**Translation Across Multiple Boundaries**

Nearly ten years ago I found myself in China speaking to a large group of public sector personnel officers about action learning and in particular giving detailed examples of action learning was being applied at that time across British public sector organisations to tackle individual, organisational and systemic issues. The day was conducted through simultaneous translation. The translator was highly skilled and there were plenty of questions and lots of dialogue. But of course, without any Mandarin or Cantonese, how can I really know what might have been lost or gained in translation. At the time one strong impression I brought away was an apparent contrast between the emphasis I was familiar with in the British public sector, which combined leadership development with tackling complex problems, often over a period of many months or years, and the focus of these representatives of the Chinese public sector on short cycle problem-solving. At the time I simply noted the diversity of ways in which people translate action learning ideas into different contexts.

In this issue we welcome 3 refereed papers that exemplify this multiplicity of translations, that make links across boundaries of sector, national culture and also across fields of academic thought. The first paper by Lesley Wood, Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt and Ina Louw takes the context of higher education, drawing from experience in South Africa, of working with the challenge of developing research students’ capabilities to influence policy and practice. The article presents their employment of participatory action learning and action research (PALAR) to help students ‘cascade’ their research learning. Such flow from the academy into the community and policy fields I would argue is one form of ‘translation’. Drawing from a leadership development programme with doctors in the British (NHS) National Health Service, the second paper by Robert Warwick explores ways in which Bourdieu’s ideas of habitus and field provide ways of understanding and explaining the power relations and particularly ‘social friction’ in action learning. As such he makes a translation from French sociology to organizational dynamics that advance our understanding of action learning and critical action learning. The third paper by Miklós Horváth is a study of the diffusion of action learning into the Chinese public sector. Taking as his focus the Sino-Swiss Management Training Program which included the very same programme run with personnel professionals mentioned above, he makes a historical-political analysis of the rationale and pattern in which action learning was introduced into China.

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