# Hjördís Þorgeirsdóttir

# Action research for Professional Development

# Background
## Sund Upper Secondary School

**New Secondary School**

**curriculum**

**3**

**YEARS**

**PERIODS**

In the school-year

**New pedagogy**

# My aim is to improve my practice

**My aim:**

- Enhance professional development of teachers in the school

- Increase teacher's agency to change and transform practice

- Enhance students' learning outcome

**The overall aim of the teachers' project:**

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

# Teachers' professional development

- The professional growth a teacher achieves as a result of gaining increased experience and examining his or her teaching systematically (Glatthorn, 1995, p.41).

- A continuous conscious process that leads to improvement and positive development. It is directly linked to the teachers' daily work with students and organised around real professional tasks... (Fagráð, 2016, p.3)

# Methodological and theoretical background

- **Action research**
  - McNiff

- **Activity theory**
  - Engeström

- **Learning Power Approach**
  - Claxton

- **Theory of formative assessment**
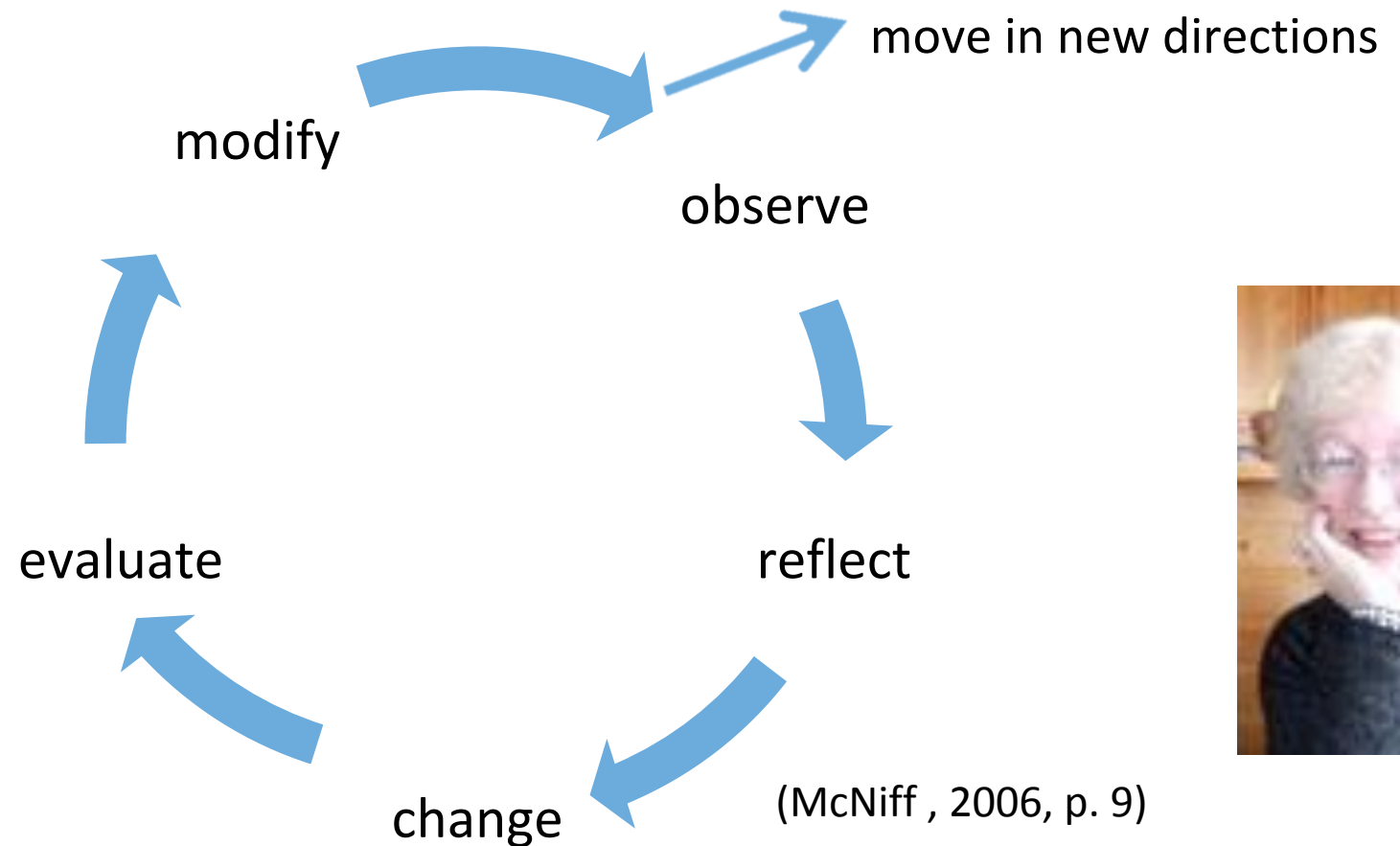  - Black and Wiliam
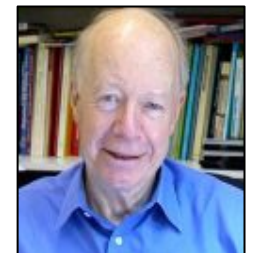
# The action reflection cycle

move in new directions

modify

observe
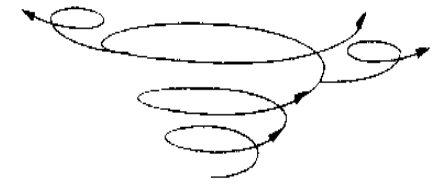
**Methods for data gathering:**
- Research diary
- Interviews
- Questionnaires
- Audio recordings
- Video recordings
- Students output

evaluate

reflect

change

(McNiff , 2006, p. 9)

# The action research work fram

- 2005-2019
- 11-22 group members
- Outside consultant
- Group meetings
- Critical friends
- Group leader
- Various individual research projects
- Many different ways to gather data
- Presentations of findings

➤ Long term
➤ Cooperative
➤ Self-directed
➤ Empowering

# The outside consultant Multi-faceted role



Professional guidance

Individual help with presentations

Advice on program for meetings

Active participation in discussions
- Praise and encouragement
- Questioning and challenging
- Links to pedagogy and literature
- Promoting action research
- Encourage to publish work
- Suggesting ways forward

# Modalities of Learning through action research

**Individual learning**

- Affirmation
- Transferability
- Creating own professional theory

**Collective learning**

- Knotworking
- Transformation
- Collaborative analysis of tensions or conflicts

# The action research group

**Examples of projects**

- Students' responsibility
- **The Change Room**
- Active learning and listening to students' voices
- **Individual composition of assessment**
- Project work and study trip abroad
- Cooperative learning
- **Learning Power Approach**
- **Formative assessment**
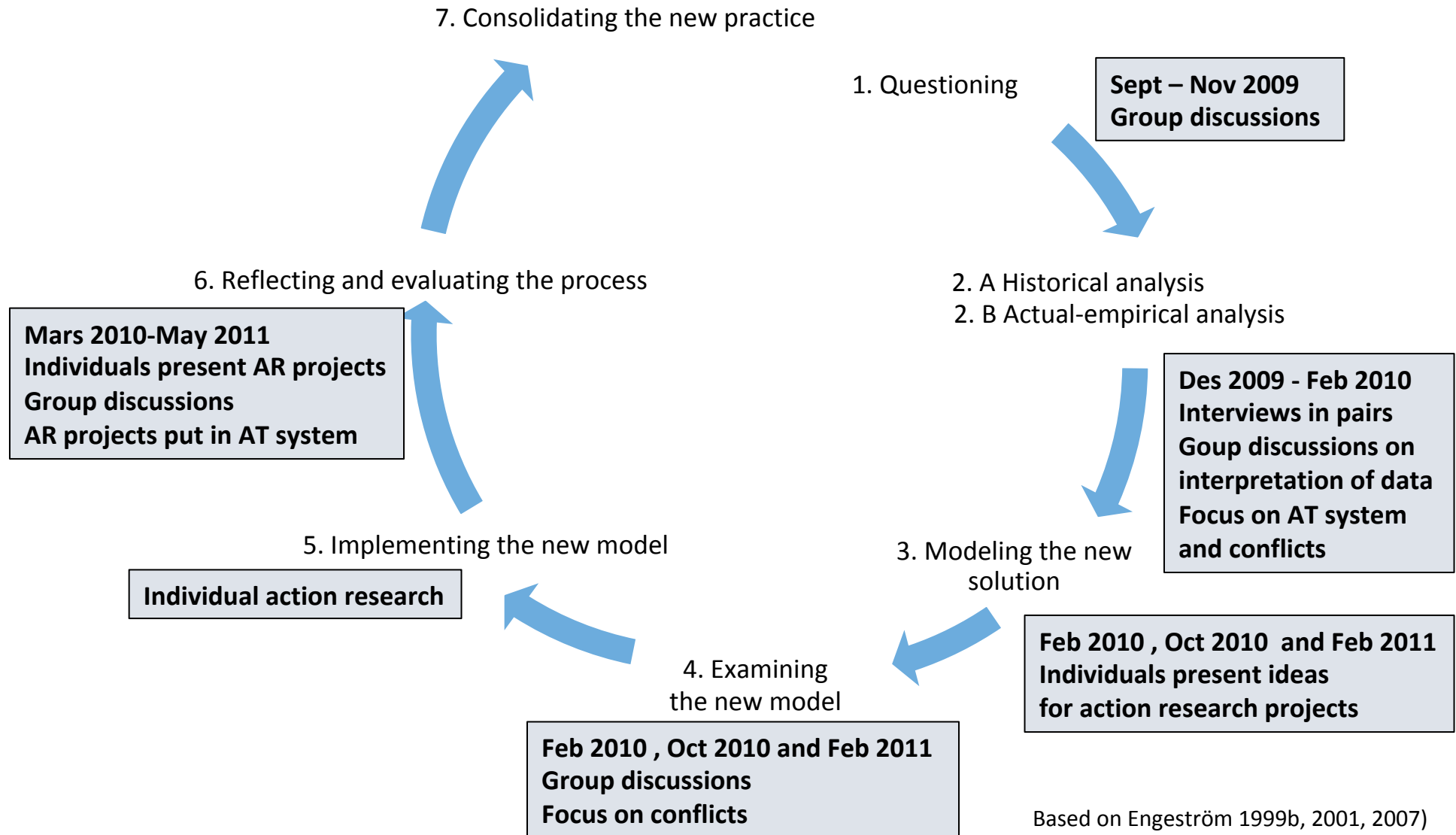
# The Change Room

- Project 2009-2011 with 21 participants

- Connected together activity theory and action research

- Participants created data about workplace experience (first stimuli)

- My role was to transcribe, interpret the data and present it within the activity system (second stimuli)

**Methods:**
- Conversations
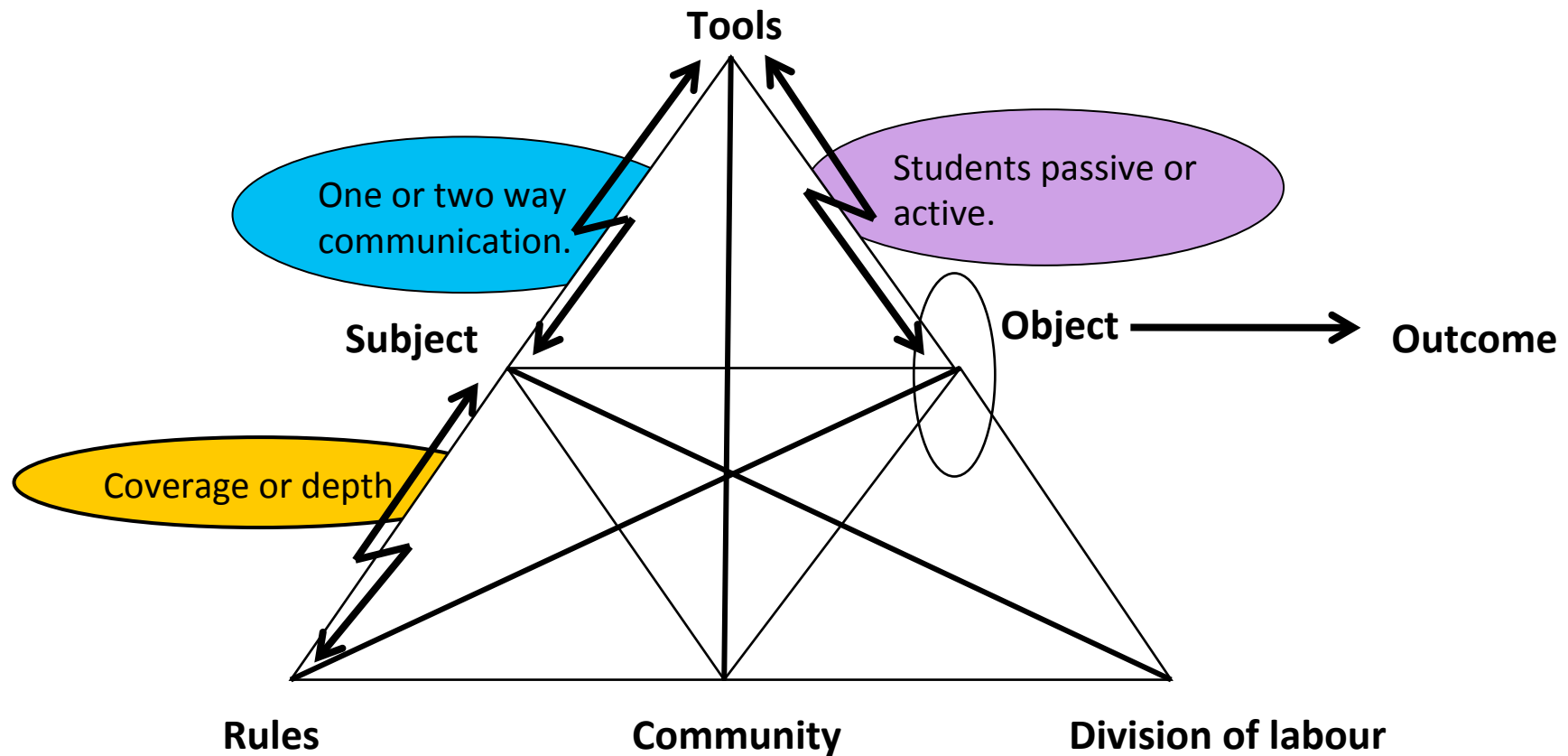- Interviews
- Presentations
- Reports

# The expansive learning cycle in the Change Room 2009-2011

7. Consolidating the new practice

1. Questioning

**Sept – Nov 2009
Group discussions**

6. Reflecting and evaluating the process

2. A Historical analysis
2. B Actual-empirical analysis

**Mars 2010-May 2011
Individuals present AR projects
Group discussions
AR projects put in AT system**

**Des 2009 - Feb 2010
Interviews in pairs
Goup discussions on
interpretation of data
Focus on AT system
and conflicts**

5. Implementing the new model

3. Modeling the new solution

**Individual action research**

**Feb 2010 , Oct 2010 and Feb 2011
Individuals present ideas
for action research projects**

4. Examining the new model

**Feb 2010 , Oct 2010 and Feb 2011
Group discussions
Focus on conflicts**

12

Based on Engeström 1999b, 2001, 2007)

# Change Room 2009-2011

# Tensions in the Activity System of the Classroom



Tools

One or two way communication.

Students passive or active.

Subject

Object — Outcome

Coverage or depth

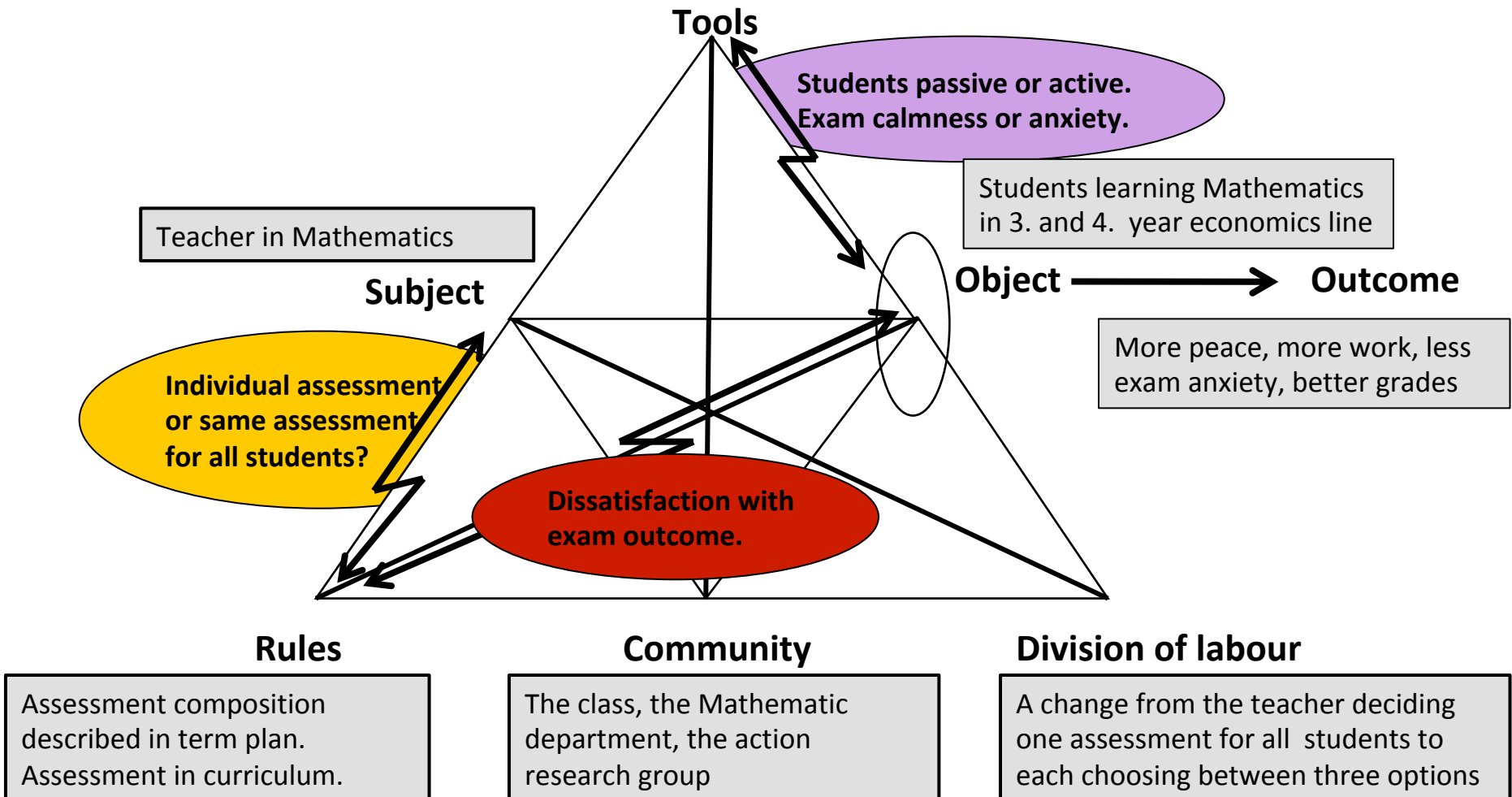Rules          Community          Division of labour

Based on Engeström, 2001

**The Change Room – 2009-2011**

# The activity system of the classroom
**ALPHA – BETA – GAMMA**

Exams, individual- and group assignments, students' teaching, students assessing each others work, teacher's ideas about assessment, mathematical terms, alpha-beta-gamma system.

**Tools**

**Students passive or active.
Exam calmness or anxiety.**

Students learning Mathematics in 3. and 4. year economics line

Teacher in Mathematics

**Subject**

**Object** ⟶ **Outcome**

More peace, more work, less exam anxiety, better grades

**Individual assessment or same assessment for all students?**

**Dissatisfaction with exam outcome.**

**Rules**

Assessment composition described in term plan. Assessment in curriculum.

**Community**

The class, the Mathematic department, the action research group

**Division of labour**

A change from the teacher deciding one assessment for all students to each choosing between three options

# New emphasis in teaching and learning

**Student active learning and responsibility for their studies**

- Emphasis on learning habits

- Emphasis on project learning

- Individual, pair and group assignments

- Cooperative learning

- Discussions as a learning method

- Creative learning

- Flipped classroom

- Field trips

- Formative assessment/learning

# Learning Power Approach



- New emphasis in the whole school on – Building students´ Learning Power https://www.buildinglearningpower.com/

- Guy Claxton
   https://www.guyclaxton.net/

- Key concepts are:
   - resilience,
   - resoursefulness,
   - reflectiveness and
   - Reciprocity (Claxton, 2002)



- Focus on learning content, collateral learning and learning environment

# Formative assessment

**Emphasis on new assessment methods**

- Self-assessment
- Peer-assessment
- Discussions on assessment
- Interviews

**Emphasis on formative assessment**

- Continuous feedback
- Goal setting for every assignment
- Rubrics for large assignments
- Important for the student to be conscious about own learning status and learning methods
- Evaluation as reflective process
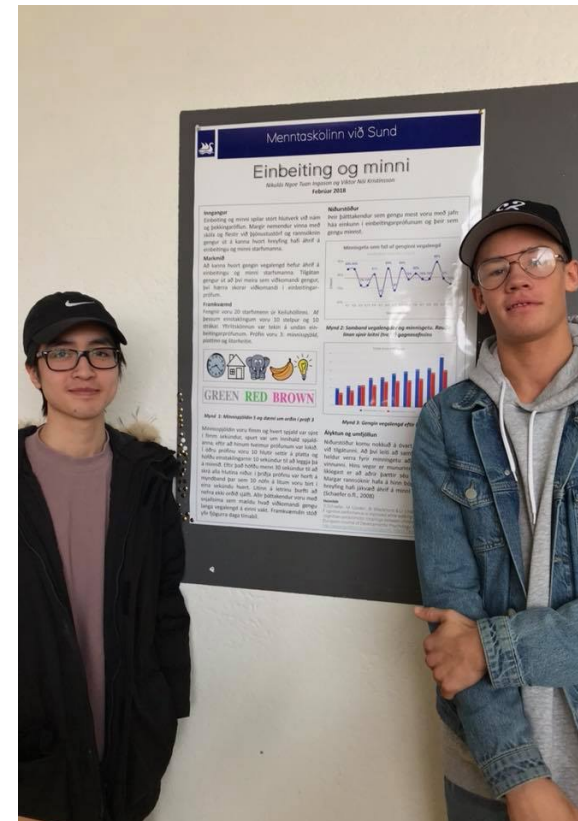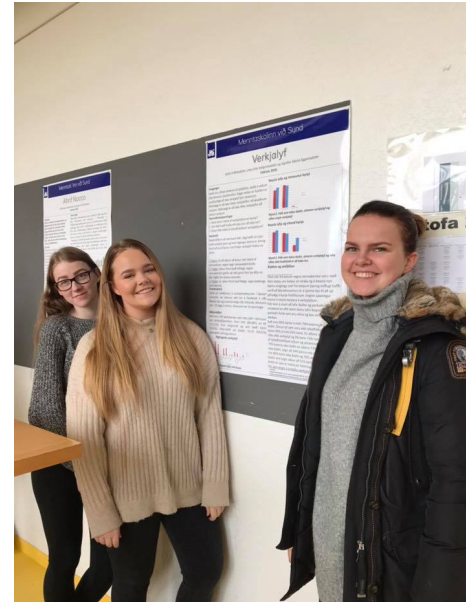
# Strengths of action research



- Improves practice
- Works against teacher's isolation
- Brings the teacher and students closer together
- Increases teachers' agency to change practice
- Increases cross curriculum cooperation
- Works against teacher's burn out
- Leads to whole school development
- Creation of new situated knowledge

From teaching to learning

# Tensions in action research

- Shortage of time
- Priorities in professional and private life
- School culture puts constrains on cross curriculum cooperation
- Lack of a support system
- Insecurity with methodology
- Theoretical application is complicated
- Hard to criticise oneself constructively

# Conclusion

- Increase teachers´ agency to change practice
- Enhances cross curriculum agency
- Implementing pedagogy of active student learning
- Whole school development
- Teacher's Professional development

**Thank you**

Hjördís Þorgeirsdóttir, Lecce ,2018

# References

- Black og Wiliam. (2009). Developing a Theory of formative assessment í Educational Assessment. Evaluation and Accountability 21:5

- Black, P., Harrison, C., Clee, C., Marshall, B., Wiliam, D. (2003). Assessment for Learning. Putting it into practice. Maidenhead: Open University Press

- Clarke, S. (2014) Outstanding Formative Assessment. Culture and Practice. London: Hooder Education

- Claxton, G. (2018)The Learning Power Approach. Teaching Learners To Teach Themselves. Wales: Crown House Publishing.

- Claxton, G. and Powell, G. (2019) Powering Up Students. The Learning Power Approach in High School Teaching. Wales: Crown House Publishing.

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

- Engeström, Y. (2007). Putting Vygotsky to work: The change laboratory as an application of double stimulation In H. Daniels, H. Cole & J. V. Wertsch (Eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Vygotsky*(pp. 363-382). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Fagráð um símenntun og starfsþróun kennara. (2016) Skýrsla til mennta- og menningarmálaráðherra 16. mars 2016. Reykjavík.

- Hafþór Guðjónsson(2011). *Action Research in Iceland -with the "I" at the center of inquiry. In* J. McNiff (Ed), Value and Virtue in Practice-Based Research (pp. 43-53). England: September Books.

- Hjördís Þorgeirsdóttir. (2018) The Change Room promotes teachers' agency to change their practice. Educational Action Research. 27 (2), 248-268. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09650792.2018.1436080

- Hjördís Þorgeirsdóttir. (2016) Investigating the use of Action Research and Activity Theory to Promote the Professional Development of Teachers in Iceland. Doctorial Thesis University of Exeter and University of Iceland. http://hdl.handle.net/1946/23886

- McNiff, J. (2016). You and your action research project. Fourth edition. London: Routledge.

- McNiff, J., & Whitehead, J. (2006). *All you need to know about action research*. London: Sage.

- Wiliam, D. (2018). Embedded formative assessment. Bloomington: Solution Tree Press.