancipatory Education and Action Research", serving as a forum of a theoretical discourse, had been very significant. In it "those who were working with action research in South Africa [had the chance] to begin to contribute to the theoretical debates about the meaning in the context of emancipatory action research" (p. 459) – pointing out the theoretical reflection accompanying the single projects.

Robinson/Meerkotter observe that the conditions for an emancipatory action research practice have improved due to the free elections in 1994, but they also point out recently developed tensions. One of those tensions exists between emancipatory standards and the competence and outcome orientation of the new curriculum and the philosophy that is behind it. On the surface this philosophy uses a rhetoric of change when in fact it is inspired by the Human Capital Theory and puts pedagogical change under the primacy of economical growth.

Concluding the authors take stock of the action research approaches at UWC. They observe that UWC succeeded in

- familiarising a high number of teachers with the potential of action research in connection with school development
- making action research part of the reforms of the administration for education
- and in guiding more than 70 Master's and doctorate students to a successful conclusion of their action research studies.

"Many of these former students now hold senior positions in the government and private sector in a democratic South Africa, and are therefore in a key position to advance the central principles of action research at a policy-wide and systemic level" (p. 462).

Overall it shows that the South African action research movement initiated by Walker and others has reached a high level of maturity throughout the years, owing to the continuous efforts of the Faculty of Education at UWC.

5 Conclusion

5.1 Reception, development and building of a tradition of action research in South Africa

In the following, essential aspects of the early action research in South Africa will be balanced on the grounds of the aforementioned articles.

First of all, we have to note that all authors of the articles have got an academic background. Teachers do not appear as authors, meaning that they are not involved in the scientific discourse with their studies (cf. Adler 1997). Whether this is because of a lack of interest or due to access barriers is as yet to remain unsettled. On the other hand action research studies written by teachers and published in collected editions exist, like the references by Walker (1995), Adler (1997) and Robinson/Meerkotter (2003) show, though they rather have a regional significance. They're being denied the inclusion in the international discussion.

Corresponding to the action research motto "research your own practice" most of the articles included in the overview have to be allocated to the genre of self-study research whereby college teachers make their subject their practice of teaching and their participation in school-related development projects. It is being looked into whether the goals intended by the projects or programmes have been reached and in what way the teachers involved benefitted from it. Although in general a participatory approach had been pursued (cf. Walker 1993) in the end the teachers are research "objects" and suppliers of data (e.g. with Gravett 2004 and Reed/Davis/Nyabanyaba 2002).

Secondly it has to be noted that in the mid-eighties the action research approach is being taken up by some college teachers in South Africa. A benchmark for the *first reception cycle* is the action research of the North with the

teacher-as-researcher-concept and with the critical-emancipatory form drafted by Carr/Kemmis. In the course of the reception the respective comprehension of what is research as well as goals and standards are being taken on and serve as a background for the evaluation of own action research projects (cf. Adler 1997)

During the era of the apartheid regime in South Africa the reception takes place under the omen of socio-political and school-related conditions as well as those concerned with the organisation of education. A reflective momentum is introduced when the researchers realise that the concepts of the North cannot simply be adopted for South African circumstances. This confirms the assumption that action research or research of practice is co-determined by the particular contexts in which it takes place and to which it refers to. For South Africa these contexts are apart from others the effects of the Apartheid regime in reference to the school system and the standard of teacher training. The projects conducted with township school teachers (cf. Walker 1993) have the goal to give the teachers the chance to collectively reflect on their practice of teaching and the factors restricting it and them. The aim is to develop reflective competence to arrive at a profile of competence and level of professionalization corresponding to the model of the reflective practitioner (cf. Reed/Davis/Nyabanyaba 2002). On the other hand concrete changes concerning the organisation of teaching are in the centre of the undertakings (cf. Winkler 2003; Gravett 2004). This makes teacher development and school development/improvement of teaching the key aspects. The professionalization of teachers in the sense of human resource development and the transformation of school practice in the form of school development as well as the development of teaching are connected. This characteristic sets the South African projects apart from German ones where mostly the aspects of school development and the development of teaching are the centre of attention, and the increasing of the level of professionalization is not explicitly aimed at since on the whole the teachers reflect a high standard of teacher training.

Another characteristic of early South African action research is the decided political claim (cf. the hint by Zeichner et al. 1998 concerning the significance of a structural linking of political reforms and action research). Teachers were seen as change agents and schools as institutions which pave the way for a democratic society. The intended transformation of the system is linked to the aforementioned topic (human resource development as well as

school development and development of teaching): In a democracy teaching has to be conducted on the basis of democratic values. It does not suffice to verbally avow oneself to democracy, but teachers have to change their teaching accordingly (Robinson/Meerkotter 2003). Some of the studies referred to show what is on the agenda of the Post-Apartheid era: the realization of new curricula (Winkler 2003) and the implementation of recent forms of teaching and learning (Gravett 2004). Following the suggestion of the importance of support (Gravett 2004; Reed/Davis/Nyabanyaba 2002) it has to be about expanding and strengthening the relations between universities and schools as well as about establishing networks of researching teachers and co-operations between schools.

In the present the emancipatory and critical orientation is still important for action research in South Africa (Nitsch 2008) since, in the field of education, there still exist disparities concerning the distribution of resources as well as regional differences and deficiencies in teacher-training (Robinson/Meerkotter 2003). This also affects the contents of the action research projects as well as their feasibility.

When comparing South African with German action research under the aspect of critical and emancipatory standards, a divergence becomes obvious. Although there had been socio-critically oriented action research in Germany in conjunction with the students' movement of the 1970's and 80's, afterwards this standard disappeared from the mainstream German action research. The ideas of the Critical Theory are not constitutional anymore for research projects as opposed to, for example, action research concepts in Australia and South America which build on it (cf. Kemmis 2001).

Against the background of their contexts the South African action researchers of the first hour had to revise their expectations and standards originating from the reception of the action research concepts from the North. They had to develop an understanding of action research according to their own conditions as well as to reflect their own role in action research projects and the action research approach in general. The reflective work is expressed in extended theoretical discussions included in those articles. The result are modifications of the received concepts of the North. The modifications are to "save" the South African projects which fall short of the postulated criteria or do not fulfil them, that is to say, not to exclude the projects and teachers involved, but to keep them within the perimeters of action research and to position them there.

The emphasis is on four topics:

1. The conception of a *reflection-research-continuum* (Walker 1993; Adler 1997), in which the reflection of the teachers can already be seen as a part of action research.
2. The distinction of *research and enquiry* (Adler 1997), with which the high standards concerning methodology and theorising connected to research are being weakened so that enquiry directed at "mere" improvement of practice can meet with recognition.
3. The demotion of the emphasis regarding the criterion of *publication* (Walker 1993; Adler 1997), which, in view of the teachers' level of training and due to the language situation in South Africa is problematic.
4. The distinction between *participation and involvement* (Walker 1993) which can be taken as a basis for the analysis of the college teacher-teacher-cooperation to decide the extent of integration of the teachers in action research projects.

When jumping ahead from early action research in South Africa to the present, the following can be established using the example of action research at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU/Port Elizabeth) which was the topic of *Martin Kuhlberg's* study: In about 2000 a group of lecturers at NMMU were concerned with action research. The initiative does not look for attachment to the South African action research tradition. Instead it amounts to a *second cycle of reception* in which once again the action research concepts of the North are being used. Particularly the idea of action research developed by McNiff/Whitehead (2006) is being absorbed. Unlike early action research in South Africa regarding the concepts of the North, so far a critical examination of the imported concepts and their adaptation to the contextual conditions is missing. One is striving for an implementation by the textbook. Later on the team research approach also originating from the North, from Oldenburg, is being introduced to NMMU. At present it is not assessable how it is being received and what effect the reception will have.

The described situation allows for several possible interpretations. On the one hand it could be that the specific South African action research tradition has not had a broad effect and could not prevail. Another reasoning could lie in the fact that the socio-political conditions of today are being very different to the ones of early action research so that their goals and orientation seem little attractive. This would explain why the critical emancipatory standard of ac-

tion research only plays a subordinate role in the second cycle of reception, and why the McNiff approach, which puts the focus more on self-reflection, suits the current situation better. It remains to be seen whether and how independent modifications will be developed at NMMU as a result of the discussion on the import from the North. Discrete exceptions for emancipation from the models of the North are available (e.g. Geduld 2008).

5.2 The significance of the South African action research for the North

Finally one has to ask what impulses arise for German action research from the South African one. I act on the assumption of the above described four topics (see 5.1) and relate it to the approaches of action research, respectively practice research in the northern German area.

1. The reflection-research-continuum: Within the frame of action research in the northern German area teachers have the opportunity to contribute their problems and to question and reflect their own actions in class. When following Walker's (1993) opinion one can already see one element of action research in this, and call the teachers involved action researchers. Furthermore there is the requirement that teachers actively take part in the research, that they are agents of research and not only use and utilise the reflective potential of it. Wether this happens depends on personel constellations. Action research projects are conducted by teams put together differently. In Bremen, Hamburg and Oldenburg action research is part of teacher training. The teams consist of experienced teachers and teacher students supported by university lectures who are not involved actively in the research projects. In this constellation, differentiations concerning roles and tasks often appear within the teams. The teachers for example contribute the research problem and discuss the research results while the teacher students independently, or if need by consulting the participating teacher, conduct discrete research steps (the development of instruments for research enquiries, the execution of data collection and its evaluation). In Bielefeld, where there exists genuine teacher research at the experimental model school (Laborschule und Oberstufen-Kolleg [Laboratory School and High School]) it is different: Every teacher is a researcher, albeit not all the time. So, here research is conducted in teams composed of teachers and sometimes college teachers are actively involved in projects, too.

While the Bielefeld projects occupy the research pole within the suggested continuum, the integration of the teachers in the research of Bremen, Hamburg and Oldenburg is partially less intensive so that the projects rather have to be positioned at the reflection pole. The small degree of participation by teachers in the research would exclude many a projects within the field of teacher run action research just as it would do with the South African projects which are spoken of here. The setting of the reflection-research continuum allows regarding the entire range of the teacher activities present in the projects as action research. The reflection-research continuum introduced by Walker (1993) provides a useful background for the analysis of the German action research.

2. The differentiation of research and enquiry: The projects conducted by the teams at the places mentioned claim that they are research. However, it cannot always be said undoubtedly whether the undertaking meets that standard with regard to methodology and quality. The guiding college teachers giving advice try to secure a certain quality of the research but they cannot prevent some enquiries from falling behind scientific standards.
   An additional aspect is that some college students and a lot of teachers react to the term research in a negative way, and since they relate unrealistic and excessive expectations to it, bring a reserved attitude towards research with them which can result in insecurities regarding the execution of one's own research: "In order to overcome these insecurities, preservice teachers need systematic instruction in necessary skills and a realistic definition of research" (Ross 1987, p. 142).
   If assuming the suggestion made by Adler (1997) to more often talk of enquiry instead of research, then this could lead to a more relaxed attitude and to a weakening of the felt weight and strain which develop from exaggerated standards.

3. The criterion of publication: If students belong to the research team they have to write a research report which is graded as a course achievement thereby excluding the teachers from participating in the drafting of the report. A lot of research reports are available as unpublished Master's theses. Apart from that there are published reports from Bremen and Oldenburg on which researching teachers at least worked as co-authors. Some of the Bielefeld teacher-as-researcher reports have been published by renowned publishing houses since it is part of the business of the ex-

perimental model school to make a contribution to the development of the educational system and to advise the administration for education for which the communication and distribution of the research findings is essential. For the German action research the situation concerning publication of research findings is not as problematic as for the early South African action research. Although it has to be noted that a lot of research reports are not broadly accessible so that they do not fulfil the criterion of publication (see above) set by Stenhouse (1981).

4. The differentiation of participation and involvement: This differentiation which comes from Walker (1993) can be transferred to German action research without difficulty. As the mentioned team constellations (see above) show teachers in Bremen, Hamburg and Oldenburg are involved in the research of practice but they can also fully participate in the research process and the research steps. How high the degree of participation gets is dependent on several factors (among others the time resources of the teachers) and on internal team agreements and on appointed divisions of the assignments and of the work. In principle teachers have the opportunity of full participation in the research. The degree of participation actually realised can be positioned in a participation-involvement continuum. Within the scope of the research undertakings college students get to look at the teacher's professional practice and at the approaches for school development and development of teaching in which, though, they are not involved actively. In a similar fashion the guiding college teachers are involved in both correlations – research as well as school development and development of teaching – but according to Walker's (1993) definition they do not participate in them. In Bielefeld however, researching teachers fully participate both in research as well as in school and class development.

It appears that in the course of early action research in South Africa concepts have been developed which are also of relevance for the segment of German action research consulted here. They can be used as a heuristic tool for the analysis and evaluation of German action research approaches. Insofar the South African action research provides many a theoretical impulse and stimulus with regard to specification and contouring of action research models in the German speaking area.

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Martin Kuhlberg

Research-Based Learning in Teacher Training at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth/South Africa and the Carl von Ossietzky University in Oldenburg/Germany: A Contrastive Analysis

1 Introduction

1.1 Motivation for This Paper

During the course of my studies at Carl von Ossietzky University in Oldenburg I, at some stage, felt that there are not enough practical elements included in the teacher training programme in Oldenburg. There were of course the two compulsory internships in (ideally) different schools which lasted 6 to 8 weeks. Prior to these internships, I did two voluntary weeks in my first semester in which I sat in during classes, observing, and eventually taking over two lessons. During this time some questions concerning the teaching profession emerged, which was a good start, but since I mainly observed and hardly gave a proper lesson or was made familiar with actual work of a teacher these questions merely stayed at the surface. Although, I still think it a good idea to observe classroom business, as it were, really early in one's studies in order to get a first glance or picture of the profession one has chosen to take on after the studies. Nonetheless, those internships, valuable as they were, in giving opportunity to teach and test yourself, are in my opinion too short. One has barely become a little comfortable and thus more relaxed with the situation (and more daring), and already the internship is over. Too little time for

getting to know the practical side of teaching[1], and all the other tasks and work entailed in a teacher's professional life[2].

So, when I first had to go to a lecture about educational research I did not understand why, since it seemed very theoretical to us. Fellow students and I wondered why they would not offer more practical courses instead. Only later I came to realise that as a teacher one has to deal with past and upcoming studies similar to PISA someday, and had better achieved some understanding on how to read and interpret them. Of course one could always ignore them which is an option, that will save a lot of time and nerve wrecking thoughts but on the other hand will also leave the teacher out of a discussion that could have proven valuable for him/her and his/her pupils. At the least, understanding the PISA reports, e.g., would maybe cause the educator to reflect on his/her own teaching effectiveness and/or to oppose the conclusions of the commissions if s/he should feel the need to do so. My first conclusion to these contemplations amounted to:

> Understanding of and awareness for research have to be promoted among (student) teachers.

The "understanding and awareness part" of this conclusion could be conveyed, at least to a theoretical extent, by working with available publications like the PISA[3] or TIMSS[4] reports. However, this approach is still on a rather abstract level for a lot of people (and I include myself here) which could prove an obstacle when trying to convince teachers or student teachers to appreciate them. When my fellow students and I had to conduct our researches at school as part of our two internships we were granted only a few weeks for research inside a school (about two), and for the rest of the work (processing of the data, evaluation/interpretation, report) we were left on our own. Though, the internships were preceded by theoretical input in the form of a lecture with no practical involvement on side of the students. There was great pressure on us to succeed and to produce a report in fairly short time, and not few of us did not quite feel up to the task sufficiently. It gave the impression

1 As opposed to the theoretical input at university.
2 Hardly ever touched in courses at our university.
3 Programme for International Student Assessment.
4 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study.

that the "research bit" had to be "squeezed" in somehow, among other important parts of our training. This way of introducing research to us, the future teachers, did not contribute to making me a research enthusiast. It seemed "pseudo-practical", something you put on display to pretend, and make others believe that you are up to date and/or innovative. This first experienced way of student research felt more as a "cosmetic device". It simply failed to give me the notion of earnest intention on side of the faculty.

Finally, in my second semester of the Master of Education (M. Ed.) programme, I had to choose a seminar in a study-module called *"Schul- und Unterrichtsforschung und ihre Forschungsmethoden"* ("School and Classroom Research and its Research Methods"). The seminar I chose was titled "*Einführung in die schulische Aktionsforschung*" ("Introduction to School-Based Action Research") and after the first class I was sure I really wanted to participate in this for the simple reason that it promised actual work with and in a school together with a teacher and to a small degree with pupils as well. It seemed a chance to do some practical work and learn more about school development. So, revising the first conclusion in the light of these further contemplations I formulate the idea that

> If student teachers are to gain a thorough knowledge of research including research methods, and a solid appreciation of it through its benefits, research has to be taught and carried out in a meaningful and "hands on" way.

I believe that action research can be an efficient method of making the student teacher aware of the requirements for good teaching (cf. Meyer 2004), like the need for reflection on their actions as a teacher. Reflection in turn can promote the growth as a teaching personality it seems. Consequently it appeared to me that action research in the form of team research at our university was being underused.

Since there exists a partnership between the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University of Port Elizabeth (NMMU) and the Carl von Ossietzky University with active communication concerning teaching and action research (AR) I by chance had the opportunity to exchange some information and experiences about the differing teacher training programmes of our universities when talking to Bill Holderness, a professor of NMMU and co-editor of the joint

publication of our two universities on action research[5], who as a guest attended the '14. Jahrestagung Nordverbund Schulbegleitforschung' (14th Annual Symposium of "The North Association for School-Accompanying Research") in Oldenburg in the summer of 2009. He was interested in the team research project I had been involved in, and I in return wanted to know more about the teacher education at "his" university. Further reading on action research as being conducted in Oldenburg and Port Elizabeth eventually lead to my intent to look at the two different approaches of action research as run by our two universities. I wanted to find out more about shared features, and differences as well as the share that this highly practice-oriented device of teacher training has in educating the future teachers of our two very different regions. Action research is, however, not merely practical but also includes theoretical work and input as will be shown later. Against this background the following title for my thesis was formulated:

> Research-Based Learning in Teacher Training at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth/South Africa and the Carl von Ossietzky University in Oldenburg/Germany – A Contrastive Analysis

1.2 Proceeding and Formal Matters

In the following chapters I hope to explain why I chose to compare two different action research approaches, to give an insight into action research, introduce the two action research approaches and to point out certain aspects which I think very interesting concerning action research in general and also in particular with regard to the distinct approaches. This will happen on a theoretical as well as on a practical level. When putting theoretical concepts to practice they may deviate from the theory through adjustments to meet the user's needs, capability and/or resources and varying beliefs and assumptions. Not surprisingly, this is no different with action research. Accordingly this comparison strives to find out not only the differing theoretical elements of the two action research approaches but also practical aspects which might not conform to the theoretical frameworks. Reflection on this work and an outlook will conclude the thesis. While reading you might find that some in-

5 Action Research and Teacher Education in Germany and South Africa. Concepts and Examples. (included in References).

teresting questions are missing. This is of course inevitable in such a Master's thesis with its limit in volume.

As to the formal matter, I have chosen British English orthography for this piece of work but have adhered to other English spelling where it was used in quotations.

1.3 Why a Comparison?

The comparison is to serve as a method of giving insight into possibilities for increased integration of action research in teacher education and to show that it can and should be used on a wider scale than is being done in Oldenburg currently. Accordingly, I would like to emphasise that I do not wish to compare the two concepts as a way of finding "the better one". Rather, this contrastive avenue is chosen as a means of showing how action research can work and add to teacher education in different countries with different environments, conditions and different needs. Susan Noffke puts it this way:

> That, more than anything, to me, is a point well worth underlining: Action research has 'multiple' meanings and uses. Its 'potential' cannot be judged apart from 'ideological' bases which drive its practices, as well as the material contexts. The history and culture surrounding action research projects (and here I mean ideology as well as material and social practices) are great influences. What we need to look for is NOT whose version of action research is THE correct one, but rather, what it is that needs to be done, and how action research can further those aims. (Hollingsworth et al.1997:312)

In order to evaluate "our" Oldenburg action research approach it seems appropriate to look at descriptions of action research in literature, and this is done in a limited manner through the introduction of general characteristics of action research[6]. A general list of traits of action research is merely a "dead thing" though, and it seems fitting to look at a "lived" concept of action research as this complies with Noffke's statement above as well as my desire of a better linking of theory and practice. In this respect, it appears to be the wrong avenue to compare solely with a set of theoretical parameters. In addition, action research rejects exclusively theoretical research approaches (cf. e.g. Carr/Kemmis 1986, McNiff/w Whitehead 2003, Altrichter et al.

6 For a more profound look at action research see e. g. *The SAGE Handbook of Educational Action Research.*

2008). Having said that I have to admit that I obviously have not written this thesis as a report resulting from self conducted action research, but I can claim that I have participated in an action research project, and I can claim that I have shared views and experiences with others who have done so. Sharing the practical outcomes and experiences of one's research is something that is strongly encouraged among serious action researchers. So, I legitimise my theorising about action research with having gained my own experience with it.

In looking at available data such as case studies, research reports, final papers on action research and interviews, as well as drawing on my own experience I hope to give an informed insight of two action research approaches and their potentials and benefits for teacher training programmes. On one hand all this served my own wish for reflection on my team research experience from a certain distance[7]. Also I feel a growing personal interest in dealing with teacher education in general. With respect to reflection on one's own practice Donald Schön (1983) spoke of the reflective practitioner, and during our studies we have been reminded and encouraged constantly by various university teachers to always reflect our actions in school, respectively in class. Action research consistently demands reflection in and on action, and so appear to be fitting means for a reflective teacher education. On the other hand I think it is good and suitable to deal with teaching in a broader context since we are, like it or not, members of an increasingly globalising community, which gives us the opportunity to compare, share, and learn from each other the world round. For me, as a future English teacher, to look at South Africa seems an additional just reason.

2 A Brief Introductory Overview of Action Research (AR) in General

2.1 Origins

Altrichter et al. (drawing on Noffke, 1990) write that "[i]n Anglo-American literature the development of the concept 'action research' is traced back to the work of John Collier, [...], Jacob L. Moreno, a physician, social philoso-

7 A first reflection is featured in our research report. Since that report followed shortly after research was concluded I felt that a second look at a later time would give me the opportunity to come to a more differentiated, complete "picture".

pher and poet and Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist [...]" (2008:266). McNiff states that both "Collier and Lewin were aware of the potential of democratic practice for both self-determination and social engineering, the potential of 're-education' as a way of ensuring compliance and loyalty to the dominant culture" (40). The US American Stephen Corey is stated to be the first teacher to apply action research in the classroom (cf. e.g. Altrichter et al. 2008, McNiff/ w Whitehead 2003) and first published his experiences in the book of 1953 called *Action Research to Improve School Practices*. However, a researching teacher can be found much earlier than this. There was e.g. the research-based teaching by the physician Jean-Marie Gaspard Itard who, in the beginning 19th century taught the so called wild boy of Aveyron (Prengel et al. 2004:183) who he named Victor. He observed his pupil, invented pedagogical measures, observed and evaluated their implications on the child, and if not satisfied with the result started the process again, reflecting on how to improve his teaching, trying out the new measure, and observing the effect (ibid.)[8]. Here we already have an action-reflection cycle or spiral which is so basic and important in action research. It will be looked at more precisely in the next chapter. *The American Educators' Encyclopedia* (1991:474), however, states that the origins of reflection teaching are found in the works of John Dewey, and indeed his works are repeatedly being drawn upon in action research literature (see e.g. McNiff/w Whitehead 2003). According to Prengel et al. (2004:185) Lewin's concept of action research had been taken on by educators in the 1970's. This concept aimed at combining theory and practice along with research and action. In 1975 Stenhouse published his now renowned book *An Introduction to Curriculum Research and Development*. It marks the beginning of the action research "movement" in the Stenhouse-Elliott tradition in Britain (cf. Altrichter 2006:57). John Elliott amongst his academic associates and along with Stenhouse contributed to the furthering of action research not only in the UK. Stenhouse was of the opinion "(t)hat the mistake is to see the classroom as a place to apply laboratory findings rather than as a place to refute or confirm them" (26). As one of the titles of the chapters in his work of 1975 demonstrates he saw teachers as prospect researchers. He was in favour of a research-based curriculum development as a continuous and progressive process in which the shortcomings would be gradually eliminated (cf. 125). This concurs with Donald Schön who devel-

8 Itard influenced the work of his pupil, Dr. Eduard Séguin, who in turn influenced his pupil, Maria Montessori.

oped a theory of reflection-in-action. The theory already includes the belief in personal or professional values used in setting the problem, and in responsibility for the actions taken. Schön's *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983) has been termed "highly influential" (Altrichter et al. 2008:269). In this book he encourages collaboration and exchange amongst practitioners, for instance. As will be seen in the next chapter, these views or ideas are now common traits of action research concepts.

2.2 Basic Characteristics of Action Research

What is presented below stems from my studies of a variety of books on action research[9]. I looked for recurring characteristics in the partly distinct approaches. The characteristics that most of the different authors and concepts seemed to agree on are on this list. I do not claim that the list is complete, and it certainly does omit a variety of characteristics apparent in some concepts of action research around the world but not in others, or vice versa. Then, some points might appear in this list that other action researchers perceive differently. Of course I cannot claim to have read every text on action research.

As action-researchers progress with their abilities and competencies as well as their self-confidence with their research projects, it is possible that they develop a rather unique way of doing action research (cf. e.g. Altrichter et al. 2008:14) in which they might add one characteristic or another to the general concept. Some educators have their own ideas about what it should aim at or how it should be conducted (cf. e.g. McNiff/ w Whitehead 2003) correspondent to the distinct situational context, for instance. Consequently, my aim in listing the below traits is to present a rough framework and to give a brief and general insight into action research[10] for the novice. This is also to serve comprehensibility and to be a helpful structure or common ground when comparing the two approaches I chose for this thesis and for the reflection on the end. I certainly do not wish to set borders, but the list can, in my view, prove useful when asking questions about the concepts, as will be seen. The following characteristics may also be seen as criteria for good quality of an action research process (cf. Posch 2009).

9 See list of references.

10 For comprehensive reading I recommend a look at the bibliography of this work where one can find works that dig far deeper into the field of action research/teacher research. Also, *The SAGE Handbook of Educational Action Research* can serve as an introductory read as well as overview.

Set of basic characteristics (as perceived by the author):

- A teacher/practitioner as researcher
- researches an issue from his/her own practice within his/her immediate school environment instead of someone else from outside
- in an action-reflection circle/cycle or spiral (though the stages of it do not necessarily always occur sequentially).

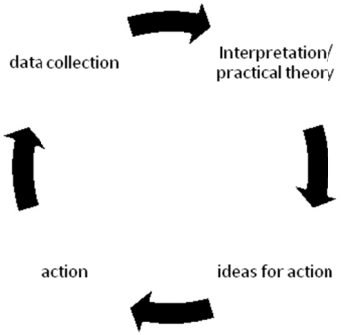

Fig. 2.2.1 The circle of action and reflection (cf. Altrichter et al. 2008:8)

In this cycle or circle[11] of action and reflection "practical theory" is presented as part of a step.

> A practical theory is a conceptual structure or vision that helps provide practitioners with reasons and explanations for actions (Sanders and McCutcheon 1986). They can be thought of as rules-of-thumb based on experience and consisting of "a repertoire of practices, strategies, and ideas" (Altrichter et al. 2008:65)

Whereas in the cycle action research is presented rather as a sequence of events in the research process, the spiral on the other hand emphasises the progressing to a higher level with each of the tackled stages. The spiral shows that often action research does not end after one research cycle but mostly needs continued work over an unknown period of time (cf. e.g. McNiff/ w Whitehead 2003, Altrichter et al. 2007).

11 In the English written literature on action research the use varies between circle and cycle. For this work I will use cycle from now on.

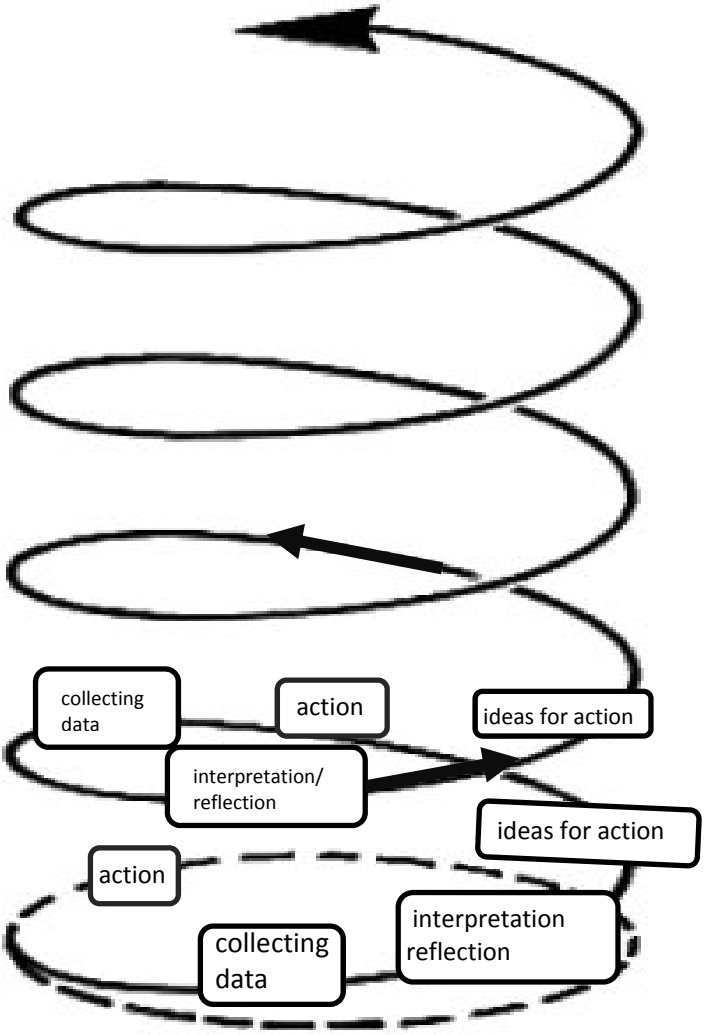

Fig. 2.2.2 Spiral of action and reflection (my example)

Rather individual research and development cycles

It is only logical that one cannot foresee how many cycles one will need for improvement of a given issue. As action researchers regularly experience and point out, the research process can lead entirely elsewhere (cf. e.g. McNiff/w Whitehead 2003). Because no one class and lesson or school is absolutely alike, (even though teachers often may say: "Oh yes, my class is exactly the same.") and thus issues, however familiar they might look, are never exactly the same either, a seemingly clear starting point for which the researcher has formulated a research question, can eventually lead to a very different ending. The target-concern one has set in the beginning may turn out to be only the surface of a larger or perfectly different problem (cf. Altrichter et al., 2008:55). This makes AR a rather individual research process (even though rules and suggestions, tips and recommendations exist of course). Experienced researchers recommend keeping the research issue small and thus feasible (cf. e.g. McNiff/w Whitehead 2003, Meyer 2009). Of course, one can take on a big research project and "slice" it into small feasible research projects.

"ethical code"

In action research it is understood that a relation on "eye-level" exists between the researcher and the researched person(s). That denotes that the investigator needs to meet the person(s) who are subject to the research with respect. Some action researchers argue that it should be a vital feature of action research that research is not done on people but together with people (cf. e.g. McNiff/w Whitehead 2003). The researcher will consequently inform the people involved in the research of his/her intentions. In being transparent the researcher ensures that everyone who takes part knows what is going on and can utter discomfort or critique (whatever tendency it may have). This is done in order to make sure, that the process stays ethically justifiable (cf. e.g. Carr/Kemmis 1986)[12]. Rules for an ethical proceeding can be put down in an agreement (cf. Junghans/Meyer 2000).

12 "The 'objects' of action research – the things that action researchers research and that they aim to improve – are their own educational practices, their understandings of these practices, and the situations in which they practice. Unlike positivist educational researchers, action researchers do not treat these 'objects' as 'phenomena' by analogy with the objects of physical science, as if practices, understandings or social situations were independent of the researcher-practitioner, and determined by universal physical laws. Nor do action researchers regard their practices, understandings or situations as 'treatments' by analogy with the

"critical friends"/different perspectives

Critical friends (e.g. Feindt 2000, McNiff/Whitehead 2010, Fichten/Meyer 2008, Altrichter et al. 2008) is the term used for evaluators, observers or experts and such, who the investigating practitioner consults and/or asks to assist in a certain way to ensure that the procedure is in order with respect to the ethical code and for obtaining valid data. In respect to the latter, triangulation[13], the collecting of data from three different angles and/or points of view is an important term. Understandably, there should be no fixed hypotheses on side of the researcher. Teachers will of course form theories regarding their teaching as well as incidents, issues, etc. that happen and that they want to examine (cf. Meyer 2004). This should nonetheless happen in an open end manner, recognising the possibility that one's observations and theories might be not entirely correct or even wrong. The critical friends and different perspectives the researcher needs to take into account are a way of securing validity of the action research results (cf. Feindt 2000).

research journal/logbook/diary

Issues, questions, incidents, ideas, conversations and stages of the research process are written down in a research journal kept by the investigator. It is a means of facilitating reflection for the teacher/practitioner/researcher concerning the research project (cf. e.g. Altrichter et al. 2008).

"Community of practice"

The researching practitioners are encouraged to take part in a community of practice in order to engage in a "dialectical process" (Elliott 2009:30). In this network of practitioners they can exchange their views, theories, research projects, findings and problems (cf. e.g. Elliott 2009, Altrichter/Posch 2009). Whether this is done on a local level or internationally is a question of choice

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objects of agricultural research, as if education were a purely technical process of achieving higher 'yields' of educational attainment (180)."

13 Elliot writes: "[W]e developed a method of helping teachers to produce objective accounts (qualitative sense) of their performance. It is called triangulation and involves the collaboration of three parties – the teacher, his pupils, and an observer. Each is in a special position. The teacher is in the best position to know what he means by what he does and how he interprets pupils' responses. The pupils are in the best position to know the meanings of their behaviour and the interpretations of teachers' actions on which they may be based. The observer is in the best position, by virtue of his detachment from the requirements of action, to gather accurate evidence of observable behaviour (2007:74)."

and feasibility. In this community they can raise and discuss questions and dilemmas as well as ask for help and/or advice. "Identity is constructed by participation in the group activity or 'community of practice', and by reification of concepts and practices through naming and categorization (Wenger, 1998) to increase the community's cultural capital" (Somekh 2009:377).

Sense of responsibility/accountability/ownership

Salzmann (1801/1961 in Prengel et al. 2004) expressed a rather drastic view on the responsibility of teachers: "For all flaws and vices of his pupils the educator has to look for the reason in him"[14]. Even if one is not in accordance with this statement as a (researching) teacher nowadays (as we now know more about influences such as parents, peer groups etc.), an action researcher acknowledges his or her share of influence on the pupils by taking issues and problems serious, and by consequently taking reflected action (cf. e.g. Altrichter et al. 2008, McNiff/w Whitehead 2003 and 2010).

emphasises the values base of practice

Actions are looked at as the expression of values, meaning that actions of researching teachers and in fact teachers' actions in general should reflect their own values (cf. e.g. Posch 2009, Altrichter et al. 2008, McNiff/Whitehead 2003 and 2010).

knowledge and development

Knowledge and development can be identified as the goals of action research (cf. e.g. Posch 2009, McNiff/Whitehead 2010). However, action research does not aim at finding generalisations which can then automatically be applied to similar situations and settings in other schools and classrooms. First of all it aims at producing knowledge concerning a specific issue or situation for the researching teacher or the respective school. So, its goal is to be relevant and to bear relation to reality (Prengel et al. 2004:187) for the practice of individuals and single schools. The individuality of schools does not allow for unreflected transformation of findings in one school to another (cf. Huber 2005:47). This does of course not rule out that findings of one school can inspire or influence other schools or teachers. The action researcher though is not to take over the findings unquestioned and apply them to his/her issue.

14 The translation from the German original is mine.

S/he can however take them as a starting point for his/her own further investigation.

Elliott (1991) defines action research as "the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it" (69). He explains that "[a]ction research improves practice by developing the practitioner's capacity for discrimination and judgment in particular, complex, human situations" (52). Another definition is presented in the introduction script[15] for team research:

> Action or practice research is a research programme with which practitioners can analyse and improve their professional practice self-directed and problem-related through systematic interlocking of their own practical doing (action) and distancing reflection on it. (Meyer 2009:6-7)

2.3 Action Research Today – A Short Glance

Today, action research presents itself in multiple concepts. One can now read about a '"wide range of work [...] such as participatory action research, critical action research, classroom action research, action learning, etc." (Noffke/ Somekh 2009:1). One way of looking at them that Noffke (1997) suggests is in their professional, personal and/or political dimensions (in Noffke/Somekh 2009). Although as she points out the political dimension is apparent in each of the dimensions, not only the political (ibid.). "They reflect orientations towards action research, which, to a degree that varies between authors, are also open to the other two orientations" (ibid.). This sub-chapter, only being a short notice on AR today, will not explore Noffke's divisional approach further.

There has been "a remarkable growth in the acceptance of action research" within the past decade (Noffke 2009: 12). Action research has found its way into schools and universities all over the world. In a variety of universities it has become a well established part of the teacher training as for instance at the universities of Wisconsin-Madison/USA, Limerick/Ireland and Bath/England. Among educational researchers a growing awareness can be identified that action research is a "powerful strategy for professional development of teachers and other professional practitioners" (Altrichter/Posch 2009:213). It is seen as a means of furthering a reflective attitude and competence (e.g.

15 The translation from the German original is mine.

Goodman 1991, Feindt/Altrichter 2009:31). It is a recognised way of knowledge production by teachers (e.g. Tabachnik/Zeichner 1991, McNiff/w Whitehead 2003, Tillmann 2009, Messner/Posch 2009) which can serve to develop good teaching skills (e.g. Fichten/Meyer 2008) but no empirical evidence has yet been obtained that shows an "automatic link when it comes to increasing professionalization through teacher research" (Fichten/ Meyer 2008:25). However, action research is seen as a means of self-evaluation and can be used as a way of accounting and justifying for the teachers or schools practice (cf. e.g. Messner/Posch 2009). Besides the universities mentioned above and the universities of Port Elizabeth and Oldenburg which give their students the opportunity to conduct action research there are others all over the world which can be detected when going through literature on action research and AR-websites[16]. Today, there exists a worldwide community and network of action researchers[17] which publishes books and magazines and exchanges their research accounts extensively on the Internet, for instance[18]. Messner and Posch (2009) see an increasing significance in action research and developmental perspectives. According to them, the growing complexity of school-related work and the commitment for justification of schools toward the public can only be managed if teachers have research competence and that of systematic reflection on their work.

2.4 Criticism

This chapter will not enter into a profound and comprehensive criticism of action research. Instead it is meant as a sort of acknowledgement that criticism is being uttered towards action research and its different uses. Only two major critical points will be addressed, since the focus of this thesis lies elsewhere.

As action research is research done by practitioners namely e.g. teachers who investigate their own teaching it is regularly argued that their research is biased by their own belief systems, attitudes, self-concept and educational, academic and/or social lacks and limits "because it involves the researcher in analyzing his or her own practices" (Carr/Kemmis 1986:191-192). The research findings are being doubted, suggesting that they are the result of "self-

16 See for example: http://www.jeanmcniff.com/reports.html http://www.bath.ac.uk/carpp/publications/doc_theses_links/index.html, http://resources.educ.queensu.ca/ar/

17 See e.g. the SAGE Handbook of Educational Action Research edited by Noffke and Somekh.

18 See above, e.g. Also some more websites are provided under References.

deception, or of ideological distortion" (ibid.). It is an objection that I heard almost always when I described what I was writing about, and it is certainly one that has to be addressed and dealt with since it questions the reliability and validity of action research. Carr and Kemmis counter such criticism in saying that there is not such a thing as a

> [...] 'value-free'[19] or 'neutral' medium in which *praxis*[20] could be described and analyzed in ways which are unrelated to the values and interests of those doing the observing. This is an illusion created by the image of a value-free, 'objective' social science itself. Any science of human praxis must embody values and interests, both as objects of enquiry and as knowledge-constitutive interests for the science itself (ibid.).

People do not act in a vacuum but according to values and rules agreed on or at least practised by a large number of the society. These values and rules have been formed by humans in processes that, to some extent, might have been quite similar to those of action research, through experience and the reflection on it. Additionally, as mentioned in the previous chapter it is a basic and vital feature of action research that the investigating teachers invite others (e.g. colleagues, experts etc.) to observe, help with data collection[21] and evaluate the proceedings and outcomes as well as the applied values (ethics). John Elliott thinks of the action researcher as becoming a "collector of value judgments" (2007:75[22]). He points out that it is important

> [...] that evaluations of his 'moral agency' are made in response to his invitations. In 'collecting judgments' the teacher gives people independent access to classroom data and uses their judgments of his moral agency to check his own (ibid.).

Huber (2005) with regard to the validity discussion recounts how Lincoln and Guba (1985 in Huber 2005) developed the concept of "trustworthiness" which was aiming at substituting the criterion validity. Trustworthiness was meant to interlink ethics with quality criteria taking into account that practitioner research always happens in relation to others. Anderson et al. (1994 in Huber 2005) postulate a conception of validity in which the specific goals

19 The inverted commas are the original.
20 The italic accentuation is the original.
21 Triangulation e.g. aims exactly at producing as high a degree of objective and thus valid data as possible.
22 First published in the summer of 1976 in *Education for Teaching*, pp. 49-71

and uses of the research project have to be taken into consideration, acknowledging that because of the two goals of wanting to know practice as well as wanting to influence it, validity in the academic context is meeting its limits.

The second critique concerns the theory building through practitioners' commonsense concepts of educational situations which is often considered "vague" and "imprecise" by "[r]esearchers in the field of education" (Elliott 2007:91). Elliott dissents by stating that "[t]he fact that commonsense concepts of classrooms are not precise enough for scientific purposes does not mean that they are not sufficiently precise for others" (ibid.). More critical contemplation will be exercised later on with regard to the discussed approaches in the discussion part of this thesis.

3 AR at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

3.1 "I-Enquiry" – The Theoretical Concept

The action research approach used at the NMMU in Port Elizabeth is built on the principles of Jean McNiff and Jack Whitehead's approach to action research. Action research has been offered and conducted at the university since 2006, and is currently being coordinated by Professor Lesley Wood, head of the department of Educational Psychology and the Action Research Unit. In the beginning phase Jean McNiff introduced her concept of "I-enquiry" (or living theory approach) in several workshops. In this action research approach the belief is expressed that the researcher should always do research on him- or herself and not on others (McNiff/w Whitehead 2003:20). If it would be done by outsiders/externals they would only observe and describe without being affected by the respective matter. Practitioners should show that they are offering explanations rather than only observations and descriptions of practice (cf. Whitehead 2000:99). Outsiders are valued as critical friends though. "Engaging with the living theory approaches means, as Whitehead says, placing the 'living I' at the centre of our enquiries and recognising ourselves potentially as living contradictions (McNiff/w Whitehead 2003:22)". In this process of "self-study" (McNiff/w Whitehead 2003:23) the researcher poses some vital questions as for example what the concern is and why the investigating person is concerned as well as further steps such as finding out what kind of evidence s/he can generate to show the situation and what s/he can do about it (cf. e.g. McNiff/w Whitehead 2003, McNiff 2008).

In order to secure that the conclusions the investigator comes to are valid and traceable first of all s/he has to lay out the values by which s/he claims to be living/acting by. So, if we assume a teacher feels that something is not going according to his/her values or that s/he does not act according to them it is only just that s/he should want to find the underlying problem and change the situation that causes this contradiction between his/her values and the actual status quo (see "living contradiction" above). When s/he made his/her values clear s/he can decide on actions that would enable him/her to eventually live by those values. Also, when having made his/her ideals available to others they can judge his/her progress or results by comparing the steps s/he is taking or the outcome of his/her research with them. In doing so they would be able to see whether the actions that have been taken to modify the situation towards betterment are in accordance with his/her values. An example of McNiff's values is her understanding in regard to action research to always research "one's own practice and generating personal theories of practice which show the process of self-monitoring, evaluation of practice, and purposeful action to improve the practice for social benefit" (McNiff/w Whitehead 2003:20), and hence aims never to conduct research concerning the work of others but merely her influence on others to change their ways of doing things. McNiff presents her example of an ideal research process as follows:

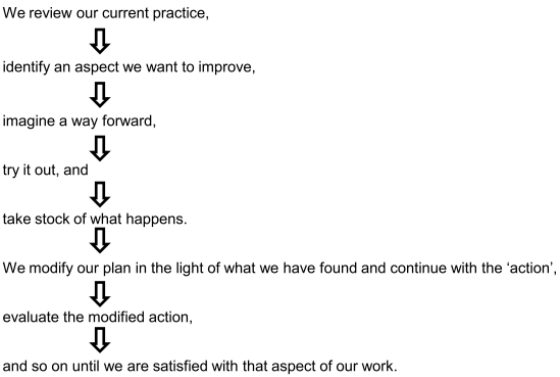

Fig. 3.1.1: Action Research Process according to McNiff (cf. McNiff et al., 1996 in: McNiff/w Whitehead 2003:71[23])

23 The arrows have been added by me for the purpose of clarity.

She emphasises that it is not a "rigid prescription of how things will turn out" (McNiff/ w Whitehead 2003:71). Instead the research process can sometimes lead one into other fields and directions, which is why she eventually came up with her own example of an action-reflection spiral.

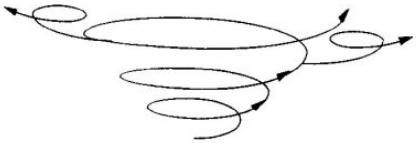

Fig. 3.1.2: A generative transformational evolutionary process (cf. McNiff/w Whitehead 2003:57)

3.2 The Formal Framework[24]

The formal level denotes the overall framework in which each action research approach is being conducted at the universities. Questions that arose while working on this thesis are:

– What is the action research project part of?

There is no organised programme or module being offered.

– Who does action research in Port Elizabeth?

It is available/ accessible for undergraduate students as well as Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students.

– What time frame exists for their research?

A two year action research training programme is being offered at NMMU for postgraduates. The undergraduates have one year to do a small research study.

– What is the setting or procedure?

In principle all action research procedures follow a certain basic pattern, as explained in chapter 2.1.2. However, Lesley Wood with regard to action research at NMMU states that

24 All information was gathered through an interview with Deidre Geduld and e-mail contact with her as well as the head of the department for Educational Psychology and of the Action Research Unit of NMMU, Lesley Wood. The insight I was able to gain is certainly still incomplete.

> [e]ach project has its own framework – with my projects I usually meet once per month, but the focus for the participants is on practice. I just familiarise them with the principles of AR and the process and guide them through it. I usually give them a manual of sorts (E-mail, 12th Jan. 2010).

The concept of McNiff and Whitehead forms the basis. As will be seen later, when outlining Deidre Geduld's action research project, deviations can occur. Lesley Wood stressed that "the focus for the participants is on practice".

– What kind of support is being offered on side of the university?

Each student is allocated a supervisor which is a professor at NMMU. The students receive one or two lectures at pre-service level. There, AR is only one design among others. McNiff works with post-graduates and staff, not pre-service.

3.3 A Look at Practice

The example I want to present from Port Elizabeth is that of Deidre Geduld[25]. She had been a primary school teacher for 14 years when she started to conduct her research project which lasted two years. It was part of a Master's programme at the NMMU which she attended as a part-time student meanwhile continuing to work full-time as a teacher at a primary school in the vicinity of Port Elizabeth where she is also head of the languages department and of the intermediate phase (grade 4-6). The programme was a pilot project. The applicants all had different fields they were interested in. Among those were, for instance, school management, curriculum development and, as in Deidre Geduld's case the interest in educational psychology. They all formed one group, but each member would work individually on his/her research topic. Geduld's research took place in the aforementioned primary school. As part of the school management team (SMT) she asked herself the question why the SMT was not doing as it ought to. After the end of apartheid, in the process of democratisation a law had been passed that required schools to implement inclusive education. However, in the primary school where Geduld teaches the SMT did not follow the bill. Drawing on Nind,

25 All information about the process of Geduld's research project stems from our interview of November 2009 if not stated otherwise. All other sources are referenced within the text.

Rix, Sheehy and Simmons (2003) Geduld (2008) explains in her Master's thesis how

> [m]ost of the educators in South Africa have been trained in an apartheid separatist environment; therefore their beliefs are echoed by those traditions. Change is very difficult and the adjustments to new paradigms even more complicated. Educators' basic method of teaching and learning remain the same as the paradigm in which they have been taught. The drive for inclusion still takes place in a system that is otherwise unchanged (4).

Meyer agrees that "[e]very teacher has a complex subjective theory of instruction. You start forming this theory already when you are a student yourself. These ideas are very hard-set; you can't change them like dirty socks" (Meyer 2009[26]). Geduld (2008) wanted to "explore the perceptions and experiences" (5) of the school management team she was part of, in the attempt to understand "how they can implement and maintain inclusive education" (ibid.). Consequently, she formulated the following research question:

> *How does the SMT ensure that it embraces the interdependence and interrelatedness of each element (for example, school culture) of the school and focuses on the professional development of all educators and the school as an organization?* (Geduld 2008)

Guiding questions in her research were:

- How does the SMT perceive inclusive education?
- How does the SMT describe the implementation of inclusive education in their school?
- How does the SMT plan to maintain inclusive education effectively? (6)

Workshops with experts who guided the researchers were provided. Jean McNiff for instance visited once or twice for that purpose. Geduld recalls about eight workshops overall (e-mail, 23rd Jan. 2010). During these workshops they talked about e.g. how to write their proposal, literature review, research methodology, their epistemological values. They had a look at their findings, and spoke about data collection, exploring which kind of their data would be valid and which would be unnecessary or even unfit for use. Alt-

26 From the handout of a speech Meyer presented in autumn 2009 in Denmark and Serbia.

hough, Geduld explained that when she engaged in learning about methodology, a lot of it happened through interaction with her supervisor. Also, since she and her fellow students had done the research part-time, working full-time as a teacher during the day, they had created a "support team" for their research projects which consisted of all the part-time students of that Master's programme. With regard to that group she related that they had their "supervisors as well as the learners there [...]" (Interview, lines 20-21).

> At the end of the day whatever you acquire about research or research methodology is your interaction with the theory, and applying it to your research question and then your supervisor who is supposed to be the expert on this [...] field guides you, whether you are on the right track or whether you need some elaboration on the concept or whatever (Interview, lines 10-14).

Apart from methodology they would talk about all the phases of the action research projects they conducted. So, this was done on a voluntary and self-directed basis among the students. For her Master's, Geduld writes, she chose the participatory action research. She felt that it suited her question best. "The researcher and the participants are equally involved in the process and each takes responsibility for the outcome of the reality that they are seeking to understand" (Geduld 2008:12).

Her research design then included four major steps based on Cowne (2003), which she presents in her Master's thesis. The research design is not to be confused with the action-reflection cycle. It is a part of it, though. "Research design refers to a plan for selecting subjects, research sites and data collection procedures to answer research questions" (McMillan & Schumacher 2001:165 cited in Geduld 2008:60). "The research design may be understood as the overall plan" (McNiff/Whitehead 2010:11).

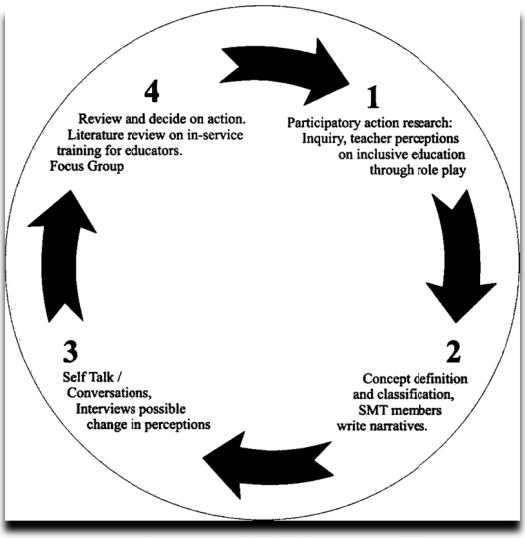

Fig. 3.3.1 Cyclic presentation of data collection methods (Geduld 2008:65)

Step one in Gedulds plan is aimed at identifying the problem; step two serves the definition of the self-concepts of the SMT members; while self-talk included that the team members were asked to choose a metaphor which described them and which they had to explain to the group. This was done in order to assist the group members to discover "their relative truth" (Geduld 2008:63). Basically writing their own metaphor and looking at them aided in surfacing the contradictions in the educators' (professional) life, the discrepancy between their personal teaching theory and their actual personal and professional behaviour, i.e. Step four then would be the point preceding the action to be taken. Its aim is to prepare for that action by focussing, structuring and necessary decision making. Below is the overview of her complete study as presented in her Master's thesis.

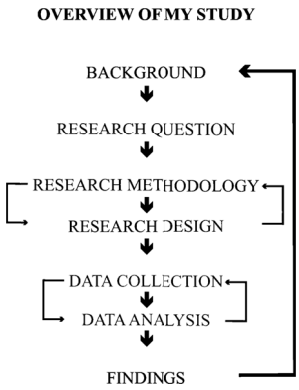

Fig. 3.3.2 "Overview of My Study" (Geduld 2008:19)

Geduld includes a time allocation summary for the different stages in the research process:

- Literature study (August–September 2007, 1 month)
- Describe research methodology (October–November 2007, 1 month)
- Data collection instruments and procedures (December 2007–January 2008, 1 month)
- Observation (February 2008, 1 month)
- Interviews, including transcription and preliminary analysis (March–April 2008, 2 months)
- Final analysis and interpretation (May–June 2008, 1 month)
- Integrating results and writing the report (July 2008, 1 month)

In September she began with the completion of a draft of the dissertation. She handed in her finished work in December 2008. A presentation of the results at university did not take place (e-mail, 7th Feb. 2010).

4 AR at Carl von Ossietzky University

4.1 Team Research – The Theoretical Concept

The Oldenburg action research approach referred to as team research draws on Herbert Altrichter and Peter Posch whose action research concept in turn is influenced by the works of Stenhouse and Elliott. Altrichter introduced ac-

tion research to the Carl von Ossietzky University in the first half of the 1990's, visiting for some seminars. Afterwards Fichten and Meyer along with some associates gradually developed their own approach from it, evolving it into the team research model which is being used now (e.g. Fichten et al. 2003 and 2008). In a script for the team research course Meyer (2009[27]) presents their theses regarding action research:

1. School-related action research as self- or outsider-evaluation can give important impulses for the development of school and teaching.
2. Self-evaluation is surgery on an open heart.
3. Change of perspective, possible within team research, allows for establishment of distance to one's own action.
4. The claim of leading empiricists that practitioners cannot research due to systematic reasons is arrogant and has very often been proven wrong.
5. Small is beautiful.[28]
6. Only through the method the research matter is becoming visible.
7. Research competence[29] develops in an alternation of being led and self-directed action.
8. Not only the research work is promoting professionalism but also the team-setting.
9. There is no automatic link between the increase in professionalism and practice-related research. Professionalism is only being furthered if research is being bound to "places of structure of reflexivity" (Feindt 2007: 263).

Fichten et al. (2008) describe that the focus of the concept is on "cooperative, practice-related school and teaching research" (93). Central for it is "the development of problem solutions and/or action orientation for professional situations" (ibid.). Accordingly, as can be seen from figure 4.2 in the next chapter, the goals of the Oldenburg model of team research are those of professionalization, the generation of local scientific findings and development of school and teaching, or as formulated by Fichten et al. (2008):

27 The translation from the German original is mine.
28 This refers to the extent of the research project.
29 Research competence is being described as the skill to research in a self-directed and goal oriented manner and according to the situation, thereby complying with ethical standards as well as quality criteria of research (20).

1. All participants will gather learning experiences through the research work that can contribute towards personal professional development.
2. The research work should be a forum for acquiring new findings in schools, teacher training seminars, and university courses.
3. The completed research work and the investigation findings coming in from the institutions contribute towards the continued development of schools, teacher training and university teaching.

Team research is seen by its developers as a means of helping educators adapt to changes, "respond to developmental responsibilities prescribed by society in a qualified fashion" (Fichten et al. 2008:94). The team in team research obviously is a major element and perceived as a setting in which the knowledge of the team members is not only pooled but also shared (cf. Fichten 2005:114), thus facilitating the research process. Each member is seen to hold different or specific knowledge which promotes the progress of the research project. Fichten argues that during the co-operative research process it is getting transparent what the individuals in the team know (ibid.), i.e. which knowledge can be drawn from and which knowledge has to be "imported" (ibid.) into the team. Another chance that is spotted by Fichten (2005) is the diversity of observational perspectives that the members bring to the team (106), as the teacher and the student teachers (pre-service, i.e.) come from different stages of teacher education, as it were. Contrary to the usual research groups in science, where there exists approximately the same background and access regarding the research field and the object to be investigated, the team research setting is characterised by the constellation of closeness and distance at the same time towards the investigated issue (cf. Fichten 2005:110–111). Whereas the teacher usually has a very close relation to the object/issue to be investigated, the students on the other hand are outsiders to that class and school in general. During the research process the teacher might be able to step back a little and observe the research issue from a distance since the work is distributed among the team members. The students in return can get closer to the field of practice (cf. Fichten 2005:111). So, the teams are to facilitate a reflexive distance (cf. Meyer 2009:7–8). As a summary Fichten and Meyer (2009) write that they want to help participants develop a lasting research stance (119).

4.2 The Formal Framework

The same questions as asked regarding the action research done in Port Elizabeth will be asked here:

What is the action research project part of?

It is being offered by Wolfgang Fichten and Hilbert Meyer within the framework of accompanying seminars. These seminars or courses have been developed and changed over the past 16 years approximately, due to the ongoing evaluation of the concept throughout the years. Today they are integrated in the Master's programme (M.Ed.) that has been implemented in 2004 as part of the transition from specific German degrees to the BA/MA system, and the course is currently titled *Einführung in die schulische Aktionsforschung* ("Introduction to school-based action research").

What time frame exists for the research?

It is being offered every semester and nowadays does not exceed one semester. The accompanying teachers however are free to do follow up studies of their original research concern together with a new team of students in the next semester.

Who does action research?

The Oldenburg form of action research is done by master of education (M.Ed.) students. The course can be attended by all students of the M.Ed. programme irrespective of their number of semesters studied.

What is the research setting or procedure like?

Hilbert Meyer has come up with a drawing that visualises the concept and processes of team-research as well as the formal setting in which theory is to be put to practice. The heading of the drawing reads "Mountain Hike 'Team-Research'", and on this picture a path leads all the way up to a three top mountain range starting from a base-camp named "Action Research Lab". The three peaks are headed (1), "*professionalization* of students, student teachers and experienced practitioners" (the highest in the middle), (2) "*further development* of school and lessons", and (3) "production of local scientific *findings*". That is where the initiators or "tour guides" (the lecturers, i.e.) of this hike aim to encourage and enable the student teachers and the experi-

enced in-service teachers to get. Therefore, the research participants are introduced to action research in general and team research in particular, and are provided with initial theoretical input by the university lecturers in the "base-camp". The next step takes place on the "research market-place" and includes (1) the presentation of the yet roughly outlined research interests of the participating teachers, and (2) the formation of the teams. For this process the teachers have prepared sheets of paper or cardboard on which they roughly have put their concern of research. With this they position themselves somewhere in the classroom hoping to attract some students. The students walk around to look at the research projects on offer, speak to the participating teachers and eventually decide on the project they want to be a part of. Usually, some rearranging or "student shifting", as it were, has to be done in order to obtain at least almost equal teams in terms of numbers[30]. When the team forming process is concluded the lecturers recommend putting down some basic agreements in the form of a team contract in order to secure equal commitment to the task that awaits them. Also, the research question, the issue to be dealt with, has to be put in a phrase that informs the others exactly of what the research group is hoping to find out. This fine-tuning process of the research issue may comprehend a questioning of the associated teacher so as to get to the core of his/her cognitive interest. Writing a synopsis/outline is a vital step further. In this the refined research question has to be contained, and the team has to explain how they will go about collecting the data. Equipped as they are with theoretical input and a synopsis outlining their research aim and approach to the issue they will attempt to take the next step. This next step is the gathering of the data, followed by processing it as well as trying to make sense of it. During the research process a team can ask for a two-team-setting in which team B is asked to listen to the progress report of team A and then pose questions and give feedback thereby acting as critical friends. In the concluding research report the group will finally give an account of the stages and findings of their investigation. It is expected of the student teachers, but not of the associated teacher, to include a reflection on the process. In fact, the in-service teacher is not supposed to contribute any written work to the account. A presentation of the results in the plenum of the seminar is scheduled for the last two or three sessions. The plenum then is free to give praise and/or offer constructive critique. A final and very im-

30 It sometimes occurs that a team actually is in need of more members than the other teams due to a more complex research project.

portant measure of the research is the feedback of the results to the related school if the matter is of interest to the school as a whole. Ideally this is done by the whole team, namely the teacher and the students together.

What kind of support is being offered on side of the university?

All along, the lecturers act as coaches and critical friends. Each team is assigned a lecturer who will be the main contact person. The coaching intensifies when, on a weekend day, possibly all team members of each team meet to be familiarised by the lecturers with research methods as e.g. group discussion, observation or interview. The base-camp also contains the archive. This holds research reports, written as the result of previously conducted action research projects, and monographs on action research which can be used by the teams to inform themselves in depth about certain aspects of action research if they wish to do so.

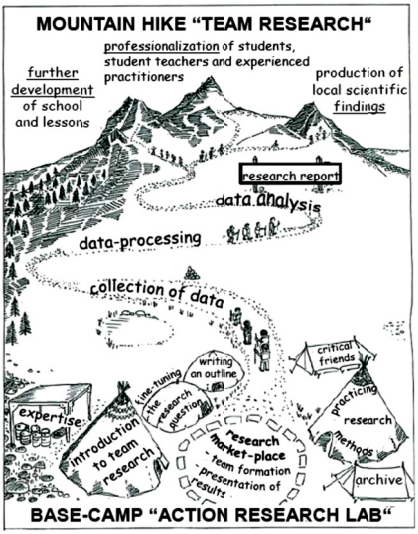

Fig. 4.2 Mountain Hike "Team Research"[31]

31 The drawing has been taken from a handout of a speech held by Hilbert Meyer in Denmark and Serbia in 2009. The original German version has e.g. been published in the introductory script for the team research seminar 2009 and in Fichten/Meyer 2009.

4.3 A Look at Practice

The research team I was part of consisted of one participating/associated teacher, one female and four male students. The process of coming together as a team has already been described in chapter 4.2. Our first and "constitutional" meeting took place at the home of the associated teacher. After working on the precise research question, according to the described process in the previous chapter, it finally titled

> *Regarding the day-school offer at the Hauptschule*[32] *(on) Alexander Street: What are the attitude, judgement and acceptance of the pupils like?*[33]

As research method we used a questionnaire which comprised of 13 questions. Before we designed our final questionnaire, our associated teacher had the idea of first asking the teachers and some pupils for questions we could include in the survey. As we all saw the benefit of this way of proceeding we agreed, and the teacher and I each lead through one of the two sessions of collecting questions. The idea behind it was that this way we would give the pupils, who this research eventually was to serve, but also the concerning teachers a chance of participating, and thereby acknowledging their say and share of responsibility in a process aimed at improving their educational/ professional life. Additionally, it made the research more transparent to everyone. This, being an element of the ethical code mentioned above in the basics of action research, is important. Most of the concerning pupils knew what we were doing and planning to do, so that the survey in form of a questionnaire did not present a surprise to the majority of the questioned. Even before all this, we presented our team at a staff conference of the school, making transparent to the teachers what we intended to do. Teachers then had the opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns or point out prospect problems and issues. From our oral pre-survey and the questionnaire that had been used in the team research project preceding the implementation of the open day-school programme we derived our final questionnaire. The ques-

32 A "Hauptschule" is a secondary school for low performers.

33 As this is a translation from German, the original title reads: Wie ist die Einstellung, Beurteilung und Akzeptanz der Schüler und Schülerinnen der Hauptschule Alexanderstraße zum Ganztagsangebot an ihrer Schule?

tions mostly came with multiple response choices for the pupils. The opening question read:

1. What do you think is good about the day-school offer?

Possible answers were:

1. There is a support class for homework.
2. No one else has to take care of me.
3. I can get to know my fellow pupils better.
4. I can spend more time with my schoolmates.
5. I can try out something new.
6. I can learn more.
7. It is fun.
8. I do not find any of it good.

The team members then visited the classrooms that had been chosen by the participating teacher for the survey and explained the procedure, handed out the questionnaires and monitored it, making sure that arising questions by the pupils could be answered. Of course, the survey was anonymous, so no names were asked on the questionnaires. This was followed by the evaluation of the outcome. It was done in sub-teams of threes and twos mostly. One group especially concentrated on feeding in the data into a data processing application. The other group mainly concerned themselves with the graphical presentation of the results and the writing of the report which was then looked at and revised by all[34]. Overall, the evaluation of the results of our team research project was executed in seven steps. The quantitative data was enumerated, the qualitative data was categorised, the diagrams were created, the results were critically scrutinised, described and interpreted and the core statements were summarised.

34 The sub-teams were not set in concrete and the members helped each other out.

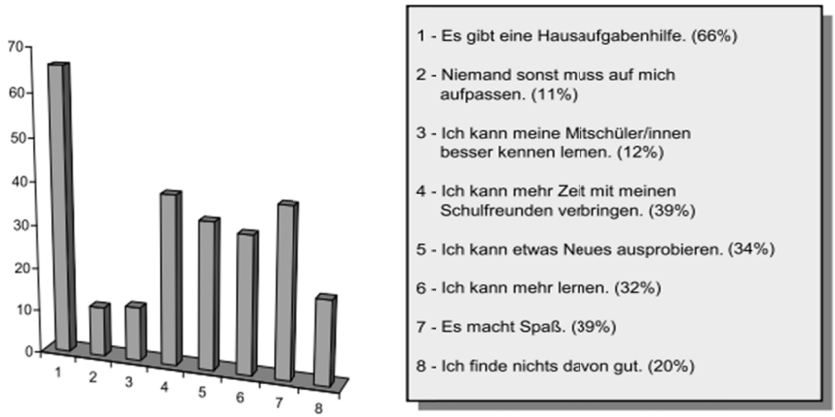

Diagram 4.3: Presentation of the results of question 1: What do you think is good about the day-school offer? (Team Research Report 2009[35])

Finally, the results were presented at a course session at the end of the semester. Our team used diagrams and charts. The diagram above shows the response choices in their German original. In brackets the percentage share of the ticked answers is displayed. Beneath is the schedule for the different stages of the team research project:

- Refining of the research question and literature review (starting 30.04.09)
- Writing of an outline (deadline 14.05.09)
- Pre-survey at the *Hauptschule Alexanderstraße* in two classrooms (18.05. and 25.05.09)
- Main survey: Data collection at school (distribution of the questionnaires in six classrooms) (08.06. – 13.06.09)
- Data processing and evaluation as well as writing the research report (22.06. – 02.07.09)
- Presentation of the results in front of the course members (09.07.09)
- Presentation of the results in front of the school teachers Alexanderstraße (05.08.09) (Team Research Report 2009:4)

The date for presentation at school had to be cancelled due to the fact that most team members were not able to attend.

35 Bade, Häusser, Kettler, Koijmann, Kuhlberg: *Bericht zur Durchführung der Team-Forschung an der Hauptschule Alexanderstraße in Oldenburg* (unpublished)

5 Analysis and Discussion of the Two AR Approaches

In the introduction of this thesis I have made the point that the motivation to write about action research originates from my personal feeling[36] that teacher education at the University of Oldenburg could and should be advanced further with regard to the interlocking of theory and practice. Because of this contemplation I describe the two action research concepts above, and it seems only congruent to ask whether or not action research (as carried out by the compared universities) can meet this demand for a better interaction of theory and practice, and how effective it is. One can look for theory-practice interlocking in different places. There is e.g. the institutional level where one can look at the relation and co-operation between a university and the schools of the area, and at the share and relation of practical and theoretical courses at the university. On a personal level one can look at how and what students have learned. Do they have a mostly theoretically grounded knowledge? Have they participated in practical courses and internships? How much practical training did they have in relation to the theoretical input? One can look at the skills and competences they have achieved, as well as the theoretical knowledge. How well are learned theories or theoretical understanding linked with practical understanding and ability for action in a person? Due to the fact that I did not spend time in Port Elizabeth having a close look at every aspect of action research at the NMMU I was not able to gain the necessary wide range of information for such a broad study. Nevertheless, such a visit would have been the best way to collect information, no doubt. At the time it seemed not feasible due to the time factor mentioned earlier. Observation of parts of action research processes in Port Elizabeth, as for instance the workshops would be required as well in order to come to a comprehensive picture of AR done at NMMU. However, I do not yet feel sufficiently trained to execute such a broad scale analysis. In any case I was able to have a close look at the theoretical concepts of their action research methods and at the works of in-service teachers doing AR in a Master's programme as well as action re-

36 This personal feeling was confirmed by several fellow students who expressed similar notions and observations. Although I also came across students who compared our university to others and pointed out that those other universities seemed "worse off". To me, to look at universities which are "worse off" cannot be a valid comparison, as, in my understanding, one should aim at advancing education if possible, not at holding on to the status irrespective of its 'run-of-the-mill' or mediocre character and say that we are doing fine compared to this or that other school or university. If there is a chance of improving things, then this is what we should try, I believe.

search accounts of a university lecturer. Eventually features of action research were chosen for the analysis, which "recommended themselves", as it were, meaning that they emerged during my studies on this thesis as in my opinion (a) interesting and (b) assessable within my means. These features or elements are:

1. the emphases of the approaches
2. ownership/sense of responsibility
3. the self-efficacy-belief
4. the role of reflection and action in the distinct approaches.

A summary each of the action research approaches follows these points. The limiting factors mentioned above, I think, rule out a heuristic approach as suggested by Wolfgang Nitsch (2008:pp.59), at least for my piece of work, interesting as it would be. He writes:

> In order to compare and evaluate the relative merits, problems and limits of approaches in educational action research for empowering disadvantaged learners, teachers and community workers in different countries, [...] we need a kind of taxonomy or inventory of aspects, factors, dimensions of action research (ibid).

Nitsch offers a "heuristic device" (ibid.) to facilitate meaningful exchange and "co-operation in this field" (ibid). In this "heuristic framework" (ibid.) he asks for

1. the kind and type of action research
2. its internal social organisation
3. its location and function in social institutions or organisations
4. its place in historical and social contexts, conjunctures and exchange
5. Who is it needed, utilised, practised by and with whom, and for whose interest and aims, resulting in which particular movements and projects of educational action research? (ibid.)

Partly these points have been or will be touched by this thesis. So far, the theoretical concepts, organisational frameworks as well as examples from practice have been presented. From all of this, a lot can be seen already. Still, some aspects will be looked at closer, starting with the emphases that the concepts have put theoretically and practically.

5.1 Emphases

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

Several foci seem discernable. Considering the concept of McNiff and Whitehead which provides the base for action research at NMMU clearly the emphasis on self study or I-enquiry stands out. It concentrates on issues which are directly connected to the educator and it stresses the importance of researching one's own practice and not for instance the behaviour of one's pupils in order to tell them what to do differently. Instead a teacher would investigate his/her own practice towards his/her pupils and seek to alter it in light of the findings. The developing of the whole human being is what McNiff and Whitehead are advertising with their concept of "living theory"[37] (e.g. McNiff/w Whitehead 2003, McNiff/Whitehead 2010) as aiming solely for professional development would not go far enough (cf. McNiff 2008:14). They believe that people can be empowered through I-enquiry enabling them to make changes concerning themselves, their immediate environment and even larger circles:

> The emphasis on the living "I" shows how you take responsibility for improving and sustaining yourself, and for trying to influence the development of the world you are in. I therefore have the capacity to influence processes of social change, because "I" can influence my own learning and the learning of others in my immediate context, who in turn can influence their own and the learning of others in wider contexts. The circles of influence are potentially infinite. One individual, working collaboratively with others, can generate worldwide change.

"I"-enquiry in Geduld's work is not present in the way McNiff and Whitehead emphasise it. The deviation of Geduld's research project from McNiff's approach was confirmed by Geduld in the interview I conducted with her:

> [W]hen McNiff was [...] visiting last year, and I gave her an overview of what I was doing, she wasn't very much impressed because she has her own idea of what action research was. [B]ut the methodology was very important to answer my research question: "Why isn't the school management team...?" [T]he school management team is not I, therefore I cannot write from my I-perspective (Interview, lines 50-55)

37 Of which self study is a major aspect.

In our interview Deidre Geduld remembered how McNiff "wasn't very comfortable with [...] that type of research methodology [...]" since her focus was "on the 'I' and self-reflection" of Geduld (Interview, lines 59-60). She recalled McNiff saying: "If this process succeeds, then it would be groundbreaking research" (line 62). Lesley Wood however recognised this deviation from McNiff in an e-mail to me (21st Jan.), saying that the staff members mostly keep more closely to McNiff's approach while the students tend to use the "outsider" research as is the case with Geduld's work. "Outsider" denoting here that it is not their own practice (alone) they are investigating, as advocated by McNiff and Whitehead. Accordingly, when looking at action research conducted by e.g. Lesley Wood, one can distinctly recognise the "I"-enquiry approach, present with such questions as stated in the section of McNiff's action research concept. With the growing realisation that education and prevention initiatives concerning HIV and AIDS need to address "societal and cultural factors which promote rapid transmission of the virus" (Wood 2009a:1), Wood tried to answer the question: "How can I influence teachers to be able to contribute to changing social/cultural norms and practices that hamper effective HIV & AIDS education and prevention?" (ibid.) So, instead of telling teachers what to do, she asked herself what needed to be done and how she could influence the perception and attitudes towards the specific issue. Lesley Wood's action research project on her attempt to shift "the mindset of teachers regarding cultural perspectives on HIV and AIDS" (ibid.) also shows a historical and social background which too is present in Geduld's work. Virginia Didloft, featured with an outline of her master thesis in the joint publication of the two universities of Oldenburg and Port Elizabeth as well shows a societal concern when giving the "Background to the Research" (Didloft/Holderness 2008:201). As opposed to Geduld, however, she chose self-study as her means of conducting action research. While reading Geduld's and Didloft's works the weight of the societal and/or historical dimension or context cannot be overlooked. Geduld repeatedly refers to previous deprivation and discrimination in the apartheid system, which the people at her school had to endure, which they were educated in, and which resulted in perpetuation of the colonial perceptions and practices at school even when the process of democratisation had already set in (see sub-chapter 3.3 of this paper). Didloft too tells of the segregating system of the past which has to be overcome through democratic and equal education. She too, as does Geduld in her work, expresses her belief "that inclusivity is about recognising diversity and celebrating the uniqueness of my learners!" (203). Like Geduld

she draws from her own experiences and insight in a discriminating structure. As a consequence, it seems, both concern themselves with inclusive education. Of course it cannot be deduced from these few examples that action research in the Eastern Cape Province or even the whole of South Africa is mainly concerned with the specific historical and societal background of the country. McNiff and Naidoo however point out that "[o]ne of the greatest challenges facing the new post-apartheid South Africa can be understood as how to ensure that the key services and institutions of the country reflect the egalitarian impulses of the new democracy" (McNiff and Naidoo, date unknown, drawing on the Council on Higher Education 2004). Wood et al. (2007) agree on this and formulate: "If we accept that teaching is a historically and socially constructed practice (McLaren 1988:xix), then we need to explore and question what we do in this light in order for transformation to take place" (68). They are of the opinion that "[a]ction research [...] provides the ideal platform to realize transformative values, while simultaneously increasing research output" (ibid.), and that "[e]ducation and educators can thus be transformed through research" (ibid.). It is of course only congruent that action research should be the chosen means at NMMU to promote change toward democracy, equality and empowerment as these values can be found at the core of it.

Carl von Ossietzky University

Whereas McNiff and Whitehead's approach puts the emphasis on self study and the development of the self as a whole, the focus at the Carl von Ossietzky University lies on giving student teachers (pre-service) and associated in-service teachers the opportunity of becoming more professional while improving a school-related issue. However, it is conceivable that the Oldenburg approach can help a person develop social competences that benefit the whole individual along with the professional skills. Fichten et al. (2008) suggest that "[d]ue to its team components, the Oldenburg research is characterized by mutual relationships, group building, and cooperative work structures" (97) which can "improve[...] life and learning quality, and can also help develop a sense of identity for the individual" (ibid.). One teacher for instance claimed that s/he learned to reflect better about his/her actions in everyday life, and to change his/her perspective in order to understand actions

and opinions of others better (Lennartz 2002[38]), which is of course not only good for teaching. Accordingly, due to their ongoing observations Fichten and Meyer (2008) claim that "[r]esearch not only promotes professional development, but personal development as well" (33). The emphases nevertheless are different ones and clearly distinguishable, since Fichten and Meyer observe that this personal development comes from "an increased professional self-confidence" (ibid.). The team in team research, it has been pointed out earlier in this thesis, is seen as a promoting factor in professionalization and therefore plays a major role in the Oldenburg conception. When the teams have been formed the team meetings are frequently held in an informal manner, as in our case our first talks at the home of the teacher. Of course, other groups, and ours did so too, often meet in the actual seminar room or in other more formal/official places like the library of the university. However, it is not unusual to meet in private, and this might encourage a more open collaboration on eye-level which can otherwise be more difficult, taking the professional roles of the participants into account. Nonetheless, the standings in the teams are meant to be equal. Although there is the participating teacher, the actual practitioner as opposed to the student teachers, who nevertheless is expected to listen to the students' opinions and also has to follow their lead if they should decide on something by the majority. Although, the teacher's practical expertise and closeness to the research subject is always acknowledged and taken into account by the students as far as I am aware. How this looked-for equality in the team factually turns out might vary, but for some teachers it might be a reason to be on the team in the first place, as one teacher related in an interview (cf. Lennartz 2002[39]). So, this hints in the direction that one is probably justified to conclude that working in such teams to conduct research can promote a kind of "team spirit" among the participants. Teachers even said that working with the students gave the teacher valuable input in the form of (critical) remarks and questions e.g., and because the teacher sometimes had to try and take on the perspective of the students. Two teachers hinted in interviews that they liked working with students because they brought a different level of knowledge or background to the team as opposed to the teacher or his/her[40] colleagues (ibid.[41]). As I could witness my-

38 In the appendix of Lennartz work, interview 4
39 Unpublished final paper, interview L1, in the appendix of her work.
40 Since the interviewees are kept anonymous I cannot tell whether the teacher was female or male.
41 Unpublished final paper, interview L1 and L2, appendix

self, during our own process of team research and also when observing another group the following semester, I realised that through asking questions, the students challenge the teacher's ideas, and his/her attitude towards the issue he brought into the team. That way the teacher is forced to be very explicit about what s/he is after in the research. One teacher emphasised that for him/her, a major reason to participate in team research was the possibility of trying team work in order to see if s/he could stand back and be an equal part of a team without becoming impatient (ibid.[42]). A "fear" concerning team work was the possibility that it was going to be all "babble" without producing any results. S/he was pleased to find the opposite proven true. This same teacher also remarked, though, that s/he had heard of some other teachers who had a more leading or even imposing role in their teams which consolidated his/her will to stand back and be as equal a part in the team as s/he could possibly be (ibid.). In her final paper, Lennartz (2002) concludes that co-operation with regard to the understanding of what a team is takes a central position for her interviewees.

5.2 Ownership/Sense of Responsibility

Carl von Ossietzky University

As described in chapter 4.2 sometimes students have to be put into teams they did not choose so that every teacher with his/her issue has enough researchers on the team. Of course, this sometimes has the effect that a few students have to take part in a project they originally did not choose, thus did not want to engage in. This fact emphasises that the issues to be researched are not the students', and in my opinion it could eventually result in the student rejecting team research. On the other hand, none of the topics stems from the student's own practice, so there might not be a real immediate attachment existent towards any subject however interesting a student may find a specific one. Still, identification with the research project and with the school or even the concerning pupils is, it seems, quite possible as shows the example which Carola Junghans[43] gives in her final paper (1995[44]). A stu-

42 Interview L3, appendix

43 Junghans, as a student teacher, had been attending the workshops about action research principles executed by Herbert Altrichter at the Carl von Ossietzky University in the early 1990's. She then acted as a coach/critical friend within the team research setting.

44 Unpublished

dent teacher related to her in an interview that she felt bad about leaving the school and the pupils on their own after having presented the results of the study instead of beginning with the necessary transformation for improvement based on the (first) research findings (61): "[A]nd then we were gone. That's just not okay[45]" (ibid.). If the team members present the results of their work before the school, this can serve as a conclusion to their research as well as a confirmation of the relevance that their project and participation has. Nevertheless is engagement in the research project highest when the researcher is directly concerned, which is why Feindt and Altrichter claim that reflection should not be limited to someone else's practice, but demand that students get the opportunity to work reflectively on their own practice (Feindt/Altrichter 2009:37). They go on explaining that the students need to have the opportunity for their own action, practice and research work in order to initiate the reflection processes bound to one's own practice. Ownership of the research project including identification, involvement, taking over responsibility, is the source of reflection processes (ibid.). Taking over responsibility is a vital feature of action research. So, it seems that the Oldenburg model lacks this definitive involvement on side of the students. As has been explained above the practice times at school are fairly short and not conducive to action research. However, it can be presumed that on side of the teachers the necessary interest and sense of responsibility is existent. This assumption is owed to the fact that the seminar means a fair amount of additional work for them and as far as I know, no financial compensation or other benefits are usually to be gained. What they may achieve though is solving a problem in their classroom/school, a gain in knowledge, further education and exchange with student teachers and teacher educators.

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

In Geduld's and Didloft's case this kind of engagement, the needed ownership, is present since their research work is concerned with their direct work environment. In addition one can see from Geduld's work that she was well aware that her colleagues of the SMT too had to feel part of the process to make everything work. This can be seen from her explanation of why she chose to deviate from I-enquiry. In our interview she stressed that her research approach worked well because she did not write from her own per-

45 The translation from the German original is mine.

spective alone. She thought that "people would not have claimed ownership to the process". Undergraduate students, as well, have to conduct a small research study in their last year and it would be interesting to know what their research context looks like. "However there is no organised programme or module, it is up to the individual supervisor. We would like more action research in the pre-service programme, but it takes time to change" (Wood, e-mail, 12th Jan. 2010).

5.3 Self-Efficacy Belief

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

Self-efficacy belief is closely linked to ownership and sense of responsibility. Most of time teachers act on their own in a classroom. Action research is a means that needs the teachers to get out of this isolation. Geduld documents well how isolated teachers can feel and how she eventually managed to challenge her fellow team members to leave this isolation and open up for the benefit of their pupils but also for their own. This can mean an enormous boost of motivation and self-confidence both for the researcher and the other participants. After her Master's thesis Geduld started working on her doctoral thesis continuing the work on inclusive education which she had begun with that first action research project. Additionally, she had been invited to Germany to present her research results within the framework of the North-South-Cooperation[46]. In our interview she also told of two others of the research programme who now work at NMMU, "doing their doctoral studies". It can doubtlessly be speculated if all this may be a result of an increased sense of self-efficacy and whether it is leading to the further increase of it.

Carl von Ossietzky University

With the Oldenburg model one can discern several aspects which are fit to increase self-confidence and self-efficacy belief. On side of the teacher it is the fact that s/he experiences team work, the sensation that s/he is not alone in this and can exchange opinions/perspectives and knowledge as well as give his/her expertise on concerning matters. Also, the teacher works on improvement of a situation: "I am doing something to change a situation for the

46 In 2003, the DAAD accepted a joint application of the two universities for funding an experimental North-South partnership programme on managing cooperation between universities and schools (Fichten/Holderness/Nitsch 2008)

better" can be a feeling and motivation. The students too will experience team work, learning maybe that this will be very handy later on as an in-service teacher. Also, a sense of "having finally done something practical and useful" (Meyer/Fichten 2008:33) might arise. The presentation in front of the school staff may increase this feeling. It is not only important in order to give feedback but it seems to me that it is a situation which can add to the students' self-confidence when working with an in-service teacher and being able to present in front of all the teachers of the school. As mentioned when giving a short report of a team research project above, the final presentation of the results of that study to the rest of the school teachers had to be cancelled. This probably could have been avoided by more careful planning and signing of a research contract. On the other hand, there still is the participating teacher of that school. Of course he can, and indeed did so, give feedback to his fellow teachers and is now carrying on with this research topic together with a new research team.

It has to be said that action research probably always starts with someone who has a positive attitude towards it. Action research involves a lot of work and takes someone who is willing to see his/her needs and lacks and limits. As a consequence it means work on him-/herself, questioning his/her theories and values. This is something that is not always easy and certainly not always painless as most people might have experienced at some stage in their professional or private life. It could mean realising that what one had conceived to be good practice turns out to be far from it. If one does not want to "wake sleeping dogs" then one is not likely to conduct action research in the first place. Consequently, doing research on a teaching issue or in the interest of school development implies concern about one's profession. It requires a certain degree of self-efficacy belief it appears, and when being successful with improvement of a certain unsatisfactory situation it can certainly increase this self-efficacy belief. Team research or action research starting at university, with a lot of support by experts, may well be a point of origin for this kind of attitude and "basic" self-efficacy belief.

> As our experiences and evaluation results show, team research as a rule leads to a strengthening of a professionally[sic]-related self-confidence on the part of students which manifests itself (among other things) in a stabilized sense of self-efficacy and in extended action and reflection competencies, as well as in an education/teaching "optimism" (Fichten/Gebken 2004 in Fichten et al. 2008:106)

5.4 Reflection and Action

The question of why one would ask for a better interlinking of theory and practice in the first place is being answered by a number of pedagogues and scientists. Elliott is of the opinion that "a teacher who is able to produce accurate accounts of his teaching and their consequences in the classroom can identify problems in his teaching because he will be aware of any discrepancies between his conception of his responsibilities as a teacher and the consequences of his actions" (Elliott 1976 and 2007:74). He goes on arguing that this awareness may cause the teacher to reflect on his/her actions (ibid.). Reflection in turn is being acknowledged as having a central position in teachers' professional actions (cf. e.g. Baumert/Kunter 2006). If professional action needs the reflection on practice and experience, then this has to be part of student teachers' training from the beginning on (cf. Feindt/Altrichter 2009). Feindt and Alrichter argue that experience in practice is not only an opportunity of socialisation into something established, but that it also offers the only possibility of transcending this socialisation through reflection of this practice experience (ibid.). The authors point out empirical evidence which indicates that students without prior "theoretical" education who early gain first practice-related school experience pose more questions (cf. Mayr et al. 1988 in Feindt/Altrichter 2009). "Practice is not only the location in which one can obtain socialisation-related answers to all questions, but also exactly the location in which questions arise"[47] (31). One answer to the question posed above therefore is: Practice engages the student in his/her future profession on a real and concrete way prompting him/her to ask questions. This is why the authors come to the conclusion that the school internship/practicum has to be developed into the core of professional teacher education (ibid.). "Theoretical approaches" (Moschner et al. 2009:7[48]) on the other hand provide the student teachers with "basic knowledge for support of practical action [...] so that they can see the pedagogical practice in light of theories and thus better understand it" (ibid). At the same time the teachers pursue "fundamental research [...] in order to participate in the production of knowledge and to describe, explain and predict relevant pedagogical phenomena" (ibid.). This insight is not a fairly new one. In 1991 Goodman wrote:

> Using avenues such as seminar groups, supervisory conferences and action research assignments, preservice teachers are encouraged to se-

47 The translation from the German original is mine.
48 The translation from the German original is mine.

riously reflect upon their practicum experiences. Although these accounts have been illuminating, if inquiry and reflection are to have a significant impact upon future teachers, then this orientation needs to be a central aspect of each component within teacher education programs. From this perspective, methods courses (which traditionally emphasize the teaching of technical skills) provide a unique opportunity to help preservice teachers understand the valuable relationship between reflection and classroom practice (56).

In the light of these contemplations and findings, practice-oriented elements such as action research seem to be highly beneficial and necessary "ingredients" in teacher education. Meyer (2004) has come up with a model that shows the interplay between theoretical knowledge, knowledge from experience and action competence, and their connection to reflection in and on action (137). According to Meyer these components are necessary for good teaching (134). "Tacit knowledge" refers to the knowledge that teachers have gained during their education, both as pupils and university students, without actually being aware of it. Being implicit it mostly withdraws from a direct conscious access. Also visible in the model below is a link between the *theoretical knowledge* and the *knowledge from experience* which reads "individual theories" (Meyer 2004:136).

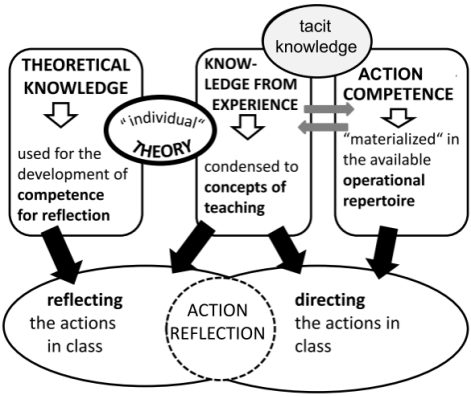

Fig. 5.4.1 Theoretical knowledge, knowledge from experience, action competence[49]

49 The translation from the German original is mine. For the original *Theoriewissen, Erfahrungswissen, Handlungskompetenz* see Meyer: Was ist guter Unterricht? Cornelsen Scriptor, 2004, p. 137

Meyer states that "individual theories of good teaching are assumptions about basics, effects and cause-effect-interrelations of class-related actions, and the critical reflection of these assumptions, on the basis of one's own experiences and purposeful acquisition of theoretical knowledge"[50] (ibid.). Individual (personal) theories can become practical theories, mentioned earlier in this paper, by testing them through experience which is purposefully being searched for, as e.g. feedback by pupils or outsider observation, and correction if need be (ibid.). He comes to the conclusion that "reflective teachers"[51] think in hypotheses and test their learning success in a methodically controlled way (Meyer 2004:137). This is also the way scientific researchers come to their findings – through research in a methodically controlled way of which transparency is a vital feature so everyone who wishes to do so, can retrace the research steps and see exactly what has been done in order to come to the presented results (cf. Meyer 2009:9). My claim is that action research represents such a way. As can be seen in the concepts and examples of action research presented above, it always has its source in practical issues which the practitioner seeks to improve according to the action-reflection cycle/ spiral. Control is given because of the framework of action research which partly includes assistance and evaluation by outsiders and participants of the process.

Geduld's Master's thesis shows how she seeks to provide a setting in which the involved staff members can utter their concerns and take active part in the research in focus groups e.g., when also they are the research "objects". She secures outside assistance in the form of a psychologist who helps with the data collection, and invites her supervisor and researching fellow students as well as McNiff to evaluate her progressing research. All the way keeping account of what is happening and finally producing a report on the research and its results. As for the reflection part Lesley Wood, head of the Action Research Unit at NMMU and also teacher educator and action researcher herself explains in one of her research accounts her "strategies to encourage self-reflection" (2009b:289). She writes that "[r]eflexivity is conceptualized, in this [research[52]] instance, as 'reflexive critique' (Winter, 1989, pp. 18-69), a type

50 The translation from the German original is mine.

51 The original German quote speaks of "reflektierende Didaktiker". In German speaking countries „Didaktiker" does not only denote teachers but also educational scientists. To me, however, the focus here seems to be on teachers.

52 Added by me for clarification.

of self-questioning of one's own ideas, beliefs, and actions" (Wood 2009b: 289). Accordingly, her aim for the teachers was to make them ask themselves, "Why do I think/act as I do in terms of gender?"(ibid.). She wanted to get to a "dialectical critique" (Winter, 1989, pp. 18-69 in Wood 2009b:289), "where the sharing of their personal reflections within the group could highlight tensions and contradictions inherent in their constructs" (289). Wood saw herself as "an initiator and facilitator of dialogue" (ibid.) thereby adopting the stance of a "reflective practitioner (Schön 1995:295)", continually reflecting on her "own ideas and practice as I interacted with the teachers, learning from their responses, and adjusting my interventions accordingly" (290).

Geduld as well demonstrates in the overview of her study (see figure 3.3.2) how she revisited certain stages to evaluate what she had collected, meaning that she had to reflect on it in order to decide on necessary and congruent further steps. For example, from the data collection she moved on to the analysis which showed the need for more data collection. All the way to the provisional conclusion of the research (most of the time further measures have to follow) the findings have to be evaluated and apt measures have to be thought of in order to progress the research. Geduld's chapter and sub-chapter headings give evidence of this reflective evaluation procedure. Some read e.g. *Rationale for the study, Research Objectives, Data Analysis, Validity and Trustworthiness of the Study, Ethical Considerations*. A time and place for reflection also seem to be the instances when the researcher exchanges ideas with his/her supervisor (cf. Interview, lines 207-211) or meets the other student researchers and attends the workshops. This frame insures that the researcher does not "boil in his/her own juice" (Junghans 1995) as one interviewed teacher of the team research programme put it, referring to the isolation in which a lot of teachers operate. In this isolation they do not notice flaws in their teaching or prefer not to see them and the need for suitable action, the need for them to change something before they or others seriously suffer. Action research actually provided a framework with which Geduld and her fellow SMT's were able to make the first steps out of this situation. This was done through careful consideration of their anxieties and restrictions as well as potentials. Geduld addresses this isolation in her Master's paper, acknowledging the implications it has on the teaching and (non-) participation of teachers in needed change (140). She also reflected on how to challenge the SMT's and provide a way out of it through the measures documented in her thesis of which some have already been mentioned, like the focus

group and the producing of metaphors by the members of the school management facilitated by a psychologist. Narratives of their teachings were another method and so were interviews. She explains that

> [i]f you can find the courage to talk to just one person about how you feel, it can be the first step towards helping you to feel better within an inclusive classroom. Primarily this was the decision the participants agreed upon: We are going to talk our way through all the difficulties we experienced and collectively come to an agreement on what practices would be implemented. By reaching out and not remaining stuck in that state of being we became someone's ear, someone's assistant, someone's observer and someone's help. By availing ourselves we have gained so much in return: support, understanding and a helping hand (141).

Action research as executed in the team research setting presented for instance in the example of this work, makes controlled researching almost inevitable I would argue. Several members plan and conduct the research. Coaches/critical friends question and challenge the researchers on a regular basis and also the whole seminar is informed of the research status and can ask questions at least once or twice while the project is still in progress. Reflection too, is a vital part. In the team setting this is done mostly within the group or at least in sub-teams. Of course, the teacher holds a special position as the originator of the research issue, and is maybe bound to think about it more and press on with work on it. Reflection on the issue being researched within the team of the presented example above was done either with the whole team but mostly in smaller groups. This was due to the fact that often not all of the team members were present. The teacher is the one person with the highest personal interest that the research be successful but the students too can develop a certain attachment and share of responsibility for the project, not only because it gains them credit points.

Considering the process of the research within the team research concept one thing strikes as "out of the norm" with regard to action research in general. Team research does not execute a full action-reflection-cycle or even work in a spiral with regard to the student teachers. Instead, at least for the students, it stops (as indicated by the black "wall" in the figure below) when new action would have to be taken, action that has been influenced and modified in light of the research findings to alter the (insufficient) situation that has been investigated. Additionally, if practical theory "can be thought of as rules-of-thumb based on experience and consisting of 'a repertoire of practices, strat-

egies, and ideas' (see above)" then it seems doubtful that the students can bring a lot of it to the research process due to the limited amount of practice they are usually able to gain during the course of their studies at university. This might, however, be compensated for by the participating teacher, and the students will certainly add to their practical experience by conducting action research which can in turn help forming their own practical theories.

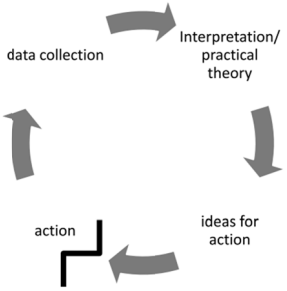

Fig. 5.4.2 Interrupted cycle from the view of students in team research

The broken cycle in mind, one can raise the question whether team research can really be counted as a "true member" of the action research "family". This, I suppose, relies on the point of view one is looking from. For the participating teacher a full cycle or spiral is possible if s/he or the school should decide to take on the "thread" existing in form of the research results. With them they can continue the cycle or rather the spiral of transformation towards an improvement of the researched situation. The teacher can either carry on his/her action research project within the team research seminars together with a new group of student teachers or, if deciding to go on alone, s/he will probably have to adopt a more "traditional" way of doing action research, incorporating colleagues and pupils rather than students in his/her investigations. Although, it is of course conceivable, that the "original" students will continue research in the team on a voluntary basis. Whether this is always practicable in the contemporary bachelor/master system I dare not say but have my doubts because of the high work load to be managed by the students. It is however plausible that a target of team research at the University of Oldenburg could be the offering of research seminars that last at least two semesters to give students the opportunity to complete at least one full action research cycle or possibly more than that. The team research approach shows that there are already good concepts for interlocking practice and theory at

hand at the University of Oldenburg which need to be promoted and developed further. Indeed, one could have students together with the responsible university teachers conduct action research on their action research concept. I believe that to regard the recent team research approach as the ultimate would seem to run contrary to the core conception of action research in general, and indeed it has gone through changes already. Team research seminars, just like school lessons, have to be the subject of reflection on side of the teachers and/or users.

5.5 Summary – AR in Port Elizabeth

As has been shown action research at the University of Port Elizabeth can deviate significantly from the concept presented by McNiff and Whitehead. As Lesley Wood related, staff members tend to adhere to the concept whereas it can be noticed that in-service student teachers use action research more freely.

The university setting for the students is being kept fairly simple. They do workshops on the action research concept, on data collection and analysis, and get assistance by a supervisor (university teacher) during the whole research process on a regular basis. Further they invite critical friends who can come from the environment of their school or the university. Nitsch (2009) discerns a combination of the research types "I"-research, "they-and-me"-research and "they-and-us"-research in Gedulds research project as she conducts it with and on her colleagues, "partly for her academic degree course [and] partly as contribution to local school development leadership strategies for a departmental programme" (ibid.).

A joint between theory and practice, action and reflection is visible as the students are firmly rooted in practice but during the research period have to engage heavily in background reading, plan their research design, take first action steps. These "two worlds" have to be combined meaningfully. At least a basic theoretical knowledge must be assumed from their initial teacher training. Action competence has to be assumed too right from the outset of their research project, at least to a certain degree. Above all they bring their own research matters to be investigated making them authentic researching practitioners. Geduld's thesis can certainly count as proof that she engaged deeply in reflection on theory, action and research. In it she states the varying

methods of data collection and validation and how she evaluated what she found out all along the way.

It would be interesting to know if the action research students of Port Elizabeth feel they would need a more developed research "scaffolding", as it were. As Geduld pointed out, she experienced her research project as a rather solitary journey and the students began a self-directed support group. On one hand this shows that there is need for a place of exchange, but it also shows that the students are well capable of organising at least basic support on their own. Clearly, already being teachers, their sense for practical thinking and the constant need for organisation as a teacher is likely to help them in the research process. Although, being already a teacher can hold other obstacles which need to be overcome as can be seen from various action research reports by teachers[53].

Summarising McNiff's and Whitehead's theoretical AR concept "I"-enquiry on a sole theoretical basis, one may find, that it looks very similar to the category of "'I'-Research" (Fichten 2008:232, Nitsch 2009) which is featuring self-reflection, self-development, personal growth and improvement of one's own tuition (cf. Fichten 2008) amounting to self-empowerment "with an egocentric and/or altruistic orientation as a professional practitioner" (Nitsch 2009, unpublished). Fichten (2008) criticises this approach as "unrealistic" (233) since "situations which contain only exclusively personal or private features or aspects are very rare" (ibid.). Situations perceived as "individual and unique" (ibdid.) always include "general features and fundamental or basic aspects of problems [...] in everyday practice" (ibid.). This may be so but my suggestion is that McNiff and Whitehead do not oppose to this but acknowledge that one can merely talk about one's own experiences and has to be careful with generalisations or speaking on someone else's behalf. McNiff and Whitehead (2003) state that the researcher recognises his/her professional and private influence and the subsequent responsibility (89). There may well be general features in every research project as Fichten proposes, but to me this does not seem to contradict the focus on the "I". I would argue that it does not rule out such aims as the ones pointed out by Fichten. One can still aim for self-reflection, self-development, personal growth and improvement of one's own teaching.

53 I suggest the websites mentioned earlier for teacher reports on their own research projects.

5.6 Summary – AR in Oldenburg

Concerning personnel, team research happens on three levels (at least[54]):

- the teacher student's level,
- the participating in-service teacher's level
- and the teacher educator's level (experts/scientists).

These agents take on different roles. The university teachers act as facilitators but also mark the final reports by the student researchers and therefore take the role of teacher educators. Additionally, they collect data about and stemming from the team research projects and processes and its participants and are therefore in the role of scientists/experts. Another role is that of a critical friend who offers advice and gives feedback to the researchers.

The participating/cooperating teacher is directly involved in the team research project and actually the provider of the research matter which stems from his/her own practice. S/he is firmly rooted in practice, and team research presents a connection to theory, taking various forms such as the concept of action research, literature on the research matter, joint work as for instance on research methods in the seminar, and confrontation with the students' knowledge base to name the most obvious. S/he thus engages both in practice and theory. S/he is questioned by the students about the research matter and the background to it and in return hears the students' views. Opportunities for a change of perspective arise. Being a part of the staff of the research location s/he is the joint between school and university. The longer and more often the teacher takes part in such research projects the more insight in and understanding of action research is possible along with a potential increase in research competence. The cooperating teacher may indeed have the best chances among all participants in team research to develop a lasting research stance as wished for by Fichten and Meyer (see theoretical concept of team research in this thesis). Also, if the teacher returns to the seminar regularly or even every semester s/he will be able to connect with the other participating teachers and exchange about their team research experience. For them, the seminar can be a community of practice with constant access to expert knowledge provided by the university teachers.

54 The incorporation of pupils or fellow teachers at the school e.g. is not taken into account here, but is of course possible and indeed regularly happens.

The pre-service student teachers on the other hand participate only one semester and thus experience barely one complete research cycle. Nevertheless, they get to research on real issues together with an in-service teacher. They get to know research methods, have to design and conduct a research including data collection, data analysis and interpretation and the presentation of the results. They do so from the view of an outsider. All these components make team (action) research "a peculiar type of 'we-are-many-research' [...] with elements of 'they-and-us research' [...], in the sense that there are four status and role positions fusing" (Nitsch 2009), the university teachers often taking on two roles when they act as critical friends as well, although other members of the courses can also take on this role.

The research matters do not stem from their own (very limited) teaching practice, but can be familiar to them from their time as pupils. The team research seminar serves as community of practice for the time of the research process. This environment and the sometimes close collaboration of the participants seem fit to propel social learning such as the promotion of team work competences. Whether their research experience within this framework and semester is sufficient to establish a lasting research stance with them is in my opinion questionable. It would be interesting to find out how many of the students who have been involved with team research within this Master's programme will actually use action research in some form as teachers later on. A basic initial gain in research competence can however be assumed I claim, since the research process is often a very labour intense experience which prompts a certain awareness and insight. How well this can be taken in is not known to me, but research by experts has emphasised that expertise usually develops from a rather long lasting personal experience and its reflection (cf. Berliner 1992 in Altrichter 2006). Accordingly, Altrichter expresses the opinion that the elements of teacher education in a narrow sense and especially the practical internships at school, and the accompanying university courses should run throughout the whole time of study instead of taking place in blocks at only a few instances (cf. Altrichter 2006:64). This should allow students to take on long lasting developmental tasks in varying cycles of development. Internships should rather be shaped "long and thin" than "short and thick" (cf. Robottom 1988 in Altrichter 2006).

6 Conclusion and Outlook

So, if the goal in teacher education is to enable future teachers to investigate and reflect on their own teaching, then, I claim, a continuous contact with their workplace to-be from early on has to have a well accepted place in it. If we are to take seriously what Altrichter expresses, then a one-time participation in a research project can only serve as an "appetiser".

> Because of profession-related biographical research results (Dirks 1997) and further qualitative analyses about the use of knowledge in the pedagogical field of practice (cf. Bommes a.o. 1996, Radke 1996) it is not possible to maintain the legend of individually determinable transfer of theoretical knowledge, gained at the university, to the successive professional practice. Even the two to six weeks lasting school internships/practices cannot establish an interlocking between theory and practice, but at best show the concerning people, quite plainly and sharpened, the separateness of the worlds of science and practice, whose relation is from now on being experienced as one of discrepancy. (Dirks 1999:86[55])

Kansanen (2002) strongly agrees with this view, and sees research-based teacher education as a means for improving "the quality of teachers' pedagogical thinking" (4-5). He even describes research as "the overlapping idea, the main organizing theme, in the whole teacher education program" (ibid.) which has been implemented about 30 years ago at his university. The summary on action research in Port Elizabeth as well seems to recommend a long term teaching possibility for meaningful research as the researchers from the NMMU are already in-service teachers.

Teacher research (as AR is also called) or team research (the Oldenburg model) is of course only one way of realising this continuous contact with school. Other ways could be explored as well. At the University of Oldenburg sometimes school teachers attend seminars as experts. I can also imagine that students would find it helpful if experienced teachers worked as co-lecturers of university teachers or if they offered workshops on different matters as say "Games in the English Lesson" or such. Buch and Müller-Böling (2007²) e.g. point out that at the university of Frankfurt/Main "co-operation seminars" are being offered in which student teachers (first phase of German teacher education) and in-service student teachers (second phase) come together in teams

55 The translation from the German original is mine.

of two, so-called tandems. The intention is to combine experiences with school practice with theoretical basics and to encourage the participants to reflect on their own learning biographies. They go on stating that from those co-operation seminars it shows that the most important experiences and insights of young teachers for their professional field are derived from coaching situations with experienced teachers. In such a coaching practice proof support and proposals are given through output and use oriented questions (Oelkers 2006:47). The in-service student teachers in return enrich the schools with important impulses (Daschner 2005:8).

Teacher research or the Oldenburg model of it could be a way of engaging student teachers in long lasting school contacts with the needed time and space to conduct interesting and useful research, and thereby develop research and reflection competence along with their own theory of school and teaching attitude that is not merely based on theory and two short internships as well as years of being a pupil themselves. Furthermore, action research could be employed continuously by the teacher after the compulsory state teacher training. Knowledge has to be updated regularly as well as the means and competences of acquisition as it seems (cf. Buch/Müller-Böling 2007²: 161). The concept of lifelong learning inevitably springs to mind when reflecting on teacher professionalism. Of all "trades"[56], so to speak, the trade of teaching cannot claim authenticity when at the same time teachers do not update their knowledge and competences on an appropriate regular base. Indeed Fichten et al. (2008) presume "that the reflexive-analytical stance developed via team research towards professional practice encourages lifelong (research) learning [...]" (94).

In a continuous research project running within the framework of at least one or two semesters, during which the student would be teaching once a week, it would be possible to look into one or more interesting real matters of teaching or school work in general. The emphasis is on "real" matters, since only then can a student teacher be expected to engage with interest or even enthusiasm. The time factor too is of importance. At the moment, however, the research cycle for the student teachers is broken or incomplete as has been pointed out in this work. Fichten et al. (2008[57]) state that only "about eight

56 Teaching as a trade in the sense that teachers offer their expertise, experience and time and pupils in return offer their curiosity and perspective on the world.

57 A German version of this text was published in 2006 in Obolenski/Meyer (see References).

percent of teacher education students participate in team research" (109) in Oldenburg, and that the demand for it is larger, "but greater capacities are not available" (ibid.). They come to the conclusion that "the goal of making research learning into an ordinary element of reflexive teacher education is still not within reach" (ibid.). As has been pointed out earlier in this thesis, in other universities it already is a well respected and acknowledged part of teacher training. It seems however that action research/ practitioner research/ teacher research still has to go a long way in Oldenburg and indeed in Germany in order to be fully accepted. It can only be hoped that it will always find enthusiastic and capable advocators at the University of Oldenburg.

While working on this Master's thesis it occurred to me that action research is to do with a wide variety of factors to be considered. Further points of interest and aspects regarding action research at the two universities can be discerned that have not been touched at all in this work or hardly. At some stage during the research for literature and talking about this thesis it became apparent that I would not be able to include all these aspects and elements into my work. I felt that much more work lies ahead when one seriously wants to look into the merits and the development needing parts of AR at the programmes of the two universities. As mentioned above, the co-operation between NMMU and the surrounding schools is of great interest as there can be valuable potential in a well developed collaboration. Lesley Wood articulated the wish of the ARU to have school teachers work together with undergraduate students for instance (e-mail, 12th Jan. 2010). After having worked on the subject of AR for a couple of months I only now have the feeling that I have gained a somewhat solid grounding on it. This lead me to question whether one time participants of team research can really "dig deep enough" to fully comprehend what TR or AR can do for them, and what it really means. So, the above mentioned personal level, the specific gain for the students including personal growth and development of personality assumptions at both universities could be a source for more investigation in order to clearly see the potentials and maybe areas which need more consideration and work. For this, more interviews could be conducted. At the University of Oldenburg e.g. the fairly new Master's programme presents new circumstances which need to be assessed. Findings from such a survey could serve as a grounding for necessary changes as suggested in this chapter. It needs to be known what student teachers need in order to benefit as best as possible from their training programmes. Nevertheless, I think that already a lot can be seen from the aspects displayed in this work.

An aspect worth investigating I believe is the collaboration between our two universities in the field of action research. I assume that a regular exchange of opinions and experiences could develop a cross-border community of practice not only among the university teachers. Today, modern technology would even allow for cross-cultural exchanges of action researchers during university courses. Contacts thus made between teacher/ student researchers of the two countries could for example amount to partnerships between German and South African schools. This, I suppose would require the restructuring of the team research concept including research projects connected to students' own experience with school and teaching practice and university courses which last at least two semesters. Team research in the present concept could stay a one semester activity as it obviously presents a good opportunity for exchange between student teachers and the accompanying in-service teachers as well as work in a team with all the challenging and promoting factors for professionalism for both the students and the teachers. The way I see it team research as done currently presents a great way of introducing student teachers in their first two or three semesters to action research as they could rely on a lot of guidance and a well organised support network. This could prepare them for self-directed action research projects conducted within the framework of a long-term commitment/ presence at a school maybe from the fourth BA semester on or the first M.Ed. semester at the latest. This way they would get a fair amount of practice without neglecting a necessary theoretical backing, thus better preparing them for what lies ahead.

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