

Gaby Jacobs
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Miranda Snoeren

Symposium

**Democratic partnerships in action
research: dilemmas and strategies**

In the next 90 minutes:



**THINK
BIGGER**

- Introduction
- Three presentations on dilemmas in trying to establish democratic partnerships
- Short dialogue in couples on the key dilemmas
- Dialogue on strategies to resolve key dilemmas

Democracy in Action Research

- ‘The aim of action research is to support democratization processes’ (Greenwood & Levin, 2007: 265). Participation is central.
- ‘The essence of the democratic process is the cogeneration of knowledge’ (Greenwood & Levin, 2007: 265)
- The formation of a ‘communicative space’ (Kemmis, 2001)
- Dialogue in which processes of conjoint meaning making take place: *‘The strength of democracy lies in the process of relationship’* (Gergen, 2003: 46)

Three projects and three levels of analysis

**THINK
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- Inter-organisational: university-professional practice partnerships (Gaby)
- Intra-organisational: professionals and management (Famke)
- Interpersonal: professionals and clients (Miranda)

Dilemmas in collaborative action research for professional development and knowledge co-construction.

**A story about university-practice
partnerships in a Community of
Practice.**

Gaby Jacobs

PROSENSE project

- 4-year project (2012-2016), funded by RAAK-SIA
- Goal is twofold:
 1. **Professional development** of teachers in primary education aimed at strengthening the social and communicative development of children
 2. **Knowledge co-construction** on three issues: pedagogical sensitivity; child development; and collective learning



**THINK
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1. FSW: formal network of 42 schools in primary education (Utrecht area)
2. The Royal Auris Group for children with speech, hearing and language problems → schools for special education
3. Fontys University of Applied Sciences, Eindhoven/Tilburg
4. Utrecht Professional University
5. University for Humanistic Studies, Utrecht

Collaborative action research design

Teachers take on small action research projects in their own schools (together with peers, pupils and parents, and with the support of university researchers)

They develop a project idea based on three questions:

- What kind of child development do I aim for? (pedagogical goal)
- What kind of pedagogical sensitivity does this require from myself and my colleagues as teachers? (professional development goal)
- How do I involve colleagues, my team and school in the project?

Their research enhances practical knowing and professional development

They share ideas, questions, findings in a Community of Practice (CoP). By collating the individual results they contribute to the co-construction of knowledge on the three research topics of the overall project => knowing-about-action or theoretical knowledge:

Child development – pedagogical sensitivity – collective learning

- Cogenerative model (Greenwood & Levin, 2007): ‘encounter between the worlds of practical reasoning and scientifically constructed knowledge’ (p. 104)
- Democratic ideal of the project: participation in research and knowledge co-construction
- ‘Knowledge democracy’ as key issue: whose knowledge counts?

Three dilemmas



**THINK
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Three dilemmas in creating CoPs for professional development and knowledge co-construction:

1. Commonality and diversity in research
2. Self-regulation versus direction and framing
3. Togetherness and alienation

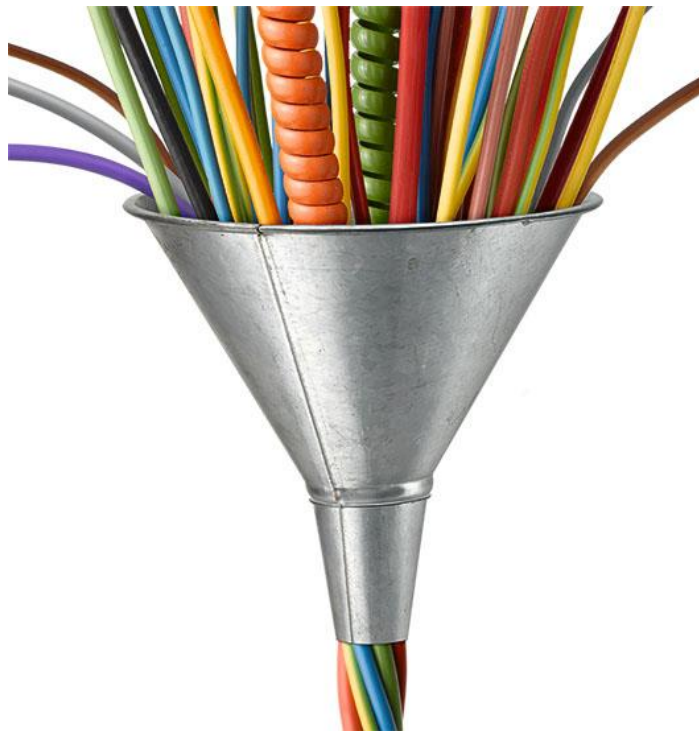
1. Commonality and diversity in knowledge co-construction

THINK
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- Teacher research as professional development requires teachers to work with their own research questions.
- However, (too much) diversity between the projects within a CoP leads to fragmentation and hinders the goal of knowledge co-construction
 - Teachers bring their own project ideas, ranging from Animal Assisted Interventions in special education to Positive Behavior Support and the development of a dialogue tool
 - University researchers are struggling to connect these to the goals of the project in such a way, that more generic knowledge can be drawn from these
- How to balance commonality and diversity in knowledge co-construction?

Projects through the funnel or loose ends?

THINK BIGGER



2. Self-regulation versus direction and framing

THINK
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- Practice (with professional and school development goals) requires flexibility in the research design whereas research output requires more direction and framing of the project
 - The school network director: autonomy for the participating schools
 - Auris directors: direction in order to connect the theme of child development with the strategic policy of Auris
 - The universities: offering a framework in order to build evidence from collating case studies. Some university lecturers put a strong value on the autonomy of teachers as researchers; others on research output
- Who is leading (on what): **research** (university) **or practice?**

Practice goals or research goals?



Practice

Research



3. Togetherness and alienation

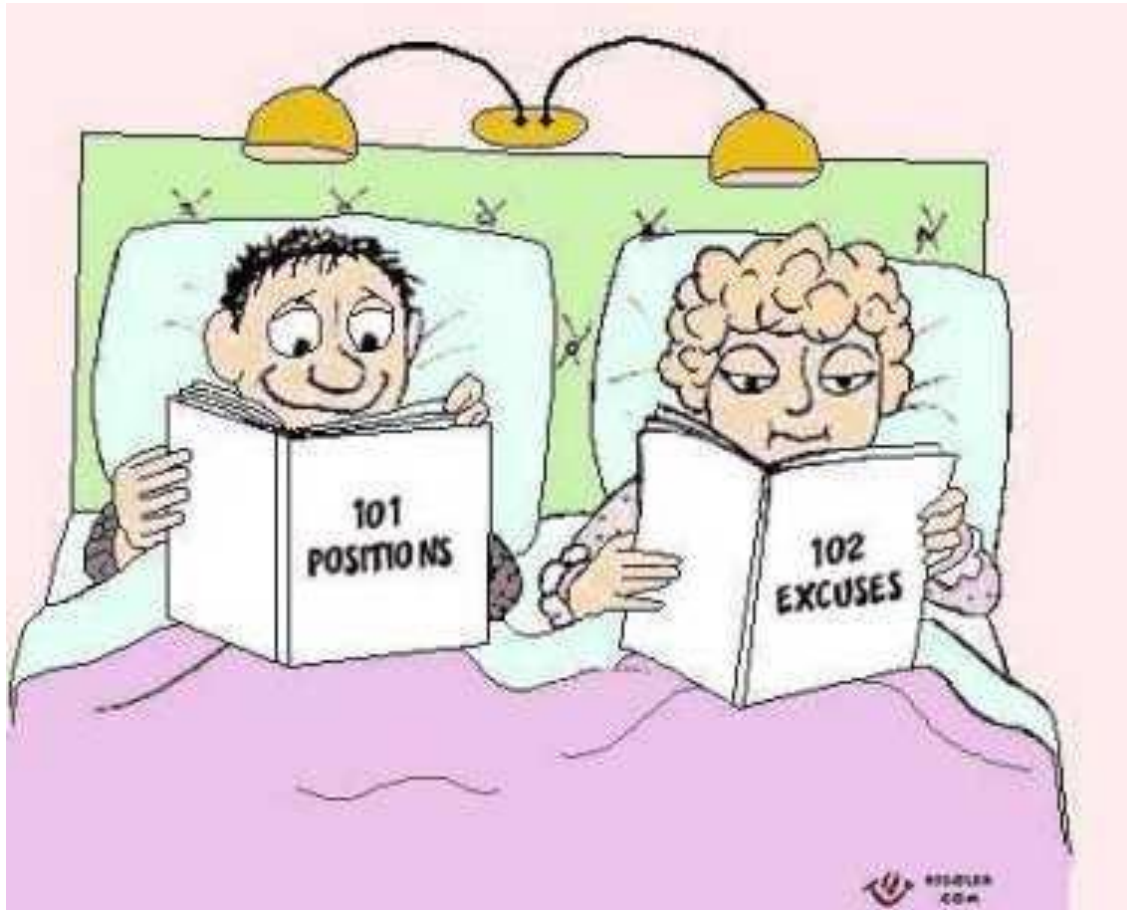


**THINK
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- The idea of CoPs stresses the importance of shared values and visions, reciprocal trust, connection and belonging as conditions for professional learning and development and knowledge co-construction (Stoll et al, 2006; Handley et al, 2006; Lave, ...).
- However, these are not a given; they stand in a dynamic interaction with alienation and disconnection.
 - Teachers and professional institutions estranged by the language of research/universities
 - Teachers feeling not supported by their school/director
 - Power differences and diversity of interests, goals, cultures and discourses in-between universities
 - and between universities and professional institutions
- How to sustain critical dialogue about different desires and goals?

It's like a marriage.... our responsibility to ongoing processes of relating.

THINK BIGGER



**THINK
BIGGER**



Fontys

**University of
Applied Sciences**