

Manifestations of contradictions and agency to change: Change laboratory and action research

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Purpose

My aim:

- Enhance professional development of teachers in college.
- Increase teacher's agency to change or transform practice.

The overall aim of the teachers' project:

- Find ways to encourage students to become more responsible for their learning in college.

From
teaching
to
learning

“a post-critical living
consciousness”
(McNiff, 2007)

Theoretical background

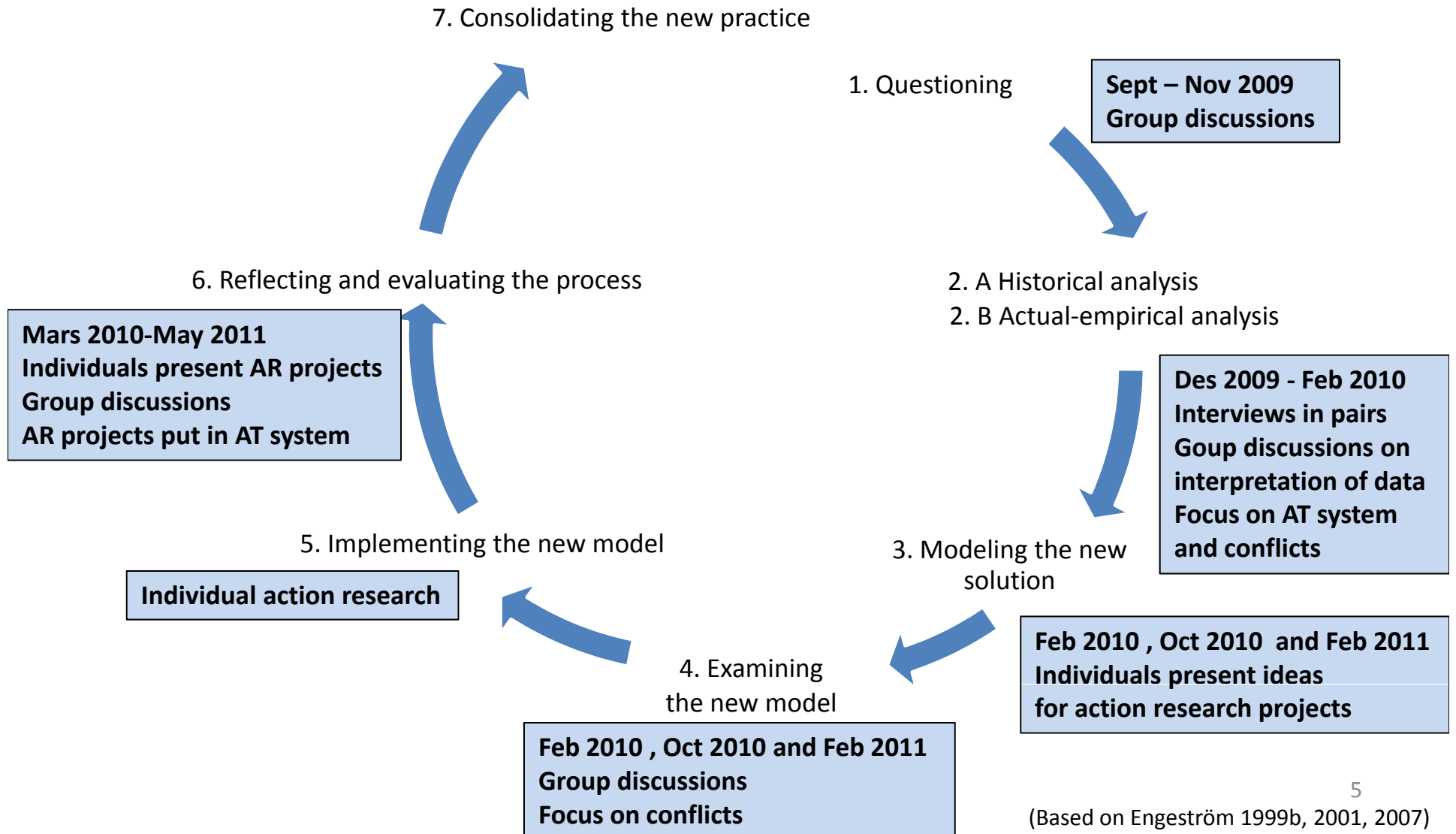
- **Activity theory**
 - Engeström
- **The Change Laboratory** – Engeström
 - The Expansive Learning Cycle - Engeström
 - A Method of Double Stimulation – Vygotsky
- **The Living Educational Theory**
 - McNiff and Whitehead

The Change Room

2009-2011

- Project 2009-2011 with an action research group in a college in Iceland.
- In the Change Room we connect together the Change Laboratory developed by Engeström and action research of participants.
- Total of 19 meetings over two school-years.
- Participants created data about workplace experience (first stimuli) through interviews, presentations of action research projects and discussions.
- My role was to transcribe, interpret the data and present it within the activity system i.e. apply the conceptual framework of the activity theory (second stimuli).

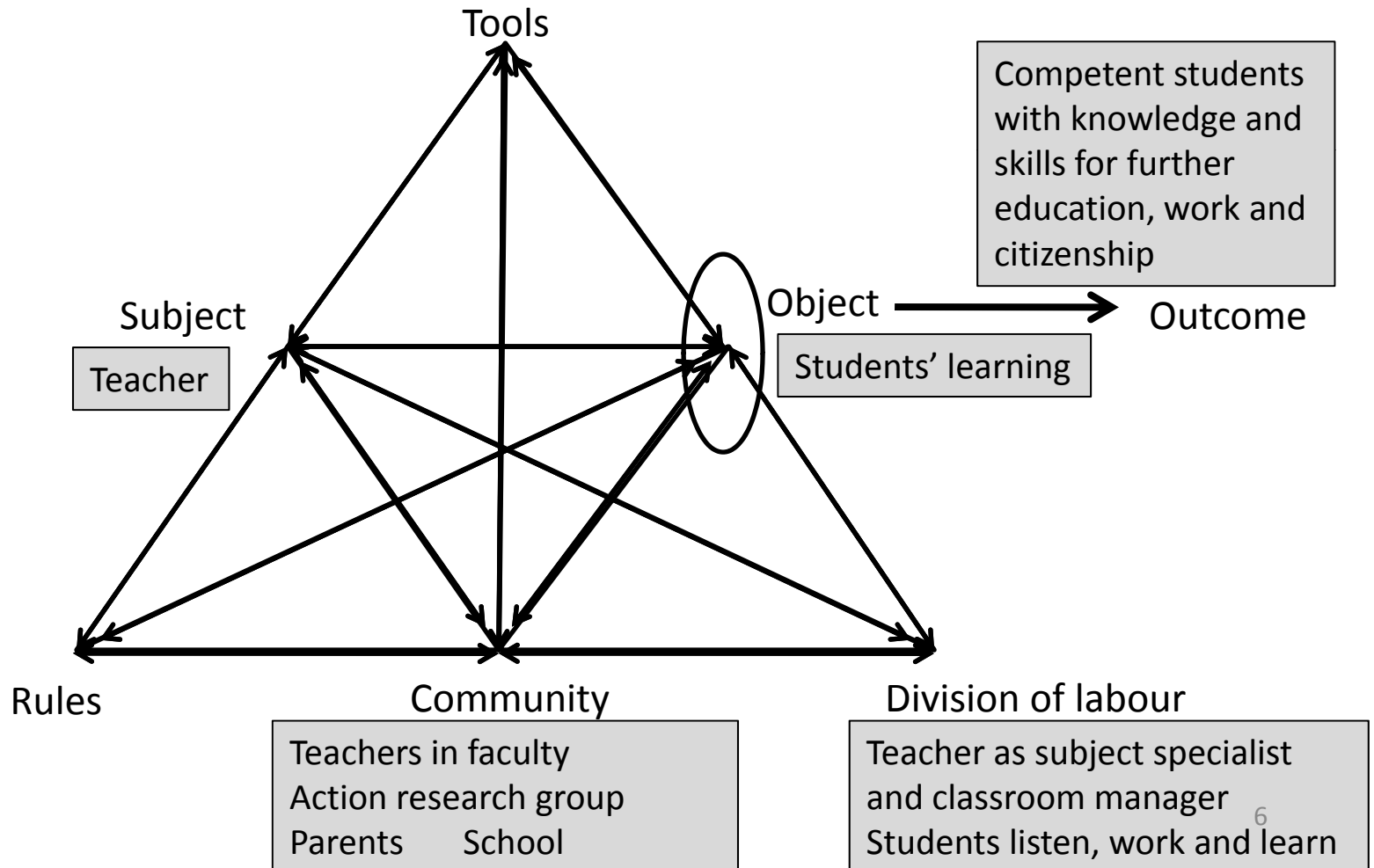
The expansive learning cycle in the Change Room 2009-2011



The Activity System of the Classroom

(Based on Engeström 2001)

Teacher's values and ideas about teaching and learning
 Teaching and learning methods, material and instruments
 Assessment and evaluation methods and tools
 Teacher's knowledge of the students

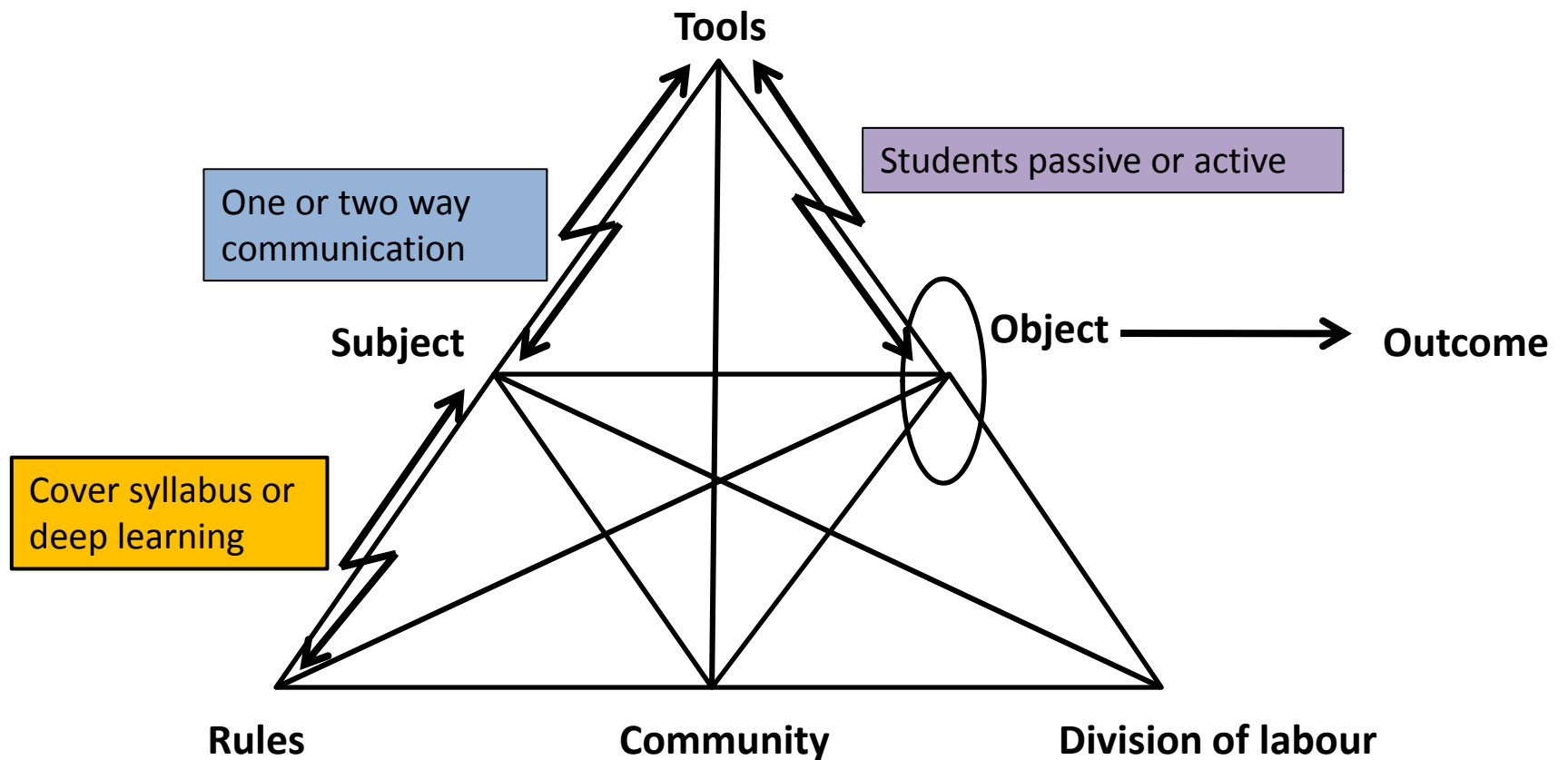


Manifestations of contradictions

Tensions in the Activity System of the Classroom

- **Subject – Tools**
 - Tension between one way and two way communication
- **Subject – Rules**
 - Demand to cover syllabus but a sense of urgency for deep learning
- **Object – Tools**
 - Students passive or active

Tensions in the Activity System of the Classroom

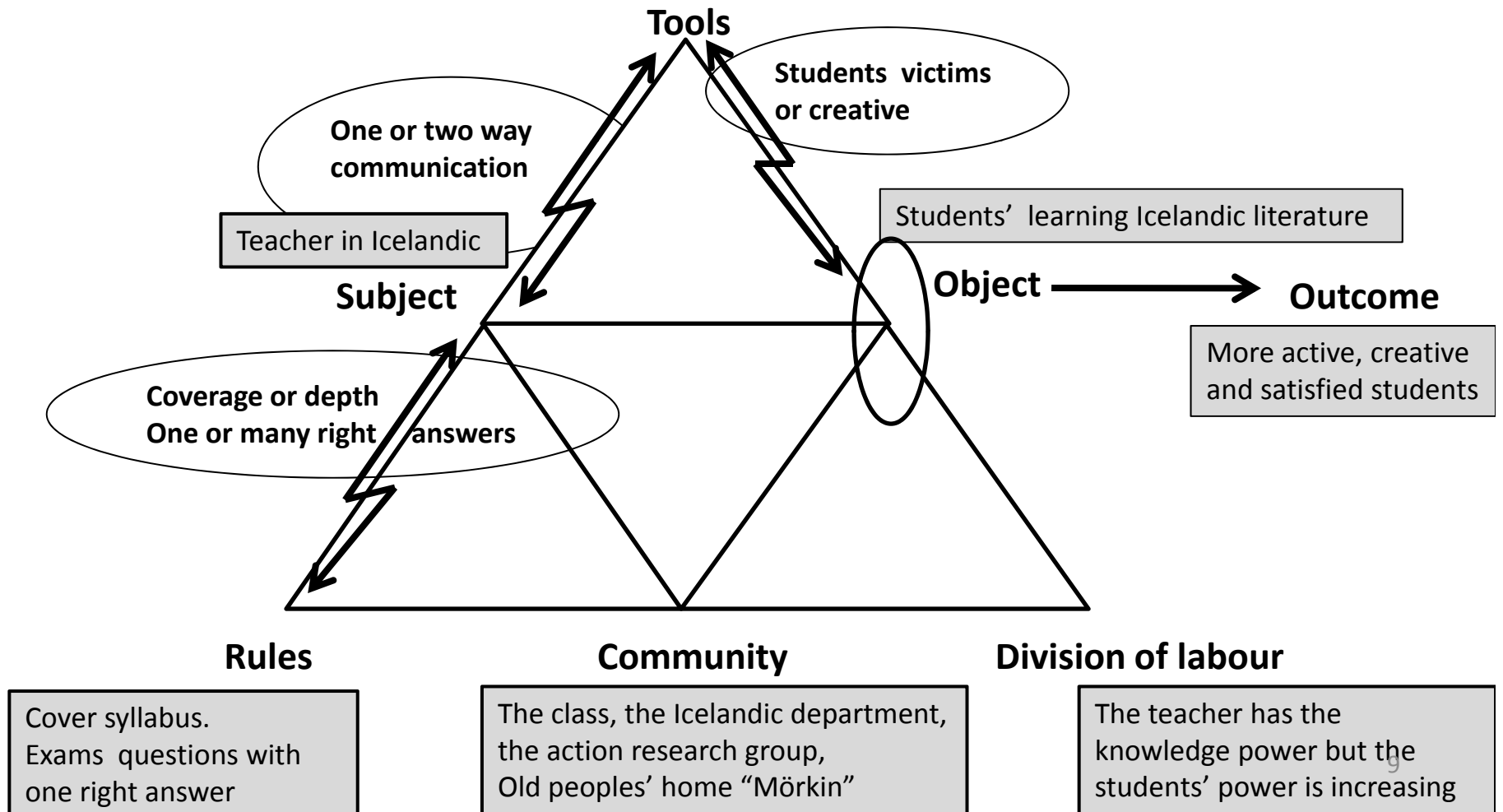


The Change Room – The present - meeting 9. 3. 2011

The activity system of the classroom

Active and creative learning

Collect students' work. Teacher's ideas of the nature of knowledge. Pictures exams. Open questions. Students answers used in discussions. Create books and cartoons. Visits to old peoples home.



Evaluation of Change Room

1. Actual changes in classroom practice.
2. Changes in the discourse within the community of participants.
3. Formation of new theoretical concepts.

(Cole and Engeström, 2007; Engeström, 2010)

4. Participants evaluation

Changes in Classroom Practice
to increase students' responsibility for their learning

Students as Active Learners

- **Students' Ownership**
 - Databank on the intra net
 - Create own learning material
 - Diaries
- **Students' Boundary - Crossing**
 - Expedition to a nursery home
 - Learning field trip
 - School visit to Denmark

Changes in Classroom Practice
to increase students' responsibility for their learning

Listening to Students' Voices

- **Activate students' ideas**
 - Students' answers used as teaching material
 - Students' making decisions about assessment
 - Students' influencing their learning environment
- **Consultation with students**
 - Students' evaluation of their own learning
 - Students' evaluation of teaching methods
 - Students' evaluation of school

Changes in the discourse at group meetings in Change Room

- More organized discussions
- Increase in presentations of action research projects
- More focus on tensions and conflicts in practice
- Students' voice
 - more use of direct quotations in students
 - increase in focus on students' learning activities

Participants evaluation of Change Room

May 2011

	N=11	Very		Neutral		Not at all
1	How satisfied are you with your own participation in the Change-Room?	9	2			
2	How valuable did you find the written minutes of meetings?	8	3			
3	How useful did you find the interviews about the past in the Change Room?	5	2	4		
4	How useful did you find your participation in the group meetings?	9	2			
5	How useful did you find it that the Change Room focused on conflict in the classroom?	8	3			
6	How useful did you find the analysis of action research projects in the activity system?	3	6	2		
7	How encouraging was your participation in the Change Room for your work on the action research project?	2	6	3		14

Participants evaluation of Change Room Teachers' Voices in May 2011

- “You learn a lot from others action research projects and it is good to see it within the activity system, it shows you the basic parts of the work that we are all dealing with in our teaching”.
- “I understand better tensions in the teacher’s job and how outside factors influence the college”.
- “Instead of being stuck in a routine I am always thinking about new and better methods to make students more active in their learning”.
- “Not sure that there is a connection” (between the Change Room and my action research).
- “... we are always running out of time at the meetings”.





Hafsteinn Óskarsson 2010¹⁷

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