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A school-leader's attempt to co-configure two different roles in an insider action research

Abstract

This presentation describes the strength and weaknesses of an insider action research in an upper secondary school in Iceland. One of my tasks as a school-leader is to enhance the teachers' professional development and I have found action research the most effective way to do that. We have experienced the empowering effects of action research and how it increases agency to change the practice. But I have also experienced tensions. Here, the focus is on role duality in insider action research (Coghlan & Brannick, 2001). I will discuss my different roles as an action researcher and as a vice head teacher, the conflict between the roles and my attempts to co-configure these roles. The conceptual framework of the activity theory by Yrjö Engeström (2008) is used to analyse the data. My action research is guided by the ideas of Jean McNiff (2010) and my data collection is based on my diary, conversations with my critical friend and participants in the action research group and audio recordings from the group's meetings. My conclusion is that I can't co-configure my roles as a researcher and a school-leader in any other way than learning to live with the role-conflict and use it to my advantages in both the activity systems of action research and leadership in the school. Further study is needed to find out if this is also the experience of some other practitioners doing insider action research and working within two or more activity systems in their organisation.

Coghlan, D., & Brannick, T. (2001). *Doing action research in your own organization*. London: Sage Publications.

Engeström, Y. (2008). *From teams to knots. Activity-theoretical studies of collaboration and learning at work*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

McNiff, J. (2010). *Action research for professional development*. Dorset: September Books.