



EDITORIAL

Jan Dewing

About ten years ago, conferences, especially international ones, were either a luxury that one desired to achieve one day – even just once, or an essential part of the world of Research and Development. They provided a place to do two things: get information that you could really only get at the conference and from key speakers that you could only hear and see at a conference. But more and more we don't need traditional conferences for information exchange. Along with presentations, we can see most people on You Tube, which often proves more than enough!

And so, conferences today, need to be more about critical connections and being able to get to know more people and know people more. For example, meeting new people who are interested in similar ideas to you – to reconnect with people you haven't seen for a year or more and to enable people new to the field to feel they are part of a wider network and feel welcomed and their work valued. Wheatley and Freize (2006) comment we should focus on fostering critical connections rather than critical masses. We need to connect with kindred spirits that will give us the courage and conviction to develop new knowledge and practices back in our own locality. I believe this is especially important for transformation and innovation work. We need to network and connect on as wide a scale as possible to help us to succeed locally and regionally. This reminds me that the creation of spaces in which we can communicate is vital and sometimes, we need to travel to connect with others in such spaces.

Habermas of course, advocates the need for ongoing critical discourse amongst members of action oriented communities (Habermas, 1972). A communicative space is, in part, something that evolves as issues or problems are opened up for discussion, and when participants experience their interaction as a valued part of a democratic expression of diverse views. In support of this, Kemmis (2001) contends that the first step in participatory research is the formation of a communicative space, embodied in the networks of the actual persons participating. Thus we all need to be experiencing such spaces as participants as well as facilitators or researchers.

Two such spaces recently emerged. Both were underpinned by the values of the International Practice Development Collaborative. The first was the 2012 Enhancing Practice Conference in Sydney, NSW, Australia and the second was a Practice Development/Action Research Conference in Kent, England, jointly organised and hosted by the England Centre for Practice Development hosted at Canterbury Christchurch University and the Collaborative Action Research Network (CARN). In this supplement, our first conference proceedings, we are sharing some of the ideas that were presented at the conferences. What we can't do is share the detail of what went on in the communicative spaces that different people created during the two events. We have eight papers here, one of which is in photographic form. For this supplement we've invited the authors to submit work and this has been subject to review by the academic editor. Apart from one plenary presenter, we've asked people who are new to Practice Development, doing smaller scale work, or building on existing Practice Development knowledge. The photographic submission, from the PD/CARN event aims to catch a glimpse of some of the communicative spaces in action. We very much hope you

enjoy this conference related supplement. It's not that long until our first regular issue of the year is due out so get reading!

Finally, we extend our appreciation to everyone who participated in the conferences; those who organised and those who took part in whatever ways. We also extend our 'anticipations' for more critical connections and communicative spaces at the next Enhancing Practice Conference in Toronto, Canada, in Autumn/Fall 2014.

References

- Habermas, J. (1972) *Knowledge and Human Interests*. London: Heinemann.
- Kemmis, S. (2001) Exploring the relevance of critical theory for action research: emancipatory action research in the footsteps of Jürgen Habermas. In Reason, P. and Bradbury, H. (Eds.) *Handbook of Action Research: Participative Inquiry and Practice*. London: Sage. pp 91–102.
- Wheatley, M. and Frieze, D. (2006) *Using Emergence to Take Social Innovations to Scale*. Retrieved from: <http://www.margaretwheatley.com/articles/emergence.html>. (Last accessed 25th March 2013).

Jan Dewing (PhD, MN, BSc, RN, RNT, Dip Nurs Ed, Dip Nurs), Academic Editor, International Practice Development Journal; Professor of Person-centred Research and Practice Development, East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust and Canterbury Christchurch University, Kent, England. Visiting Professor, Person-centred Practice Research Centre, University of Ulster, Northern Ireland. Visiting Professor, Aged Care and Practice Development, School of Nursing Midwifery and Indigenous Health Studies, University of Wollongong NSW (in partnership with Uniting Care Ageing SE Region).