MULTIPLE AUTHORSHIP THE ROAD TO DEVELOPING A RESEARCH PROFILE QUICKLY:
A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT
This paper outlines one of the strategies being employed by two first-time researchers in a small non-traditional Australian university who are striving to develop their own research profile quickly. Using both an action learning and a narrative approach the researchers reflect on their recent collaborative research experience and performance, and recognize the benefits. They conclude that working collaboratively with the right person(s) will not only set first-timers on the path to becoming productive researchers, but will help them do so more effectively than if they remain independent.

INTRODUCTION
Dependent on government funding for survival and growth, and faced with strong competition for a portion of the research funds available from the government for universities with a proven research record, new universities in Australia 'have [had] to develop a thriving research culture quickly' [3, p.157]. For first-time researchers this means developing their own research profile, fast. One strategy towards this end is to encourage these new researchers to collaborate 'as a means of providing more opportunities to mentor...to build social relationships and scholarly networks...and to produce higher quality work' [1, p.2].

The methodology that informs this paper is focussed both on action learning and narrative. With regard to the former, the researchers (and authors of this paper) are the subjects here, and their process of collaboration and research output constitute the data to be examined. With regard to the latter, attention is paid to the story-like qualities of the accounts given by the authors.

The paper is structured as follows. First, the application of the action learning model and narrative method is explained. Second, the authors tell their stories and offer some reflections. Finally, it is concluded that working collaboratively with the right person, or persons, will not only set first-time researchers on the path to becoming productive researchers, but will help them do so more effectively than if they remained independent.

LEARNING BY DOING: A NARRATIVE ACCOUNT

Learning by doing, or 'action learning', is 'a powerful and very cost effective...approach to learning by using personal experience and reflection, group discussion and analysis, trial and error discovery, and learning from one another' [4, p.58]. Essentially a method of social research, action methods focus on the experience(s) of those in the system. In this paper it is the experiences of the authors, who are both the researchers and the researched, that is the subject of the inquiry.

As action methods deal with internal processes and how they are related to external structures, it is a methodology that seems very appropriate to use, for, as Riding, Fowell, and Levy [7] point out, an action methodology is 'both a way of producing knowledge...and a powerful way of improving...practice' [p.2]. In this research, one can discern elements of three types of action method-action research, participative action research, and action learning. A brief description of each of these types follows. This precedes a very concise account of the main tenets of narrative analysis.

Action Research
Action research is predicated on the understanding that social systems are dynamic and changing. When the people in the system are open to change in the environment, change tends to come about. In this instance the practitioners (who are also the researchers) are consciously reflecting on their situation and that of the School, with an eye to changing the habits and practices of many years, of themselves and others, in order to help shape the old 'teaching-only culture' into the required research culture of the new millennium.

Participative Action Research
Participative action research is predicated on the assumption that no social research is value free, nor is the researcher outside the system being researched. In this case both authors value education per se and the pursuit of excellence in their craft while being a part of a broader system that increasingly devalues their contribution in favor of chasing the dollar. Thus we see the authors externally trying to meet the demands of the overall system, while internally discovering, and relishing, the research and collaborative processes.
Action Learning

Persons involved in action learning work on a ‘live’ project in real time. The situation being analyzed here is very real indeed. The success of the School as a whole, as much as that of the individuals personally, is dependent on the efficacy with which those individuals develop their research profile. Arguably, it is incumbent on those individuals to learn what they need to do, and to do it. In the long run, their jobs, and the very existence of the School, depend on it.

Narrative

Another ‘particularly valuable source of insight’ [5, p.712] is afforded by the use of narrative as a theory and a methodology. Narrative theory explores the way individuals use narratives (stories) to understand the world around them. Narrative analysis allows us to uncover the underlying pattern of events, and at the least, describes a sequence of events over time. The stories presented below, in the main, concentrate on the period April 1999 to September 2000. Events are given meaning based on the part they play within the whole of the individuals’ life or designated portion of that life. In the case here, it is a portion of the work life that is of interest.

Language is one of the tools people use to communicate their story [6]. The language used influences how the individual sees the world, and vice versa. In Irene’s story we see words like ‘fruitful’, ‘active’, ‘fountain of possible topics’, and ‘excitement generated’. One can sense a bubbling, vital world where the collaborative relationships, rather than the research per se, hold the personal meaning. In Barbara’s story we find phrases like ‘spur-of-the-moment’, ‘waiting for inspiration to strike’, ‘a more deliberate approach’, and ‘a more even...spread of the work’. Here one can see a shift from a world of impromptu happenings to a more considered, better balanced place. Central to narrative theory is an understanding of the relationship of metaphor to language. Metaphor is a key element of the narrative mental process [2] because the metaphors used signal the underlying thought processes of the individual. The phrase ‘the turning point’ (Barbara’s story) provides a good illustration here, when understood as underpinning phrases such as ‘spur-of-the-moment’ and ‘a more deliberate approach’.

Irene's Story

I have had three major collaborative research relationships. In my first I was very much the learner, with my doctoral supervisor as collaborator, mentor, teacher and guide. We wrote a conference paper together out of my thesis - at her suggestion. The process was really just an extension of my thesis supervision, writing and presenting my work to my supervisor for her consideration. We repeated this process in 1998 with a similar relationship existing. I was the student, she the teacher/mentor. This was followed by two more papers - one for a conference, the other for a journal article. This process was more collaborative - for the journal article I handled the bulk of the writing, but when referees comments came back, my supervisor handled methodological queries while I handled content related ones. For the conference paper I took a more active and more confident role in the collaboration, with my supervisor acting as an advisor.

My next important and extremely fruitful collaborative relationship is with a colleague from another discipline in the School of Business. This process is quite different from the first. The first time we wrote together each of us wrote a paper and reviewed each other’s work. The second time and more particularly this third time we have truly collaborated at every stage, although one person still does the final writing of each paper. We are excited by each other’s ideas and support each other when we are down or a little flat. We can add to each other’s work in different ways, whether in writing or presentation style, choice of words, computer tricks, or whatever. We edit each other’s work thoroughly with an eye to clarity and meaning. Our meetings are intense, productive and always leave me inspired.

My third collaborative relationship is, for the first time, with a teaching colleague. Here I am the teacher/mentor/guide whilst she is an expert in the discipline. Our relationship is very much like my first with my supervisor, except my role has reversed. I find this relationship more satisfying rather than inspiring. I feel I am putting something back, passing something on.

I have enjoyed each relationship, and expect them all to continue. I hope the fountain of possible topics never dries up.

Barbara’s Story

The turning point came for me at the Teaching and Learning colloquium. We had reached the end of the session when I commented that ‘some-one should write this up’. It was a bit of a throw away line at the time. A few days later the Educational Development Facilitator (EDF), my co-author here, sent an email around calling for those interested to come together to look at this suggestion. I thought - I’d better put my money where my mouth is. Four of us met and discussed the possibilities. Irene volunteered to write an abstract and bring it for discussion to our next meeting. That abstract spawned some dozen different ideas for conference papers. Both Irene and I volunteered to tackle a paper each. The papers were completed, submitted to different conferences, and both were accepted. We were very pleased with ourselves. One of my greatest joys and most productive collaborations is with Irene. Since those first two papers we have worked on, and submitted, a further four (including this one). We bring different methodologies and styles to the work as we come from different disciplines and traditions of
research. It is a stimulating and strengthening research relationship in which we support and encourage each other's work. Sharing the work with others allows you to produce more though, and the School's situation demands as high a level of productivity as possible.

When I compare my strategies in early 1999 with what I do now, some 18 months on, I believe that I have moved from a spur-of-the-moment way of being to a more deliberate approach. I used to spend a lot of time waiting for inspiration to strike. This year is different. I have written follow-up papers to previously successful ones and have approached currently less productive colleagues and suggested joining my writing knowledge to their theory base in an effort to use our different strengths and interests to produce papers and articles. This is proving to be a more productive division of labor than trying to do it all from scratch all the time. I am aiming for a more even, and therefore less stressful, spread of the work next year.

SOME REFLECTIONS

The authors, reflecting on their recent collaborative research experience and performance, are clear that the papers/articles they have produced have benefited substantially from the collaborative process. The collaboration that produced this paper, for instance, is especially productive - this being the sixth paper to come from the relationship in less than two years. Both authors here also produced multiple papers with other collaborators, and recognize the benefits to be found in sharing the workload-the advantage of some-one to talk to about new ideas and/or difficulties in the work; help in overcoming writers block; an increase in output; and an excitement and pleasure in the work that is harder to sustain when working totally on your own, among other things. Both have found themselves in a variety of roles, ranging from novice researcher, to equal partner and mentor, teacher and guide.

The environment is harsh and very uncertain, yet the stories these authors tell reflect a pleasure and excitement in the work that many may argue belies the reality of this workplace. These two stories are noteworthy, however, for their emphasis on relationships. Neither story focusses on the grim reality of the environment. This is not to say that the authors are unaware of the situation facing them. Rather, they accept it - 'the School's situation demands as high a level of productivity as possible' - and have learnt to work in new ways. They know that two years ago they were naïve in the world of research, but now feel they are growing apace. Taking account of their experiences, as well as those of others, they conclude that working collaboratively with the right person(s) will not only set first-timers on the path to becoming productive researchers, but will help them do so more effectively than if they remain independent.

REFERENCES