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RE-COUPLING A VITAL LINK FOR PRACTITIONERS AND ACADEMICS

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***Editorial***

**Kurt W. Clausen**  
Editor

Since the *Proceedings of Meetings of the Royal Society* were first published in the 1660s, research journals have been instrumental in safeguarding researchers' thoughts and discoveries from thieves and other admirers. Indeed, the concept of an academic journal has proven to be such a success that in the past few decades the number of journals has proliferated. Some journals remain generalist in nature, but in most cases the topics covered in any single periodical have tended to be quite narrow, and its readership has declined to a small circle of expert critics. At the same time, journals in any of these specific areas have developed into a hierarchy, based on reputation and strictness of the review policy. Inevitably, scholars endeavour to submit their work to the most prestigious in the field in order to bolster their reputation and cv without worrying about the size of their readership or who the information will help.

In 1998, a group of action researchers embarked on a sensible and high-minded act to counteract the academic elitism and pedantry that had estranged practitioners from the greater educational dialogues of the day. Growing out of a limited partnership between teachers' federation, school board and university, they decided to create this on-line journal as a way to encourage a collegial partnership between practicing teachers and university faculty in developing educational knowledge. While peer review was a mainstay of the publication, the main interest of the editors was to provide a forum for teachers to share the results of their research projects, and to provide models of effective action research. So it was then, and so it remains.

This volume, like so many before it, has endeavoured to balance the academic-practitioner sides in its articles. We are very pleased to feature the first of an award winning four-part series by **Dianne Stevens** and **Julian Kitchen** from the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. The series will examine various facets of an action research project that they undertook with pre-service students at OISE. Winner of the *Ontario Educational Research Council's* award, these two authors begin the discussion of their study with the first installment entitled "Introducing Pre-Service Teachers to Action Research". In it, they examine their rationale for the study and the overview of the participants in this project. Our second article sees the return of a familiar contributor to the OAR, **Thom Ryan**. Stemming from his own doctoral defense experience, his exposition examines the importance of *reflexivity* when undertaking research or situating your own philosophical position. Our final submission, written by **Louis Lim** and **Lynda Colgan**, deals with a prevalent problem in mathematics class: using multiple methods to assess students' performance.

It should be pointed out that this volume also represents a new beginning, in many ways, for the journal. Andrew Odlyzko (1999a, 1999b, 1995) has argued that on-line research journals should evolve into something akin to internet forums over the coming decade, and that this change may open them up to a wider range of ideas (some more developed than others, of course). The process of review is an important mechanism for feedback and quality control for

a paper. However, to stay true to the original vision of this journal, to act as a broadcaster of action research around Ontario, the country and the world, it is necessary that we expand our view beyond the refereed articles we publish. For this reason, alongside our new website look we have added a few new sections that give a different, wider perspective to the dialogue. The first is a *Correspondence* section that will allow individual readers to respond to the articles they have read or to discuss topics of general interest in relation to action research. The second, *Reviews* section, will inform readers about books, products or software on the market related to action research. The third section containing *Announcements* will show readers any related activities that are going on around the province for practitioners or academics in the field.

Finally, an ambitious new section, *OAR Checkup*, has been created to monitor what action research projects are going on around the province. It is hoped that anyone with a project (whether it be a class, school, board or university) will write in to discuss their research, outcomes and plans. For this instance, the results are less important than the fact that action research projects are being undertaken by practitioners all around this province. As the founders of this journal said almost ten years ago – “Action research is an approach to school improvement that honours teachers' professionalism” (DeLong & Wideman, 1996, 15). It is hoped that the changes made to this paper will honour these practitioners even further by letting a wide audience know of their goals and accomplishments.

## References

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