Amodity
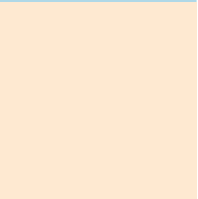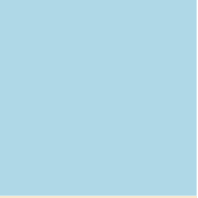# of Self-Evaluation
Processes

NADA TRUNK ŠIRCA

Amodity of Self-Evaluation Processes

Amodity of Self-Evaluation Processes

Nada Trunk Širca

Contents

List of Tables and Figures

Tables

Figures

Chapter One

No Boundaries for Higher Education

When discussing the relationship between the 'local' and the 'global' (Appadurai 1991), the globalisation of education in relation to nation states (Green 1997) and the role of higher education in national and global labour markets, a particularly strong trend has often been pointed out. It is about the flux of identities in nation states, precisely at what defines them in the global contexts, while with individuals this phenomenon refers to the 'local' and 'global' space. Appadurai (1991, 295), for example, claims that the central problem of modern global interactions is tension between cultural homogenisation and cultural heterogenisation. In his opinion, the new global cultural economy has to be perceived as 'a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing centre-periphery models' (p. 296). It can neither be discussed in terms of simple 'push' and 'react' models, nor in terms of surpluses and deficits. Therefore, Appadurai suggests addressing the global economy of culture within five dimensions: ethnoscapes, mediascapes, finanscapes, technoscapes and ideoscapes.

To this, in discussion at Brdo in 2000, Stronach has added the 'eduscape.' It could be said that from the aspect of the present work, both 'eduscape' and 'higher education scape' are being established as meta-scape over the other five scapes. Complexities of higher education, for example, could be discussed through finanscape or mediascape, etc. Higher education exists in the world of science and knowledge production as well as in the market, thus concerning consumers and producers, employers and employees and consequently indicating complex and multiple relations. Therefore, it would be difficult to limit higher education to its own or to only one of the proposed scapes. Boundaries separating them seem to be lacking clarity and the world is no longer 'taxonomical' (Hannerz 1993) but made up of 'flux' and 'flow' (Stronach 1999, 177).

Movements towards comparability of higher education in Europe

9

could, according to Appadurai, be understood as a creation of a new, 'Euro Higher Education Scape.' Some documents (from the Bologna Declaration in 1999 to the Berlin Communiqué in 2003, see Thune 2002) that have been signed by the European Universities and governments declaratively support this idea. Yet, a specific tradition of academic freedom has to be taken into account when higher education is discussed. In the following section, this study focuses on documents and declarations that can potentially contribute to 'creation' of the above mentioned Euro Higher Education Space and enforce the development of audit culture in higher education. At the same time, it is also an illustration of the fact that in different local environments these documents were discussed with a certain level of scepticism. To me, being the author of this study, such tensions seem irresolvable but when exposed, they can be seen as 'pulse' for change. As for the concept of professionalism within global higher education processes, Stronach et al. (2002, 131) agree on a more appropriate 'metaphor for professionalism being pulse rather than push.' Relating this comparison with Zgaga's (2001) comment on the Sorbonne Declaration is quite interesting: he argues against 'harmonisation' yet supports the processes of exchange, which can be understood as 'pulsing.'

Europeisation of Higher Education or Euro Higher Education Scape

The History of Philosophy (Filipović 1979) keeps track of influence and the flow of scientific discoveries all along the historical vertical (e.g. Aristotle's influence on Ibn Ruša) as well as the horizontal (e.g. the formation of different philosophical 'schools'). Furthermore, the trade in the Old and Middle Ages – via merchants' travels and discoveries of the new worlds – points to a certain degree of internationalisation that should be separated from the modern globalisation streams which make the boundaries among nation states and nations are becoming more and more indistinct. Cultures, traditions, ideas, knowledge and people 'travel,' and in the process of introducing and placing them into local environments both 'the local' and 'the global' change. Co-operation in research is therefore not a recent phenomenon, but the fact that teachers and students mobility increases in recent years only, should be considered. This is mostly due to various European Union programmes, such as Socrates, Erasmus, Comenius and Leonardo da Vinci. Creating co-operation and

new bonds within higher education is recorded in numerous international documents, the most important of them being:

Magna Charta Universitatum. Rectors of European Universities signed it in 1988 in Bologna. It describes the university as an autonomous institution and emphasizes the indivisibility of teaching and research.

The *Erfurt Declaration* on the autonomy of universities was signed in 1996 by academics and ministers. It determines the responsibilities of states and universities and emphasises the work quality of the latter. The university itself should decide on suitable work standards and control its own activities, while remaining 'transparent' and answerable to the public.

The *Lisbon Convention* on the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education in the European Region. It was signed by the ministers of European countries in 1997 and ratified by the Slovenian Parliament in 1999. The document defines the elements and procedures of the mutual recognition of higher education qualifications and is binding on all signatory states.

The *Sorbonne Declaration.* Ministers signed it in 1998. It calls upon the signatories to 'open' European higher education and speaks of the 'harmonisation' of the European higher education system. (It is interesting that Zgaga opposes the term 'harmonisation' used in the declaration, as the signatory states – in the context of forming the 'united' Europe – do not give up their current power in education, science and culture. For areas such as lesson plans, language teaching, publishing textbooks, etc., it advocates fair co-operation between different systems, rather than bureaucratic changes.)

The *Bologna Declaration* was signed in 1999 by the representatives of the academic sector and ministers. This document is basically an operationalised version of the Sorbonne Declaration and serves as a vow for the states to reform their own higher education systems, in order to enable comparability which should in turn pave the way for greater student mobility and an increase in employability as well as in population mobility. In a broader sense, The Bologna Declaration is considered as some kind of a starting point to establishing close co-operation in the European higher education area. This is also called the 'Bologna Process' or the 'European Process in Higher Education' by which the agreed principles get gradually exercised via ECTS – European Credit Transfer System, life-long learning, diploma

supplement and the formation of two levels of study degrees (under-graduate and post-graduate) and finally by the implementation of comparable assessment criteria and methodology in the frame of the quality assurance process.

Ever since The Bologna Declaration has been signed conferences are organised every other year, so that members of the academic sector and the ministers can review the work done in the past period and formulate directives for the future implementation of the document. In 2001, the conference took place in Prague, in 2003 in Berlin and in 2005 in Bergen. The movements expressed in declarations can also be understood as outside pressures on national systems to make them transparent and comparable. However, those documents set the basic guidelines of development in European higher education area, but stress only the moral obligation of all signatory states (the Lisbon Convention being an exception). In order to practice mobility and achieve comparability, transparency needs to be maintained and this puts auditing (external and internal) to the heart of these movements. The analysis of the Bologna Declaration (see http://www.bologna-berlin2003.de/pdf/bologna_declaration.pdf), specifically arguing against pressures, promotes co-operation and is based on continuous audit and fresh agreements on new measures, such as:

> We are pursuing these objectives – within the framework of our institutional competences and taking full respect of the diversity of cultures, languages, national educational systems and autonomy of the University – in order to consolidate the European area of higher education. To that end, we will continue our efforts for intergovernmental co-operation, as well as for co-operation with European non-governmental organisations with competence on higher education. We expect Universities to respond promptly and positively and to contribute actively to the success of our endeavour. Convinced that the establishment of the European area of higher education requires constant support, supervision and adaptation to the continuously evolving needs, we have decided to meet again within two years in order to assess the progress achieved and the new steps to be taken.

This extract shows a slight tension between the 'local' and the 'European,' between full consideration of the diversity of the cultures and the consolidation to the European area of higher education.

The Local and the Global

Nóvoa and de Jong-Lambet (2002, 10) critically discuss the idea of European education space and, among other, argue that education has been one of the most turbulent areas in Europe, not only due to its symbolic value in national identities but also because of public resistance to a common policy. The main purpose of the work programme by 2010 should be regulation of EU education standards into a single, comprehensive strategy which, accordingly to their analysis, emphasises four verbs: identify, spread, measure and compare. To 'identify' should mean to agree on shared objectives and guidelines for educational policies, and to 'spread' should refer to diffusion and transfer of most successful practices from one country to another.

To 'measure' means setting precise benchmarks, evaluating performance of each part of the educational system, and 'compare' methods in order to form a way of assessing the progress made by each country. It would be pointless to restate the overt intention that all of these convergence policies should adopt the 'agreed instruments,' 'voluntary participation,' 'partnership' and 'decentralised approaches.' The goal of these processes should be to help the Member States in developing their own policies progressively. Which we translate as: 'to help Member States to develop their own policies progressively, in accordance with the objectives defined at the European level.'

According to Nóvoa and de Jong-Lambet, introduction of 'indicators for measuring progress' is intended 'to create quantitative tables and not, as it is claimed in the document, to learn from one another, not to single out the good students or countries from the bad.' They also determine how difficult it is to imagine that a national state could indeed stay outside of this common European higher education playground. For them, the idea of establishing comparable indicators represents a powerful way of formulating educational policies, since the indicators and the standards that have been 'commonly' defined and 'voluntarily' accepted should provide policy makers with reference points.

According to both authors, the 'challenge of data and comparability' establishes a policy without specifically formulating it. And this is the most effective way to transform and change educational systems. Slowly but steadily, taking precisely defined and coordinated steps, in 'tempo misurato,' European education policy is already on the march (Nóvoa and de Jong-Lambet 2002, 18). The authors claim

that the idea of Europeanisation is based on the 'logic of mutual accountability, as developed through an evaluation of, or comparison between, national systems of education, using a series of indicators, outcomes, benchmarks and guidelines' (p. 22). In their opinion, the education space is considered a field of expertise and the main objective is indeed to achieve consensus. Considering the fact that comparability serves as a mode of governance, they argue that the concept of comparability should be explained in greater detail since better understanding of both limitations and potentialities is one of the ways to avoid the 'vaporous thinking' which intensively infiltrates research methods, particularly those related to education and European affairs (Nóvoa and de Jong-Lambet 2002, 23). Nóvoa and de Jong-Lambet (2002) are committed to developing a comparison in 'space-time' relations that will allow the 'construction of an interpretative space which is historically grounded.' Contextual positioning results in cultural contamination and assumptions, therefore 'technical specifications of role, purpose, function, rationality and outcome can be challenged and rewritten through a cultural deconstruction' (Stronach 1999, 178).

The concept of quality in education has been very much in the spotlight during the past decade. There are many multi-national projects funded by PHARE or other EU financial sources where Western experts help to transfer the so-called 'products and knowledge' to the East. At the conference Ways towards Quality in Education in 2000, it soon became apparent that various countries adopt and implement different 'borrowed solutions' with more or less scepticism or healthy criticism. A delegate from Lithuania, for example, pointed out that countries in transition ought to lean on foreign institutions, since without external assistance and financial aid provided by PHARE the national authorities most probably would not be able to establish and support the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (Zelvys 2000, 141). At the same time, Zelvys (2000, 137) emphasized the need to 'secure the historical and cultural heritage of the country.' However, the school effectiveness and improvement movement mainly ignores cultural differences.

During the study of intercultural educational practice, Stronach et al. (1998) warned that reflexivity could be understood as a narcissistic activity, turning inwards. But looking outwards or re-contextualising is also important in this context. To start with a reflexive remark: in a certain sense conferences like ECER (European Conference of Educa-

tion Research) and ICSEI (International Conference of School Effectiveness and Improvement) as well as different European projects are 'intercultural events' themselves. Perhaps we could consider them as partly 'global,' since according to Gough (1999), globalisation is expressed in our apprehension of new and increasingly complex patterns of interconnectedness – cultural processes that destabilise relationships between social organisation and spaces and places in which technologies, materials, media and meanings are produced, exchanged and consumed. Castells (1998, 331) says it is certain that new configurations of the 'local' and the 'global' are emerging and that Europe is an intriguingly problematic example, and he also warns that the 'political theory still does not have a simple term adequate to this kind of configuration.' It is interesting to note that the author proposes the expression 'network state' anyway.

And yet we notice that place and space are not the only two important dimensions connected to Europe, as there is also the question of identity (Stronach et al. 1998, 2). The European space already seems interwoven with myths, according to different authors the myth of expertness, the myth of homogeneity, the myth of a common language, the myth of neutrality, the myth of equality or the myth of universal rationality. On the other hand, it is clear that there, in fact, is something we could call 'intercultural:' knowledge, for example, seems to be increasingly shared; at least partially it is globally designed. Numerous cultural studies commentators have described the contemporary world as the one of 'flux' and 'flow,' as the world that is no longer limited in the ways it once was, and can no longer be understood in the old 'taxonomical' way. It is important that we, as researchers in education, undertake a reflexive study of the impact of these cultural reversals on research practice. If we pay little attention to differences, risk we not the McDonaldisation of research up to the global ideology level?

The purpose of this thesis is also to explore some of the important differences and obvious confusion that mainly appear when different educational cultures attempt to speak a common language of 'improvement' and 'effectiveness' in education.

Europeanisation in Slovenian Higher Education

Interestingly enough, Slovenian higher education responded to 'Europeanisation' in higher education and the 'Bologna Declaration' quite sceptically. The 'Bologna Declaration' was considered one of

the main motivating factors for 'local' discussions on some important changes, such as the introduction of a credit transfer system (ECTS), diploma supplement and self-evaluation reports. The prevailing impression in the meetings was that in Slovenia, we were primarily concerned with maintaining and preserving our own culture, language and academic tradition; but I show in the next section that this phenomenon can be put in a different perspective: Do we really want anything to change? Or, in other words, do 'tradition' and the 'local' serve only as excuses to stay in position and keep our 'gardens' and 'dovecotes'?

In November 2001, 'The Developmental Challenges of Higher Education' conference was organised in Ljubljana. Numerous issues and dilemmas were brought to light, for instance, how to co-ordinate the area of higher education (the organisation and activities of universities and institutes, the establishing of new higher education institutions and universities etc.) in order to promote competitiveness. Rationality in the work of existing institutions, connecting universities with the economy, quality and international competitiveness, study efficiency, innovations in pedagogic work and the employability of graduates were also included among the most important topics. As this was a one-day conference with 46 papers, running out of time for discussion was no surprise.

In his introductory speech A. Kralj (2001) asserted that 'higher education will have to adapt to the changes brought by globalisation and the new economy, as well as to the demands for continuous development and, last but not least, to the formation of the European scientific region and to increasing competitiveness' (Stanovnik, Golič, and Kralj 2001, 9). Reporter Kontler wrote a critical article about the conference, expressing the feeling that Slovenian higher education does in fact not want any changes. To back this up, she mentioned the applause by which the academics approved the rector's view that 'the Bologna Declaration is not an obligation – it is a bureaucratically designed agreement which does not bind universities to follow it' (*Delo,* 2 February 1999). Later in the article, she quoted a statement by a foreign professor who has been co-operating with colleagues from Slovenia for decades (Petrovec 2001):

> To me, Slovenia seems an interesting mix of Kafkaesqueness and Paradise. The need for creativity and co-operation blends

with the still potent remains of the centralised incompetence. The Slovenian system of education is a miraculous cure for insomnia. It is hard to imagine how Slovenia, with its inefficient system of higher education, will cope in Europe.

Of all the speakers, Zgaga (2001) touched most significantly upon the changing of higher education and the Bologna Process, especially in the field of study policies. He advocated gradual changes in small steps, concluding his speech with (p. 298):

> I do not think that something radical should be undertaken any time soon at the level of the system just because of the Bologna Declaration. […] Nevertheless, I do not advocate the belief that this storm will sooner or later calm down or that we can sail with our old boat peacefully into the new millennium, as we have done with the past one. We do not need to wait for the fateful legal changes to occur; by introducing some minor amendments and in the spirit of the Declaration it would be wise to pay proper attention to actual higher education study policies and their implementation as soon as possible.

Zgaga demonstrated a political approach in trying to softly balance the need for change and the preservation of the status quo. In connection with the previously mentioned thinking of Stronach et al. (2002), European processes could be understood as a 'push' to create 'pulsing' as internationalisation at the institutional level and also a reason and a cause of change in the HE institution management. These processes wish to open the 'closed,' autonomous HE space to the life 'out there' – in Europe and around the world. Self-sufficiency is no longer sufficient.

Quality in the European Higher Education Scape

Requirements for standardisation and consolidation in the area of quality are shown by the ENQA's activities (European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education). In co-operation with EUA (European University Association) and ESIB (The National Union of Students in Europe), this network drafted a two-phase survey in December 2001. In the first phase, the survey focused on the question which evaluation models were used in the 32 member states. The second phase was an analytical report on the state-of-the-art evaluation

methods and procedures identified in the first phase. The chairman of ENQA, Mr. Thune (2002, 3) expressed his hope that the project would result in an answer to the question whether there is a possibility of identifying the extent of a shared protocol of quality assurance among ENQA members. This question was posed at the ENQA General Assembly in May 2002.

Auditing and measurement, standardisation and transparency of evaluations are all elements of quality assurance (Murgatroyd and Morgan 1993; Sallis 1993). However, the question arises: how could then be said that there is no pressure, only moral obligation (as in form of the Bologna Declaration, for instance), where 'moral' sounds like a passive acceptance of ideas with no consequent change in practice – especially if shared protocols are eventually to be designed in the future or there is at least an attempt to explore this option? In the last decade, interest in quality determination and assurance, especially in evaluation as a steering mechanism and a tool of improvement, has increased remarkably in Europe. According to many authors, the cause of these tendencies is changing conditions in which higher education institutions function (Wolff 1997; Brennan and Shah 2000; Scheele, Maassen, and Westerheijden 1998). To list some of the facts:

- Due to extreme increase in the number of enrolled students, higher education has changed from elite into mass system.
- Europe is an open educational market where an increasing number of students spend one or even two semesters during their studies abroad, so more transparency and availability of information about institutions and programmes is necessary.
- Slowing down centralization mechanisms at the level of school ministries leaves more decisions to higher education institutions.
- The government and other stakeholders require higher education institutions to assume greater responsibility for quality and efficiency (the value for money perspective).

All of these facts indicate that the changed conditions also impose the need for better leadership and management systems. Higher education institutions should be able to cope with the continuously changing conditions and expectations. The role of managers in aca-

demic and/or administrative position in such development-oriented organisations is becoming more and more important.

About the Research

Research Topic: Self-Evaluation

One of the major research problems of this study was to examine the possibility of setting up a quality determination and assurance system (model) within my institution, one that would be transparent and comparable to others. I chose self-evaluation as the best method for achieving quality in a higher education institution and its establishment and implementation through an action research. In higher education, self-evaluation has proved to be one of the most appropriate quality assurance strategies. But the purpose of evaluation procedures in relation to the 'ownership' of evaluation systems remains a highly debated issue. Evaluation performed by the government is usually external and bureaucratic by approach; quality is evaluated according to pre-defined external standards and with focus on control and accountability. On the other hand, evaluation performed by a higher education institution can be understood as an internal approach with an emphasis on 'excellence with purpose' which ensures that quality is established as a result of institutionally stated aims and goals. In this case the focus is on the results and processes improvement – the functioning of the institution.

Ownership is a content-intensive concept. Many theoreticians of the participatory management often emphasize the importance of organisational culture, vision, mission and strategic management (Tavčar 1997; 2002; Hamel and Prahalad 1994; Collins and Porras 1997). The participatory management assumes that people – often in the sense of the 'staff' – share or 'own' the same values, directions, and vision of an organisation because the process of designing the mission statement is based on participation of all stakeholders.

In this context, it would be possible to express a reasonable doubt about the 'equality' of meaning, values and attitudes, as well as expectations and guidelines for all employees as well as other participants in the organization. The question of the meaning of the (often unjustified) general quantifier 'all' in the present environment appears as well. My main criticism of participatory leadership theory in relation to quality refers to it using the processes in an instrumental way to get the 'right' outcomes. Participatory leadership is often

seen as the most effective method by which the process leads to the 'sameness' of the result. In other words, if there is no (measurable, tangible) outcome, the process is not valued. That explains my fo-cusing on processes, social dynamics and interactions that introduce different views into processes and enable the co-creation of mean-ings, sometimes with no measurable outcomes in a short run.

This thesis defines self-evaluation as a process being about pro-cesses itself, while the aims of the research are gaining in-depth knowledge and understanding about processes of institutional self-evaluation as well as implementing the same processes on a study-case of a selected higher education institution. I have given the 'case' choice a lot of thought. One possibility would be to just enter an insti-tution, study it and leave it upon completing the research, suggesting an appropriate 'model' (in the present study single quotation marks indicate the specific use of the term) for that particular organisa-tion. Yet, I felt the need to carry out the study in 'my' organisation and take the path of studying and changing or co-creating a higher education organization. As a practitioner, I decided to do an action research – marking an interwoven approach to theory and practice where change (of both) is incorporated in the research process.

Methodology: Action Research

My role of a manager in a higher education institution gave me the opportunity to study the implementation of self-evaluation proce-dures at the College of Management (1995–2002) and later at the Faculty of Management (from 2003) and thus to carry out an effective case study. I was particularly challenged by the methodological de-sign of the research itself. I designed a case study around the process of institutional self-evaluation, as an organic approach to improve-ment in changing environment, with particular focus on reciprocal effects concerning the study itself and its relationship with manage-ment issues. The research is mainly qualitative by nature and based on the established methodology of the action research (Elliot 1991; Carr and Kemmis 1995; Kemmis and McTaggart 2000). Many differ-ent methods were used to collect data, among them survey, interview, observation, documentation analysis, etc.

Given the fact that he gap between theory and practice is partic-ularly problematic in social sciences (Confrey 1987), the action re-search is considered to be an active approach which bridges this gap.

Moreover, most action research is intended for development and improvement of institutional practices and for understanding them. The action research approach suited the aims of my study – to set up a 'model' of self-evaluation that would work in practice. It enabled me to:

- examine the evaluation results with special attention to the impact that these developments may have on the internal processes of quality improvement;
- observe the impact of the evaluation process on implementing changes in college policies and practice (management team and researchers, teachers, etc.), and on organisational structure;
- explain the leadership and management challenges that the institution faces as a result of the 'sustainable development' measures as well as to start developing college policies and practices;
- systematically develop the evaluation process (processes, evaluation methods and techniques) with respect to (on-going) past results.

I initially organised action research in three cycles; one cycle should represent one academic year. But during the study the need for a fourth cycle emerged. The four cycles were fully completed, so the action research reflects four academic years between 1996 and 2000. Data collection and analysis were continuous and often simultaneous. That allowed me to better understand the emerging issues and issues that led to new data.

The classical approach in writing an action research is through its cycles, and within each cycle, the three basic action research 'routines' are depicted: 'look,' 'think' and 'act' (Stringer 1996). The cycles are similar by structure and consist of the following:

- *description* of the evaluation procedure (instruments or methods and the evaluation process from data gathering to the analysis and report),
- *reflection* on the evaluation process and current management practice in connection with corresponding theories,
- *suggestions* for changes in the next cycle of the evaluation process and for changes in the management practice.

I have documented the study very carefully because, according to

Guba and Lincoln (1989), the purpose of qualitative study is to accumulate sufficient knowledge that could lead to understanding. The work done in these four years of action research study can be compared to their approaches to evaluation. They define them as four 'generations: the first one being measurement-oriented, the second one description-oriented, the third one judgement-oriented, whereas the fourth, being the most mature, is about the evaluation whose key dynamic is negotiation' (p. 9). The first idea was to arrange empirical data, collected in surveys, observations, formal and informal interviews, meetings, etc. in that particular generation of students. Later, I thought it would be more appropriate to divide them into two levels: the 'technical' (the 1st and the 2nd cycle of the action research) and the 'social' (the 3rd and the 4th cycle of the action research).

This study has no standard literature review. A great amount of data, events and processes recorded in its course were complemented with theoretical extracts on emerging topics. To study in greater detail, I chose those of 'quality' and 'academic community,' even though I cannot really pinpoint the criteria for this rather subjective decision. I found these two topics essential for a newly established institution that wanted to be involved in the so-called 'European flow' of higher education. I also felt these topics to be particularly relevant for higher education in the Slovenian context which, as I have noticed, has a strong culture of above mentioned) 'dovecotes' and academic freedom at the same time. However, similarly important justifications could also be found for other topics, e.g. management of a higher education institution and related changes, the topic that has already been researched in other European countries. Organisational design could also be a suitable topic. I would actually be able to list several other topics emerging from my study and each could be supported by weighty arguments. However, what seems to be the most important is the fact that the richness of data available from this research enables the reader to relate them to various theories, while myself being the author only deal with two topics from the theoretical point of view.

The action research knows neither end nor deadline that would encourage the end of data collection and analysis. It is therefore understandable that by institutionalising of certain processes, some new issues emerged as well. After four years – or cycles – I concluded my research, but the processes of reflexivity, development and evaluation continued. No standard form 'conclusions' are based on this

study, yet I do bring up the issue of emerging themes and try to show the reader where my process-focused reflexivity brought me to – to a 'non-model' of self-evaluation which is explained in its concluding part.

'I' in the Research

This study is a highly personal engagement in the action research within an organisation where research and management are intimately interlinked. In one of the latter chapters, issues revolving around multiple roles and power relations are discussed in more detail. In the research framework, it should also be emphasized that the deconstruction of multiple roles contributes to the trustworthiness and credibility (Merriam 1998; Guba and Lincoln 1989) of this study. The question of power (Foucault 1977; 1988) and interweaving roles of multiple 'I's' (Peshkin 1988) were my major considerations and hesitations when deciding upon the research design and the topic. Yet, as a maths teacher by my bachelor degree, and as a practitioner at heart I saw great potential to connect practice and theory within the action research. The role of a manager enabled me to write a 'useful' study, at least from the 'case study' point of view. I was interested in 'my' institution only, and had no intention to build a national system of evaluation. I wanted to get a better insight into processes in 'our' school and to implement concrete changes there.

Management position was of a great help (access to people and resources as well as authorisation to introduce changes, etc.) but also a hindrance (ethical issues, for example) to my research. But at least in the beginning I was able to could rely on theoreticians such as Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998) as well as Guba and Lincoln (1989) emphasizing the importance of researchers and practitioners collaborating in the organizational context of reforms and changes. Huberman's study (in Day 1997) of efforts to disseminate the large-scale national projects of applied research empirically supports the importance of researchers' involvement in the organisational reform contexts. From that, Day (1997, 199) concludes that 'research is more likely to have a strong conceptual influence on practitioners when researchers are active in the context where innovation is an ongoing process.'

During the empirical-practical study as well as during my writing, I was concerned about people in the institution. I devoted quite a lot of my energy to their anonymity, only to find it almost impossible.

Anyone knowing the organization described and reading my work in order to recognize the people in it should be able to identify at least some of them, as well as their contribution to development of the organization. Yet, I want to remind the reader that it is not primarily about people – the 'good' and the 'bad' – it is rather about social processes, the construction of meanings and deconstruction of practice critically reflected through the 'eyes' of the researcher, who sees every individual in the organisation as a valuable participant and a carrier of processes and changes.

Some results of this study are presented in tables and diagrams, some qualitative other quantitative. The latter seeks to correlate, clarify and reduce information while the former play quite a different role by trying to open up complexity that written language might close. To bring this complexity to the surface, we have to be aware of limitations of both language and narrative, due to their linear connotation. Diagrams are a different intellectual demand. Reading them may be less linear, and more 'exploratory.' Are they, therefore, more 'readerly' than 'writerly' objects as they make a greater demand on the reader to make sense of representation that does not hide its metaphorical nature in the ways in which 'ordinary' prose may do?

Higher Education in Slovenia

This chapter is my insight into higher education and is supposed to contribute to better understanding of this study and its contextual placement in the environment and circumstances. Political and economic changes in Slovenia in the last ten years have also marked the education system area. Changes in the Slovenian higher education system are also part of changes that were initiated by prospective European Union entry. A great deal of these changes is related to the mobility of students and teachers and is reflected in the transparency and comparability of educational programmes through credit system, implementing quality assurance systems and so on.

I also present some facts on the College of Management as well as on the Faculty of Management being its later form, from the foundation of this institution in 1995 to 2004. Since the school is in fact the main subject of my case study, this data is essential for the understanding of my action research.

The changes in higher education started in 1993, when the new Higher Education Act was adopted (Zakon o visokem šolstvu 1993).

TABLE 1.1   Data on Higher Education

	1995/1996		1999/2000	
	Public	Private	Public	Private
Higher education institutions	3	2	3	7
Universities (Lj + Mb)	1 + 1	0	1 + 1	0
Faculties	20 + 9	0	20 + 9	0
Professional HE	3 + 1	0	3 + 1	0
Academies	3 + 0	0	3 + 0	0
Independent HE institutions	1	2	1	7
Faculties	0	1	0	2
Professional HE	1	1	1	5
Teachers (FTE)	2,102	–	1,788	61
Assistants (FTE)		–	1,776	42
Undergraduate students (total)	45,738	213	73,631	3,978
Short-type HE (2-year)	11,703	0	478	0
Professional HE	3,827	213	31,167	3,978
University programmes	30,208	0	41,986	–
Post-graduate students (total)	1,957	–	2,953	53

NOTES   Adapted from Plevnik and Žižmond (2000).

The basic principles on higher education are 'the autonomy of universities and other higher education institutions, deregulation, public accountability, equal opportunities, integrity of research and teaching and freedom to establish public and private higher education institutions.'

The reform of the Slovenian system of education has called for a considerable increase in spending. The share of public expenditure for education in 1992 amounted to 4.7% of GDP and in the year 2000 it increased to 6%, which is the average for the OECD countries. Nevertheless, our higher education had little benefit from the growing resources. In 2002, for example, 1.16% GDP has been allotted to the system of higher education, the average percentage in the OECD countries being 1.7% GDP. The education system in Slovenia is almost fully financed from the state budget.

Higher education activities are regulated by a separate act and in this context, more than 300 programmes exist, organised at two levels, undergraduate and postgraduate. Higher education has a twin-track structure at the undergraduate level: academically oriented

university studies (four to six years) and higher professional studies (three to four years). In 1996/1997, all study programmes of the former two-year colleges were abolished and professional higher education programmes were introduced (from 1995/1996). At the graduate level, students receive either a second professional degree – *specializacija* – or a science degree – *magisterij* or *doktorat*. The new legislation from May 2004, in accordance with the Bologna Declaration, introduces a three-stage study.

Institutions of higher education include universities, faculties, academies of art and professional higher education institutions. All of these institutions can be founded by the state as public or by any other body as private. Higher education institutions which are not part of the University are independent higher education institutions. It is difficult to present the University as an organisational and administrative entity or unit because its members (a common name for faculties, art academies and higher vocational colleges belonging to it) are 'partly autonomous' – mainly in operating with non-budgetary income.

The first independent higher education institution was established in 1994 and the College of Management in 1995. Most private higher education institutions are co-funded by the state, a kind of anomaly, since they are private institutions with state funding. By the year 2000, independent higher education institutions received considerable moral support from the government. This can be seen as a political incentive, and it is completely understandable that, after being established, those institutions received certain financial support. On the other hand, the same phenomenon can be understood as 'forcedly taking' money from universities and enabling competition between institutions. Support for such institutions in the Primorska region was part of the project for the establishment of a third university, which was finalised in 2003.

Development of Higher Education

In the historical perspective, the first university in Slovenia was founded after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1919, the University of Ljubljana was established with five faculties: Arts, Law, Medicine, Theology and Technical. The first period in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was not favourable to university development. Shorter, two-year courses were added to classical four-year courses

later on. Until the 1960s, Slovene higher education system only had one university, so there was no academic competition. After 1960, some individual schools were developed in North-Eastern Slovenia and in 1975 the University of Maribor was established. At that time, the legal status of economic activities was regulated by a socialist self-management system, having an impact on the status of higher education institutions as well. The University was a self-managing community of higher education institutions (independent members), established by the state that nominated the rector. The central power of the University was limited and most important decisions concerning curricula, development of science and other academic tasks were formally made by the members of the University. Zgaga (1998), discussing the situation in university education, argues that in the 1980s we had a weak and unintegrated university on the one hand, and powerful and independent faculties on the other. At the same time, there was a considerable lack of autonomy in academic affairs.

These problems culminated with the Career-Oriented Education Act in 1980 (Zakon o usmerjenem izobraževanju 1980), which regulated higher education as well as the entire secondary education sector and which basic idea was that all education should be work and vocation-oriented. The Career-Oriented Education Act was altered in 1989. Both Universities were given more autonomy in the academic sphere – the 'power' shifted from the state to the academics – professors. The described situation, along with the political changes in 1990s, was the main reason for introducing new legislation.

The legal basis for the existing higher education system is written in the Constitution, which recognises the right of universities and other higher education institutions to act autonomously, within the limits set by the law. The Higher Education Act in 1993 introduced many changes, among them the possibility of establishing private higher education institutions, the autonomy of higher education institutions, regulations concerning status and curricula (accreditation, which is directly or indirectly related to the quality of higher education) and a general operation framework.

In 1997/1998, the first draft of the National Strategy for Higher Education in Slovenia, including directions, visions, strategies and development plans for the next five years, was made. The Parliament adopted it on 26th February 2002 (Nacionalni program visokega šolstva Republike Slovenije 2002). Its aims clearly show that the State

demands for the efficiency of post-secondary education got signifi-
cantly greater. The most important are the following:

- Within the next five years (at that time), one quarter of the em-
  ployed population should have a degree in higher or postgradu-
  ate education.
- In the coming decade (at that time), 35 per 1000 individuals
  should study.
- The number of places available for enrolment should increase
  and enrolment restrictions for most study programmes should
  be gradually phased out in the majority of study programmes.
- The co-funding of part-time students should be introduced.
- The number of students and graduates of post-graduate studies
  should at least double.
- Conditions for successful work of universities and independent
  HE institutions should be provided.
- A decentralised network of higher education institutions should
  be encouraged as well as the establishment of the University of
  Primorska.
- Co-operation between higher education institutions and the
  economy should be promoted.
- International co-operation should be enhanced, the system of
  scholarships should improve and modernise, the standard of liv-
  ing for students should rise

The National Strategy drew attention to the fact that higher educa-
tion is a public good and should therefore offer a multitude of study
programmes in order to meet the varying needs of individuals, the
demands of education as such, and those of the labour market. Some
strategies for achieving the listed aims were proposed:

- introduction of a credit system,
- the diploma supplement (a compulsory document describing the
  national education system, higher education institution, study
  programme and student's assessments),
- providing academic quality,
- internationally comparable and competitive study programmes
  that assure quality and employability,
- life-long learning.

Legal Framework of Higher Education and Quality

Responsibility for securing minimum standards (in the form of accreditation procedures) in higher education lies with the Council for Higher Education of the Republic of Slovenia. This is the body of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and consists of representatives of universities, independent higher education institutions and experts. It is authorised for accreditation of new higher education institutions and study programmes.

According to the Higher Education Act from 1993, amended in 1999 (Zakon o spremembah in dopolnitvah zakona o visokem šolstvu (zvis-a)) and 2004 (Zakon o spremembah in dopolnitvah zakona o visokem šolstvu (zvis-d)), universities and independent higher education institutions are legal entities. They have the right to independently regulate their internal organisation and operations on the basis of their own statute. They are fully autonomous in their employment policy decision-making, in formulation of their criteria for awarding academic titles and in design of internationally comparable study programmes. Defining the status of universities, especially the relationship between the university and its member institutions has been subject to intense discussion. Until 1993, all university members were legal entities. Although in 1993 the law changed their status, they continued to benefit from their legal independence – contrary to the law – in particular by retaining a separate giro account. With legislative changes in 1999, members were again given partial autonomy, especially in the management of non-budgetary sources.

Ministry of Science in 2000) was preparing a new funding system from 1990 and it came into force in January 2004. In the academic year 2002/2003, the state was still financing higher education institutions on the basis of teaching hours in full-time students (the so-called 'regular students') courses, while part-time students (the so-called 'irregular students') were paying full price for their studies. For public institutions, the state also ensured the working conditions such as space and material costs. In addition to the number of teaching hours, the new system also took into account the number of students and graduates.

Accordingly to the Higher Education Act, the university should consist of the following bodies: the rector, the senate, the board of directors, the academy assembly and the student council. Academic assemblies were introduced by a law change in 1999, the first being

formed in 2000. The assembly consists of all members of the teaching staff, and its most important task is the election of the senate. The bodies of the university members or an independent higher education institution are: the dean (and director), the board of directors, the academic assembly and the student council. Depending on the nature of the activities and the scope of the work of the higher education institution, the statute may stipulate the separation of the function of managing professional work and the managerial function. The Statute then determines the competence of the professional manager (dean) and the powers of the management body (director).

The domain of quality is partly covered by the accreditation system but also left open to H E institutions that are supposed to set up their own systems for evaluation of the performance of their activities. The Erfurt Declaration on University Autonomy imposes an obligation regarding quality, that the state should respect and protect academic freedom and academic autonomy as well as allow higher education institutions to monitor the quality and to set up their own standards (Wolff 1997). Accordingly, a higher education institution is supposed to ensure transparency on the basis of self-regulation and accountability. We can say that both provisions are actually integrated in Slovenian legislation. Regarding the problems of quality, attention should be drawn to Article 80 of the Higher Education Act from 1993 which states that the quality and effectiveness of the educational, scientific and research, artistic as well as professional activities of higher education institutions should be monitored and evaluated by the Higher Education Quality Assessment Commission created by higher education institutions in the Republic of Slovenia.

The above-mentioned commission consists of representatives of all scientific and art disciplines and professional fields. The Commission should also obtain the opinion of students and acts according to the rules determined in co-operation with senates of higher education institutions and according to criteria defined by the Council for Higher Education of the Republic of Slovenia in co-operation with The Council of Science and Technology of the Republic of Slovenia.

Once a year, the Commission reports to the senates of the higher education institutions, to the Council for Higher Education of the Republic of Slovenia and to the Council of Science and Technology of the Republic of Slovenia. The report is to be publicly disseminated (Zgaga 1998, 141).

The Commission was established by higher education institutions in 1996 at the initiative of the Ministry. The work and the role of this Commission will be reflected on and discussed further in this study because it is closely related to the research topic and also – undoubtedly – because I had the opportunity to be its member. Between 1997 and 1999, a lot was going on in its context – many projects, conferences and meetings were held. The Commission distributed information about data and guidelines exchanged with the CRE (European Rectors' Conference), about approaches to evaluation and about the quality assurance with PHARE project – the latter being about the guidelines for self-evaluation of the institution and programmes. The chairman of the Commission was also a member of the CRE group of experts on evaluation and made intensive efforts for progress in the field of self-evaluation in Slovenia. In the beginning, these efforts were not taken seriously by the faculties, so the following example is interesting: in December 1998, the Commission sent a letter to all deans, ordering them to design and implement a programme of institutional self-evaluation, and then to report to the National Commission for the Quality of Higher Education. HE institutions did not respond, which to me was not surprising, as HE institutions are traditionally reluctant to follow orders and instructions. Yet, it was a challenge for me and for the College to find a place and approach to evaluation, preferably self-evaluation, in order to develop awareness of the importance or – to quote Peters and Waterman (1982), to get on the path of the 'search of excellence.'

Negotiations between the state, the management of both Universities, and the University Trade Unions over salaries and a forthcoming strike in 1997/1998 were also quality-related issues. In June 1998, negotiations ended by signing an agreement on the salary increase. The signatory parties have set themselves the task of doing everything in their power to reach a higher efficiency level in higher education and to introduce a new way of financing at the same time.

The second part of the agreement was a well-rounded summary of issues to be tackled by higher education: the universities should ensure links among teaching and research institutions as well as modernisation and high quality of programmes. A credit system for the evaluation of study programmes should be introduced. The document also addressed issues such as the modernisation of management, separation of academic and management function, appoint-

ment of professors and assistants, their status and promotion, improvement of their teaching and learning activities as well as introduction of regular institutional quality assessment system.

In accordance with this agreement, the Government started to ensure sufficient financial resources as early as 1998 for the gradual increase in salaries, 25% in four years. Universities dealt with the drop-out rate. The survey (Bevc 2001) showed that only 44% of the enrolled generation successfully completed their studies, with an average study period of 8 years. Data was relevant for discussing accountability for public funds and related to introduction of a new financial mechanism. I strongly believe that such financial dependence could influence HE institutions pushing towards better performance. In this respect, this type of financing is just an emerging form of external control and enhanced accountability. Much slower were the changes observed in the quality field. The chairman of the Commission resigned in spring 2000, the official reason being disagreement over the financing of the Commission. From 1996, the Commission had held 14 meetings in the years 1998 and 1999, each of them convened at least twice, because of the lack of a quorum – which can undoubtedly be considered as an indicator of (non) interest in quality. In the autumn of 2000, a new Commission was formed for the next four years. Efforts to prepare institutional reports on self-evaluation continued. In February 2000, some independent HE institutions and both Universities made their own reports on quality public for the first time, but without adopting a common methodology. The reports included information on the number of students and graduates, which slowly began to reveal the effectiveness of higher education institutions. In one of the reports, the Commission called on the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport to establish a National Quality Agency and to start the process to become a member of ENQA (European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education).

In 2004, the Higher Education Act introduced some novelties in this area. It abolished the Higher Education Council as the accrediting body for supervision of quality of higher-education institutions. By December 2005, the government should also establish a public agency for higher education, which would perform both professional and administrative tasks for both councils. After establishing the public agency, the National Commission for the Quality of Higher

Education ceased to function. Despite the establishment of the new Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (November 2004), the areas of higher education and research remained unconnected, both from the organizational and the financial point of view.

In the atmosphere of profound changes at national level and during the process of EU accession (which raised numerous issues concerning the mobility of students and teachers, credit transfer system, diploma nostrification, emphasis on quality assurance and effective management at the institutional level), the College of Management was founded in 1995 and by its functioning my study had also begun.

Characteristics of Selected Case

In order to fully comprehend the action research, the method and the dynamics of the development of a self-evaluation 'model' it is necessary to know and understand some of the selected case characteristics. Data on the College – especially those on the type and scope of activities, the number of students and staff, material conditions and financial management of the school – could help the reader understand its growth and development. I will also present the context or the outer frame of the action research between 1996 and 2000 as well as some recent data for 2004/2005, when the final version of this text was in the making.

The College was founded in 1995 as a private institution, its founders being the Chamber of Commerce in Koper and the municipalities of Piran, Izola and Koper. The foundation of the College was politically-driven, dating back to autumn 1995 – one month before the parliamentary election took place. It has been founded as a professional higher education institution, with teaching as its basic activity. In 1999, we enrolled the first generation in the postgraduate programme Management in Education and two years later, another post-graduate programme, Management in the European Environment, was launched. Research work was encouraged from the beginning and in 2001 we established the Institute of Management Research. The expansion of research activities and the increase in the scope of educational activities with new study programmes also enabled more job openings for higher education teachers. The full scope of activities can be found later in this chapter.

Already in this initial period we managed to establish wide-ranging international co-operation, mostly in the form of interna-

tional projects and concluding bilateral cooperation agreements. We also organised some high-profile international conferences, mostly on general management and management in education. We also became recognizable in the Slovenian higher education area, as the operating flexibility allowed us to introduce certain novelties, such as diploma supplement, the development of a higher education information system, and implementation of ECTS.

The progress of the College in 2001 reached the level that prompted us to prepare a detailed document enabling conversion of the school into a Faculty. Conditions for establishing a Faculty are more demanding, especially with regard on the quality of teaching staff, which is measured by the number of full-time, associate and assistant professors employed on regular basis. The difference between the two statuses is also very important for the institution itself. Higher professional colleges can only carry out professional studies and postgraduate studies of specialization, while faculties can also carry out postgraduate masters and doctoral programmes. We obtained the consent of the Higher Education Council in November 2002 and the College had been transformed into the Faculty of Management (FM). The third Slovenian university was founded in that period as well, and the FM became its member in March 2003.

In 1996, the first two generations of students, namely 112 full-time and 51 part-time students, enrolled in the College. The interest in part-time studies soon began to increase significantly, so we opened additional units: in Maribor, Škofja Loka and Nova Gorica, in 1999 also in Celje. A strong interest in the programmes showed that employers had confidence in our school.

We have been aware of the problem of mass education and therefore sought new ways to maintain healthy and close relations with students through social events like 'brucovanje,' the graduation dance, the diploma ceremony, etc. In June 2002, we introduced a traditional sports event and a student conference in 2004. Commitment was being promoted indirectly by t-shirts, pencils and bags with a school logo – these items were given to all our students every year. From the first generation, special attention was given to study effectiveness increasing activities. An introductory seminar for newcomers was organized as well as additional tutorials for those subjects where results were poor. The concern for the study effectiveness was one of the key areas of the research, serving as a base for the improve-

ment of practice within the scope of self-evaluation. By December 2004, the number of graduates was satisfactory, full-time students graduated in the average of 4.3 years and part-time students in 5.4 years.

Paying attention to the study efficiency was becoming increasingly important, mostly because of the transition to a new system of financing – based on a study success rate (number of graduates). A number of discussions on the introduction of a new method have shown that here was no ideal formula for financing higher education and many authors (e.g. Brown and Wolf 1993, as well as Jongbloed and van der Knoop 1999) prove that the state can significantly influence the quality of higher education institutions through appropriate differential measures of fund allocation. This works according to the principle of control and gives the system certain acceleration – a push in the selected direction.

In 1999/2000, the first cohort of students was enrolled in a post-graduate specialist programme, Management in Education, simultaneously at Manchester Metropolitan University as part of a licensing agreement. In 2001/2002 we initiated another specialisation programme: Management in the European Environment. Since the College was authorised to implement specialist courses only, we estimated that we should be very pleased with the enrolment and number of our post-graduate students – there were about 120 per year. In general, interest and enrolment in post-graduate study programmes in Slovenia has been growing lately.

As studies leading to a Master's or Doctorate degree have, from 1999 onwards, partly been co-financed by the state (about 80%), they seem to attract the most students. In 2004/2005, with the transformation into the faculty, we started to conduct masters and doctoral studies in the field of management. FM was one of the five Slovenian faculties that would enrol students in the so-called Bologna programmes in 2005/2006, updated in line with the new Higher Education Act from 2004 (Zakon o spremembah in dopolnitvah zakona o visokem šolstvu (ZVIS-D)).

In 1996, we started with a modest group of higher education teachers and co-workers. Among the full-time employed teachers, only one held a PHD. In the following years, the number of teachers increased in proportion to the level of school activity, annually there were also more regular employees and fewer contractors. There were a total

of 12 teachers and co-workers at the beginning of the study, which increased to 51 in its last year.

In 2001, we acquired the first national research project and for the first time a researcher was employed. In 1996, nine people altogether were employed, twelve three years later, then the number of full-time employees began to rise rapidly. Employment and habilitation procedures of a higher education teacher and associate are one of the autonomous areas of higher education institutions. From the very beginning, the careful selection of assistants, as well as the professional training and development of all employees, have been our primary concerns. I was well aware of the fact that professionally competent colleagues are one of the key factors for quality performance of every single school activity. We encouraged studies in master's and doctoral programmes, various functional educations, participation at various conferences and seminars and guided self-education. In addition, we held several in-service training courses on various topics of higher education didactics. Especially younger colleagues were encouraged to publish their work, write scientific papers and other publications. By presenting papers, our teachers have taken active part at various scientific and professional conferences at home and abroad. Participation has been rising every year, which confirmed greater professional competence of employees (by improving their own knowledge) and represented the link with the latest scientific findings at home and abroad. More and more often, our teachers attended those conferences as special guest lecturers.

Ensuring teachers' and co-worker s' professional development is another priority, and an important point of interest in my action research study, in terms of the practice improvement as well as in terms of its significance in self-evaluation. In 1998, we started systematically introducing in-service workshops, in the field of higher education didactics – different professional topics such as knowledge examination and assessment, mentoring and tutoring, research and projects. These one-day consultations expanded later on. In 2000, such three-day meetings outside Koper were called 'annual consultation of higher education teachers and colleagues' and have by now become a tradition. From 2003 onwards, consultations are organised as two-day meetings twice a year (in February and September). One of our teachers summarised the in-service by saying: 'The highest value of these days is in building shared understanding.' I believe that such

events can significantly contribute to building a professional and autonomous academic community.

The professional excursions that involve visiting H E institutions abroad have also become a tradition: Centre for H E Studies in Prague in 1998; University of St. Gallen, Switzerland in 1999; University of Verona in 2000; Central European University Budapest in 2001; University of Bologna in 2002; University of Salzburg in 2003. In 2004, we visited Tuzla in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Such combining of professional interests with social activities proved to be extremely beneficial for establishing co-operation and for general improvement of the organization. In 2000, we organised the first 'College conference' in order to offer an additional opportunity to encourage employees to perform well in the scientific and research field. In November 2003, it expanded into an international scientific conference.

The first College building was a state-owned one. We had to purchase all equipment from our own resources, hence financial problems during our first year. Later on, we gradually set up the premises, but also had to rent classrooms from nearby schools as the number of students increased. In 2002/2003 we had about 2000 m2 (own and borrowed) at our home-office in Koper, that is 4 m2 per student. Already in our very first year we founded the library and by 1997, there were 615 books and 12 magazines available, in 2000, around 4000 books and 108 magazines, and in 2004, there were 16,000 books and 348 magazines available. Every year, the number of visitors – students and external users – increased. The College publishing house was established in the academic year 1997/1998. During the first few years, mainly study material was published. After 2000, we published some commercially successful monographs. Promotion of research activities coincided with an ambitious project – publication of scientific journals on management. In 2003, the first two issues of the international research magazine *Managing Global Transitions* were published. In 2004, the F M publishing house was registered as a scientific publishing company and the magazine was included in some national and international databases and successfully graded.

The College obtained relatively small subsidies for implementing its full-time and part-time undergraduate programmes, sufficient for salaries only, but not to cover material costs. In 1997 we were confronted with increasing financial problems but managed to solve them by enrolment of part-time students. We have always operated

economically; revenue and expenditure well balanced. The income from the state budget constituted about 30% of all the revenues. The financial means obtained at the market consisted mostly of college-fee payments from part-time students and to a lesser extent of income from various projects. Since 2002, the share of funds from research projects had been rising rapidly, reaching 10% in 2004.

The organisational structure of the College has been changing in accordance with the growth of activities, their scope and number. From the very beginning, the leadership of the school was divided in two parts: academic function – the dean and administrative function – the director. So far, this division has proved to be appropriate and successful. Mintzberg (2001) discusses the parallel hierarchies in professional bureaucracy as well as the power of the dean and executive director in a higher education institution. He argues that the professional administrator may not be able to supervise the experts directly, but has considerable indirect influence through the structure of the organization and through its professional services (p. 180). In 2001 the organisational structure of the institution slightly changed due to the rearrangement of assignment distribution among the non-teaching staff and from the extension of activities to the field of research. This organizational structure was kept after FM joined the University of Primorska.

The idea of establishing the College emerged in June 1995. In December 1995, I was nominated the Acting Dean. In 1998 I became the Director and in 2002 started the new term of office. During this process, I have tried to use the opportunities of a newly established institution, mostly because of highly motivated staff and the flexibility of a small organisation. I put a lot of emphasis on staff development as well as students' success and satisfaction. The formation of an academic community was the hardest as well as the most challenging part of my job. The decision to write a doctoral thesis on self-evaluation in HE institution has additionally strengthened the bond between my personal life and my official duty to manage the College. I decided to design my study as an action research that would change practice and reflect it at the same time.

Chapter Two

Action Research in Theory and Practice

This chapter describes the methodological approach to the study that should be considered from at least two different aspects. One of them is methodology in relation to Slovenian tradition of research in social sciences and the other is the subjective aspect of the choice of design and implementation of the study. The second one reflects my own choice and preferences in designing the study. In the following sections I discuss the development of the research approach, mainly striving to place it in the Slovene tradition of research in social sciences with a special emphasis on intercultural differences.

Slovene Tradition of Research in Social Sciences

The question of the tradition is necessarily related to epistemological questions about science – in terms of what counts as knowledge and evidence – and the nature of truth. Is it universal and our world of science only has to reveal it, or as Ryan (1999) discusses it, our knowledge is socially constructed and embedded? I advocate Stronach's (1997) relativistic position that there is no universal truth. However, the Slovenian tradition of understanding science is different. Ule (1992) discusses analytical philosophy and draws attention to qualities that are characteristic for science, such as: precision, organisation, formalisation and special language. I have to add the notion of multiple meanings and their construction, which to me are particularly relevant aspects of social studies. People construct meanings in their interactions but the nature of interactions can be exclusive, not only inclusive. Exclusion is an instrument on the basis of which, by using the special language of a profession, experts confirm or legitimize their expertise and make it difficult for non-professionals to challenge their authority or at least understand the foundations of a particular profession. This exclusivist, oligarchic tendency is discussed in Stronach et al. (2002), who conclude that it is about an unresolvable tension between polarities and that all what remains is a struggle for an unachievable, simple, clear position.

Ule (1992) discusses Feyerabend and his holistic understanding of science, yet does not provide a discussion of his own standpoints. Štern (2001) doubts that Slovenian researchers had ever really touched the idea of multiple perspectives and the relationship between subjectivity and objectivity in order to bring a dimension of valuation into scientific discussion. He also claims that Slovenian university is a 'sanctuary of solid science,' which has not yet been even slightly touched by globally renowned philosophical concepts, such as Popper's or Feyerabend's. It is supposed to be unsusceptible to the basic message of the world's most important theorists of science: one issue may be explained by two (or even more) completely dissimilar and conflicting hypotheses, each having the potential to be equally narratory and beneficial. Štern notes the wide incompatibility of Slovene institutionalised scientific thought with the fact that we might never know the truth since various explanations would keep interweaving, contesting and winning virtually into infinity and then, at their own pace, they might diverge again.

Many insights into Slovene social research show that quantitative research is more valued than qualitative. The influential Slovenian researcher Toš (1988) even refers to qualitative and action research as merely inferior alternatives. He does not consider them to be really defensible because they cannot meet the standards of scientific research, such as validity, reliability and generalisation. He believes that the alternative paradigm, as seen through the concept of action research, is a relatively new phenomenon in the practice of social research and that consequently there are only a few works available to prove the feasibility of such alternative methodological principles. He does not provide an extensive discussion of these few researches but prefers to deepen the theoretical discussion on the basic principles of the so-called alternative research method and the role of a researcher, which is more subjective due to the use of non-standardised approaches and data collection methods if compared to scientific (positivistic) research.

Kirn (1996) and Ule (1996) discuss the nature of science within this Slovenian discourse. Kirn is certain that qualitative research is part of 'pseudo-science,' such as astrology, for example. It deals with problems beyond the scientific research. Ule, on the other hand, discusses the reduction of science to the basic principles of physics. He argues that one of the most important questions is related to

the monopoly of traditionally respected sciences (physics) over social sciences. I personally think that in this non-implemented dialogue, while standing apart, we simply speak about different worlds, one of nature and the other of societies and people. Only by different and multiple ways of research can we bring to the surface the richness of human and social action that cannot be explained by simple cause-effect relations. Sagadin (1993) and Marentič Požarnik (2001) also discuss the applicability and appropriateness of action research and its results in the Slovenian context. A special seminar on the subject of the action research and the qualitative paradigm was organised by the Slovenian Association of Pedagogues in the 1980. While Marentič Požarnik warmly greeted the action research, Sagadin cautiously expressed his opposition. Nevertheless, in the past decade, several practical projects in the field of education were based on the action research.

The introduction of evaluation studies to Slovenia provoked a similar conflict among researchers. Readers would be able to judge for themselves in what way the traditional scientific views are still reflected in the field of research and how significant their influence is. In March 1999, the Slovenian government expressed its concern about the evaluation of changes in the school system by appointing a State Commission in charge of the evaluation of new programmes at pre-university level. When Zgaga was the Minister of Education in Sport, he justified the need for evaluation at the national level. It was supposed to be an analytical reflection on performed tasks, including newly adopted and implemented programmes and syllabi. Evaluation should be performed in co-operation with schools, teachers and certain state institutions and should be based on methodology adopted by the State Commission. The result of evaluation studies would show if new curriculum solutions (at the programme level) and syllabi or any other elements needed to be completed or changed (Zgaga 2000).

The first dispute over evaluation, more specifically the evaluators, occurred between the State Commission and the National Education Institute in March 2000. Several polemic articles were published in newspapers and the Ministry decided that the State Commission should monitor the so-called objective, scientifically evaluated curricular restructuring and the National Education Institute should implement it. In May 2000, when the Minister was replaced, the State

Commission was terminated with explanation that there was no legal basis for its work. Marentič Požarnik (2000) commented that, among other, it was all about different views on aims and philosophy of evaluation. There was a question whether autocratic, bureaucratic or democratic evaluation would be implemented? (The first one is done by researchers for their colleagues, the second one is done for government employees, and the third one is for dialogue with the teachers and others involved.) Unfortunately, in the process that was supposed to be coordinative, a lot of valuable energy of experts was lost on non-constructive opposition. Persistence on insurmountable differences between the 'local' monitoring and 'hard' scientifically designed evaluation did not contribute favourably to the topic. According to Marentič Požarnik, an opportunity for a tolerant professional dialogue was lost.

Qualitative Approach

This study is based on a qualitative research paradigm, although this may not at all be a real paradigmatic relationship, since some forms of qualitative research (e.g. Glaser and Strauss 1967) can be considered positivistic, and some forms of quantification are more in line with naturalistic methods. Guba and Lincoln (1994) claim that selection of the paradigm depends on the researcher's view of the world, which is a set of basic assumptions which deal with questions of primary principles. Hughes (1990) states that paradigms are constructed around basic ontological, epistemological and methodological questions. Hence this study reflects my view of the world, a world of multiple realities as well my understanding of evidences and truths that are not universal but appear and form in interpersonal activities and social actions. Peshkin (1988) mentions the notions of 'subjectivity' and 'multiple I's,' which, in my study, apply to the whole methodology selection process and express the conflicting and divergent views of the world.

Considering my higher education, I can say with certainty that my view of the world was strongly shaped by mathematics and its particular development of evidence and truth. However, working in education as a teacher and as a director of a higher education institution left me with intensive dilemmas and questions about institutions and people supposedly submitted to the same rules and regulations as the natural sciences. When I thought about the study of institu-

tional self-evaluation, I soon opted for qualitative study. Not because I really believed that this paradigm best corresponds to my view of the world, but because I do accept and understand that a qualitative paradigm might bring about the best motivation and participation in people involved in this research and the functioning of the institution simultaneously. So I designed the study as a case study and used an action research approach. But before I theoretically justify the appropriateness of the choice of methodology and research techniques for this study, I must also draw attention to the constant internal tensions during the research.

On the one hand, I had many dilemmas about how to reach a single and absolute conclusion and how to define the way of strategic planning and management that would be 'the best' for the institution. On the other hand, the action research, based on the involvement of all employees and on permanently emerging questions, dilemmas, responses and solutions, openly expresses doubt about 'best,' 'universal' and 'perpetual' solutions. McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (1996, 3) argue that the action research can be defined as a work method that:

- is practitioner generated;
- is workplace oriented;
- seeks to improve something;
- starts from a particular situation;
- adopts a trial and error approach;
- accepts that there are no final answers;
- aims to validate any claims it makes by rigorous justification processes.

Action research as a concept is a metaphor as well as a way of work and does not offer a particular methodology by itself (McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead 1996, 2). But it 'opens the space' for many methods, techniques and approaches. At least as far as the research approach is concerned, in terms of design it approaches the case study – a study of a particular situation, a limited system which could be a classroom or a school. I neither feel the need for an unique definition of the action research, nor do I know how to shape it, but I do see the 'action,' especially the concept of 'improvement' (despite it being a value-laden transition from 'bad to good') as an

essential feature of the action research. From this point of view I feel, as a practitioner and a researcher, comfortable with the concept of the action research and its research philosophy expressed through perspective of a reflective practitioner. In my study I try to embrace such interweaving of views and understanding of the world, and the nature of practice and improvement.

Case Study and Action Research

While pondering how to design my study and what to include, I considered two basic standpoints. I wanted to study 'my' institution and make my research a case study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) point to disputes about case study's definition as there are many definitions and approaches of case studies in the contemporary specialized literature. Yin (1994, 1) describes it as 'one of several ways of doing social science research' and says that case study as a research strategy is used in many situations including policy, political science and public administration research. It seems to be appropriate to conduct 'dissertations and theses in the social sciences – the academic disciplines as well as professional fields such as business administration, management science, and social work' (Yin 1994, 1).

Bassey (1999) presents a historical overview of case study's definitions by also mentioning Stake's book *The Art of Case Study Research* (1995) where the author explains that a case study is 'the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances' (Bassey 1999, 27). Creswell (1998) contends that while some consider the case to be an object of study (e.g. Stake, 1995) and others consider it a methodology (e.g. Merriam, 1988), a case study is a longer-term exploration of a 'bound system' or case (or multiple cases) through detailed, in-depth data collection, involving multiple sources of contextually rich information. This system should be bounded by time and place, and plays the role of the case being studied – a programme, an event, an activity, or individuals (Creswell 1998, 61). Merriam (1998, 26) claims that 'case studies, especially qualitative case studies, are prevalent throughout the field of education.' She also suggests that a qualitative case study can be defined in terms of the process of actually carrying out the examination, the unit of analysis (the bounded system, the case), or the end-product. Various authors, such as Stake (1995), Merriam (1998), Yin (1994) and Bassey (1999) offer a historical and developmental

approach to understanding the concept of case study but focus on different elements, for example on the process (Yin 1994).

The idea that the organization renewal in the above-described sense is a 'bounded' system, or a 'case' within which I can study the processes and people involved in creation and implementation of the processes seemed to be appropriate in terms of the research design. Here is to emphasize that I understand the system's boundaries solely from the methodological point of view since I later treat the organisation as an 'open system' – as a complex living organism which interacts with its environment (Morgan 1995). The open system does not imply that the organisation has no boundaries, but rather that the boundaries are permeable, screening inputs and outputs and serve as mechanisms to secure relative independence from the changing external environment and secure at least some stability in functioning (Scott 1981). Katz and Kahn (1978) argued that organisations differ in permeability of their boundaries and that the main function of leaders is to manage this permeability. Goldring (1997), when discussing the boundary between the school and the environment, points out that schools have very permeable boundaries.

The next 'problem' was related to me and my perspective, the purpose of the research and my role in it since I could not assume the role of an observer nor that of a participant. My work in education, my position as a director in the institution concerned as well as my (rather pragmatic) attitude to action required something more. Merely studying the case was not enough because I also wanted to change, influence and even direct some of the processes under study. In my opinion, my role as a researcher, reflective practitioner and change agent required more than a case study limited to asking 'what' and 'how' questions, observing and documents examination. Since I was involved in a decision-making process, the 'case' was able to change and develop continuously. Recognizing the simultaneous role of the researcher and participant, I thought that the study would also be an appropriate action research Therefore, from the role of a researcher and participant in the study, I also considered the action research as an appropriate method for my study.

Davidoff (1997, 100) defines her study on organisation development in a changing political environment as a mix of case study and action research 'used as methodology for change in the process.' Similarly, I also consider my study as a case study. However,

according to the approach, the structure of the study and my role of the researcher it is actually an action research. McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead (1996, 47) argued that action research brought about the redefinition of education theory, the essential part being the move from being grounded in theory to the 'living the educational theory' maxima. This action research can be metaphorically described as an attempt to define and simultaneously implement a 'living management theory.'

Action Research

The action research is a process of inquiry, going on over a longer period of time and in a more intense way than other research methods, with the consequence that action research reports have a specifically narrative structure, located in the developing experience of those involved. Adelman (1993) in his study discusses the origins of action research and Kurt Lewin (1890–1947) is usually referred to as a pioneer in group dynamics and action research who demonstrated 'how complex social phenomena could be studied empirically' and expressed hope that 'experimental inquiry of social practice would lead to an integration of science and practice' (p. 9). His dictum should be: 'No action without research; no research without action,' and it's from him that Adelman (1993) also borrows a summary of the action research characteristics. Action research should believe in developing the power of reflective thought, discussions, decision and action by ordinary people taking part in collective research of 'private problems' they have in common – the view based mainly on Wright Mills and his sociological imagination (1959).

Adelman (1993, 11) expresses a critical view of certain 1960s' projects, his opinion on them being that 'instead of giving the ordinary people within their own communities the power of decision, action research had become an integral part of management development for "common excellence."' Later he (p. 12) points out the perception that Lewin's ideas were 'accepted as axioms instead of being accepted critically and submitted to further testing.' But it is not surprising that action research itself was granted axiomatic status within its own paradigm. Even Kuhn, the original 'father' of the paradigm notion argued that such axiomatic assumptions are part of the essence of *every* paradigm. They provide it with durability and stability. It is therefore not unusual that the Action Research

literature deals with itself in order to achieve optimal models and most suitable metaphors, as will be seen further on. Interestingly, quite a few authors of the literature on management decided to base their cases and studies on Lewin's tradition. Among them are Argyris and Schon (1978) who in their book *Organisational Learning* investigated individual's reflection, group development and institutional relationships in research.

There are many models of action research, such as emancipatory, participatory (Leitch and Day 2000) or community-based action research (Stringer 1996), the difference being within thematic emphasis. Emancipatory action research, for example, aims at the 'emancipation of participants in the action from the dictates of traditional compulsions' (Leitch and Day 2000, 184). This action research touched the subject; if colleagues brought their 'traditions' of teaching and understanding higher education into new institutions I wanted to 'liberate' them, at least from those not useful to new institutions. But the environment in which my action research was done lacked this very component, as it was a newly established institution without an 'institutional' tradition. Kemmis and Wilkinson (1998, 21) discuss participatory action research and argue that it aims 'to help people to investigate reality in order to change it' Although it might be seen as a fairly static approach to representing research processes because of the cycles and step sequences, they argue that 'in reality, the process is likely to be more fluid, open and responsive.'

The community-based action research is 'ultimately a search for meaning. It provides a process or a context through which people can collectively clarify their problems and formulate new ways of envisioning their situations' (Stringer 1996, 158). We could say that this kind of action research seeks to change the official and personal dynamics of the research situation and to create favourable working relationships, productive interaction and communication among all participants. McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead (1996) argue that action research is naturally practitioner and workplace oriented; it seeks to improve, adopts trial and error approach and accepts that there are no final answers. To me, only the last trait of action research was slightly problematic, as in the beginning I was actually searching for a final form of self-evaluation that could be developed for the College and put into practice as more or less definitive 'model.'

At first I sought for the most appropriate model for my situation,

although the process has actually already begun, even before I could refer to any template. The search for a model, or models, or model parts became a post hoc rationalisation. This process certainly did not lead to modelling in terms of a scheme or a blue-print, despite my ambition that the model would form itself during the study process. In retrospect, I can conclude that the more it formed, the less it looked like a model or even a recipe.

By the end of the 1960s, the action-research approach became widely accepted in education as well, mostly gaining its ground in communities with existing strong belief in learning through reflection. In his book 'Action Research for Educational Change' (1991), one of the leading theorists, John Elliott, criticises Lewin's model of action research, which is supposed to be too simplistic in listing several activities. Elliott (1991, 70) argued that 'the general idea' cannot be determined in advance, that 'reconnaissance' is not only fact-finding and that 'the implementation' is not a straightforward process. Instead, he suggested:

- The general idea should be allowed to change (checking the original idea).
- Reconnaissance should involve analysis as well as fact-finding and should constantly recur in the spiral of activities, rather than only occur at the beginning.
- Implementation of an action step is not always easy, and one should not proceed to evaluate the effects of an action until having monitored the extent to which it has been implemented.

Action research in form of spiral activities has been given various names. Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), for example, presented it as plan-act-observe-reflect sequence, and Stringer (1996) as a look-think-act routine. In the 'look' phase, the problem which is the object of study should get defined and described, in the think phase, the current or new situation should be analysed and interpreted so that in the third phase (act) the solution or one of the solutions to the problem could be formulated. Stringer highlights that these simple, periodically recurring processes are only a cover for numerous interweaving activities. Multiple viewpoints and agendas should constantly disrupt the course of events, resulting in a continuous need to coordinate perspectives and modify and adopt actions. These research tasks become a social process in which people together reconstruct

their lives through continuing cycles of exchange, negotiation, re-alignment, and repair. Research events, according to Stringer (1996, 40), therefore become more interactive and repetitive, while multiple descriptions, analyses and explanations interweave in a complex process of inquiry.

Action research in the Slovenian area is an interesting and contro-versial topic, especially if we look at it in the light of ongoing debates on knowledge and practices. Miglič (1999) provides an overview of developments in action research. It is non-negligible that the ques-tion 'does a new action research have more advantages in relation to traditional research before earlier traditions of learning' is left open by the author (p. 150). In general, she focuses primarily on the re-search processes in general and argues that this (action) transforma-tion of a research process must 'emerge from the purposes of re-search, from the aspiration to create new knowledge/awareness that has to be on higher levels than the existing knowledge is' (p. 151). To me, the problematic part of her understanding of action research is the notion of 'knowledge,' as there is an overtone of theoretical, gen-eralisable knowledge in her text when she argues that 'the research process is useful only when it helps its participants to increase their capabilities, when it is self-perpetuating within a certain time frame and when it is suitable for various users.'

My understanding of action research is different from her view mostly regarding systemic or model self-preservation and suitability for various users. Yet, if I consider the current self-evaluation trend and relate it to action research, I understand the action research as approach to research and also to changing and improving practice. Such an improvement can be done within institutions and for insti-tutions, not least because of the survival of the organization as the final aim. Institutions have, among other, a choice of approaching their practice through action research, not in order to create self-perpetuating models but to engage people in action research and hence produce knowledge and change practices. It is for the reasons given that I found the action research worth a weighty reflection and implementing. This kind of bridging of theory and practice is an is-sue discussed, for example, by Confrey (1987), who argued that much is written in theory yet little implemented in practice. In his opinion, action research contains 'activity' component even if it cannot gen-erate 'grand theory:' but it does 'change practice.' This more proac-

tive and pluralistic version seems to be supported by Stringer (1996, 41) who argues that action research 'constructs' realities and 'gives meaning' to things that are part of everyday life, thereby looking for a common relationship between them. The aim of the research is not to recognize the 'occurrence' or to describe what 'really' happened, but to reveal various truths and occurrences – constructs – of different individuals and groups.

Validity and Reliability

Validity, reliability, and triangulation can be understood as a language of quantification (Janesick 2000). When qualitative research design is approached, Janesick (2000), as well as Stake (2000) define validity through the 'trust value' and credibility. Lincoln and Guba (2000) write that one of central validity-related issues is the fusion of the method and the interpretation, which leads them to a new paradigm of exploration, which, as a method, not only promises the action on a certain set of local or situational truths, but is, as such, also the process of interpretation. In recent written work, the most attention is given to consistency of interpretation and therefore Lincoln and Guba (2000, 180–183) discuss validity as 'authenticity,' 'resistance,' 'post-structural transgression' or even as an 'ethical relationship' in various contexts.

Validity in positivist research is achieved by triangulation, the use of more (at least three) methods or sources in the study, thus satisfying both the dynamic plurality of truths and the fear of often ambivalent fluctuations in the arguments between the two opposite poles. Denzin (2000) identified four basic types of triangulation: data, research, theoretical and methodological. From that point of view, triangulation in qualitative terms aims at bringing the depth into a specific study and therefore does not represent a 'means' to increase validity as a 'scientific' quality. Janesick (2000, 392) hereby introduces a new metaphor of plural or multipoint determination of the truth, called 'crystallisation' where 'the image of the crystal replaces that of the measurer and the triangle.'

During my action research I studied, lived and changed practice. The whole educational institution (knowingly or unknowingly) participated in building the self-evaluation model and the entire study was confirmed through practice (and in it) and by consistent interpretation and use of methods. Concepts of validity are mostly sub-

ordinate to concepts of efficiency and never exceed them by impor-
tance. In other words, the economy of performance was subject to
ecological efforts in order to develop some sense of responsibility
and dedication, to create a good organizational ethos and culture in
which conversations about improvement and development would be
the widest and deepest possible.

   Major dilemmas in action research are often related to what con-
ceptions of validity are necessary in order to differentiate a 'convinc-
ing' from an 'unconvincing' narrative. Can validity be based on the
assumption that the reader would understand the text in the way
the author (researcher) wanted to, or should we accept the relativ-
ity deriving from the emphasis of the reader's contribution, the co-
formation of meaning and common understanding? The action re-
search certainly represents a necessary deviation from the positivist
understanding of knowledge and research, since it focuses primar-
ily on processes and contributes to the development of organisations
and employees. It creates a learning environment for the researcher
and all involved and hence may help to build a concept of a learning
community (Atweh, Kemmis, and Weeks 1998; O'Hanlon 1996).

   I personally agree that the action research embraces a 'meaning
relativism,' since we, the participants, create diverse meanings in our
interactions (Kvale 1996). Accepting this relativistic position means
that the narrative is not able to be entirely separated from an indi-
vidual's view of the world, values, discourses and interactions (Ryan
1999). If the action research adopts a narrative form, it is left to the
reader to judge the probability and credibility of the narrative and the
action research itself. Yet, much is also up to the action researcher
(narrator) – whose role is, among other things, to convey a credible
narrative.

   So credibility has two guarantors. The first is internal and refers
to characteristics such as comprehensiveness, procedural defensibil-
ity, and consistency, which, despite positivistic optimism, cannot be
methodologically determined. Stake (1995) argues that the narrative
must also appeal externally to address the judgement of those stake-
holders who are in the position to judge the content as well as the
members of the research community who can guarantee its credi-
bility. Also Hammersley (1997, 22) in his discussion on relativism
claims that we cannot accept the postmodernists and relativists posi-
tion that 'we simply have to learn to live in a relativist or postmod-

ernist world.' He finds that argument unconvincing but it is of utmost importance that researchers do not present their 'narration' as if they merely recreated or illustrated the reality they were studying and to explain any possible controversial predictions on which their analysis is based. It is also essential that, last but not least, they are aware of everything that threatens the validity, and that they properly evaluate the evidence of conflicting narratives. From that, it follows that the research processes must be open and detailed enough to enable 'readers' of all kinds to independently form judgments in accordance with individual reading of data.

Elliott (1991, 77–83) provides a list of techniques and methods which can be used to collect material in the action research: logs, lists, document analysis, photographic material, audio, video, transcripts, external observers, interviews, real-time comments, shadow studies, checklists, surveys, triangulation and analytical memos. I also decided to use some of them and focused primarily on surveys and interviews. The latter allow something that Denzin and Lincoln (2000) call 'methodological triangulation' since cross-checking is possible. For example, in my own research I used questionnaires for full-time students, part-time students and for teachers and I even interviewed some of them in order to verify and acquire an in-depth insight. Besides that I also wrote a research diary that contained 'key' events, comments and 'comments on comments' (e.g. when I had a discussion with staff about questionnaire results, I included the comments to my diary notes from that day).

At this point, none of these methodological approaches seemed to completely fit the type of social research process I have developed. A positivist paradigm required meeting criteria concerning validity, reliability and standards of triangulation which I was neither able to meet in the study, nor were they my goal. At the same time, the study was not a simple action research since I wanted to develop a 'model' – which in this case does not mean anything other than a set of practices – of action research during the process itself, rather than implementing an a priori model.

Role Diversity in Action Research

The role of an action researcher and how he/she is involved in the action research is being intensely discussed. Stringer (1996, 22) argues that 'in community-based action research, the role of researcher

is not that of an expert who does the research, but that of the re-source person.' The researcher is basically the one who joins the re-search process, promotes or facilitates it and acts as a consultant (p. 23). The author specifically draws attention to the language and says that 'it signals the nature of relationships and the orientation of the research.' He also notes that people in influential positions tend to believe that they have superior knowledge.

I see my research role as a facilitator which enables or accelerates the processes and as the person providing resources, one of them also being the power to make things happen. It is about decision making, the executive power related to finance, spatial resources and equip-ment management, co-deciding on personnel and other sources. As a researcher in early stages of action research and College devel-opment, I had the power to set up certain procedures and I also had some knowledge and awareness that evaluation in the form of quality assurance system was needed. I estimate that it was not only needed but it was also an opportunity for the College to develop and im-plement practices very different from the ones at other colleges and faculties. My aim was consistent with what Stringer defines as the aim of the action research that should be community-based and seek to develop and maintain non-exploitative social and personal inter-actions as well as to enhance social and emotional lives of all people involved. It should be organized and conducted so that it has a pos-itive impact on the formation of a community – the 'common unity' of all participants – and that it strengthens the democratic, equitable, liberating, and life-enhancing qualities of social life.

Stringer's image of the action research process which assumes that everyone should get 'enriched' and 'empowered' all the time raises my concern, since such an illusion is simply unachievable in real organisational contexts. As an action researcher I cared about people, so I tried to direct processes to the formation of a community – in my case, an academic community of experts.

Yet, I do think that in organisational contexts (and in most other as well), power is constantly an issue. It can never be avoided or ignored, at best it needs to be deconstructed and recognized. The flux of power, as well as its forms, cannot be defined – and although power is not the subject of this action research study, it remains its essential part.

'Those that have the power to make public definitions of reali-

ties have a far greater influence on social policy than the sceptical, slow to judge researcher! The action research is not for the impatient' (Adelman 1993). The author assumes that the role of a researcher is not played by people having the highest executive power. That is why I would like to point out two findings. Firstly, I was both researcher and manager or director. Secondly, I have tried to show that research helps to distribute the exercise of power and to share that formal power with those less powerful. This was reflected in at least partial delegation of powers to other participants. In the next sections I will discuss my multiple roles and deal with the issues of power. Peshkin (1988, 17) suggests that researchers, 'notwithstanding their use of quantitative or qualitative methods, their research problem, or their reputation for personal integrity, should systematically identify their subjectivity throughout the course of their research.' When I consider my subjectivity in this sense during the action research, I often think about the multiple roles that I performed and how these roles shifted, changed, emerged and diminished. Peshkin (1988, 18) claimed to study – and observe in a certain sense – himself while he was doing a study of a school; thus he came up with the concept of 'situational subjectivity.' He argued that although we bring all arts of ourselves – a full selection of subjective 'I's' – to each new research site, a site and its particular conditions will elicit only a subset of them. His understanding of subjectivity seems to be a bounded system of (ontologically plural) 'I's' that are expressed in different constellations depending on the various settings.

Distinguishing my 'I's' from each other seems quite hard and the logs in my journal, after an analytical search, point to a 'moral' 'I,' and an 'action' 'I.' During my study, when I reflected upon my research and practice, I often felt confusion, particularly when I wanted to separate the two 'I's' relating to my principal roles: managerial/business and research. The roles are inextricably bounded and intertwined since as a practitioner and performer I have the 'access to the commitments and practical theories which inform praxis and only the practitioner can study praxis' (Kemmis 1993, 182). This can be understood as an overall rationale for the whole study but it also brings up the need to discuss the roles of action researcher – practitioner, in my case the executive manager and at the same time the one who had been building the institution from its very beginning in many ways. Hammersley (1993, 211) discusses the 'teacher-as-researcher' concept

and points to an important shift in understanding the concept. The role of curriculum developer and evaluator became blurred and the author thinks that the curriculum researcher could now be seen as someone charged with helping teachers to improve their practice by developing their self-reflection skills (p. 212). The action research and the 'teacher-as-researcher' concepts are often applied to classroom practice and aim at overcoming the gap between curriculum developers, researchers and practitioners (Elliott 1991).

Throughout the whole study, my roles of researcher and manager are obviously interwoven. Although I see this as a methodologically justified item, I believe that the question of power and intertwining should be addressed and discussed, as there are implications for practice and limitations to the research emerging from this relationship. In addressing the notion of power and its implementation, I will rely on the scientifically unquestionable Foucault (1977; 1988) and his ideas of power, knowledge, science and the truth. The position of a College director involved power in many forms during the study as well. Koren (1999) argues that power in the school context appears in many forms. It can be understood as the power of praising, punishing, legitimate power and expert power. He relates some forms of power to the position itself, namely legitimate power is given to managers and directors by the position while expert power is grounded in the manager's expertise and may be recognised by followers. Foucault (1977; 1988) discusses the question of power from different perspectives. He claims that power is not a substance and neither is it a mysterious property whose origin is yet to be found. The power is merely a certain type of relation between individuals and such relation is specific, as it has nothing to do with exchange, production and communication, even though it connects with them. Characteristically for the power, some people can more or less entirely determine other people's conduct – but never completely nor often coercively (1988, 83–84).

Foucault (1988) discusses the power as non-coercive (in literal sense of the word) and dependent on the individual relationship between the entities or participants. My managerial position can be related to this understanding of power, as I do not have to coerce or force my colleagues, even though the power is of the key importance in forming our relationship. When I conducted my study, I had the power to implement changes, use the tools or develop and encourage

others to develop means by which the aims − my own, organizational and shared ones − could be achieved. I hence determined the conduct of others by determining the research and development aims, by designing the tools and the instruments and by evaluating the implementation. An obvious question appears − why I chose to take evaluation as a subject of the study and used the action research based on reflective and active practitioners if power (so great and so various) was at stake? In my opinion, the power relations are being an issue in every research, but I find it more important to develop the ability of recognizing and emphasizing the influence of power. By this rational and positive approach to power I reveal and recognise it as a limitation in the study and an issue of concern in my managerial practice.

Foucault's recommendation on re-questioning the 'form of rationality' (1989) should be taken extremely seriously. The institutional rationality, often covered with the idea of the most beneficial events for the institution, and its rational argumentation related to efficiency and effectiveness have to be addressed in relation to power. My counter-argument would be to assert that power during the research, expose it to potential contrary evidence and the resistance of the organisation's members. Whether such an ambivalent exercise of power did in fact empower participants is, in the end, a matter for the readers to judge. The 'external' verdict in the end determines the issue. In the context of his 'archaeology of knowledge,' Foucault (1989) discusses the role and formation of science and knowledge. He uses two expressions, *savoir* and *connaissance* that reflect various types of knowledge; one being related to scientific disciplines and the other to 'practice.' The action research can produce both, as according to the author, knowledge is to be found not only in demonstrations, it can also be found in fiction, reflection, narrative accounts, institutional regulations, and political decisions. If knowledge produced by action research is actually 'knowledge and action in support of liberating social change' (Greenwood and Levin 2000, 95), then knowledge is inextricably associated with social or institutional action and change and hence contains both 'theoretical' as well as 'practical' component.

Foucault offers an 'impure' version of knowledge that is inherently value-laden and therefore an expression of choice, 'powerful' in the author's own sense. The question arises: is this managerial 'abduc-

tion' of radical theory? One possible answer might be that power and knowledge are inextricably linked and in this regard I also tried to achieve that the exercise of power was subject to the viewpoints of all stakeholders. Is the outcome simply paradoxical (which would rather confirm it by the Foucault's standpoint)? At this point, after the action-research process, the participants are more powerful and more democratically engaged in the 'community of professional individuals.' At the same time I am becoming even more powerful, in terms of my 'surveillance' of the institution, and the leading position in its management. So this cannot be a zero sum game, it's rather a situation of mutual benefit, the so-called 'win-win' situation.

Greenwood and Lewin (2000, 95) discuss the role of action research within universities and argue that universities cannot be explored through the action research (p. 95). For me, the action research is an essential approach to studying and changing universities which are autonomous and therefore do not tolerate any interference from the 'outside.' As already mentioned, while organising the first staff development in-service meetings with participation of guest experts from the 'outside,' I was struggling with reluctant attitude from senior staff.

Self-evaluation as a topic of my study, the 'evaluation of self-evaluation' included, done through action research refers to political decisions, instruments and tools, institutional regulations and narrative accounts of those involved and to myself as a reflexive practitioner. I am also aware that, within Europe, the topic of my study is on the top of the higher education agenda, on both institutional and national level in Europe and therefore exposed to ideological pressures and requirements. In my opinion, such trends and pressures are almost impossible to avoid but they are also hard to define. Foucault (1989, 185) states that the question of science concerning ideology is not the question of situations or practices that it reflects more or less consciously, nor is it the question of the possible use or misuse, but a question of its existence as a discursive practice and of its functioning among other practices.

The knowledge of this study creates 'the totality of relations that can be discovered, for a given period' (Foucault 1989, 191), in this case in the frame of an institution chosen as a case study. Such knowledge should be dynamic and provisional, based on permanent and continuous evaluation and implementation cycles. Nevertheless,

it should also be bound to a specific 'model' (see further sections) that can be replicated in this or any other institution. The question of power can also be discussed through Foucault's concept of the panopticon as a kind of a 'big brother' control system. I have no intention to develop a new theory of power as such an attempt would lead to reduction of the complexity of power relations, which is precisely why it cannot be considered as an object of scientific analysis. However, I need to draw attention to power relations in the College of Management, being part of my role of a researcher and position of a director, to be able to provide the reader with some of the most important insights of this action research.

When Foucault (1977, 176) discusses control in prisons and schools he argues that a relation of surveillance, defined against and regulated, is inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching, not as an additional or adjacent part, but as a mechanism, that is inherent to it and which increases its efficiency. Control in schools is 'organised' and achieved for example by spatial restriction or schedules. In the illustration of a round control tower in the middle of circularly distributed prison cells, where one guard can control a large number of prisoners, the panopticon model turns out to be an important mechanism of power automation that is separate from the individual (1977, 202). The author's parable of the panopticon also acts as a dissociating machine within the seeing/being seen dyad: in peripheral ('prison') ring, one is seen completely, without ever seeing and in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen.

I have to admit that in my relation to the College, I sometimes felt like being in a 'tower' − in the control centre, being the director. I scheduled, organised, brought people together and carried out the initial experiment of change, without people having insight into my decision-making arguments. The 'tower-power' would therefore be a convenient synonym describing the 'technical' stage of my action research. I 'measured' and people were measured, I initiated and people were initiated (into thinking, participating), I monitored and observed the institution as whole.

Surveys and other methods in this context can be seen as techniques of 'disciplinary power' (Foucault 1977) aiming at 'normalising' the institution, and consequently adapting it. Ryan (1999, 105) writes that methods of observation constitute the foundation for the operation of a modern form of power that takes shape in the organisation

of institutional life. As that very stage was strongly dependent on my position and the power associated with it, I see it as essential for building the institution. But at the same time I also feel that the action research undertaken simultaneously with the very establishment of the institution, brought different awareness with its own reflexivity and led to deconstruction of relations that initially seemed 'natural' to me.

At the social stage of the action research not only the focus of research shifted but also the 'tower-power' shifted from my position to other roles and people in the organisation. I organised social events, in-services and so on, but colleagues already started to ask questions, require things and give initiatives and suggestions. For example, when a colleague said: 'I think we need to have a two day excursion, people would like it and would come,' the influence as a form of power emerged from other sources. In this sense the social stage developed from the technical stage, but at the same time represented its subversion and led to the vulnerability of technical, formal power − which, after all, can also be understood as a further eloquent paradox. The institutionalisation of processes and events brought up various new sources of power and initiatives for change and also gave the power to refuse them, although, from my point of view, the positional (legitimate) power remained associated with my position. It only became less transparent and changed the form. For that reason, the 'reflective' component and the deconstructive approach that I discuss later in this chapter were necessary.

Manager as Researcher

At this point, my roles in the College were still slightly blurred and somewhat transient: a director of the institution, a curriculum designer, an evaluator of the school work and a person in charge of performing certain work at the same time. I engaged in establishing and building the institution, performing my research at the same time. Therefore I do not feel comfortable discussing double roles (a director and a researcher) or even the role of 'multiple I's' (sometimes being a friend, a consultant, even a 'mother') but I will still try to discuss the managerial or the administrative-research relationship in the light of role and position relationship. It seems that the idea of 'multiple I's' blurs the power relations between a manager and a researcher in structured organisational settings. Reflecting back on

Peshkin (1988) and his idea of elicit, 'situational subjectivity,' I conclude that different 'I's' and their roles evolve from 'the same source of power' which, however, increases with the contextually emerging specific role.

In my study, the manager and the researcher roles were strongly related to power, the first in fact enabling the other while in reverse the 'researcher' continuously empowered the 'manager.' It is about both, the 'empowerment' and 'enabling realization.' Let me here use the metaphor of the theatre as I often felt as a director, an actor, even a producer, at the same time – I chose co-actors and also decided upon finances. I performed and encouraged others to perform as well, in order to make them think critically about their own performances. Because of my managerial position, some people took part of the action research without knowing what I was doing. This issue is discussed in more detail in the next section on ethical dilemmas but for now, I just want to point out the power that I had as a manager and how I tried to balance it in every aspect.

Every researcher possesses a certain power profile in its many dimensions, but is rarely in position to change practice beyond his/her 'circle of practice.' Current leadership theories (Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach 1998) discuss leaders through their influence on followers while classical, more bureaucratic organisational theories (Bush and West-Burnham 1994; Handy 1985; Morgan 1995) discuss types of power associated with positions.

The delegation process, for example, is very much associated with positions in organisations (Koren 1999), while educational settings are perhaps better for working with notions such as cooperation and flow of roles, influence and power (Koren and Trnavčevič 2002).

Related to teachers in classrooms and their action research, Hammersley (1993, 226) makes a valuable point saying that the educational research should take the form of teachers carrying out research in their classrooms and schools, this being seen not as an extra activity added on to their teaching but rather as a transformation of that teaching. Changes in organisations, however, rarely occur spontaneously. Very often an initial push, internal or external, is needed (Fullan and Hargreaves 1992), possibly shaped as a formal requirement. For meeting that requirement positional power is necessary. And I had that power to say: 'We will do it.'

I can distinguish between normal functioning of various organisa-

tions (equally bureaucratic in most cases) and their culture of change which needs to 'unfreeze the rigid' rules, procedures and norms. My change-introducing strategy contradicted some of the established norms of academic life in Slovenia, but also made them visible, enabled discussions and somewhat changed them. I felt there was the need to 'bump start' change – with an initial hierarchical intervention. Obviously, all my deliberations about the action research are returning to the issues of power. In my opinion, creating opportunities for a dialogue (meetings, excursions etc.) in my research was a question of power, working for and against me, while the research dimension had a self-reflexive impact.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is sometimes considered a narcissistic activity and experts like Lynch (2000) define it as a futile and non-scientific approach to research, allegedly not meeting the standards of science. Pels (2000), on the other hand, specifically points to reflexivity as an important element in social research. He notes that the role of a researcher is never neutral or isolated. In his view, the researcher is involved in research activities as an individual with his/her sets of beliefs, values and attitudes and as such he/she cannot eliminate those influences from research interactions. In fact, the researcher is never a silent observer in his narration. The mere fact of his/her presence creates different situations. My roles of a dean, a director, a researcher, an initiator of implementation and a generator of ideas were always associated with the role of reflective practitioner and had a great influence on it Leitch and Day (2000, 180) discuss the distinction between 'reflection' and reflective practice. Reflection is considered to be a process or activity that is central to the development of practices but they also argue that in given context it seems most likely to remain a metaphor that represents the process of learning from experience but does not allow a more detailed analysis. The authors point to Schon (1983) and his concept of 'reflective practitioner' which combines two processes, 'reflection-on-action' and 'reflection-in-action.' Reflective practice in these terms triggers the process of making conscious and explicit the dynamic interplay between thinking and action.

My main purpose was to improve the quality of action within the College of Management. As we were establishing a new institution, I could say not only to improve, but also to develop a certain mind-set

that was based on an understanding of quality. The theory in this case was generated and validated by checking the functioning of practitioners employed by the institution. The action research included both reflection processes: 'on' and 'in' action. Reflection-on-action is documented at the end of each cycle, containing additional reflection on a general idea of self-evaluation research which needs to be constantly revised during the process of action research (Elliott 1991, 73), as well as the plan of changes and improvements in self-evaluation procedures in the next cycle. 'Reflection-in-action,' in a form of diary entries, played a great role in implementation of self-evaluation procedures, together with interpretation of numerous analyses. I mainly wrote about it in the think routine and sometimes in the look routine, which mostly described some important facts within each cycle. 'Reflection-in-action' processes within action activity can be compared to 'reconnaissance,' which should constantly recur in the spiral activity (p. 70). The author also recommends explaining relevant facts immediately after having collected and described them. How do they arise? Which significant events or key factors influence the described situation? By asking these questions, according to Elliott, one moves from a description of the facts to critical analysis of the context in which they arise (1991, 73).

In order to reveal some of these relations, power being the central one among them, I need to reflect on the processes, outcomes and my own role in the entire process of action and research. The reflective component is already built into the processes and stages of the action research but I felt the need for deconstruction of my roles and power relations in order to make the research more transparent but also to explore the role of the researcher and the limitations of my research. In this context, the ethics of research and management inevitably become the subject of debate.

Ethics of Action Research

Ethical concerns in the action research, as well as in any qualitative research where the so-called soft data is collected from face-to-face communications with participants, always represent a challenge for the researcher. In the beginning of my action research, I confronted some dilemmas emerging partly from the Slovenian positivistic tradition in educational research. Books on quantitative methods, such as Sagadin (1993), mention ethical behaviour and assurance of

anonymity when questionnaires are sent out to respondents. Morris (2000) and Cooksy (2000) discuss the 'off-the-record' data and how to handle them, while the American Evaluation Association (2000) in its *Guiding Principles for Evaluators* lists five categories: systematic inquiry, competence, integrity/honesty and respect for people. The action research as well as other qualitative paradigm based research (Merriam 1998; Yin 1994; Stake 1995) discuss ethical dimensions on the basis of (adequately informationally supported) consent of participants, possibility of withdrawing from research at all levels, confidentiality of data, anonymity of respondents etc. Yet, in the case of this action research some ethical issues appear and I want to discuss them as I find them specific to this study as well as contextually embedded.

My action research has interfered with the functioning of the institution, being an attempt of evaluation, professional development and research. It could be said that my approach was similar to that of Robertson (2000), who describes his action research and reflects on methodological issues of reflexivity, reciprocity and reflection on reality. He argues that his study of the research field guided the key components of the professional development model, but the principals' use and reflection on the components informed the model. The main difference between our action researches is in the focus on the model, when he states that during the interviews conducted regularly with each principal in their own school as he developed theory on the model of professional development, the principals all asked for direction on matters within their schools. Nevertheless, he concludes that his methodology became part of his professional model. He understood his role as being a critical friend with 'an outside perspective.' My research did not end up with a definitive model of self-evaluation nor was I playing the role of an external expert, or a critical friend. I was deeply involved in all relationships, and a researcher on top of that. Ethical concern is therefore related to my interference with the institution and – because of the power I had – also with individuals. Surveys on student satisfaction represented specific interventions into working life of individuals, not in terms of punishment and reward but in terms of their professional selves as well as probably their self-esteem as well.

I also want to emphasize that there was no written consent from participants but the action research was deeply interrelated to a prac-

tice of self-evaluation to which they had agreed. Difficulties appeared in protecting identities of those involved as a reader, familiar with the context was able to recognise at least some of them – which is particularly true of the framework of the institution itself. Answering the question of how to deal with these concerns was not easy, and I did not find a satisfactory solution, not even at the end of the research. By deconstructing power, roles and positions as well as by revealing problems, I have at least tried to make the latter transparent – which does not really resolve them but at least enables the reader to judge their ethical dimensions a bit easier. Personally, I considered self-evaluation and action research too intertwined for me to separate them. Would it be less ethical to develop and implement a grounded 'model' of self-evaluation through action research or to simply 'borrow' one of the international self-evaluation models and implement it at school?

The features of the situational model were at least partly derived from the negotiations between the researcher and the researched. The thesis itself indicates which contents and self-evaluation processes were the matter of ongoing discussion and negotiation. In addition, others were informed of the interpretation of results and the reader can find related information in the following chapters.

In my opinion, the action research with its reflexivity and reflection-on action somewhat joined the research and development dimensions, and enriched the practice as well as the theory, but in ethical dimensions it did not change much. As a director, I looked for a quality assurance system – a self-evaluation model which we have developed and implemented. This was an intervention in the institution, its people, and professional development. If there was no action research – reflexivity and reflection-on-action dimension in particular – I would most likely simply have sticked to a static model. People would be trapped or framed within a model and also forced to come to terms with it. The action research method brought some special awareness and concern for people, and diminished the focus on the rigidities of a 'model' which could have an ethical dimension. Therefore the grounded, in this sense predetermined nature of the 'model' contained the basis for empowerment and this reflected in the transformation of the research from 'technical' to 'social' stage, of the research (in the research also referred to as 'societal').

I can, of course, also identify ethical dimensions of my research

through a utilitarian perspective. It could be said that my research was based such a perspective that assumes one single consistent domain of morality, that should concern a single set of considerations which determines what we ought to do (Christians 2000). Strong dualism appears between means and ends and the domain of the good in utilitarian theory is extrinsic. All worth valuing is a function of their consequences, according to the author. Consequentialist ethics is therefore one of those with impact on my study, but it is by no means the only one. Relativism in ethics – especially concerning the research ethics – brings the participants and their views on themselves during the research process into discussion. During this research, I did not ask people about their view of ethics as I was more focused on which consequences were beneficial for the organisation as well as for individuals, by externally established criteria. Thus the various rights of individuals involved in the research have to take into account both ethical dimensions related to the individual and the collective good, and both can be planned in terms of research goals and outcomes.

I did not obtain particular consent for taking part in the research from colleagues although they knew we were to develop and implement a model of self-evaluation. Also, participants (colleagues) did not have an option to leave the study since then they should have to leave their jobs as well. For some individuals, even the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity issues have been at stake, regarding the circumstances and positions. I tried to resolve this ethical dilemma by giving the text to be read by some (speaking and declaring things in the first person in certain parts of the text) main 'actors' in my research to verify the narrative and the descriptions of their roles and actions. I gave them false names, but they remain recognisable to everybody who knows the organisation.

Chapter Three

Case Study

Data Analysis

When I came to a final decision that 'self-evaluation' would serve me as a topic and 'action research' as methodology in my study, built on the 'case' of the College of Management, this decision was based on three basic considerations:

1. The question of quality seemed to be a topical theme in higher education at the time, and we were increasingly aware of it in Slovenia too. Within various international projects in this field, some important analyses have been carried out and potential systems for assessing quality have been developed. Self-evaluation was one of them.

2. The field of evaluation as the integral part of school development planning had been discussed by the survey study already in my master thesis (Trunk Širca 1995). In the interviews, head-masters had expressed some of their hesitations and one great concern: different models developed by experts looked great on paper, yet the implementation of ready-made theoretical models could prove very risky. They pointed at two main arguments to back their assumption. First, the working conditions and surrounding environment are different from school to school and the headmasters supposed to play the role of facilitators in such implementation are not nearly enough qualified for this task.

3. Last but not least, my duties at the College were at times quite a mental burden and took a lot of time. A case study, dealing with the school, could represent an ideal opportunity for me to research evaluation in higher education and (as responsible for the functioning of the school) to try playing the double role of a manager and a researcher. I decided for the action research, because the College was in its early stages of development and I saw this research as the opportunity to create our own self-evaluation model and implement it in a way that it would become an integral part of activities and work at school.

67

Taking into account the Slovenian tradition of social research, I still confronted the concern whether action research was 'appropriate' for a study. My former supervisor expressed doubt about its contribution to science, knowledge and hence 'the validity' of the study. The question was similar to the one described by Hanrahan (1998, 302) – she felt that there was something wrong with her and her methods when she used action research in her P h D study. She emphasized that her cultural background influenced the choice of methods and approaches to research and that she intended to perform a 'real' research for her P h D, which initially meant that the study would be useful for the educational community (1998, 310). She felt she achieved that aim anyway and hence contributed to knowledge and practice in education. Personal growth was also a part of her 'journey.' I myself feel a considerable similarity between our reports and see my study as a certain objectively valid contribution to knowledge and practice in higher education. At the same time, I do not want to minimise the significance of this study for my personal growth both as a researcher and an individual.

Writing About an Action Research

I started to write my research diary in June 1996, after the first methodological workshop in Bled. It could be said that I had two diaries. One of them was actually an 'annual planner' from the collection called 'My Time = My Strength,' in which I recorded various activities and events, many of them connected to the action research. The real research diary was a folder, which offered me a greater flexibility in data managing. In chronological order, I collected different notes, questionnaires, analyses, sometimes even newspaper articles, etc.

Every time I took the folder from the shelf, I read at least a few of my previous observations: the records on the course of the research, the responses of my colleagues to the implementation of questionnaires or the introduction of innovations, the remarks I made about a book I had read, etc. The essence of my diary writing was not only the creation of some kind of a document portfolio but also an ongoing reflection and dialogue with the others – with people, events and sometimes with 'multiple I's.' Some records were very personal – glimpses of my double role as a manager-researcher, even perceptions of my personal life, insights of the reflection of the search for the mean-

ing of existence and of personal satisfaction. As Elliott (1991) cites Kemmis (1981) about keeping a diary, when he recommends that it should contain personal observations, feelings, reactions, interpretations, reflections, hunches, hypotheses, and explanations. And in all of the above, I tried to be consistent.

Mostly in the final year of my research, while reading, I have often thought about the fact that the research is coming to an end and that it is time for me to transform these records in a more systematic form. Thus, an electronic version of my research diary was created a bit later. Going through this folder today, I come across various pieces of paper that come in different shapes and sizes, notes written in different colours, newspaper articles with lines highlighted, etc. And even though some things happened more than eight years ago, these pieces of paper still remind me vividly of certain occasions and events. A careful preservation of all the important documents and real-time recording enabled my action research to become and remain a unique live narrative.

At a certain point all data had been collected, I had to stop and limit the amount of it and I also started to wonder how, what and where to start writing. What should the writing be about and what would my target audience be? What should be the correct way of writing in order for me to say that 'I am writing a research'? Is it an academic paper and research report that will be held in my drawer until the end of my life or the very concept of this action research contains a certain potential for its later use? I did not want to write solely for an academic audience, I wanted the thesis to be useful for the institution and for further development even if would not be called 'action research' any more.

Yet from the very beginning of the research I could not overcome the feeling that I should have read more about my chosen topic and (later) about action research in all its dimensions – in order to broaden and deepen my knowledge. I focused mainly on literature since I presumed that the literature review chapter should have been written first, as usual. Another reason was hidden in many tempting opportunities that my job has been offering. There was almost a daily delivery of catalogues, publications and books related to higher education, quality and self-evaluation. I usually just browsed or ran through the book in order to find a chapter or paragraph which I thought I needed. Many ideas from literature were included in prepa-

ration of self-evaluation procedures and some of them were useful and immediately applicable to College practice. When implemented, they directly contributed to the improvement of the school work.

But the more books I read, the more I became confused. I wondered how could I read or even only skim so many texts and books written by so many authors (on such a broad-based topic). Would I be able to keep up with them? Will I be able to keep a certain overlooking position? Beside library sources, more and more (or more frequently discovered) websites became available. Given so many sources, which could facilitate my study in a certain way, I found myself even more confused and at the same time overwhelmed with similarity of ideas coming from various authors. Which was the primary source, what was the original, and who was I supposed to quote? I came to the conclusion that in the interest of a fruitful discussion this is in fact irrelevant, since in the academic discourse from the intertextual point of view one simply has to trust, although certain security can also be guaranteed with a simple criterion: how recognized or well-known is a particular author.

In November 2000 I said to myself: 'Enough reading. It is time to start writing.' I decided to organise and transcribe the research diary into computer form first and continue from there. I kept the diary from the early stages of the research. Accordingly to recognized action researchers such as Glaser and Strauss (1967), Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Denzin and Lincoln (2000), a detailed research diary became an integral part of the action research process. It was also supposed to be used for data collection and analysis. While reading my research diary, I spontaneously and instantly decided to start writing. I designed the chapter of the 'literature review' but soon realised that it should best be written in close connection with my action research findings. By the end of March 2001 I in fact really started to write my 'first' chapter – about the first cycle of action research.

In the course of action research, different questionnaires, analyses, notes and minutes were created, and I included them in my research diary carefully and promptly. While writing, I started to ask myself a selection related question, more precisely what to include into the 'Appendices' section. A decision to add an appendix, containing certain documents translated into English, had already been made – partly meant to illustrate my 'story,' and partly to help the reader reflect on the data. Also, a 'Technical Volume' was prepared. It in-

cluded all the questionnaires, analyses and important documents, as they were created in the framework of the action research. This volume was intended for readers who wanted a more detailed insight into the development of individual questionnaires within action research and into the very approach to data analysis. Or had I designed *it* to serve as a kind of a 'proof' to those readers who will assess my work in Slovenia? Perhaps a great quantity of data, numbers, analyses and diagrams would just prove to be more convincing than the narrative? While engaged in the art of action research, I still felt the burden of science inside me.

In order to make the study readable and widely understandable I structured the data analysis and four research cycles of my action research into two main stages. In the first stage, I mostly describe development and implementation of questionnaires that I had designed for self-evaluation of teaching and learning practice. This is called the *technical stage*. It embraces two academic years, which means two cycles of my action research. The second stage includes the institution as a whole, is more focused on interactions between the people within the College of Management and for that reason I labelled it the social stage. It embraces two academic years – the two cycles of my action research. In addition, I identified some emerging topics during the very process of transforming the collected data into a narrative. I elaborated and reflected on them through literature review.

The following chapters of this study are designed to tell the story of my approach, relations with others and activities through two stages as well as four action research cycles. Many details were omitted simply because they were not important enough for understanding the essential message of this study. Data was gathered with various qualitative and quantitative techniques such as questionnaires, observations, formal and informal, structured and unstructured interviews and the document analysis. I have linked the story to four years/cycles structure and not to the technique or method principle. I base this decision on two reasons. Firstly, I saw the time – the academic year – as the only constant parameter and sort of categorical variable. Instruments have been changing, adjusting and modifying but the time-frame remained unchanged. Secondly, I perceived improvement of the practice as an important function and the aim of self-evaluation – and compared to it, other techniques and methods

seemed to be of a secondary importance. An introduction was created for each cycle, summarizing the most important accents of that current year.

A rather standard approach was used in writing an action research analysis (Kemmis and Wilkinson 1998; McNiff, Lomax, and Whitehead 1996) which means that each cycle is described by following the three basic action research routines: look (gather data), think (explore, analyse, interpret and explain), and act (report, plan, implement changes). At the beginning of each cycle I provided a general introduction and described some events that I found essential for the College and for the study.

The look routine embraces the narrative about the College and has two essential dimensions. One dimension is related to the self-evaluation process itself and embraces all steps from preparing the instruments and gathering and processing the data, to preparing reports. The second dimension is focused on the improvement of practice. The think or reflect routine is focused on reflection on the self-evaluation procedures (the instruments and the implementation steps) and on current management practice. It interprets and establishes a critical relation to practice and self-evaluation on the basis of theory and reflects related events in the Slovenian context. The act routine focuses on actual environmental influence. The research determines the guidelines for reconstruction of the self-evaluation procedure in the next cycle and the management context implies the identification of changes in management practice and the preparation guidelines for the College development in (each) next academic year.

The following chapters are a narrative about processes, events and me through an action research that I conducted from 1996 to 1999 at the College of Management. It is 'my' story of the self-evaluation 'model' – which is actually not a model (I therefore write about it using a single quotation mark). Initially I took world-wide movements focused on quality, improvement and self-evaluation issues for granted. To me, as an interim dean of the newly established College, that was essential and, undoubtedly, some sort of quality assurance had to be implemented. I was the main actor, initiator and the driving force for implementation. At the same time I was also trying to be a reflective practitioner, aware of the fact that I need to establish and maintain a critical distance to my activities and initiatives. I aimed

at implementation of changes in practice – successfully, I believe. I had quite some influence on creating and shaping the culture of the College and also both the opportunity to reflect on achievements and results as well as the awareness that it was necessary. Follows the story about what I did and how it all worked out.

A Short Outline of the Study

In the third chapter, I will present a case study that was carried out through an action research. In it, I studied the processes for establishing an academic community of a new higher education organisation into which we introduced the self-evaluation system. In the introduction, I present an overview of the areas of discussion and instrumentation of the action research.

The action research was conducted in four cycles during the first four years of operation of the higher education institution. Its aim was to develop a model of self-evaluation, which would involve all interested students, teachers and leadership of the school. Within the first academic year, mainly students were included into research activities, in order to develop the self-evaluation instruments, mostly questionnaires for students. During the second academic year, teachers were also included in the action research. The research area concerned the professional development of teachers, with special emphasis on self-evaluation of educational activities. The third year of the action research included strategic planning and creation of a mission, and the fourth academic year was all about planning the development of higher education institutions.

It is clear from table 3.1 that this project of action research has always dealt with people. As far as the methods used, during the first two years there was a considerable emphasis on questionnaires, so it was called the 'technical stage.' In the years of the 'social stage' that followed, we started to intentionally develop forms of joint action (like workshops) and various forms of socializing. Participants were very creative and willing to cooperate.

In order to properly understand the structure of the present report (of course, in its much abbreviated publication form), it is essential to know the basic model of the action research that indicates the spiral course. The study is based on four cycles (which reflect four years of the research as four normal life cycles of an educational institution); each of them consists of three successive steps: (active, conscious)

TABLE 3.1   Methods and Contents of Self-Evaluation in Four Cycles

Topics and content of self-evaluation	Methods and techniques of self-evaluation
People – mainly students (academic performance)	Survey, discussion
People – mainly teachers (professional development of employees)	Surveys, group discussions, interviews, discussions, statistical analyses, social events
People – all colleagues (mission statement and performance indicators)	Workshops, discussions, observation, surveys, group discussions, interviews, statistical analyses
People – public and other stakeholders (activity report, developmental planning)	Workshops, discussions, observation, surveys, interviews, statistical analyses, public report

looking, thinking (as reflection and analytical thinking) and acting (as some kind of pre-influence of designing improvements and positive changes). This structure is directly reflected in the structure of the present chapter as a document of the action-research process:

- 1st cycle: quality and effectiveness of studies, questionnaires and student satisfaction,
- 2nd cycle: quality of teaching and learning and employees development,
- 3rd cycle: strategic planning and creating of a mission of the institution,
- 4th cycle: design of a development plan and search of a self-evaluation 'model.'

Students, Quality and Effectiveness of Studies

The first cycle of the action research corresponded with the first academic year of our school. The main feature of this cycle is its focus on students; I obtained their opinion on the performance with a survey. The design of the questionnaire and later analysis and interpretations were the focus of this cycle.

In this year I focused on designing the questionnaire for students. I wanted to know about their satisfaction with the quality of teaching. I also wanted to know whether they were satisfied with facilities, the equipment and with access to resources. I defined resources as human (school staff) and physical, such as opening hours of the library,

the school space, equipment and similar. In order to find out students' opinions and levels of satisfaction, I designed a questionnaire.

In the first year I was busy establishing and ensuring formal requirements for the College's functioning but I used every opportunity to talk to teachers, assistants and students. An opportunity to establish a higher education institution from zero was a challenge for me and I found satisfaction in that kind of work.

Look: The First Year Was Mostly about Students

The College was in its first year and to me it made sense to focus the self-evaluation procedure on students, their perceptions of teaching practices and their satisfaction with the teaching staff, study conditions and College routines. By 'procedure' I mean both instruments and steps for implementing self-evaluation.

During the winter exam period, the attitude of students to their responsibilities has improved considerably, it has become more serious. In February 1997 we analysed the first exams' success rate and we found that the majority of students had taken all four exams. The success rate of two exams was relatively low, less than 50%. In April 1997, one of the topics discussed at the senate session was the analysis of the exam results of the winter period and an important conclusion was that the transition from secondary to high school was demanding and that students needed proper guidance and assistance.

We designed a seminar on learning with a special focus on effective use of time; we gave students advice on how to decide upon aims and priorities, and how to write seminar papers. The purpose of the seminar – we called it an introductory seminar for new students – was to motivate students to get actively and responsibly involved with their higher education studies. At the end we wanted to know whether students were satisfied with the seminar, so we conducted a survey on their satisfaction. It was completed simultaneously with questionnaires for other subjects.

Students were obviously satisfied and to me, that was a clear sign to introduce something similar as a compulsory part of the courses required. Surveys seemed to be a very useful approach to changing and improvement of practice.

The transition from findings to implementation is simple in such a case as you do not have to ask permission from many people. The introductory seminar could happen mostly because I had an oppor-
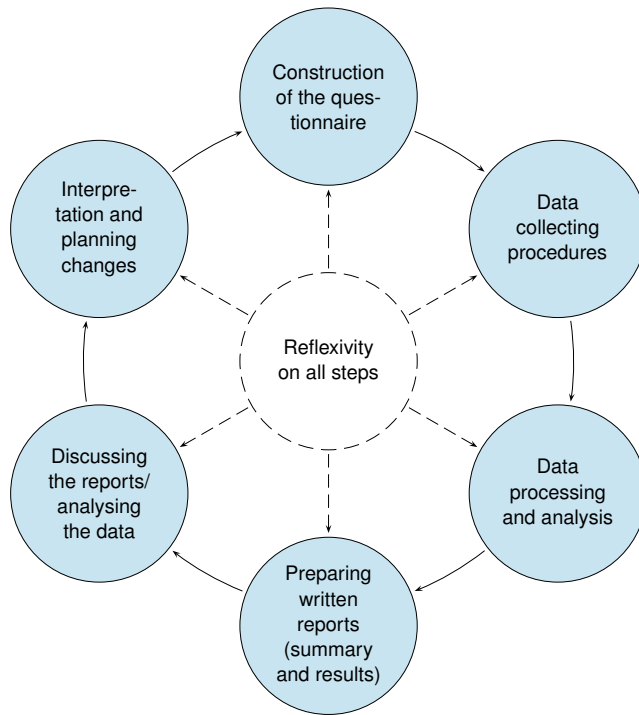
FIGURE 3.1   Building the Self-Evaluation 'Model' – Construction
of Questionnaires: Stage 1

tunity to implement the idea in an almost undisturbed way. I was
also able to begin to realise the idea of establishing self-evaluation
primarily because of my position, which is described in more detail
further on.

The First Step to Self-Evaluation 'Model:' Questionnaires for Students

One of the reasons that introducing students' questionnaires became
the main activity in the first so-called self-evaluation step was my
interest in students and their achievements. The questionnaire im-
plementation is shown in figure 3.1. The questionnaires as part of
the activities of self-evaluation were also part of the action research
study. Reflexivity on all steps was in the centre of my interest and
in this context, I will deal with it in a bit more detail later on. For
now, let it be sufficient to know that we are familiar with various

definitions and divisions of reflection. According to Woolgar (1988, 22) it should be ranging from a 'constitutive reflexivity' to the level that he calls a 'benign introspection.' Generally speaking, reflexivity in this thesis tends towards the latter, as a kind of combined 'reflective practitioner' model with a research element. As will become apparent later, such a combination is not 'model-like' by nature. I will also explain the steps of the reflection process in more detail below.

Creating Questionnaires, Their Objectives and Content

In April 1997 I designed a draft of a questionnaire for full-time students. While designing it, I became aware of the need to include my colleagues. Looking at the questionnaire's final version made me consider the ten claims that were all (implicitly or explicitly) related to teaching. I asked myself: 'Do stated claims not reflect the picture of an ideal teacher? Do I not convey a message to students and teachers what quality teaching in higher education should be?' The answer would only be positive – and this was my view. In fact, I gave students some guidelines on what they ought to expect from a teacher and also what I expected from my colleagues. For a moment I felt discomfort as if I were exercising some pressure on the teachers. Implicitly I guess I did, but it was such an opportunity to influence teachers, particularly the younger ones who were the College's 'potential.' So it was also an opportunity for the growth of academic culture at the College.

The surveys' objective was to get students' opinion about the school ways and about the study programme in that year. The questionnaire was divided into five main topics:

1. Students' attendance at lectures and practicums. Every student estimated his/her attendance rate on a scale: 100%, 75%, 50% or 25%. The assessment of the attendance rate at lectures or practicums was supposed to be helpful for each teacher in order to facilitate the interpretation of the results related directly to him/her. From this data, teachers were able to find out how well the students knew them and how they valued their contribution.

2. The reasons why students attended the lectures and practicums. Every student was given two options as to why they attended them:

- … because they were compulsory and I feared possible consequences of non-presence;
- … because they were interesting and/or useful and I would attend them even if they were not compulsory.

If we carefully consider the answers to the above questions, they are a good example of an awkward formulation. They were supposed to mutually exclusive and should make a clear distinction between 'compulsory' and 'free' and also between 'interesting' and 'not interesting.' The answers, hence, did not consider the option: 'they were compulsory but I liked them.' Or, digging deeper: the compulsory nature was a fact; the question should enable me to find out whether the students were satisfied at all – and if they were, how much. The two answers given were a perfect demonstration of mistakes occurring in questionnaires. But at the same time I consider the survey and even those two answers as a push that was supposed to put us in motion – which could be understood as a process, contradictory to many quality theories based on philosophy of 'getting things done right first time' (Drucker 1990; Murgatroyd and Morgan 1993; Sallis 1993), the so-called quality assurance and the total quality management (TQM) approaches. On the other hand, I perceived the action research as a 'philosophy' that offered me the pattern 'doing – evaluating – doing.' Not that simple in practice, but the basic message was there. Self-evaluation is also 'active' in a way, since it is followed by the implementation of changes. At the same time, it is 'informative' due to surveys and questions, hence full of formative and informative concepts and loaded with action imperative 'let us do it.'

3. The students evaluated their teachers, assistants and subjects in a way that claims were mostly related to the teaching and learning process and the teacher – student relationship. They expressed their opinion by choosing grades on a scale from 5 to 1, whereby 5 showed that they strongly agree with the statement and grade 1 that they totally disagree with it. Regarding the teachers, ten statements were given:

- 'The teacher clearly presented the *subject's objectives* at the beginning of the course.'
- 'The teacher introduces the *central theme of the lecture.*'

- 'The topics have attracted my attention.'
- 'The teacher lectures clearly and understandably.'
- 'The teacher checks on our understanding of the subject and explains the material for the second time if necessary.'
- 'The teacher relates the topics to real life situation.'
- 'The teacher encourages discussion and critical thinking.'
- 'The teacher entices the majority of students to co-operation.'
- 'In class I feel free to express my opinion or ask a question.'
- 'The teacher was available during office hours or at the agreed time.'

As for practicums, the first two questions were modified appropriately since they are mostly meant to consolidate theoretical knowledge or demonstrate applicability of knowledge into practice. Practicums are usually taught by assistants, in small groups up to 30 students. The new claims were:

- 'The practicums effectively complement the lectures.'
- 'The assistant copes well with the group's dynamics and attracts the attention of most students.'

4. An open-ended question followed: 'I would like to add …' and referred to a teacher/assistant or a subject.

5. The last part of the questionnaire contained open questions related to organisational issues, routines and the College's functioning.

As I was designing the questionnaire, I also sketched the implementation dynamics: full-time students were to complete the surveys in the last week of May which was the last week of lectures, the data analysis should be completed in June and by the end of June, the teaching staff should discuss the report. I also thought of a survey for part-time students but the lack of time and the fact that their programme ended in the autumn made me postpone that idea to the following year.

Data Collection and Processing, Preparation of the Report

I designed an invitation for students to complete the survey. It was put on several school information boards a week before the meeting. The survey was scheduled and implemented in the last week of May,

more precisely after the last lecture scheduled that month. 42 stu-
dents participated, which was one third of all students enrolled and
approximately one half of the students who regularly attended the
lectures or the contact hours.

Later, while reading and analysing the questionnaires I was amazed
by the richness of data provided by open-ended questions Students'
statements told me more than just numerical data that could be
useful in comparing individual scores and the average, or in case
of comparison between the highest and the lowest scoring teacher
or assistant. When looking at the pile of returned questionnaires I
realized that the next year there would be even more of them. I
considered the purpose of the work with respect to analysis and I
started to think about different approaches to gathering data, one of
them being a group interview. I gave the students an opportunity to
express their views and opinions about our first academic year and
it seemed right to me to offer the same opportunity to the teach-
ers. Before the survey was carried out I informed the teachers about
the purpose of the questionnaire for full-time students. I enclosed a
sample survey, asked them to consider two issues in particular and to
prepare their replies within two weeks. The first issue was their opin-
ion of the questionnaire and the second was their view of the first
academic year at the College. They were also invited to a meeting at
the end of June when we were supposed to discuss the analysis of
students' opinions. I knew that questionnaires where teachers' work
was assessed by students were not well received among teachers in
Slovenian higher education. I did care about the reactions but ev-
eryday demands made me push my hesitations and considerations
aside.

Further on I will describe how data was processed and how a report
was prepared, based on the survey analysis.

I scanned the returned questionnaires and cautiously read the an-
swers, especially those to the open-ended questions. It was interesting
reading especially the answers to open-ended questions. What I was
particularly interested in were suggestions for change and what was
especially praised by the students. It seemed to make sense giving
every teacher a personal analysis and a general summary of all the
results in order to be able to assess comparability of his/her results
with the average responses given by students. For that purpose, I in-
cluded the average mark as well as the best and the worst grade stu-

dents gave to teachers for every closed-ended question. To illustrate the answers to the open-ended questions I selected the statements that seemed the most interesting and typical – in my opinion. But I did not identify teachers that the statements referred to. I decided myself which answers to the open-ended questions will be in the report, and I was aware of my power of choice and decision-making.

In the introduction to the written report as a summary of the analysis I explained the purpose and the mode of survey implementation and proposed a way to use the results: the analysis summary could be useful for teachers to compare their own results with the average and to determine noticeable deviations. Followed the analysis of five clusters:

1. The attendance rate for lectures and practicum represents an important factor in the interpretation of results. It tells the teacher how much have the students, his evaluators, listened to him/her and by that got to know him/her.
2. Answers to the question why the students attend certain lectures and practicums are also of considerable interest and significance, as they show the students' motivation for attendance.
3. In the analysis of student's opinions on subjects and teachers we show the average for every statement and the corresponding lowest and highest individual's value.
4. In the section 'I would like to add …' students are given the opportunity to comment on a teacher freely. We note the most typical answers in quotation form.
5. Students descriptively respond to questions on College's organization and functioning. We cluster their responses into topics, about the office for students' affairs, the library and other offices. We also summarise answers to open-ended questions 'I liked …' in 'I didn't like ….,' and write down the most typical answers.

I will refer to some results from this report later as well, but always in connection with introduction of changes to academic or management practice.

Discussing the Reports

Discussing the Report at the Senate Meeting. During the meeting of Senate in June 1997, I distributed the summary of the survey ques-

tionnaire analysis to the Senate members. They leafed through that 6 pages and were all visibly surprised. A teacher also employed at the University of Ljubljana said: 'When you sent us a note that we would "play the student questionnaire game" I thought it would be the same as in our Faculty. Nobody processes the student survey data, we do not know in which drawer they get stuck, let alone anyone would want to present a summary analysis.' The Senate members agreed to present the summary of the analysis, to discuss students' opinions and to set the College priorities for next year at the next staff meeting. At that point, their attention shifted to the following questions: who processed the data? Who had access to individual's files, etc.

Discussing the Report at the Staff Meeting. The staff meeting was scheduled for the following day. It was focused on a discussion about the functioning of the College in the academic year that was coming to an end. 9 out of 12 invited teachers and assistants attended the meeting, mostly older contract teachers were absent but all non-teaching staff (7) was present. The focal point of the meeting was the report on survey results, which represented grounds for further change.

Discussing the Personal Analysis with Individual Assistants. Shortly after the meeting we sent the summary of the analysis to all colleagues. The teachers got their personal analysis attached while assistants could get a personal analysis during an informal 'coffee chat' with either me or the associate dean. There were only a few assistants employed at the time and individual meetings were manageable.

Kvale (1996) argues that interviews are actually 'inter-views' which I understand as bringing different and multiple views into discussion. By doing it, as Kvale argues, we construct the 'occurrence' and share meanings with other people. An interview is more than establishing mutual understanding or seeking opinions and clarifications from others – as Bell (1993) would argue. It is about construction, sharing and, in a way, building a discourse. Interviews are therefore not clear, simple situations enabling the researcher to simply collect information. 'Inter views' detect and surface values, emotions and relationships arising from tradition, circumstances and personal 'history' of a person involved. Ryan (1999) argues that meaning is constructed in actual situations and is not automatically shared as it emerges from discourses, specific contexts and circumstances. That

is why my conversations or interviews with assistants were not only an opportunity to ask their opinion and let them talk – I brought my expectations, values and views of the world in these conversations, and so did they. It was interesting to observe the opposing views; mine focused on the institution while they were mostly interested in their own promotion.

Assistants had critically evaluated themselves and when they got the feedback from students (personal analysis) they were pleasantly surprised and satisfied. Despite favourable reports they wanted to tell me about their plans first and what they wanted to do differently the next year. I listened, asked questions, encouraged them in conversations and remained alert to possible topics that would arise and could be further explored. At this stage, I did not specify them, although they were a 'sense of direction' for my activities. After every interview I also wrote down the interviewee's professional or subject area of interest. I saw that data being a useful source of information for staff allocation at the College in the coming years – which was also part of my managerial role.

Interviews were valuable, and so was the absence. The assistant evaluated the least successful by students did not come to talk to me nor to the associate dean. Students disliked his condescending attitude towards them and they also pointed out his weak knowledge of the subject he taught. I noticed his non-eloquence or absence from interview and I felt students were right in their opinion. Yet, I did not do anything to get him involved. I was only too happy having great interviews with others and I took for granted the saying: 'There is always somebody who is difficult to deal with.' Or, as Schein (1999, 8) argues about organisational culture: 'there are three possible patterns: separation, domination, or blending when we want to combine different cultures.' This assistant represented a 'separation' from both conversation and culture; he did not blend in with the others. Interestingly, culture is often understood in terms of sameness. The assistant in question would better fit into 'diversity lacking the unity' (Stronach 1997).

Discussing the Report with Non-Teaching Staff. I also gave the summary of analysis to non-teaching staff and asked them to read it. In the period of preparation for the next academic year, we made some improvements together.

Discussing the Report with Students. The students − members of the student council − were sent a summary of the analysis and they were asked to read it and put it on the agenda of their next meeting, to which the school management should be invited as well. The students did not meet on this subject.

Interpretation of 'Doing' and Planning Improvements

I strongly believed that the aim of those reports − summary and personal analysis − was to stimulate individuals and the whole institution to reflect on their work. I also wanted the staff to get engaged consciously in the dialogue and in discussions focused on improvement planning. For this purpose, I organised meetings and conducted formal and informal conversations.

In the discussions in the Senate and staff meetings (that followed), only a few teachers expressed their own perceptions of the College's work in its first year. The interpretation of the analysis is, therefore, more of my understanding of the results than an overall summary of everybody involved. A similar situation occurred when I wanted to discuss and define priorities for the following year. In the end, setting up priorities became a result of my thinking and bilateral discussions with teachers, assistants, non-teaching staff and students. Staff as a community showed no particular interest in cooperation.

The summary of analysis and discussion with suggestions for change were supposed to round up the self-evaluation procedure − but to me, they were only a new beginning. I understood those data as the starting point for preparation of the next action research cycle and used them as such. I have already mentioned that I could label the first year as a pilot or experimental cycle of the action research. I started to think about self-evaluation procedures in the second half of the academic year. I established questionnaires to monitor full-time students' satisfaction with the study programme.

We carefully monitored some other fields as well, like the number of hours taught on a monthly basis, the success of students during and at the end of exam periods, and we monitored the management of finances and resources in accordance with the legislation.

Think: On Self-Evaluation Procedures

I have already described the development process and implementation of the survey for students as the instrument for the self-

TABLE 3.2   Stages of Self-Evaluation Procedures – Questionnaires

Survey for full-time students about teaching and learning, students – teachers relations, organizational issues (performed for the first time)	C – construction of the questionnaire	April
	G – survey (done at school directly)	May
	A – data processing	June
	Rs and Rp – written documents	June
	I – senate meeting	June
	I – all staff meeting	June
	Rs – mail to all faculty members	July
	Rp – mail to teachers	July
	Rp, I – discussion with assistants	June/July
	Rs – meeting	July
	Rs – mail to members of Students' Council	September
	I – discussion with students	September

evaluation within the first year. The overview of the 1st cycle activities in table 3.2 makes them easier to understand. Later, this table should also enable comparisons of all cycles of my action research. This is why it presents the self-evaluation procedure of the 1st cycle of action research and includes the steps in preparation of the questionnaire for full-time students. From an action researcher's point of view I see the stage of discussion as opportunity for data collection. The steps of implementation are found in the second column. In the third column I present a time frame since the sequence dynamics is important for planning changes.

Institutional self-evaluation (Brennan and Shah 2000; Kump 1995; Seymour 1993; Green 1995, Scheele, Maassen, and Westerheijden 1998) is focused on institutional mechanisms of quality control and on interpretation of results in order to contribute to the improvement of quality management and strategic planning. There are some optional rules for self-evaluation design. According to them, an institution should initially develop vision, long-term and short-term goals (aims and goals) and define the criteria of success. Only on that ground should the institution be able to initiate effective self-evaluation procedures. Had this rule been strictly followed, the College of Management could not have engaged in self-evaluation since we had not developed our aims and goals yet – at least not in the measurable form.

Higher education institutions are autonomous and define their own quality criteria (Wolff 1997; Zgaga 1998). The Slovenian Higher Education Act stipulates only minimal institutional standards that

have to be met in establishing a new institution (institution accreditation) and minimal standards for programme implementation (programme accreditation). At the time, the College had no vision and mission statement, written or otherwise, and no clearly stated aims or criteria. On top of that, we did not even have access to any comparative data at the state level, as they did not exist. So what did we assess and evaluate at all? And on what basis? How can I argue for and substantiate my decision to initiate self-evaluation procedures already in the first year?

My decision to focus on teaching and learning process analysis in the first year emerged from professional literature (for example Marentič Požarnik and Mihevc 1997; Kump 1995; PHARE 1993; 1997). Teaching was the only activity that the College provided in its first year, anyway. There was no research work, no project work and no publishing. During the process of the questionnaire construction I turned to similar instruments and mechanisms that had already been developed by other institutions. I adjusted the existing models to our cultural context and specific circumstances at the College.

Act: Planning Improvements

In the first year, self-evaluation was based on the questionnaire. I faced the fact that the Slovenian cultural and research context was quite quantitatively oriented (Stronach et al. 1998). Using questionnaires for data collecting is quite a common practice in research activities, but not for evaluation purpose. I noticed passive behaviour towards this way of evaluation – almost a silent rebellion – among older professors. The majority of younger teachers and assistants, however, accepted the questionnaires relatively well. But my records show that in the first year I was in fact 'alone.' Only a few colleagues were occasionally involved in certain stages of the research. Even changes, based on report results were planned with a few colleagues only. I knew that I was able to implement some procedures only because of my firm belief in doing something right and worthwhile for further development. I was also aware of the fact that I was entering a completely new territory for Slovenian higher education – establishing an institutional quality assurance system and testing it. The existing professional literature provided professional support, while the power to implement the project emerged from my position at the College.

Reconstruction of the Self-Evaluation Procedure

During the summer months in 1997, I checked the questionnaire that I used and I re-read the summary of the analysis as well as all personal analyses of teachers and assistants. I leafed through the folder called my 'research diary.' The documents, notes from meetings, and conversations had been inserted into it. It felt as if the last half of the year was repeating again. I had to decide what was well accepted and approved last year as it would make sense to keep for the next year in similar form, and what to change.

I also planned to ask the teaching staff about their views and opinions on teaching and organisational issues and routines. I knew I had to find some kind of a mechanism to encourage discussions on organisational issues among teachers. That seemed to be one of the major problems I intended to face the next year. Everything was made even more difficult by the growth of the College – which grew in size from one to two cohorts of students, and consequently the number of teachers increased as well.

School Activities

Some of the new school activities could be implemented immediately and did not require a lot of co-ordination, while others required a different approach, more discussion and a consensus. It was easy to plan and later to implement changes related to organisational routines and practices; a discussion with the person centrally involved was usually sufficient to change a routine. We extended the opening hours of the office for students' affairs and the library opened twice a week in the afternoon. For some improvements, however, we needed resources: for example, we planned to buy a photocopying machine so that students could make copies in the library, to purchase some equipment and to set up the computer classroom.

My intensive interest in students continued the following year. I wanted to encourage them to play an active role in the study process and also to take responsibility for their own achievements. I concentrated my efforts, directly related to the success of my students, in a development project called 'From New Student to Graduate.' I also thought a lot about the development of the teaching staff.

They were all experts in their own subject areas but as an institution we could have benefited by developing our own approach and a comprehensive view of teaching. By the end of the first academic

year yet another idea matured: teachers should get involved in reflecting on teaching practice, in order to develop a more holistic view of teaching and learning. I partially started to implement that idea in the second cycle of my action research. It grew steadily and shaped into an institutionalised form of staff professional development during the second stage of this action research.

In a way, I lived 'with' the College and 'for' it. I wanted to test the action research dynamic in live situation. I started to study; I wanted to experience the complexity of self-evaluation in practice. I was dedicated to work, changes and practice improvement. In my mind, I designed other options for changes, such as implementation of the ECTS, elective subjects and new study programmes. But I could not afford to use all of my energy in one year since establishing a higher education institution is a long lasting project – a real marathon. It requires prudence and, above all, endurance. That was my main thought in the beginning of the second academic year also being the second cycle of my action research study.

Teachers, Quality of Teaching and Learning

The dividing line between the 1st and 2nd cycle is blurred since both cycles are marked by two dimensions of action research: daily operation or practice, and its evaluation. An additional dimension of complexity is added by my interwoven roles of a manager and a researcher.

The plan for the new academic year (1997/1998) was based on conclusions, interpretation of findings and suggestions for improvement acquired through the 1st cycle. My position at the College was one of the factors that had influenced the content of changes and dynamics of their implementation the most. It would be difficult to say that the changes introduced have replaced the old, established processes with new practice. The College was only in its stage of establishment and there was no old practice. Since the establishment we have developed our own rules and regulations, all with respect for the legal framework. In regulating some essential areas of work, we have followed the practice of similar higher education institutions in Slovenia and abroad – for example, how libraries work and what marking regulations other institutions have. Nevertheless, many activities have been done intuitively, especially those that have had a strong influence on the so-called spirit of the school.
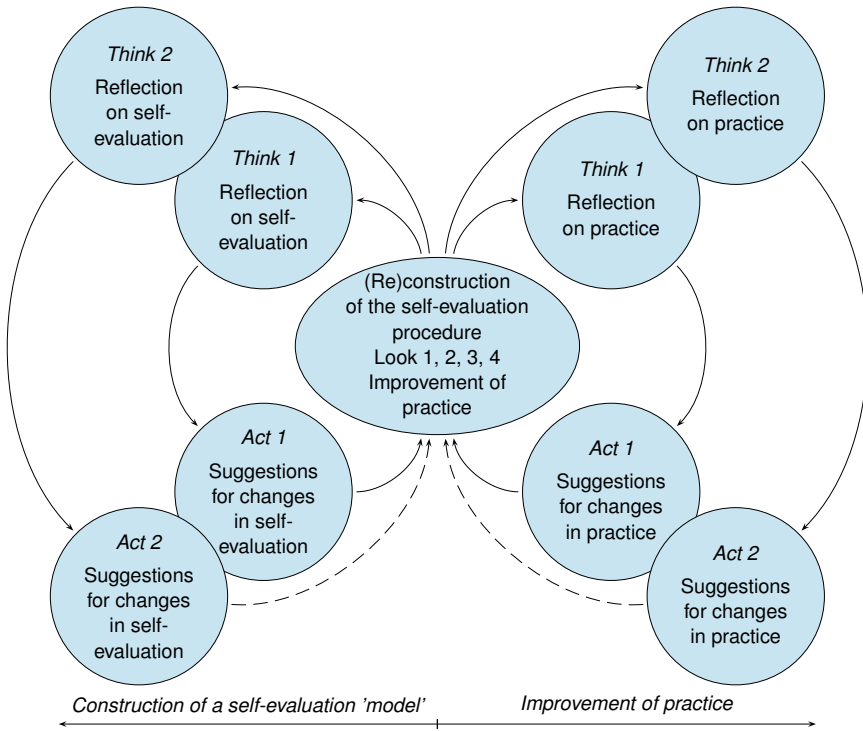
FIGURE 3.2   Two Parallel Dimensions of Action Research Contents

In the first year, we worked with students a lot. In order to ensure the study effectiveness, an introductory seminar for new-students was introduced. In the 2nd cycle, we systematically upgraded the activities that had already started as well as developed the new ones. In the second academic year, we carefully introduced training and education for teaching staff.

In the 2nd cycle of action research, I began to recognise the interplay between the self-evaluation processes and performance in higher education practice. The beginning might have been intuitive, but soon enough – perhaps also because the research approach forced me to critically reflect upon the processes and events – I consciously started to deal with the cause-effect relationships between self-evaluation and the improvement of practice. Focusing on the content for each of the cycles emerged from these relationships as well – the success of students in the first year, and the professional development of the staff in the following year.

In figure 3.2 I tried to show the two dimensions or contents of the action research: the construction of the self-evaluation 'model' on the left and the improvement of practice on the right.

Both processes result from the activities of the first cycle, the stage was called 'Look 1.' The first year (in the 1st cycle of the action research), I conscientiously tackled the creation of the questionnaire on students' satisfaction and took practice for a given fact – as something that would evolve on its own. Let me emphasize here that the 'self-evaluation procedure' is narrower in sense than the 'self-evaluation process.' A procedure is supposed to focus on technical issues, while a self-evaluation process includes procedures and draws attention (and the focus of research) to improvements introduced for the sake of organisation and its people. Here and there, the reader might notice some inconsistency related to both definitions in my writing, but, especially at the early stages of the research, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the process and the procedure. The development of self-evaluation procedures still represented the focal point of my research in that period, its ultimate 'goal' at the time being the construction of a self-evaluation model.

I also started to reflect upon connections between both processes and their interweaving. Is a planned approach to practice improving a logical consequence of self-evaluation? Is it at all relevant to think in terms of cause and effect by separating them from one another? Or, could it be that self-evaluation is an automatic 'result' of a good practice thus becoming its integral part?

The 2nd cycle of the action research hence began with the improvement of practice, which was based on the self-evaluation of the College's operations in the first academic year. This dimension, which could be labelled as the 'improvement of practice,' seems an important output of the self-evaluation procedure to me. While thinking about it, I realized that had there only been one cycle, the self-evaluation procedure could result in suggestions or plans for change, but they would never be implemented in practice. To me, acting (action) was essential. And I notice that the action research at that point brought an important 'action' dimension into the self-evaluation theory.

Despite difficulties in drawing a clear line between the cycles as well as separating the management from the research I will, in order to be transparent, present the 2nd cycle of the action research in two
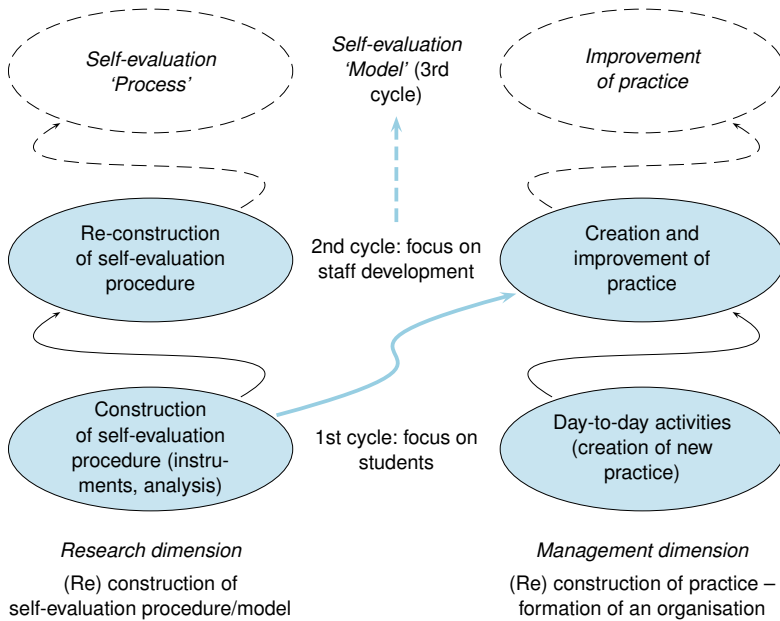
FIGURE 3.3   Building the Self-Evaluation 'Model' through Action Research:
            Stage 2

parts. First, I will describe the improvement implementation. I will
focus on those innovations which seemed to be essential for insti-
tutional development – the improvements related to material condi-
tions, different organisational structure, changes in curriculum and
staff professional development. In a way, the content of innovations
and changes reflected my vision of important issues and priorities
in the higher education institution. I cannot clearly separate the ac-
tion research based changes from those emerging from institutional
growth. To me, the institutional growth represented one of the major
elements of change at this point.

The figure 3.3 shows the development of my original idea. I started
with a straight link and clear line between the self-evaluation proce-
dure and the functioning of the institution. The practice was basi-
cally 'given' to me and I had no intention to evaluate or monitor it
in detail. The action research as a research method was focused on
development of self-evaluation only, the left curve in the figure. Yet,
things already got complicated by the end of the first cycle. I realised
that changing self-evaluation procedures also meant change of the

practice at the same time. The dimension of the practice improvement emerged spontaneously (the right spiral). The grey arrow in the figure represents the field where results of self-evaluation of the first cycle influenced the action and practice of the next year – in the second cycle.

The simple concept of the action research 'look – think – act' appears in both the research and the management of a higher education institution. But it was not a matter of two separate action researches. My 'function' enabled me to link the self-evaluation development with practice while the action research basically remained the working style. Soon, the lines dividing self-evaluation from practice became unclear. Figure 3.3 demonstrates that I wanted to have a clear model of relationships, influences and cause-effect relations between practice and self-evaluation. The self-evaluation did not remain a separate activity – the action research embedded it into practice. Both, the managerial and research dimensions interwove more and more, and not just in the context of my action research, at the one particular year level. The 'look – think – act' routine became the predominant style of me approaching everyday work, personally as well as in terms of managing the College. Have I started to build an 'organised chaos' approach towards organisational development – towards quality?

Quality Chaos

In literature, self-evaluation is listed as one of the approaches, models of quality. Murgatroyd and Morgan (1993) discuss TQM, inspection (at undergraduate level) and the quality assurance models, such as ISO standards and also self-evaluation. Higher education is different from under-graduate education at least in some areas, such as the autonomy of the institutions. Pounder (2000) argues that institutional self-assessment is considered to be the crucial quality assurance mechanism in higher education. The essential elements of all the quality assurance systems in higher education are the institutions taking responsibility for self-evaluation and involvement into some form of external evaluation (peers, commissions, agencies) (Scheele, Maassen, and Westerheijden 1998). Self-evaluation has, hence, become an imperative for institutions in order to prove their quality and a high level of accountability. One of the aims is associated with the accreditation system as well. As there are more and more private

universities emerging also in the countries that had traditionally not
have private higher education institutions, accreditation seems to be
essential in order to get recognised on the national level as well as in
the European Union, and also signalling readiness for the movement
of goods, workforce and knowledge, as well as the mobility quality.

The problem with the idea of self-evaluation as the quality concept
is mainly that despite the explicit self-evaluation (Scheele, Maassen,
and Westerheijden 1998), the 'external' factor is extremely important.
With it, the university as an independent institution establishes stan-
dards itself (Wolff 1997) and opens them to the public in order to as-
sure or assume public responsibility, as stated in the Erfurt Declara-
tion on the autonomy of universities. Yet, Kirn (1996) states that mo-
bility, markets and competitiveness in the European Union require
quality of higher education systems while respecting their autonomy
('institutions') and accountability ('towards public'). The only ques-
tion is whether the institution and the public follow the same agenda.
Boyle and Bowden (1997, 117) provide an answer to my question ar-
guing that 'any approach to quality assurance in higher education
needs to recognise this complexity and the need to balance a qual-
ity improvement orientation and the accountability function.' For me,
balancing is about negotiation and not a solution for a dichotomy of
external standards and internally implemented processes. It seems
that in the market environment the outcomes are worth more than
the processes. Evaluation can be seen as a 'tyranny of transparency'
(Strathern 2000), part of the 'audit culture' and consequently also as
concern for the 'economy of performance' (Stronach 2000), partic-
ularly when imposed on institutions from the government in order
to increase accountability and competition. Or, it can be justified as
the need to shake the old and almighty universities and to take into
account both the students and the public.

In terms of novelty implementation, I find it interesting that quality
approaches including self-evaluation models, often remain theoret-
ical, written in national directives or project reports, where, at least
to the best of my knowledge for the Slovenian context, evaluation is
most often separated from those who work in practice. This can also
be seen in the PHARE, ETF, the Danish Center for Quality Assur-
ance and Evaluation of Higher Education and the French National
Evaluation Committee, for example. These three reports illustrate the
building of the evaluation 'model' and its recommendations. But how

are these recommendations put into practice? The gap between the national and the institutional, between accountability and academic freedom seems to steer the changes and create obstacles.

Look: The Improvement of Practice

In the 2nd cycle of the action research, I'm separating the improvements into two categories:

1. changes that were implemented in order to improve the results as the outcomes of study activities and to increase the study effectiveness, and
2. changes that contributed to staff professional development and/or to the formation of the academic community.

Study efficiency and professional development have proven to be important topics, therefore I am specially reflecting on them in the final chapter, in terms of quality theory and organizational culture.

Study Performance and Student Satisfaction

In the following, I summarize some of the activities that we have introduced in the academic year 1997/1998 and have (or should) contribute to the study effectiveness in the long run:

- improving spatial conditions, for example a computer room and the reading room,
- increasing purchase of professional literature for the library,
- establishing our own publishing house and encouraging teachers to publish textbooks, scripts and manuals for practicum,
- re-constructing an introductory seminar for new students and upgrading it with computer skills seminar,
- issuing a manual on assignment writing for students, also aiming at unification of teachers' requirements concerning the style and the form,
- promoting extra-curricular activities, such as sports, movie evenings, social events, the first new students ceremony,
- teacher training,
- re-designing of the questionnaire for full time students and
- designing of a new questionnaire for part-time.

Despite of all that, I was aware of the fact that innovations alone would not accelerate the College's development: seeing things as a researcher and a director, it is not only important to introduce the changes, but the approach itself. Will the students be ready to accept it? And the staff? Are the changes just a shooting star or are they going to last longer and become components of the College's functioning – part of its culture? (Research Diary, 11th November 1997).

In order to give the reader an opportunity to get an insight into the action research, I will introduce and explain some of these changes, also be able to serve as a basis to assess and evaluate the circumstances in which the innovation was implemented. The introductory seminar for new students was shifted to an earlier period – the winter term – and was conducted in four groups of approximately 30 students. It was well received. The questionnaires which students completed at the end were filled with positive statements, such as 'a lot of practical work,' 'we all participate,' 'very useful,' 'instructive.' Only a few students wrote: 'boring,' 'useless,' 'waste of time.' I expected a few such reactions.

According to the Higher Education Act, practical training – as a form of acquiring work experience during the course of studies – is compulsory in professional higher education institutions. It aims at giving the students a 'real life experience' and a sense of reality of their future profession. For that purpose, professional practice in working organizations should also be a part of the training. With regard to the contents of the 'Management' study programme, we planned to insert a couple of weeks of professional practice into each of the three years of study. But already within the first year, we encountered companies' unwillingness to provide professional practice opportunities for students. Their excuses being that they have 'their own work' and that 'care for the students is not paid.'

Based on the experience of the previous year, and in accordance with the feedback we received from companies, some changes were introduced. For the first year students, we replaced the professional practice in companies with practical training provided by the College. The introductory seminar for new students and the computer science course were part of this training. The students in the second year went to different companies to do their four weeks professional practice, they worked during summer holidays. That area of professional practice was an innovation in the Slovenian higher education

context, introduced without state support. The following diary entry is an indication of the problems encountered.

In May 1998 we organized training for mentors in order to facilitate their work with students. All their expenses were covered by the College. Approximately 120 mentors were invited, among them those who had been mentors already and those who were supposed to become mentors. 11 mentors attended the seminar. The low response rate was attributed to work overload. 'There is no time!' said one of the participants and continued: 'During the year, a student constantly requires additional time from the mentor. While performing the tasks of his job, he must assign some appropriate work to the student as well and this work must be supervised. A student also represents a financial burden for the company. We have to pay the student at least one meal and transportation costs, and they expect some financial reward as well.'

I objected by emphasizing that a student can also do some useful work for the company. The mentor only shrugged and added: 'Some of them are hard workers and useful indeed. Sometimes they even find the work by themselves. It is, however, inconvenient that professional practice is always organised during summer months when the majority of employees go on vacation. In our company we do not leave a lot of work undone for that period of time and the extent of activities is as a rule smaller during the vacation period. Students would be much more useful to us at the beginning of the calendar year' (Research Diary, 7th May 1998).

The professional practice seemed important to me, for students as well as for the College, so I paid special attention to it. We introduced questionnaires about professional practice for students and mentors as a part of self-evaluation procedure. The main purpose was to systematically monitor the area that nobody at the College was really familiar with and to organize the professional practice in a way that it would best meet the needs of students and of the study programme. At the same time, the College's links with the economy should be strengthened – the transfer of theory into practice and vice versa.

Staff Development does Not Just Happen by Itself

Success of the students is closely related to teachers' pedagogical capabilities. The teachers and the assistants need to know their subject or the area of expertise well and have knowledge of teaching and

learning methods and strategies. Education and training for peda-gogical work is a part of a complex area of staff development and I systematically engaged in it during that academic year. Let me list below some activities that we introduced:

- At the Senate meeting, we defined the rules and the employment policy more precisely.
- Measures and standards for staff promotion were approved and the implementation of related procedures began.
- The training related to higher education didactics was organised for all colleagues (two seminars).
- We organized discussions on questionnaire analysis for the students and the teachers.
- Various social events for staff such as celebrating birthdays and other important events as well as the New Year celebrations were organised.
- The first professional excursion for staff was carried out.

As already mentioned, during the first year at the College I had to deal with severe employment problematics and could only choose from the following three options:

- To employ retired teachers (between 60 and 65 years old) having the title of a professor, on a contractual basis.
- To employ teachers from the Slovenian universities – provided that they can get consent from their parent institution – on a contractual basis.
- To regularly employ full-time local teachers (mostly without phd), at the level of senior lecturers or lecturers.

I have mostly decided for the contractual employment of already formed teachers.

Teachers are supposed to have appropriate qualifications in two areas: in the subject area and in pedagogy. The professionalism of subject area is most important. Teachers upgrade their professional, subject area knowledge by completing Master, Doctoral or Postdoctoral studies, and later by participation in research projects, international conferences and so on. However, the field of teaching and skills for it is underestimated in higher education (Marentič Požarnik and Mihevc 1997; Marentič Požarnik 1998).

Designing the annual self-evaluation procedure is the core of the action research. As I am referring to the experience from the 1st cycle, this is a process of restructuring. During the second year, the questionnaires, their design and implementation were still in focus of my interest. I used the analysis as a starting point for discussion with the employees; after all, it was all about the solid scientific facts, to which in Slovenia we still prefer to respond, or at least their apparent credibility makes a certain impression. This can be illustrated with experience from one of our meetings where the presenter used a lot of graphs and quoted the percentages. He made a strong impression on the audience although the sample and other parameters were imprecise and misleading. The approval was repeated: 'What a graph! What a picture!'

During the 2nd cycle, new instruments were introduced – the questionnaire for part-time students and the questionnaire for teachers. That year, the presentation of the analysis was accompanied by a lively discussion among the staff. The feeling of success was nicely summarized in a statement by a colleague: 'I would be disappointed if we had not surveyed students this year. I am really curious how I stand this year.'

Being able to attract my colleague into thinking about instrument changes and the production of new ones made me really glad. She was much happier to co-operate than in the first year. At that point she already participated in the content design and she independently designed the questionnaires. She assisted in the conduct of surveys and took over the preparation of the data analysis and the reports. The questionnaire-related activities became part of her work. By the end of the academic year she took the initiative in designing a new questionnaire that new students were supposed to fill it at enrolment. It focused on the reasons for choosing the College and on their expectations. We planned to give the completed questionnaires back to teachers who taught subjects in the first year in order for them to have a better picture about the cohort they were teaching. Her idea seemed interesting and we agreed for her to prepare a questionnaire draft for the following year.

The questionnaires (surveys) were the central part of the first two action research cycles, so this stage of the action research was called

'technical' or 'instrumental.' The questionnaire-making process was not separated from the process of the practice improvement. Already in the 1st cycle, that is in my pilot or experimental research year I have chosen the questionnaire to be the central instrument. I have already discussed the reasons for my choice and the specific Slovenian context in the previous chapters. However, looking back on my then efforts to create my own 'model' of self-evaluation, I see the extension of the already existing and accepted set of instruments to new samples. From the 1st cycle I had the knowledge and experience from the questionnaire construction and design, from conducting surveys, processing and interpretation of data as well as from discussions about data provided by questionnaires. The width of the data was more important than their depth, which is exactly what surveys provide (Merriam 1998; Yin 1994; Creswell 1998).

Establishing a student survey system is a complex and dynamic process, which definitely requires a variety of knowledge and skills, including those from the field of management. Taking into account the organisation of work at the College, I decided to follow the next steps:

- to separate all three questionnaire-related stages of the implementation process;
- to decide about the instrument and then design it;
- to gather and process the data in order to prepare the summary and personal analysis reports;
- to interpret analyses and reports and to discuss improvements.

In the first year, most attention was paid to the first two stages. In the second, I still actively participated in preparing the questionnaires, but focused my attention on the analysis interpretation, either at the staff meeting or later, in one-to-one or smaller group discussions.

The same year the questionnaires were improved, re-designed for part-time students and teachers as well. But I started to feel the need for deeper data insight, not just for myself but for the staff as well. Also, I became more aware of the data gathered by surveys. I wanted people to start reflecting on their work and how to improve themselves. The question 'What is the fuss about it?' got its true meaning in the 3rd cycle. The staff started to feel that those 'annoying' questionnaires had a deeper meaning after all. By using them, we paved

the way to the 'social stage' of the institution development, but as long as the questionnaires were still technically imperfect and not a part of the routine, moving towards 'social' was almost impossible. Only when the logistics handling of surveys had become transparent, the focus could shift to people.

Some ideas about the (re)construction of the questionnaires were results of discussions with the teachers and the non-teaching staff. I wondered how to get the teachers systematically involved in the construction of the range of instruments and managed to do it by introducing new questionnaires for the teachers and by asking them their opinions and suggestions for change. Their answers helped me in (re)constructing and transforming the self-evaluation procedure that later implemented in 3rd cycle.

Do: Constructing a 'Model'

The doing phase is an integral part of self-evaluation as well as of the action research. In the context of self-evaluation, the notion of 'doing' can be understood as the totality of changes and improvements planned. As for the College, the analysis of numerical data and the reports created the basis for numerous formal discussions and countless informal conversations that resulted in suggestions for change. The ideas were considered carefully and, after having consulted a few individuals, I suggested them to be carried out in the following year as new or improved activities. I describe some of these activities or improvements in more detail in the 3rd cycle.

As an organisational activity, the action research should also have a 'doing' stage. Every cycle requires a critical reflection on the work already done and indicates changes for the next cycle. Within the framework of my action research, this 'doing' stood for the continuous construction of an organic self-evaluation 'model.' By means of the action research aiming at self-evaluation modelling, I intended to discover the path to a sustainable, organic development of a higher education institution.

By that time the questionnaires were already institutionalised to a certain extent and became part of the school's routine. A critical overview of the data related to the functioning of the school shows that in the first two years of the action research we confronted many issues. But we remained weak mostly in the area of the institutional norm, guidelines and values as well as the strategic management.

Those areas were supposed to be the focus of the last, 3rd cycle of the action research. The action research was initially planned to only last for three years. In the academic year 1998/1999, when I realized that the self-evaluation model had not yet been fully developed, I decided to extend the research for another year.

Designing Mission Statement and Sense of Belonging to Institution

In 1998/1999, some activities represented a great contribution to the development of internal organisation of a higher education institution. The most important of them were encouragement of professional co-operation among the co-workers (introduction of the chairs, pedagogic seminars that evolved into yearly pedagogical consultations), and efforts for transparency of the College's activities (questionnaires, a study guide, some statistics on study effectiveness, etc.) and last but not the least, creating a mission statement as some kind of an attempt to clearly express our common understanding of quality.

Of all the possibilities, why do I emphasize the vision and the mission statement? The first reason lies in the very nature of the evaluation: it requires well-defined objectives that can eventually be compared with the actual outcomes (Fidler 1996; Davies and Ellison 1999). By rule, a plan of activities defining its goals long before the implementation of the self-evaluation process should exist in every organisation. The second reason was the need to ensure the College at least a basic level of stability, especially as far as the internal organisation was concerned. This seemed even more important since the situation in the Slovenian higher education was increasingly unpredictable, thus making schools more vulnerable. To illustrate it further, the number of students was increasing every year, the resources granted by the state were limited and the demands for quality greater. Establishing of new, independent higher education institutions took place, and the efforts to found the new University of Primorska Region became more prominent. In May 1997, a project for establishment of the University of Primorska was formally launched, and soon after that, initiatives for new universities in other Slovenian provinces (for example, in Dolenjska and Gorenjska regions) emerged.

The third reason for creating the vision and mission statement was a personal one. In May 1998 I was nominated a director of the College

of management in Koper. Setting up a process of strategic planning on the basis of a dialogue with the colleagues represented a great occupational and professional challenge. The process of creating a vision and a mission statement was planned to unfold within five successive workshops. The emphasis was on dialogue among the staff. In addition, the search for the common interests of all the important College members was actually the study of the values held by these individuals. That phase was interpreted as the 'social' level of the action research. The formation of a mission statement influenced my perception and understanding of the College management, as well as the configuration of a self-evaluation 'model.'

Self-Evaluation: Technical and Social Level

Preparing for the questionnaire implementation, quite time-consuming earlier, has become almost a routine in the 3rd cycle. We conducted a survey among the full-time and part-time students, about the level of their studies satisfaction, and two similar surveys among the new-students and among the teachers. The analysis of the questionnaires and the discussion followed. The action research, introduced as a means of self-evaluation 'model' construction, entered a new dimension of changing the practice and initiating changes in the 2nd cycle, with the ultimate goal of an overall institutional development. Each year, the 'natural' development or growth of the College paired with the conscious changing of practice, created a new situation for the self-evaluation procedure to develop and settle in. The focus of the 3rd cycle being the creation of a mission statement, the processes of the improvement of practice and the re-construction of self-evaluation approached each other even more. My roles of a researcher and a director started to interweave inseparably.

When I started to plan my action research, I expected to continually develop and improve self-evaluation throughout the cycles – to define the self-evaluation 'model' as clearly and precisely as possible. In the 2nd cycle I use an arrow (figure 3.3) to show the causality in the link between the self-evaluation procedure and the improvement of practice, in order to show how the results from the questionnaires affect the practice and the functioning of the organisation at the individual, group and institutional activity levels respectively. In the 3rd cycle, when we drafted the mission statement, the activities began to interweave almost 'organically' and in figure 3.4 they are depicted
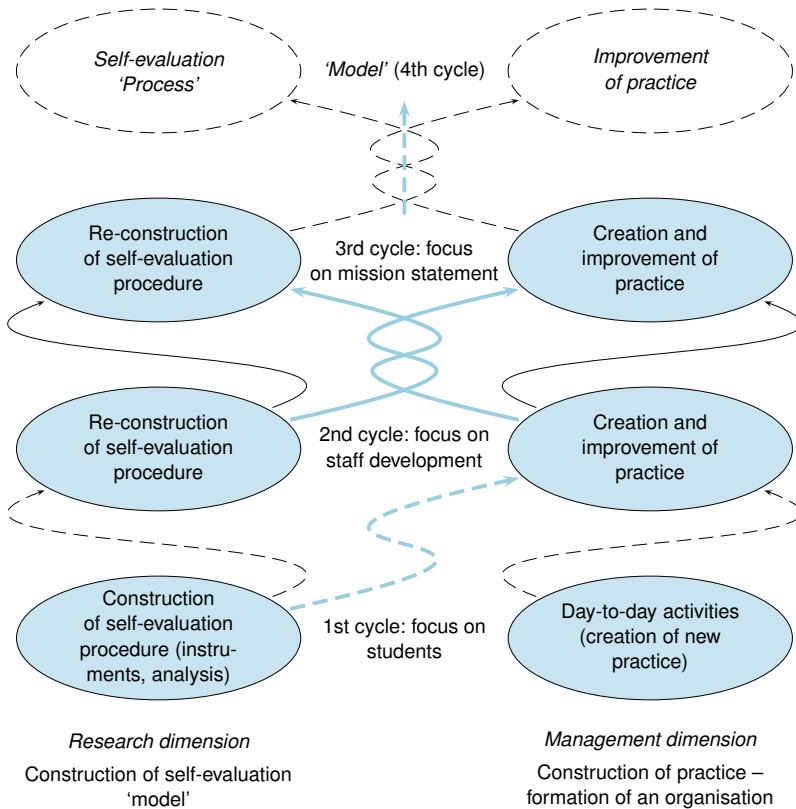
FIGURE 3.4   Building the Self-Evaluation 'Model' through Action Research: Stage 3

with grey links between the action spirals of self-evaluation and the improvement of practice.

Still determined to get to my 'model,' this is why I defined the formulation of the mission statement simply as one of the elements of its design. Between the two action spirals, I started to look for some kind of a logical connection and the structuring of various processes that took place at the organisation level (figure 3.5).

The various connections and interweaving (grey lines in the figure) indicate the dynamics of the emerging 'model' of self-evaluation. The principles of the action research are slowly but obviously becoming the appropriate means to achieve the aim, or rather the way the work was carried out within the organization. The monitoring, evaluating and introducing improvements (in figure 3.5, each turn of the spiral
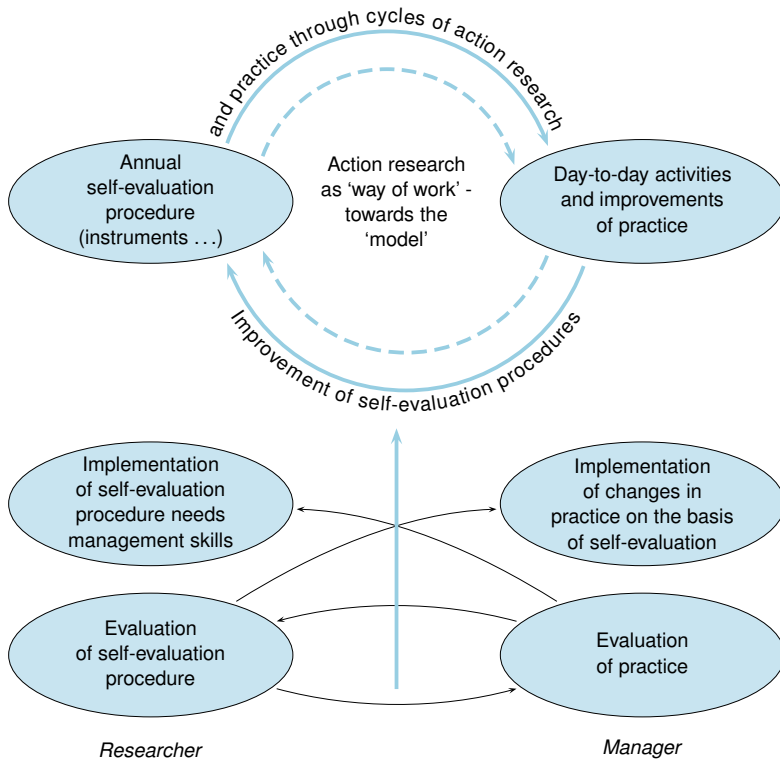
FIGURE 3.5 Processes and Dynamics in Action Research

represents one cycle of the action research) were supposed to contribute towards effective organisational development.

I also started to differentiate the connection, marking a mutual influence between the research and the management dimension, thus between my roles of a researcher and a manager. My position, based on these conclusions was that without changing the practice, the construction process of the self-evaluation 'model' would only be a purpose to itself, and would therefore be interesting exclusively from the point of view of a researcher. At the same time, changing the practice without evaluation would inevitably lead to non-systematic, *ad hoc* changes, bringing less benefit for institutional development.

Nevertheless, I still wanted to perceive the simultaneity of mutually distinct and well-recognised processes in the interweaving of my roles. They are marked with thin arrows in the lower half of figure 3.5. The role of a manager influences the course and changing

of self-evaluation procedure since implementing it requires management skills; also, the procedure itself is subject to evaluation, which again is one of the tasks performed by the manager. The role of the researcher strongly influences the functioning of the organisation, the management processes more precisely, since the improvements, emerging from the previous years' self-evaluation results are introduced, and the current management practice is being evaluated and self-reflected as well.

Look: Improvement of Practice

The process of formulation of a mission statement could be included into the 'improvement of practice' chapter, but I prefer to describe it within the framework of the (re)construction of self-evaluation procedure, because planning and stating the goals are closely related to the institutional evaluation. As a matter of fact, one should not exist without the other. If we want to evaluate the work of an institution, we should get to know its aims and goals, since the degree to which they have been achieved is determined by means of evaluation. With no critical opinion and no self-evaluation of performance it is extremely difficult to decide what to do next (Hargreaves and Hopkins 1991; Hopkins 1989).

The College grew and expanded, development of study programmes as well as the publishing of manuals and textbooks have contributed to the 'building' of a higher education institution. Most activities have become institutionalised, the component parts of our organisational culture. A similar process of institutionalisation can be seen in the surveys and in the framework of the self-evaluation procedure. Let me describe some more important activities that aimed towards the two principal targets: the professional development and the student success.

An institutionalised academic community cannot just simply appear overnight and there is no rule that would lead to it. In the academic year 1996/1997, the College started from scratch. Yet, this is not entirely true; everyone contributed his views, interests, wishes, expectations and a special value system. A certain culture did exist, but still not in a form of a new organization that would confirm that the culture is based on widely accepted (internalised) values of people. Tavčar (2002, 19) states that 'the connection between the manifestations (artefacts) and the adopted values and assumptions is not

unique,' therefore it is difficult to identify the characteristics of an organisational culture from its manifestations. In a new institution, the emergence of culture is a gradual process, greatly influenced by values of the stakeholders. The non-existence of an 'organisational culture' (Schein 1999), does not indicate the absence of tension between individual value systems. From the beginning, we encouraged processes that were supposed to help in establishing an academic community, expected to be built on a large enough number of generally accepted principles and values (in education) or, simply said, the views on learning and teaching as well as researching in a higher education institution.

In the previous year, one-day workshops on didactics in higher education were very well received, so in the third year I decided to risk with a longer version. I use the word 'risk' because workshops that include the entire teaching staff, especially in the field of didactics, are a rather unfamiliar concept in the culture of Slovenian higher education institutions. These forms of professional integration strongly influenced the growth and the cultural level of the emerging higher education institution.

Think: Self-Evaluation and the Mission of the Organisation

In the 3rd cycle of the action research, the central activity of constructing the self-evaluation 'model' was creation of a vision and mission statement, which represented the beginning of the strategic planning process. Two reasons convinced me to try and create a development plan for our College. The first reason involved my research study: the planning process was strongly interlinked with the institutional evaluation (Hargreaves and Hopkins 1991; Hopkins 1989; Sallis 1993). The second reason was encouragement from a senior colleague, who had already suggested creating such a development plan in the previous year. Strategic management is his field of expertise and he believed the process of planning and plans to be of utter importance for a successful organisation. He focused on the process of monitoring the College's activities, because I was immersed in developing the self-evaluation 'model.' The construction of the College's development plan seemed to be an opportunity to bring together the two processes (planning and evaluating) both being indispensable management functions (Ansoff 1984; Hopkins 1989; Stoner and Freeman 1992). The process of planning defines the main activities

of the organization, maps out the long-term and short-term goals of the organisation, as well as individual activities and their standards of efficiency. Therefore, the pre-set standards of the evaluation process (and of control, in this context) are among criteria for assessing efficiency of an organisation or activity.

We approached the strategic planning in accordance with the 'model of organisation policy' (Tavčar 1997). Similar approaches can be found in other authors (Kralj 1992; Schwaninger 1994; Mintzberg 1983; 1994). Mintzberg (1994) resumes the history of the strategic planning 'from its origins around 1965 through its rise to prominence and its subsequent fall.' He challenges the belief that planning is rational, logical, linear and controllable and emphasizes that strategic management should be understood as 'an arena of complexity' where important cognitive and social processes take place. He ends his book with a valuable thought that there was never one best way in the planning. To that, he also adds that too much planning may lead to chaos, but the same is true for the lack of it, only in this case slipping into chaos would be direct (p. 415).

Fidler (1996), in his book *Strategic Management for School Development* describes the strategic management in educational organisations and provide activities in order to help practitioners in developing a strategy in their own organisation. He also warns of problems and contradictions in the period of introducing strategic management into schools. This book is considered to be some kind of a guidebook through strategic planning, although Fidler warns that it should primarily contribute to an understanding of processes. Models need to adapt to school circumstances (p. 16). Watson and Crossley (2001) examine the generation and the evolution of the strategic management process in higher education, pointing out that strategic planning requires a high degree of flexibility and involvement. Flexibility should encourage adaptation to the changing environment of the institution and the need to avoid creation of an over-rigid control and planning system. A wider involvement is necessary to gain the 'ownership' from the stakeholders responsible, not only for the strategy's construction but also for its implementation (pp. 121-122).

The strategic planning process at the College had an optimistic start and was initially limited to a smaller group of people. Later, all employees participated in the planning process. The co-operation itself was in fact more important than the final outcome and within

six months, we designed our own vision and mission statement. The development plan had to wait for the following year. At that time we also prepared the first annual report of the College, a review of the work accomplished from its establishment onwards and a sort of the first public report on our self-evaluation at the same time.

The project team was supposed to meet twice a month. The tasks and the time limits were defined in great detail, and the Senate was supposed to approve the development plan by April 2000. The first and the most important assignment, that of 'defining the basic (permanent) policies of the College,' should comprise the following:

- the mission statement as a programme framework and the beneficiaries of the College, as well as the vision,
- the objectives of the College and its benchmarks and
- the basic content orientation of the College's activities, the basic organisation of the College, together with its financing and employment policies.

I had my concerns about the actual dynamics of our strategic planning and defining of the meaning of this structured planning process within a narrow project group. I wanted to get all employees involved in the process, in order to work together and to co-ordinate possible solutions. Such a co-operation would also be an opportunity for us to identify the specificities of planning in higher education.

Act: Strategic Planning

One of the most important tasks in the following year would most certainly be continuation of the strategic planning project and preparation of the development plan. Defining the objectives, criteria for assessing the performance of main activities was an integral part of the self-evaluation process, which was the basic content of the last, the 4th cycle of the action research. The development plan could be understood as a written document, which should reflect the College's everyday practice.

In that year, the questionnaires remained an integral part of the self-evaluation process; the ones for postgraduate students had to be re-designed, but generally speaking, they became an integral part of our practice, we adopted them. It is interesting that in the year when the questionnaires were no longer an issue at our school, the University of Ljubljana launched the so-called 'media campaign' on the

questionnaires' necessity (*Delo*, 2 February 1999). The public debate confirmed my belief that the surveys had been justified, but only if analysed promptly and in co-operation with the staff in the same academic year as they were carried out. Thus in the case of the students' questionnaires priority should be given to the process of realising them and less to their contents.

That year, we designed the first annual report which was also supposed to be some kind of a first public report on self-evaluation. We had to consider and define the most reliable performance indicators that will allow to compare our work with the work of other higher education institutions. We also had to reach an agreement on data: what do they show, who, when and how were they collected and analysed by, how and by whom are they used, how do they help to improve the situation in the short and long run. Thus, the process of self-evaluation in its natural progression interfered with the processes of operational and developmental planning

At the time I was not certain whether I could manage to construct an institutionalised self-evaluation 'model' in the last cycle − holistic, balanced and comprehensive. I thought that such a model could only be a way of operating and thinking, something impossible to exist in reality since the circumstances and the people are changing constantly. Such thinking and doubt accompanied me into the last year of the action research.

Search of Self-Evaluation 'Model' as Social Process

The decision to extend the action research onto one more cycle and thus prolong it for another academic year was taken in the summer of 1999. The main reason was the fact that I could not have finished the research at that point since the 'model' planned to be the result of the study was not yet constructed. I continued to believe that our mission statement would develop into a written development plan during the 4th cycle, which would conclude the research by providing some kind of a document on managing of the interwoven processes of development planning and self-evaluation.

Soon, the possibility of creating such a final document seemed less and less likely. The processes have gained more and more importance, various instruments were losing significance. In the first two cycles, instruments offered a kind of solid support for the construction of a self-evaluation 'model.' The processes were of the so-called

soft type by nature, but very important. They enabled the connections between the day-to-day activities, and those connections led to good practice or at least offered the possibilities for its step-by-step improvement.

I started to consider self-evaluation and planning more as a process, but was still was driven by the need to create a (more or less static) model. Even in the 3rd and 4th cycle, while focusing mostly on the development planning, I put much more emphasis on the processes of reflection, negotiation and the pursuit of agreement than to the mere production of the mission statement and the development plan. In this regard, it is important how the development planning process was directed – we critically contemplated the College's directions and objectives for the next few years. The question arose as to when and how the development planning process should be carried out and in how many steps. Hargreaves and Hopkins (1991) recommend a strictly strategic (forward and outward-oriented, proactive, creative and holistic) approach to development planning, implying that a development plan is some kind of annual renewal of the thinking process about the organisation's future. From the management point of view I would therefore need some documentation on the planning process management. Such an approach to development planning was tested in the 4th cycle of the action research.

Even for self-evaluation, it seemed that the processes such as data gathering and interpretation have been more important than the results, such as written reports. The best outcome, however, are the results that direct us towards changing our way of functioning. This as well is an essential part of my research – that self-evaluation actually resulted in the improvement of everyday practice.

Development planning strongly influenced the development of the self-evaluation 'model.' When defining the development fields of the College, we also defined other fields that should be given some special attention within the self-evaluation procedures. swot analysis (the assessment of internal weaknesses and advantages, and the analysis of challenges and threats with regard to the environment in which the organization operates) helped us to understand how the colleagues saw a particular field – what they considered as advantages and disadvantages, how did they define challenges and dangers. In the planning process, however, goals and benchmarks were

defined for each development area, but it soon became obvious that it would not be that simple.

The action research revealed that the surface nature of the research encouraged the development of deeper and more hidden processes. We tried to connect and interweave two of them, planning and evaluation; build them, discuss them – and rebuild them. The annual cycles of self-evaluation (analysis and reflection on the past) and the planning (the daily management and thinking about the future) are interwoven. The practice should change and improve on the basis of data gathered by self-evaluation procedures. Yet, the question arose whether this was the model able to contribute the most to organisational development. The relations were not clear and simple enough for me to be able to say it with certainty, and there was also the added complexity of perspective due to my interlaced roles. I realise that by means of a chronological separation between the action research cycles, the complexity and dynamics of the practice research vanish inevitably. Nevertheless, I do believe that this is the only opportunity to actually keep an overview of the basic research processes and its focus.

The dividing line between the evaluation and planning, my role as a researcher and a manager was getting thinner. In figure 3.6 I still insisted on separating the two processes, but it becomes obvious in the 4th cycle that the process of self-evaluation reaches far beyond its previous boundaries and extends into practice and everyday activities. Meanwhile, the College's activities dictated the procedures and contents of self-evaluation. Processes were interwoven and affected each other in an 'uncontrolled' way, also because they included an increasing number of people, the staff in particular. In the 3rd cycle, 'they' turned into 'us,' and 'we' started building interpersonal relations, and strengthen the functioning of the organisation. But could it be possible to arrange these seemingly chaotic relations into a coordinated, functioning system or at least into a simplified model? Figure 3.6 could definitely not be used as the foundation for this 'model,' as, at first glance, it seems completely unreadable.

At the beginning (1st and 2nd cycle) of the action research I could still distinguish between management and self-evaluation. The process seemed linear and there were cause-effect relationships, similarities and differences were identifiable. In the 3rd cycle, the boundaries between events became blurred and the accurate planning of

A 'Model' of continuous improvement
through research process as living
management theory or as the way of work

| Re-construction of self-evaluation procedure | 4th cycle: focus on accountability (external dimension) | Creation and improvement of practice |

| Re-construction of self-evaluation procedure | 3rd cycle: focus on the mission statement | Creation and improvement of practice |

| Re-construction of self-evaluation procedure | 2nd cycle: focus on staff development | Creation and improvement of practice |

| Construction of self-evaluation procedure (instruments, analysis . . .) | 1st cycle: focus on students | Day-to-day activities (creation of new practice) |

Research dimension
Construction of self-evaluation
'model'

Management dimension
Construction of practice -
formation of an organisation

FIGURE 3.6   Building the Self-Evaluation 'Model' through Action Research:
Stage 4

the steps of a certain activity became less important than deciding
for direction. This shift probably affected the attitude towards de-
signing a mission statement, when all our colleagues were invited to
join. Some College directives resulted from mutual consensus, for
instance, we agreed on the importance of students' success, inter-
national comparability and the satisfaction of the colleagues. It also
helped 'me' and 'us' in deciding on individual activities, that we first
planned and then carried out in the years to come.

In the 3rd and the 4th cycle, the disorder and complexity, reflected

to a certain extent also by the figure 3.6, opened new dilemmas that required explanations. Some of these issues are discussed in the final chapter.

Look: Practice Improvement

One of the challenges of the 4th cycle was how to balance the 'thinking for tomorrow and beyond' and the everyday control of the College in order to achieve the best possible results at the time. From my point of view, the present is probably more important than the future. The public judges the organisation by its current results. A student enrols because it is 'here and now' and goes to a College today with very little interest about this same College tomorrow. From the point of view of the colleagues, who intended to collaborate with the institution in the long term, it is definitely important to see the College of 'tomorrow,' but being aware that tomorrow is created with their today's work.

We organised a three-day seminar in Brdo (February 2000). It was announced in the beginning of the academic year already and the Dean and I prepared an ambitious six-topic programme: international trends in higher education, management as a scientific discipline, pedagogical and andragogical aspects of teaching, image of a higher education teacher, international co-operation and research and development.

We prepared and carried out the first consultation. We started to prepare the first professional conference, which points to the early stage of systematic encouragement of research activities at the College. I dedicated myself to the planned activities of higher education (teaching and research) hoping to be able to create the necessary conditions for the development of the academic community. Only a balanced relationship between the two activities and good mutual relations could serve as a solid basis for development of the teachers, the employees and the College.

The Development Plan and the Public Report

For the needs of the self-evaluation procedure, we introduced a new questionnaire for post-graduate students of Management in Education programme, which was carried out for the first time in the academic year 1999/2000. The dynamics of realisation, analysis and interpretation of the questionnaires did not change much. Despite the

growing number of students we were still able to analyse the data and have a presentation at the end of June, before the summer vacation.

We started to think about system improvements in this area. The idea of questionnaires for graduates on the day of presenting their thesis was dropped for two reasons: the inappropriate time and the anonymity providing. But the graduates are very important to the College so we decided to keep track and send them the question-naire within one or two years after their graduation. This way we could get their opinions about the utility of our programmes from a certain time distance and at the same time find out more about their employment. We planned to introduce this questionnaire in 2000/2001.

We also discussed surveying the part-time students as their number was growing, but the data analysis proved to be too time-consuming and even predictable; the past year experience had shown that full-time students often had an opinion on professors and subjects that was very similar to the one of part-time students. We decided not to carry out the surveys that year. But there was the risk of giving the impression that we were less concerned about the part-time students, so we were searching for new approaches, like an initiation evening at the beginning of the school year, a round table with a professional guest, social and sports gatherings or an invitation to the FM confer-ence for all the students.

Not only have the questionnaires become institutionalised, we al-ready started to cancel some of them. This demonstrates that we have overcome the level of the questionnaires being our principal source of data gathering. Accepting the meetings and the conversa-tions as a qualitative (and, according to the still widespread belief, less scientific) approach to gathering data for the legitimate process of self-evaluation was an important recognition of the social stage. It was more than obvious that the questionnaires assumed various roles during the process of action research and went through several stages that can be described as:

- Provocative role – the questionnaires triggered discussion and exerted some kind of pressure on the recognised values and points of view.
- Organic role – the social stage during which the questionnaires were already institutionalised, yet they still encouraged debates;

not in the sense of provoking communication but constructing a dialogue on the quality of higher education staff.

- Redundant role – at the point when communication became the vital part of the functioning of the institution, the questionnaires began to loose their function (for the institution). The remaining ones still represented a starting point for continuous learning, for the improvement of the individuals and the College.
- The *Report 1995–1999* (Visoka šola za management 1999) can be understood as the first public report on institutional self-evaluation. It includes all the important data about the functioning of the College in the preceding period. The data, especially the quantitative data, is given for all the previous years, providing an illustration of the College growth. A comprehensive overview, delivered to our colleagues and to the general public, shows which activities we carried out and how.

Our strategic planning process was concluded with a detailed basic policy document with two outcomes. The first one was the vision and mission statement and the second one was the definition of 13 important College areas and the formation of 13 groups, supposed to analyse each of these activities in detail and the findings could later be used as the starting point for the preparation of a development plan. Thirteen groups of 4–5 colleagues each were working on the following areas, one for each group:

- Teaching faculty (employment and development),
- Study programmes,
- Teaching methods,
- Knowledge assessment and examination,
- Practical training of students,
- College's research activity,
- International co-operation,
- Examining and assuring the quality of work,
- Outside-College activities,
- Organisation of work at the College,
- Publishing house and the College library,
- Classrooms, offices and equipment,
- Students and enrolments.

Due to the fact that, from the viewpoint of the organization, not more than 20% of the total resources could be intended for development programmes, the intensity of the creation of the development plan had been reduced after the first intermediate results.

Think: Self-Evaluation and Reflection on Further Development

The last two years of the action research could be considered as the 'social stage.' In the 3rd cycle, the word 'social' refers mainly to co-operation established among colleagues as well as to the search for organisation's common values, bringing trust and good relations to the individuals and in the College. In the 4th cycle, the 'social stage' also refers to the establishment of our academic community within the Slovene higher education system. Many activities were formally organized for an external audience (the report and the study guide) but contributed mostly to the functioning of the College. Those factors, emerging from the action research, often had considerable influence, especially in terms of changing the practice and creating a public image of the College.

Cornelissen and Thorpe (2002, 177) discuss the reputation measurement of business schools. They present the four principles of reputation research and measurement: to distinguish external perceptions from internal assets, to acknowledge the role of individuals and stakeholders groups in reputation formation, to distinguish the image and reputation constructs and to select only the measures and methods corresponding with the reputation construct. They are critical to measuring and, as alternative to survey methods, they recommend that the researchers expand their methodologies to include qualitative and ethnographic approaches, thereby allowing the study of complexity and the holistic nature of reputation, the psychological processes involved, as well as the most subtle social accomplishments.

A recognisable school communicates with the environment well and demonstrates its image through its daily practice. In my opinion, the communication with environment also depends on the shared understanding of the institution and of the affiliation feeling of the colleagues. If the image is not clear within the organisation, then the communication about it is unclear as well.

The Report 19951999 and the development plan were constructed simultaneously and I was thinking a lot about the connection be-

tween them. Which activities are part of what became a key question, since neither self-evaluation nor development planning can be an independent event. In the process of planning, we define objectives and tasks for the future. In the evaluation process, we assess to what level these objectives and tasks were accomplished. So the common features are the tasks, objectives and criteria in all areas important to the College activity.

Which Processes Should Include the Staff? People in general prefer planning and thinking about the future more than checking and evaluating what they did in the past. Perhaps this was one of the reasons why in the first two years I somehow pushed the colleagues aside when thinking about what and how to evaluate. But they were not left out of the stage of interpretation. Everyone received the reports and the analysis, so they all had the chance to take part in the data interpretation and to suggest activities for the improvement of practice – so they had the possibility to be involved in the process of planning. In the 3rd and 4th cycle, I actively engaged people in the process of strategic planning, practically from the beginning, and by doing so I was trying to build some kind of alliance in order to assure commitment to collectively defined actions and also enable their subsequent implementation.

Reflection: Improvement for Today or for Tomorrow?

The construction in the sense of the College formation began with the teaching and learning processes. Only in the 3rd and 4th cycle have we started to think for the future. Fullan and Hargreaves (1995) also claim that the vision comes later. What did such kind of approach mean for the stability or the growth of the institution will be discussed in the following chapter, as the tension between the 'future' and 'day-to-day.'

The improvement of practice can be considered from two points of view: the day-to-day work and the organisational development. The activities were upgraded and extended every year. The growing number of students and the staff brought about more daily organisation of activities. In the 4th cycle, the process of development planning took most of my time. I began to wonder what I should give priority to: the work of today or the work for tomorrow. I could not avoid any, because of my management position and because this was the subject of my study.

TABLE 3.3　Activities for Ensuring the Measurement or the Transparency

Self-evaluation activities	Research cycle				2000/1	2001/2
	1.	2.	3.	4.		
Surveys for full-time students and reports	+	+	+	+	+	+
Surveys for part-time students and reports		(+)	(+)	–	–	+
Group interviews with part-time students and reports		+	+	–	–	–
Surveys for teachers and reports		+	+	+	+	+
Surveys for new-students and reports			+	+	+	+
Surveys for post-graduate students and reports				+	+	+
Surveys for non-teaching staff and reports						+
Statistics on students' success in different subjects	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)		+
Statistics on graduates' success				(+)	(+)	+
Statistics on student transition rate between years	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)		+
Public report on the College's activities for the past year				+	+	+

Preparation of a development plan, the rules on internal organisation, the information system, maybe even the then emerging self-evaluation 'model' show that I have strived for more order and effectiveness in the organisation. This could also be called an effort to create transparency. A part of this effort is evident from the questionnaires for students and teachers as well as from the study of the College data – in the performance indicators and the publications such as the *Study Guide* and the *Report.*

Students who cared about the kind of knowledge the College would give them and what kind of employment possibilities the College diploma might assure them, frequently expressed more and more demands for orderliness and consistency. Also among the teachers and the non-teaching staff, while working in groups, a great commitment to order was apparent during the planning process.

Act: Constant Changes

The research was officially concluded in the academic year 1999/2000. Does this mean that with the action research – the systematically repeating of the same or improved instruments and procedures within the four cycles I or we have institutionalised the instruments and the processes as well as created a culture that functions by the rules of the action research?

TABLE 3.4 Activities for Students – for (Higher) Study Effectiveness

Self-evaluation activities	Research cycle				2000/1	2001/2
	1.	2.	3.	4.		
Introductory sem. on learning and writing seminar papers	+	+	+	+	+	+
Individualisation (posters and pictures of students)		+	–	+	+	+
Seminar on research and writing a diploma thesis		+	+	+	+	+
Publication: *Study Guide*		+	+	+	+	+
'True' seminar papers - the preparation for diploma thesis				(+)	(+)	+
Publication: *Brief Guidelines for Writing Seminar Papers*		(+)	(+)		+	+
Publication: *Effective Approach to Studying*				(+)	(+)	+
Publication: *The Basics of Management Research*					(+)	+
Higher education information system					+	+
Surveys for students	+	+	+	+	+	+
Students participate at the ped. conf. and in the Senate					+	+
Publication: *Students Yearbook*			+	+	+	+
Social event – 'Brucovanje'		+	+	+	+	+
Social event – 'Absolvent' ball				+	+	+
Social event – sport/social gathering of all students						+
Solemn diploma awarding ceremony				+	+	+
Student Association and extra-curricular activities		(+)	(+)	(+)	+	+
Alumni Club – association of the College's graduates					(+)	(+)

View Across all Four Cycles

At this point, I will graphically (quantitatively) summarize some of the qualitative improvements, the ones that required a systematic approach just because of the action research process. Data will be presented in tabular form. The entire extent of the self-evaluation activities and their influence on the work transparency is shown separately (table 3.3); the same goes for those in the field of the improvement of practice (tables 3.4 and 3.5). It was difficult to group the activities, since many of them contributed to the self-evaluation as well as to the higher study effectiveness or the development of an academic community. The sign '+' in the table indicates the ongoing activity in a particular cycle or year, while, the '(+)' stands for the activities that were either at the forming point or had only been performed partly. In order to prove that this kind of work had continued at the College later on, I include the data for the academic years 2000/2001 (the fifth year) and 2001/2002 (the sixth academic year of

TABLE 3.5 Activities for Academic Community – Transforming into 'Us'

Self-evaluation activities	Research cycle				2000/1	2001/2
	1.	2.	3.	4.		
Introduc. sem. on learning and writing sem. papers	+	+	+	+	+	+
Seminar on research and writing a diploma thesis			+	+	+	+
Publication: *Study Guide*			+	+	+	+
'True' seminar papers – the preparation for diploma thesis				(+)	(+)	+
Publication: *Brief Guidelines for Writing Seminar Papers*			(+)	(+)	+	+
Publication: *Effective Approach to Studying*				(+)	(+)	+
Publication: *The Basics of Management Research*					(+)	+
Higher education information system					+	+
Surveys for students	+	+	+	+	+	+
Students participate at the ped. conf. and in the Senate					+	+
Graduation award ceremony				+	+	+
College Conference and conference minutes					+	+
Annual pedagogic seminar			(+)	+	+	+
Meetings – discussing reports on questionnaires	+	+	+	+	+	+
Surveys for teachers		+	+	+	+	+
Social events for staff	+	+	+	+	+	+
Social events for the children of the employees			+	+	+	+
Professional excursions – visiting foreign universities		+	+	+	+	+
Workshops and strategic planning process			+	+		
The attempt at defining teachers' work obligations				(+)	(+)	(+)

the College). Table 3.4 presents the activities and improvements that were, in my opinion, very useful for the study performance.

Table 3.5 shows the gradual establishing of an academic community. It also contains certain activities that were mostly introduced for the benefit of the students, but managed to indirectly affect the teachers' work as well. Each activity can actually be regarded as a tiny tile in the mosaic of 'us,' of our community. Most of the mentioned activities became traditional, and are embedded within the College's culture nowadays.

The reality of every organisation is very complex and hard to describe. By looking at those tables, I could almost say that I had succeeded to catch the dynamics and the complexity of the work of the College (at least at the time of the action research) into a structure or even a model, since all models are actually simplifications of a pre-

sumed reality. In fact, what kind of structure is this 'self-evaluation model' or even a 'model for organisational development' that I had planned to construct during the process of my action research? In the last chapter, I will deal with a new, crucial question on the 'model' and discuss two emerging topics: the quality and the academic community.

Chapter Four

Non-Model: Dialogue between Theory and Practice

It could be said that up to this very point the whole project had been some kind of a journey through data, experience, feelings and reflections. This last chapter of my practice-based research is supposed to be a dialogue with theories. It is partly written in form of a conclusion although it does not provide conclusions in the traditional sense. The reader who has followed the creation of the 'model' should find out that my research resulted in a 'non-model' as an organic decrease of the need for a generally valid 'modity.' So he should probably understand why I decided to finish this chapter (and hence my study) by describing the contributions to the practice and theory, and not by listing the findings and conclusions. The research carried me away from my primal wish to 'encapsulate' the organisational development as a 'model' that could be offered to future users in the product form. So, processes led me to a 'non-model' which can also be understood as a form of model, non-transferable to other institutions. I simply do not want to burden the reader with my own final determinations. I am certain that presented data and reflections have the potential to enable everyone to find one's own non-model in one's own space and time and consequently to draw their own conclusions regarding the (continually) specific example. Therefore, in this chapter, I would like only to discuss the emerging topics that need to be addressed in terms of theory.

The model-constructing processes create a fertile ground for various topics emerging in the higher education space, among them the quality, organisational design, academic and administrative leadership, organisational culture, academic community, autonomy etc. However, I intend to remain limited to issues of quality and academic community as the two topics are strongly related to processes of organisational development. Each topic will be discussed within the framework of different theories and manifestations through the action research cycles.

Quality and Self-Evaluation in Higher Education

Quality issues are the central topic of current debates in education, specifically in higher education. An intense discussion is going on about the models and approaches that seem (or are proclaimed to be) the most appropriate for education. While Sallis (1993) discusses the quality assurance related to the approaches to quality management, Murgatroyd and Morgan (1993) extensively discuss the Total Quality Management as being the best option for education. Winch (1996) brings a more critical view to discussion by pointing out that quality is linked to wider changes in societies, and therefore the usefulness of concepts adopted from entrepreneurship and industry is questionable in the field of education.

In general, quality is defined by meeting standards (Sallis 1993) and/or as customer satisfaction (Murgatroyd and Morgan 1993). In the research, quality on the basis of self-evaluation embraced both dimensions. Stake (1997, 41), however, raises the question of a quality definition and argues that defining good teaching, which directly addresses 'learning, nurturance, stability, sensitivity, scholarship' concludes with the label 'it depends.' He perceives relativism in the attempts to define a good evaluation as well, on the basis of the same label. Stufflebeam (1997, 61) also expresses concerns about standards, 'standard-based evaluations' in particular. He suggests that the whole 'evaluation enterprise' (p. 63) needs to be examined.

The more I tried to define and to set up standards, the more I returned to Stake's words – it depends. The theories of quality basically refer to three approaches: Quality Control (QC), Quality Assurance (QA) and Total Quality Management (TQM). They differ with regard to who controls and where the control comes from. Trnavčevič (1996) discusses the issues from an education point of view. The quality control is associated with the school inspection model where the control is external, so the minimum standards are set as the criterion and they need to be met. The quality assurance is associated with ISO and similar standards, actually being a sort of combination between external and internal quality assessment and assurance. While standards could be called a normative approach to quality, the TQM is defined as being a conceptual approach and acts as some kind of an internal push towards quality improvement, 'from and for organisation' (Murgatroyd and Morgan 1993).

In the area of education, other models have also emerged, one of

them being Glasser's schools, based on the idea of reciprocity and a way of managing students (Glasser 1994). Self-evaluation is also increasingly relevant. In Slovenia, it was used to design the national concept of quality assessment and assurance for pre-university education. The performance indicators and related standards are inextricably associated with means of quality measurement and assessment. Yet, when we take a close look at this project, it is fairly easy to see it as a classical model of quality assurance, similar to ISO standards. The schools are supposed to receive a handbook Mindful Eye: Identify, Analyse, Improve which describes individual areas and performance indicators, and provides questionnaires for teachers, students, parents, principals and local authorities for each area. Then the partially external evaluators assess the school quality and recommend steps for improvement.

Schwandt (1997) mentions that in evaluation practice, House has illustrated how the language of evaluation does not simply describe the socio-political world but constructs the meaning as well (p. 95). Here, I do not only see the construction of meaning as the central topic, but also the question of power. The evaluator has the power and the authority to define what is valuable in the world of practice, how it should be measured and by which means. I assigned a lot of power to myself (the position of director) but I think I could also assign it to the evaluation itself, which is needed and necessary in Slovenia (as well as globally). Preskill and Preskill (1997, 155) additionally support my position towards evaluation by explaining it as an ongoing process for examination and understanding of life of the organisation, as a process that is fully adapted to all other aspects of organisations and also widely shared and practised by the members of the organisation.

Should a self-evaluation system consider the functioning of an organisation that virtually lives in a complex and dynamic environment, then the system itself has to live and change. This means that we are not dealing with the final model. If a higher education institution adopts an external self-evaluation model, it becomes questionable, as self-evaluation opposes the use of an external, foreign or even borrowed evaluation model. It therefore makes sense for the self-evaluation model to evolve through the process of the construction of the meaning in every single institution respectively – hence my non-model form.

Quality Assurance Systems in Higher Education

In higher education, accreditation and evaluation are the two main quality concepts that have become widely spread and enforced within the last decade. Accreditation usually refers to the status awarded to an institution or programme by the competent authority. It usually denotes the procedure of assessing an already operating institution by using pre-set minimum standards. It could be compared with the quality control concept, i.e. the school inspection at the pre-university level. It is an important feature of the quality management in the USA that has recently been adopted in Slovenia as well.

Here and also elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, the procedure of accreditation was connected with establishing new higher education institutions or new study programmes. In Slovenia, the National Council for Higher Education assesses a newly established, not yet operational institution simply on the basis of a detailed written document (a type of report called an 'elaborate'), and actually grants the institution a permanent right to award diplomas in accordance with the adopted study programme.

Evaluation is rapidly becoming the most influential quality assurance system in European higher education, with special emphasis on self-evaluation as the only approach that has the potential to work satisfactorily. The policy makers and various associations use a variety of expressions in relation to this subject. The quality assurance, for instance, is defined as 'planned and systematically carried out activities which are directly related to maintenance and improvement in the quality of education' (Wolski, Chojnacka, and Macukow 1997, 3), the quality assessment as 'the process of external quality evaluation' and the quality management as 'a part of the whole management system comprising both quality control aspects and quality assurance procedures which permeate into another.' Brennan and Shah (2000) strongly support the idea of combining quality assurance with quality assessment in order to manage quality of an institution. The quality assessment is namely an important part of quality assurance, as it usually involves the processes of assessment and measurement. Collocations are often used: Evaluation/Evaluation, Checking, Auditing, and Monitoring (pp. 4–6).

Seymour (1993) adds some kind of a 'consumer' perspective into quality discussions and other aspects of survival issues. In his opin-

ion, no one would ever say that he/she is committed to mediocrity. Further on, he provides lists of performance indicators and suggests ways to achieve them. The higher education institution being the object of the study was not an exception: in the 3rd cycle we searched for the characteristics of a good school and criteria for measuring these indicators. 'Students' employability,' for instance, is measured by the number of graduates employed one year after their graduation. The study efficiency is determined by employability as well as by proportion of students who make it to the next academic year. However, such a dialogue on possible indicators was in our case particularly useful for creating some common meaning, and later for deciding on the priority tasks of the institution, and not for a possible evaluation by indicators. In such discussions, the forming of institutional values and culture began.

Brennan and Shah (2000, 11) bring an international perspective on institutional assessment and change and argue that at a certain level, the quality assessment methods appear to be similar between countries. They should comprise a national co-ordinating body, institutional self-evaluation, external evaluation performed by academic peers and published reports. They refer to self-evaluation in various countries and see it as 'self-analysis' (p. 57) which should perform three functions:

- promote processes of internal quality assurance;
- serve as internal preparation for a visit of the (agency) review commission;
- provide background information for the review commission.

In the case of the College of Management, we tried to develop a self-evaluation 'model' and create a public report. At the national level, a Slovene National Quality Commission was present, although it did not play the role of an external evaluator.

Self-Evaluation and Culture of Control

Much more could be said about quality in higher education but I want to bring up some issues that I find questionable within this so-called quality movement. Self-evaluation in higher education seems to only provide the means for improvement, so it is only internally used. But data obtained from self-evaluation could confirm the work

transparency and be used for external evaluation. In this case the concept of self-evaluation seems to be lost.

In this respect, Stronach et al. (2002, 128) discuss the Trojan Horse-style systems of self-regulation and argue that such systems should primarily provide categories and performance criteria established in advance, managerially rather than professionally. They argue that 'pure' models of the economy of performance vary quite radically in political terms. The evaluational attitude towards the 'Self' (in terms of self-evaluation) is floating between transparency and surveillance, yet it does not seem to be agreed or negotiated but simply drawn into organisations from the outside, and even though it is the most important for the internal perspective, especially in terms of internal control, which can lead to the 'petrified selves of audit,' it acts against the internal dynamism and flexibility of the organisation. I sensed the threat of rigidity and fear when we started to introduce the questionnaires and if that was supposed to be the essence of self-evaluation I doubt that any collusion or negotiation between external and internal tensions would ever be my decision.

So, which quality and self-evaluation guidelines in higher education are currently being considered as the only model for quality assurance and assessment? I can paralelly relate it to the concept of the audit culture with several authors (Power 1994; Stronach 2000) and to the idea of Strathern (2000) on the 'tyranny of transparency' and Tsoukas's (1997) concept of the 'tyranny of the light,' and last but not least with Stronach's (1999) understanding of 'educational effectiveness' as a cultural performance.

The 'audit' concept is being used with growing frequency in the UK, in more and more concepts. It generally includes the importance of monitoring and measurement, reflected in a variety of revision and comparison procedures. In addition to financial audits, there are now environmental audits, value for money audits, management audits, medical audits, teaching audits, technology audits, stress audits, democracy audits and many more. The wider implementation of audits and other quality assurance initiatives simply means that many individuals and organizations in one or another context will sooner or later find themselves subject to audit. More generally, the spread of audits and other quality assurance initiatives means that many individuals and organisations now find themselves subject to audit. In this respect, the Great Britain of the 1990s really became an 'audit

culture' as the most insightful and probably extreme example of a culture of control. Education has been exposed to audits in many forms (from inspections to evaluation models), which often led to ranking and was based on performance indicators. Stronach (1999, 173) deconstructs global evaluation discourses concerning school effectiveness and improvement, and notes that the audit culture limits educational performances to normative indicators, usually expressed by grades, and consequently by ranking. According to Stronach, this leads to the commodification of educational performance, classified by the author as part of the economy of performance, according through which professionals are increasingly assessed.

Strathern (2000) in principle opposes the tyranny of transparency, where we want to make everything visible and measurable. Higher education professionals agree with the idea of assuming accountability, but at the same time perceive the indicators as highly constructed and artificial means of measuring the real output. As the term 'accountability' implies, people want to know how to trust one another, to make the trust visible, while (knowing that) the very desire to do so points to the absence of trust (p. 310).

The debate about the extent of transparency in the light of trust seems very important to me. Visibility and transparency are often just a means to gain the trust of the public (to attract new students, for instance) for a newly established institution while 'established' faculties and universities have already gained considerable trust, sometimes even a monopoly, which makes them more resistant to transparency demands. The question is whether they can change at all and how could they do it. Tsoukas (1997) brings to light the paradoxes of the information society in which we want to act rationally in everything we do or create. He claims that more information may lead to less understanding, undermine trust and make the society less rationally governable (1997, 827), had it ever been rationally governable in the first place. My use of questionnaires did of course generate normative judgements of the educational process (the teachers could compare their own scores to the average) but my intentions were developmental rather than judgmental. I tried to develop some kind of the ecology of professionalism in the College. Such (in the broadest sense of the word) ecological features of professionalism concern mainly the notions such as responsibility and trust. The feedback was intended to develop responsibility by developing a clear notion of what might

count as good teaching and learning (according to certain criteria), how individual performances is seen by the users of its services. In my experience with the process of the action research, I also see positive aspects in the phenomenon and processes of revision, which can lead to the development of the institution. I can assure that it is possible to create audit control within the institution, and it can become an integral part of the practice. The staff mostly accepts such a form of supervision, as institutional self-analysis. They do not see anything forced in it – it is not foreign to them, not forced from the outside, as an external model. The findings of such audits could provide information on the functioning of the institution and the starting point for planning improvements. If auditing is performed annually, an effective organic approach to the sustainable improvement and development of an organization can be formed. The concept of sustainable improvement is not only the basis for organizational development, but also the core of the self-evaluation process and the action research.

The construction of a self-evaluation 'model' can also be seen as an internal managerial system implemented through the action research – a kind of an action research experiment. In fact, I brought people into the process of social science experimentation. This is important because every institutional development is risky and there is always the question whether something will work or not. Since I have that reflection series on loops and cycles written, I dispose with something that people do normally not have – a large amount of feedback on what works, what does not work and what we ought to focus on in the future. I also think that by the very discursiveness of the process, I can say that it is also organic. It is a process of continuous improvement and I can also demonstrate that it is not externally determined. There is a sort of general principle I believe in firmly: If it is working, we want to know why, because we want to do more of it. If it is not working, we want to know why, to stop doing it and do something else.

The audit culture together with associated effectiveness movements in higher education seems to coincide with massification of the higher education (Smith and Webster 1997) and extensive discussion on whether the nature of higher education has changed from a modern to a post-modern institutional formation. Scott (1997, 41) discusses the massification of British higher education in five as-

pects, the most important of them being the elite system of education, reduction in unit costs and growing scepticism about the claims of universalism made on behalf of the values of cognitive rationality. In his opinion, tomorrow's graduates will require skills different from the pure, scientific knowledge provided by the old universities (even though he expresses his doubts on the subject).

Higher education is also loaded with ideas of the so-called entrepreneurial universities and Clark (1998) thinks that widespread features of a rapidly changing university would pressure individual institutions of many nations to become more enterprising. He claims that if many universities should engage in the hard work of entrepreneurially led change, the interrelated elements brought forward in his five-case analysis may have been seen as answers to a global problem of growing university insufficiency (p. 129). The author's opinion on his framework of change is often considered in the policy making, having key influence on the latter. I believe that it is about the additional reinforcement of the audit culture through striving for efficiency and transparency, as entrepreneurship is inextricably linked with the markets. But on the other hand, the normative aspects of the audit culture impose huge burdens of accountability and 'paper wars' on the institutions, which makes them rigid and less likely willing to take risks although this is very important in entrepreneurial activity.

Besides, in continental Europe of the last few years, the market conditions are replacing the state control as the principal mechanism for steering higher education. The state, more precisely its professional accountability is being replaced by market accountability where institutional imperatives will be set neither by academics or the government but by the negotiations and quid pro quo set in a competition which is fed by public funds but which operates as a market (Becher and Kogan 1992, 33).

All of this redefines universities, as well as the concept of science and knowledge. Unlike some colleagues, I do not wish to bring back the good old times of traditionally academic universities, where a teacher could do virtually anything to his students, and the whole organisation was based on the knowledge as a discipline and a power relation. The teacher was the only source of knowledge and therefore of the power as well.

I often feel a divide between the two concepts, namely the au-

diting one and the critical one. As an institutional leader, I had to consider the external pressures from the government and competition in the market on the one hand and the academic interests and benefits of the institution on the other. I agree with what Strathern (2000) has pointed out in her re-stated Goodhart's Law statement: 'When a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure.' Similarly, Alderman (1997, 139) discusses the problematics of quality assessment with regard on what can be measured and in what way – and especially what kind of work someone does. He concludes in disappointment that it no longer really matters how well an academic can teach and whether he or she sometimes inspires their pupils; it is far more important that they have produced plans for their courses, bibliographies, outlines of this, that and the other, in short all the paraphernalia of futile bureaucratisation required for assessors who come from on high like emissaries from Kafka's castle.

I am aware that measurement could be important and that both, the outcomes and the processes should be measured. However, I assessed that it was easier to measure outcomes than processes. And that the processes were also more important. So I turned from standards to people, wanted to understand and not only to control them. When the focus is on processes rather than on outcomes, that can become a valuable contribution to development of an organisation. One could question the moment when the processes disappear, but the outcomes and measures are good and likely to remain forever, or at least for a long time after conditions, people and institutions change. But the action research has introduced the ongoing dimension, the processual continuity into our institution, which prevents us from finding 'eternal' criteria and also induces the ongoing process of questioning who we are. It is essentially a social engagement about 'us' – our perspectives and directions. This specific instability played the role of a central guideline that had led to a 'non-model.'

Gombrich (2000) wrote that education occurs in human relationships, not only between teachers and pupils but also between fellow-students and between colleagues. That is why we need academic communities, but they, according to the author, will be as full of flaws – as human beings usually are, and yet special because they will be aware of them and admit them. The good academic very often says, 'I don't know' and 'I am not sure;' he also says what one might do to find out, or explain why certainty will never be possible.

Academic Community and Organisational Culture

In the following, I would like to briefly discuss the concept of 'eternity and orientation towards an individual' compared to 'dynamism and community orientation.' Green (1997, 135) argues that higher education is a paradox and in her opinion, its mission is to conserve the timeless values of scholarly inquiry and transmission of knowledge on the one hand, while on the other, higher education institutions should be dynamic organisations having the capacity to adapt to changing conditions and demands (p. 136).

Timeless values of methodical study and transmission of knowledge can be contested. My data show that notion of timelessness can be understood as a strong tradition of academic community which is usually understood differently by older teachers or those who came from the other two universities (Ljubljana and Maribor) than by younger or those who were just beginning an academic career. Replies that teachers have written in the questionnaires, our discussions following the analysis of questionnaires for students and our annual pedagogic seminars have shown that young teachers were synchronised with time and context while old teachers defended their traditional perception of teaching – as they have been part of the academic community for years and at the top of the knowledge pyramid.

Timeless Values of Professional Imperative and Academic Freedom

What is covered by the concept of timeless values in an emerging higher education institution? In my study I see them as values that teachers brought from other higher education institutions and can best be represented via the notion of 'dovecotes,' putting the emphasis on individualism, personal autonomy and own discipline. Considering the circumstances, I would prefer to use the expression 'knowledge of the subject' instead of 'knowledge of the discipline.' I perceive the relationship between discipline and subject in accordance with Trowler's definition (1998, 61), saying that the subject is understood as organisational structures and patterns into which disciplines are translated. Our questionnaires were subject-based as well and they included the analysis of teachers' work as well as students' satisfaction with the subject content and its execution. The rise of interdisciplinary research and loose definition of the subjects have had a strong impact on higher education institutions lately.

Carr and Harris (2001) discussed that every teacher should monitor and provide evidence for their professional development, not only in their own scientific discipline, but also in the following fields: teaching, co-operation, caring for students and responsibility. Yet, this is not easy to achieve in practice. At the Slovenian Summer School of Higher Education Didactics 2001, Dr. David Jaques asserted that the academics are often deaf and blind to introduction of changes to their work (*Delo*, 6 April 2001).

The second characteristic of the 'dovecote' of individualism is personal autonomy. Autonomy has been much discussed in higher education. Zgaga (1997), Wolf (1997) and Clark (1998) attribute it to a higher education institution. In continental Europe it is also understood as professor's autonomy. By paraphrasing Pechar (1996), speaking of the Humboldtian tradition, teachers are taking some kind of academic freedom. And some Slovene professors even exceed the powers of academic autonomy, sometimes understanding it as some kind of the freedom of teaching. Some of them dare to make a step further by persuading themselves they have the freedom to do what they want. Even at our College, I occasionally hear an assistant complain: 'Why should I take my time to provide advice for students, if the professor does not.' Does this also indicate that younger teachers are already 'growing feathers' and wish to turn into 'doves'? Are we, at the College, creating a new 'academic dovecote' as well?

Process of Construction of Meaning and Dynamic Organisation

What precisely is the 'dynamic' part of higher education institutions as Green (1997) puts it? In the case of the research, my data show that processes and events that provoked social engagement carried a certain dynamic notion. When we discussed reports and data from surveys, we engaged in the 'construction of meaning' of many concepts, such as what is characteristic of good teaching and what a good teacher is. Teachers brought different views, perspectives and attitudes into discussions and they implicitly or explicitly discussed their values. Changes were suggested and implemented with relative speed. Based on the survey results, we introduced the whole package of student support activities 'from new-student to graduate' but the attitudes of established academics and also some younger teachers were only changing very slowly.

Events, such as discussions about survey results and pedagogic seminars showed that we incrementally started to discuss the views, attitudes and values of our profession. The question 'are students really allowed to assess us' was never brought up again, we even started to invite the students to our pedagogic seminars.

Colleagues discussed those pedagogic seminars, saying that they are a useful contribution to joint solutions and a great opportunity to exchange views. To put it simply: we were together. Nonetheless, comments implying that more time should be left for discussion appeared as well, which shows a lively interest in bringing about mutual understanding and common views.

Changes in Higher Education and Quality

When Byrne (1999, 69) discusses modern turbulent times in higher education, he argues that, constrained by the limited resources and faced with daunting challenges, our institutions of higher education must re-evaluate their programmes, structures and internal cultures and reform them as required. What kind of changes do we want then and which values should we encourage?

I understood changing circumstances in higher education associated with broader changes, including the 'mass education' (Trowler 1998), market demands and employment opportunities. The old perception of the higher education being elite has changed and required change. I had the opportunity to initiate changes by provoking people to get engaged in discussions. Social engagement, joined with internal rules on orderliness in the College's work (that we began to form in the 3rd cycle of the research) and, later, with introduction of a new information system, have all influenced the culture of our organisation. Everyone participated in building of an academic community, which I define from an organisational perspective. In the narrower sense, it only involves the teaching staff, and in the wider, all employees in the organisation, their values and views on the mission of the organization and on teaching and learning as central tasks.

Within the newly established institution, the focus was (at least in the first years) not on as much on structures and programmes as it was on people, their values and attitudes. The higher education institution was new, but the staff – older academics as well as younger teachers and non-teaching staff – brought along their own values, expectations and interests. Brennan and Shah (2000) discuss four

main types of quality related values: 'academic,' 'managerial,' 'pedagogic,' 'employment focused.' The traditional 'academic' values focus on the subject (knowledge and curricula) and are associated with strong authority of professors (p. 14). Older teachers, who taught most of the courses at the College in these first years, came from Slovenian universities, where this 'academic' value has been very significant. I think that a higher education institution needs to strive for balance between these four values, since they are each and all important for the quality of the institution. Therefore, I did not want that professors should keep certain attitudes, connected to teaching and learning (for instance: 'questionnaires for students and assessing teachers are useless') or their subject-based limited perspective: ('my course is the most important and I am not accorded enough teaching hours') as well as their understanding of students as individuals who are there but not the teacher's thing (for example; 'students are not motivated').

I tried to keep reminding my colleagues that the 'managerial,' 'pedagogic' or teaching and 'employment-focused' values are important as well. Was I really creating new values with my action research activities? It could be said that I promoted pedagogic values at some point of the technical stage of my action research. People were always in the focus, particularly the satisfaction of students and teachers, their teaching skills and work with students. This emphasis of pedagogic aspect was particularly evident from the questionnaires for students. The first few questions inquired about students' satisfaction with the education and knowledge dissemination, as well as with the content. Seminars and workshops for teachers were introduced and we emphasised the importance of professional development of the staff. These activities also reduced the discipline-based authority.

At the so-called social stage of the research, I was dealing primarily with procedures and structures, thus with the rules which could be attributed to (my) managerial values, based on the assumption that quality can be produced by good management (Brennan and Shah 2000, p. 14). In that period, we simultaneously developed the rules and the organisational structure of the institution, mainly because the leadership function had been divided into academic and managerial. Meanwhile, in the process of forming the vision and mission statement, we had the opportunity to create the shared meaning. For instance, students were recognised as important stakeholders dur-

ing their studies and also in the period of employment seeking. This recognition led to the questionnaire for graduates in the academic year 2001/2002. We were particularly interested in how much time it took them to find a job, and to what extent the knowledge and skills acquired in the programme helped them. This is what Brennan and Shah (2000, 15) understand as the employment values that take account of customer requirements (where the customers are frequently regarded as the employers of graduates) and tend to include both, subject specific and core characteristics of the study programme.

Whose Quality is it Actually About?

During the action research, especially when we prepared our vision and mission statement as a team, four interest groups or types of stakeholders were identified: students, employers, employees and state/environment. Each of these separate audiences has its own vision of quality and specific motives for setting special criteria. One of the challenges of the quality assurance system (for me, at least) was all about how to achieve some kind of a complex understanding of quality that would involve or incorporate all four sets of values and various interests.

The key issue within a quality assurance system is the question of power – who gets to decide about procedures and outcomes. Brennan and Shah (2000) refer to Finch (1997) who distinguishes 'naked power' and 'legitimate authority.' Management of a higher education institution also possesses the 'naked power' in Weber's terms, namely the ability to pursue its aims despite the resistance of others. Weber (Brennan and Shah 2000, p. 17) also believed that a stable society could not be based on the exercise of naked power: decisions made in this way would tend to be resisted or subverted.

In the first year, the self-evaluation process was carried out mostly on the basis of 'managerial power.' The introduction of questionnaires for students was based on the values that were different from what professors believed, and the questionnaires faced some strong opposition (e.g. 'such a young college and so much bureaucracy') or simple astonishment (e.g. 'students will assess my work?!') In the following years, this principle of introduction of self-evaluation within the framework of the action research enabled us to implement certain improvements and new activities, for instance the questionnaires for teachers, discussions on analyses, pedagogic seminars and work-

shops for debates on the vision and mission. I used those activities to provide legitimacy that should imply that people accept certain kinds of decisions as binding (Brennan and Shah 2000, p. 17). I looked for such collective understanding of quality assessment procedures among the staff, teachers in particular. However, Brennan, and Shah (2000) doubt that teachers are the most important factor in this matter or that the 'academic legitimacy' actually matters. In terms of the quality assessment, should we not convince the influential players first – the state, the potential students, the graduates' employers and the sponsors of research? For these groups, legitimacy might be achieved through criteria other than disciplinary understanding – in the opinion of both authors, for example, with the customer satisfaction, good value for money ratio, with relevance to economic growth (p. 18).

Being aware of possible failure in the attempt to achieve legitimacy with all relevant audiences, I would paraphrase the words of Berger (1966, 18), sociologist who states that he who has the biggest stick has the biggest chance of defining quality and the stick is just another word for 'naked power.' And yet it seems to me that the distinctions between the 'naked power' and the legitimate power are much more complex. I exercised managerial power in the beginning of the action research and thus created elements of an internal economy of performance. But the social stages of my research show phenomena of ownership and cultural development (from 'I' to 'we,' from 'them' to 'us'). So I somehow used the power in order to give it away and with hope that a series of some kind of ecologies of practice will develop, whereby younger teachers, students and others could begin to develop their own conversations, their beliefs and values. Namely, the flows of authority, the shifts in autonomy and the growth in solidarity are shifting and complex.

Organisational Culture and Balance of Opposites

Literature provides us with numerous definitions of organizational culture, mostly describing it circumstantially, through its role in an organisation. For example, Robbins (1991, 576–577) writes that organisational culture defines the limits of an organisation and separates it from the others. Wheelen and Hunger (1995, 123–124) see the role of the culture mostly in increasing of the stability of the organisation and in the employees' commitment to the goals of their organisa-

tion, which generally reach beyond their personal goals. Deal (1993) sees this culture as 'elusive, untouchable, implicit and self-evident;' nonetheless, 'shared meaning' is created within every organization, the written and unwritten rules that control the everyday behaviour and actions of the people within. Jelovac (2000, 13), however, says that the culture is predominantly 'our consciousness of ourselves, of the time and the place we live in.'

The organisational culture shall not be fully understood if we perceive it separately from the culture of the environment (as the headline concept of the human practice) in which the organisation functions. In her dissertation, Erčulj (2003) discusses Prinsloo's holistic view of the culture and argues that the essence of such belief (the holistic view) is best illustrated in the quotation 'I am because we are.' A further illustration of its meaning should be possible by the greeting 'I see you!' and the answer 'I am here.' Both examples illustrate interdependence. The coherence connects all aspects of life in a system so tight that removing one item from it would paralyse the structure of the whole. Besides that, the inter-relatedness within the community would also imply that there exists an appreciation that the life of any person extends beyond the individual and the meaning for that life should be found in community with other beings (Erčulj 2003).

Because of the complexity of individuals, organisation and environment, it is only partly possible to predict the characteristics of organisational cultures from the culture of their environment and vice-versa. Similarly, it is virtually impossible to tell for sure which of the organisation values were created just on the basis of individuals' values (and vice-versa).

Scholz and Hofbaner (1990, 35) claim that organisational culture can be meaningfully interpreted and developed only on the basis of the synthesis of two aspects: functional-objectivistic and subjective-interpretative. The first concept deals with the notion of organisational culture as an internal variable that can be recognised by its tell-tale signs – artefacts. The subjective-interpretative concept builds on the assumption that organisations as social systems do not exist in reality, but are only embedded in the consciousness of the staff – are, therefore, nothing but cognitive constructs. The members of an organisation construct their own notions of reasonable acting. The common understanding of subjectively formed components evolves from

various social processes – mutual communication produces some kind of a common view of reality.

The action research brought the atmosphere of an ongoing process, based on constant discussions, into the life and work of the higher education institution. Those discussions pointed out a number of different perspectives and values and eventually produced some changes in practice. Every year, we were basically dealing with the same types of questionnaires but they did not lead to an ultimate 'formula' but to further discussion. This can best be illustrated by statements such as this one, coming from a young teacher 'Last year, I almost gave up. But this year, I prepared very carefully for my lectures and slowed down their pace. I got better feedback this way and I know what to change for next year.'

In the management literature, a number of typologies of cultures are described, which simplify the complexity of the components and relationships between the organization and its external and internal environments. When classifying culture, the typologies tend to take into account a very limited number of parameters, and that is why the authors of these models emphasise that they can only serve as an incentive for raising awareness and thinking, but not for drawing serious conclusions or actual acting and changing. Despite that, these typologies are favoured among managers and consultants who use them as static support in decision-making.

Trowler (1998, 24) divides typologies to the nomothetic, the functionalist, the ones based on the inductively-derived categorizing and the ones based on the phenomenological approaches. The first three approaches are based on categorising. Handy (1985), for example, categorised organisations according to 'power,' 'role,' 'task' or 'person' cultures. Berquist (1992) in *The Four Cultures of the Academy* differentiates higher education institutions into collegial, managerial, negotiating and developmental types.

Trowler (1998, 25) suggests a phenomenological approach which sees culture as created uniquely in each social setting and considers this to be in a constant state of flux. Understanding and values develop into recurrent practices but are relatively insubstantial, and as they change, behaviours do as well. Typologies, based on the category approach outline cultures as enacted; they consider individuals within organisations to be simply adopting a set of pre-existent values. But the phenomenological approach, according to Trowler, un-

derstands organisational culture as at least partly constructed on an on-going basis by individuals and groups.

Brennan and Shah (2000) provide typologies of cultures in their discussion on quality assessment through changing cultures. They refer to Douglas, who uses two dimensions to distinguish different aspects of an individual's involvement in social life, namely the 'group' and the 'grid,' where the group determines the strength of group boundaries and the grid refers to external rules and regulations imposed upon the individual. Different combinations result in four types of organisational culture: hierarchy, fatalism, egalitarianism and individualism.

Looking at the culture of the studied higher education institution from this typological point of view, I could classify it as individualistic, based on study subjects. This way, a familiar dovecote would be created, where every pigeon has its perch – an axis, actually. In traditional academic culture, there is specific hierarchy based on the academic titles, such as assistants and professors. This hierarchy is reflected through certain patronising approach some older teachers tend to have towards faculty assistants. An elderly professor once said: 'Young assistants need some tutoring from their professors.' Besides that, he found it normal that they should attend pedagogic seminars, while older teachers do not need that, since they are senior and experienced.

I definitely find this typology too limiting and simplifying. In some aspects, a culture that favours individualism, subjects and the autonomy of individuals exists indeed, but during the process of the action research, certain level of collegiality emerged, for example when the staff began to listen to each other. Centralisation of the decision-making was an organic step in organisational development but was eventually confronted with the emergence of 'us.' Initiatives related to study visits, social events and so on, were implemented. The power of decision-making was indeed concentrated in my position, but more in the sense of enabling performance than in the sense of limiting and discouraging initiatives.

I therefore find this typology, as well as any other categorization of the type, inappropriate, since it simplifies, limits and does not focus to processes but to outcomes. In addition, it does not provide expanding the participation of relevant stakeholders, especially students. King (1995), while presenting her personal experience in man-

aging change within a higher education institution, points to the need for widening participation. All typologies (for example of authority or organization) tend to define static categories. I tried all the time to go beyond the static and try to understand the dynamics of my roles as research developer, evaluator and manager. I have argued for a kind of performative juggling between these roles and identities as simultaneous requirements for conformity and innovation. And the way I have addressed these conflicts is the key to understanding management and development in complex environments.

Multiplicity and Participativity of Cultures

All the above approaches tend to see the culture as unitary by rule and as relatively insulated from its environment (Trowler 1998). In our institution, numerous cultures co-existed, their holders were the professors – old or new, pedagogical workers or non-pedagogic workers. But I see them as several different sub-cultures, not as a unitary whole – according to Trowler (1998, 30) – as a set of cultures of different levels and kinds, manifested in different ways.

Trowler is reluctant toward top-down approaches to introducing changes because one cannot simply give a culture directions. My research shows that in a newly established institution, a top-down approach to institutional development is useful and even necessary, but data also show that it has to change at some point. The 'top-down' approach should be balanced by the 'bottom-up' approach. The action research brought the shift of focus from outcomes to processes, even by using a 'hard,' impersonal approach initially (surveys, for example). Trowler's (1998, 154) own research, as well as mine, showed that academic staff, and others, are not passive role players who simply enact cultural norm and values. They would rather be actively involved in their creation on a day-to-day basis. He sees this involvement in the way Fullan and Hargreaves (1998, 154) describe it – as encouragement of the shared vision development, one that attracts broad commitment because it reflects the personal vision of those involved.

The notion of development is essential. The action research has brought into focus the concept of the process, while in most management literature development is rather seen as steps and tasks to be undertaken. But I would still hesitate to say that we have developed a shared vision; we have rather established processes in which our views are constantly contested, disputed and challenged. We achieved

that by a wide range of non-typical events and means (seminars, consultations, celebrations, professional excursions etc.). We still do not have a shared vision of teaching and learning, but we do have 'us' in the process of creating a shared meaning.

The process of change 'me-them-us,' and mostly the process of provoking and challenging the existing values, the ones that people brought with them from other institutions and from their past practice, was inextricably bound with the context and development of the organisation as a new institution. Among these people, through the process of social engagement, a new culture was created (deliberately and unconsciously), where an 'ongoing' challenge to existing practices, behaviours and values, actually represents one of the values. Some of them organically merged with the institution (for example feedback on questionnaires and the mission development process) and some of them became redundant.

The ongoing challenge concept is particularly interesting. For the greater part of the above mentioned versions of culture, the challenge is something anti-cultural, emerging from the instability that is somehow a built-in part of the culture. In my opinion, most of the organisational improvement paradigm is increasingly based on a linear supposition about movement and change, but my rather holistic approach is also interested in transformative change (e.g. in relation to interpersonal relations, organisational culture: from technical to social to community phases).

So, did we establish a participatory culture? Definitely, in certain respects, since we also gave voice to students, in Slovenian tradition and context rather still being just objects of teaching (at our College, student representatives attend pedagogic seminars and participate in decisions in the Senate, the Managerial Board and commissions). The opportunity was given to teaching and non-teaching staff to work together and enjoy the time spent together, but the most important is that through the action research we developed some important participatory processes (discussions on data from reports, workshops, and pedagogic seminars).

Dialogue and Participative Organisation

Beck (1992) describes our contemporary society as a risk society, where we are forced to constantly choose and we often reflect on what kind of world or organisation we want. We usually talk about a better and more participatory life, full of various activities and gained

through struggles and endeavours. This also means that we want a more participative, inclusive society and organisations, and we link this to both consensus and agreement between individuals and social movements. I consider the dialogue and negotiation between interests and needs as the key to development of a participatory organisation. Habermas (1984) discusses dialogue and consensus as the essence of human relations and points out the need to overcome social barriers through a process of intersubjective dialogue and the creating of new realities in the form of shared meanings. A frequent argument against this is that a dialogue – based consensus in 'free speech' situations, as Habermas puts it, is rather utopian. It implies that contradictions can be resolved, conflicts settled – at least in principle. That is in fact rather similar to the epistemological project of models, typologies and similar constructs. Once we reach an agreement, our problems are solved. I took a different approach. I accept uncertainty, and live conscious with the conflicting pressures of the job – in the role of a manager as well as a researcher.

Could universities in fact be academic communities, where the dialogue can play a principal role? Alderman (1997) believes this is one of the key problems in higher education, and it is getting deeper because of the different concepts of quality. He expresses his critical view of the British Standards Institution, which defines quality as 'fitness for purpose.' So, the essential question of the definition of the purpose needs to be solved in every higher education institution respectively. Alderman (1997, 138) claims that the traditional purposes of higher education were scholarly, academic and self-justifying, but adds that at the heart of higher education lies the dialogue between the teacher and the student, between the student and the student, and finally between higher education institutions and communities in which they are situated, or to which they relate.

In communication, language is important, but the most important is interpretation that the negotiation process is built on. Equally important are the 'social events,' performed verbally and non-verbally – they allowed me to understand interpersonal interaction. The role of a communicative and egalitarian dialogue and its consequences in terms of support is the foundation for integrating people in organisations. To indicate these positive effects, I need to emphasise my experience in action research which includes dialogue and negotiation as an integral part of the learning process.
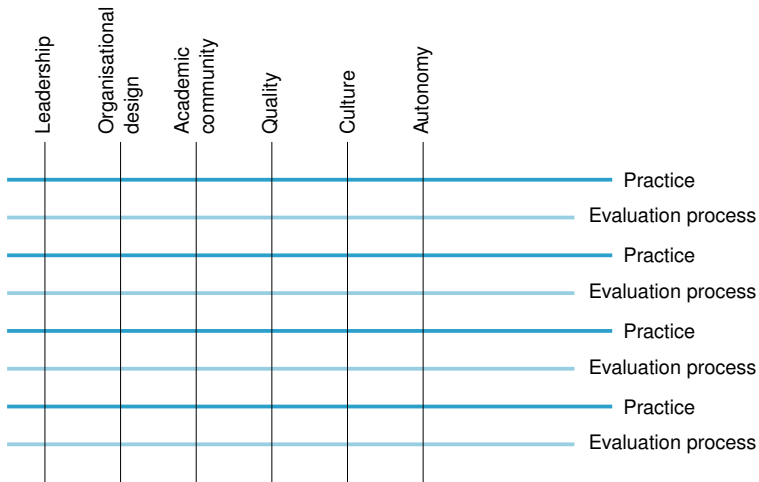
FIGURE 4.1 'Weave:' Contents Dimension and Some Emerging Topics

Contribution to Practice and Theory: From Weave and Crystal to Non-Model

A careful reader certainly took note of the concern I have mentioned in connection to quality – 'it depends.' The same hesitations go for the contributions. It all depends on how something is undertaken, in what context and for what purpose.

The reduction of reality to particular concepts, events, procedures and the establishing of cause-effect relationships seem to me no longer acceptable in the light of my research and developmental experiences. By the end of the 3rd cycle the weave metaphor still seemed adequate, which most certainly could not be said of the 4th cycle. The metaphor of weave reflects the interwoven processes well but does not include the dynamic component. Weaving is two-dimensional, we metaphorically remain at the surface of a certain 'product.' Both horizontal threads (light and dark) represent the development of the 'model' through the action research, where the self-evaluation and the improvement of practice compose an integral parts of everyday life in all cycles. Vertical threads can be compared to the contents dimension or the dimension of the emerging topics (the 'what') in figure 4.1 or to the human dimension or the dimension of people (the 'who') in figure 4.2.

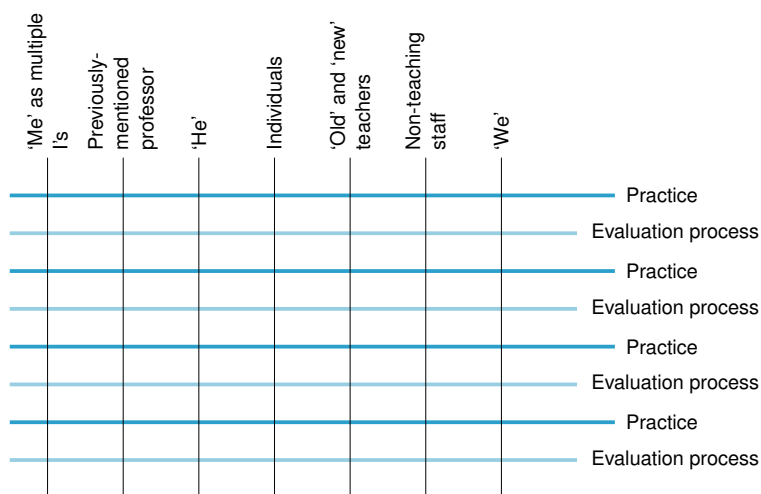Deliberately, I never explain the figures with words, as this would

FIGURE 4.2 'Weave:' Human Dimension and Some Key People

be over-simplifying. I prefer to let the readers understand the whole complexity of metaphors. Weave is always produced in an organised way, so that some of the threads never even meet. They have their own place, either vertical or horizontal, never both. As much as I initially liked the idea of weaving and weave, I started to see a much more dynamic component of my study and the people involved. Through the research process (the period of 4 cycles), the model has become more and more complex and dynamic. In a way, it became uncontrollable. So I needed a different metaphor. It started to emerge when I became aware of 'me-us-them' relationships, by the end of the 3rd cycle, which I labelled the social stage, since it represented a significant movement from papers and instruments towards people. With the reader, I would now like to awaken the feeling for that movement, that process of moving away from 'me' and constructing different relationships with and among colleagues – in order to change and form 'our own' culture.

I started to think on the basis of a different metaphor – the one of a crystal. This metaphor emerged from Janesick (2000) and his writing about crystallisation. The crystal allows me to search for a three-dimensional representation of my 'model' (figure 4.4). The axes on figure 4.3 represent its three dimensions. The time dimension axis should account for at least 4 cycles of the action research, while the
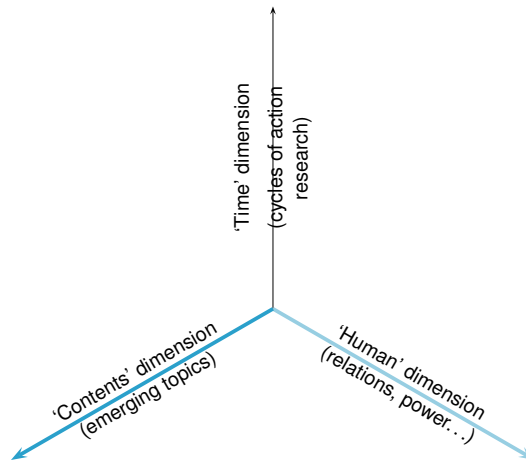
FIGURE 4.3   'Crystal:' Three Dimensions of the 'Model'

human dimension axis represents the important people within our organisation – influential individuals as well as formal and informal groups. The contents dimension axis is supposed to show the organisation of important matters. This interlinking actually proved to be much more complex than I first thought. The phenomenon of the academic community can be viewed from various human perspectives and the appearance of the academic community can change through time. Figure 4.4 shows this complexity much more clearly, yet the three components still represent a simplification of a (complex) reality.

All these images might evoke an impression of complexity. The management of complexity is the key management problem in the changing environment. Someone could see these pictures as images of the chaos. The word chaos is used in everyday life as a synonym for disorder or confusion, while the modern science has developed the so-called chaos theory, which is becoming increasingly important (Wheatly 1994; Grint 1997). Chaos, in the latter sense, emerges when a system starts to behave in an unexpected way, while certain aspects remain predictable. If we alter the initial state of the system (however slight the change), this system will, after a while, inevitably reach a point where we cannot control its behaviour anymore.

The astrophysicist Hawking (1999; 2002) also discussed the time and the order by relating to the second law of thermodynamics, say-
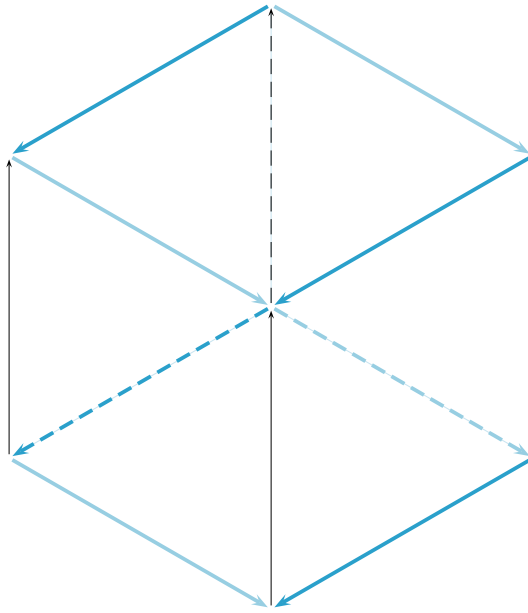
FIGURE 4.4   'Crystal:' Complexity and Dynamics of 3-Dimensional 'Model'

ing that in any given system, chaos, i.e. entropy, increases with time.

By interpreting the whole matter according to Murphy's Law, we know that if anything can go wrong – it will. In our everyday life orderly situations are far less frequent than the chaotic ones, and even if a system is systematically arranged in its original form, the tendency to chaos will grow with time. I felt and experienced something similar throughout the whole period of the four cycles of the action research. The interweaving, or the weave of the contents and of the human dimension becomes slightly more surveyable when the time dimension is disregarded. In the case of our institution, this is shown in figure 4.5, which was designed in order to emphasize the way in which the shared meaning and understanding of different topics emerges among the people.

This illustration is still a matter of considerable simplification as there are no rigid limits between different topics or people. Topics interweave and people interact. If I wanted to illustrate this in a picture (still simplified), the grid in figure 4.5 should be placed in a three-dimensional context, with a similar 'weave' spread above, but the axes 'people' and 'topic' should swap their places. Time would
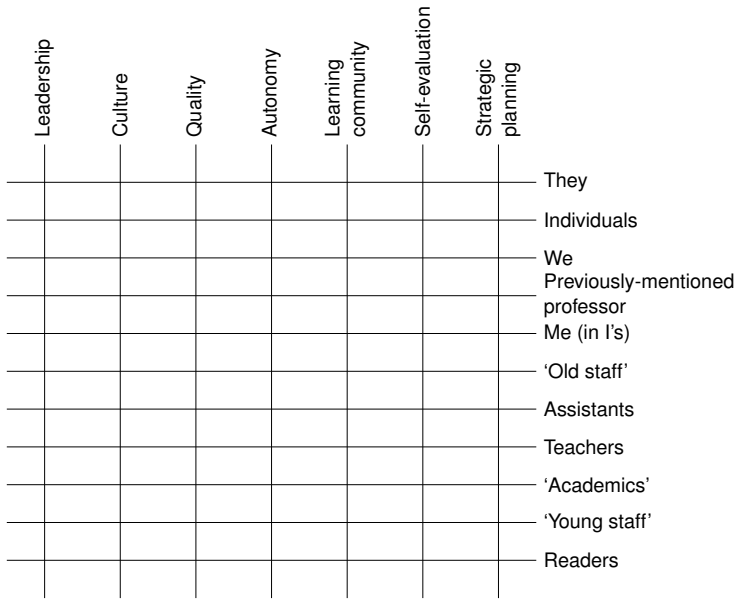
FIGURE 4.5   Action Research without Time Dimension: Contents-Human
Weaving

become the fourth dimension. Since the complexity of time, space, topics and people is a people-generated concept, my case, in its final stage of complexity, is four-dimensional as well. This constructing, dynamics and the interweaving of processes just cannot be contained within a final form of a 'model.' The metaphor of a crystal might indeed contain more dimensions than that of a weave, but it just cannot integrate the totality of events, people and interpersonal relations.

But even in the most complex chaotic systems (scientific or social), a phenomenon of self-organisation can occur. The phenomenon of establishing order in complex systems (spontaneously or designedly) is described by a science called the synergetic, which is still in the process of establishing its position among other sciences. Synergies can be influential accidentally, which means that they are not logically connected, but have unintended positive consequences (events such as excursions, pedagogic seminars, scientific conferences etc. have influenced institutional solidarity, knowledge, common feeling, ideas and the cultural growth of the school). These are non-linear multipliers rather than the linear cause-and-effect connection. The

idea of synergies is particularly interesting in my case, because it assumes that even things that seem not logically connected can affect one another, which distances this idea from the linearity of other models. For the above reasons, the concept of synergy seems to be very useful for my perception of a 'non-model.'

But does this 'search for a model,' related to the functioning of the institution also represents a certain endeavour to reach 'orderliness' in the coming years? And does this contradict the already mentioned relation between time and chaos, where the increase in chaos is supposed to determine the direction of time? Does an increasing orderliness in the form of a 'model' indicate a voyage back on the time-line? Hawking (1990, 127) speaks about subjective perceptions of the direction of time and introduces the concept of the imaginary time, where time no longer has one specific direction in space and thus individual events can only be attributed to the imaginary time component. If I decide to ignore the dimensions of time and space in my research, will it become an imaginary case study?

New questions emerged constantly and first reliable answers came along with them. To the question whether the quest for a 'model' remains the subject of my research, I could answer positively. The model resulting from my research was actually a non-model and I used it as a living management theory, where day-to-day practice and planning for the future interweave organically with evaluation, which enables a certain synergetic arrangement in the functioning of the institution. To the question whether the path which we chose for our institution during the period of my action research comprises this non-model, the answer was positive as well. Not only the structures but also the processes constitute a part of the non-model.

Why so many pictures? Perhaps because it was always easier for me to express my thoughts by means of images rather than with words? Or maybe because an expression or word represents a thought in its rigid, well-defined form, while an illustration leaves more space for interpretation and just offers the reader a starting-point for independent contemplation.

These images are in fact allegories – the ultimate simplifications of my reasoning. We can read them metaphorically as well as literally. In the search of the right image, my thoughts were wandering from theory to practice, from yesterday to today and tomorrow. That is how this last chapter was created.

Reflection on Research Process

In my PH D proposal as well as in the beginning of the action research, I decided to find a self-evaluation model, which would lead to development. Figure 4.6, was created in January 1999, after tutorials with my mentor. With it, I hoped to identify the important components of the model and illustrate some of the relations among them. The direction of the action research is indicated by a continuous line in the form of a spiral. The annual self-evaluation which includes the quality assessment procedures, data gathering, analysing, reporting, interpretation and suggestions for improvements, and at the same time, it also represents one action research cycle.

But I was beginning to realise that there were other processes (management in particular), running parallel with the process of action research. They originated from my role of a manager and from the evaluation process which I monitored as a researcher. Since these processes are actually the constituent parts of the action research and mutually influence each other, they appear in vertical lines in figure 4.6. I distinguished the evaluation processes at two levels: the first was about the improvement of instruments and the construction of self-evaluation and the second was about the improvement of practice.

Other processes that were identified, included the management processes at the executive level and implementation of self-evaluation which implicated the cultural level the improvement and revision of instruments, how teachers and students felt about the process, what we did as a result of that – old vs. new, young teachers, ownership issues).

Another perspective was growing more and more interesting – I could call it the personal one: my journal, my feelings as a researcher and manager. Every day I was becoming more aware of the fact that my research was not independent of me and that people in the organisation actively co-shaped the processes of my 'model.' Thus, my action research shifted to the social stage, which is also the reason why this 'model' has turned into 'non-model,' and the quality assurance process has become more a matter of partnership and less an implementation of the top-down imposed recommendations.

Comparing figure 4.6 with figures 3.6 and 4.4, where the 'non-model' is represented, I began to contemplate my research, which is still not fully completed. It is evident that action research became my
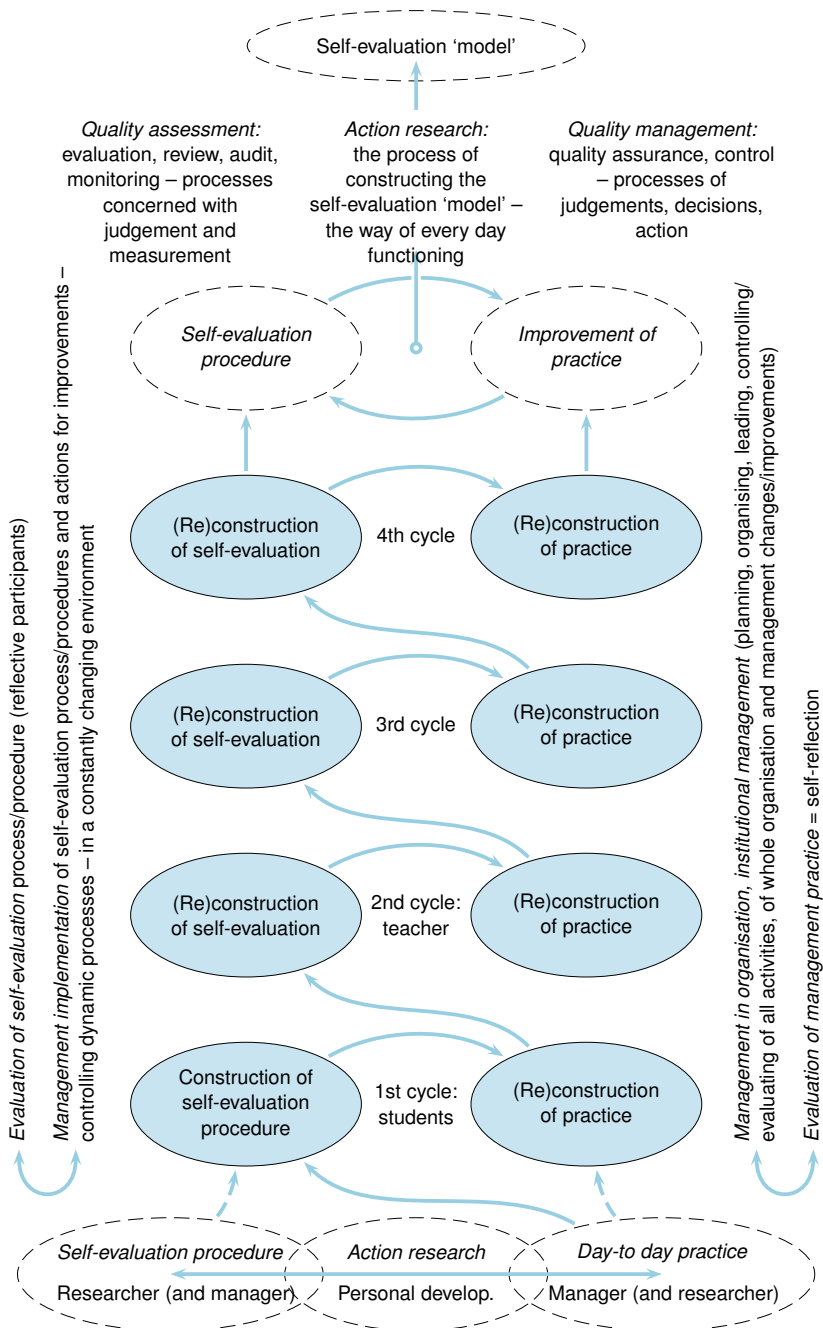
FIGURE 4.6   My Action Research (Research Diary, January 1999)

way of work and research, a kind of living and changing management theory.

Let me go back to the title of my study from June 1997: 'Managing the Interrelated Processes of Institutional Evaluation and Continuous Improvement in a Newly Established College of Higher Education in Order to Bring About Developments in College Policies and Practice: an Action Research Study.' Is it still appropriate, after five years? I would like to change or replace two expressions: 'managing' by 'understanding' and 'interrelated' by 'interwoven.' The reader should probably understand my reasons for that change.

This was a grounded creation of a self-improvement 'model,' but it was also about the institutional development, the experiment and the case study, based on the action research. At that point the research was over and the practice went on. According to Dadds (2002, 12), the whole thing could be summarized as a research for new knowledge and understanding, a research for critique and a research for improvement. The author also drew attention to the special characteristic of the practice-based researchers who need not just curiosity and ethical sensitivity, but also great courage if they are to take relevant research questions into the heart of their work. Every form of research-based professionalism necessarily touches the identity of the researcher, since identity is bound into practice (p. 18). From my experience I can agree with her and add: it was worth taking that risk.

References

Adelman, C. 1993. 'Kurt Lewin and the Origins of Action Research.' *Educational Action Research* 1 (1): 7–14.

Alderman, G. 1997. 'From Elitist Self-Regulation to a Marketable Commodity: British Universities and the Illusions of Academic Autonomy in Democratic Society.' In *Autonomy and External Control: The University in Search of the Golden Mean; The Erfurt Declaration towards the Responsible University in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by K. D. Wolff, 129–46. München: Iudicium.

American Evaluation Association. 2000. 'Guiding Principles for Evaluators.' Http://www.eval.org/Publications/GuidingPrinciplesPrintable.asp

Ansoff, I. H. 1984. *Implanting Strategic Management*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Appadurai, A. 1991. 'Global Ethnoscapes: Notes and Queries for a Transnational Anthropology.' In *Recapturing Anthropology*, edited by R. Fox, 191–210. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.

Argyris, C., and D. A. Schon. 1978. *Organisational Learning*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Atweh, B., S. Kemmis and P. Weeks, eds. 1998. *Action Research in Practice*. London and New York: Routledge.

Bassey, M. 1999. *Case Study Research in Educational Settings*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Becher, T., and M. Kogan. 1992. *Process and Structure in higher Education*. London: Routledge.

Beck, U. 1992. *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage.

Bell, J. 1993. *Doing Your Research Project*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Berger, P. 1966. *Invitation to Sociology*. London: Sage.

Berquist, W. H. 1992. *The Four Cultures of the Academy*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Bevc, M. 2001. *Analiza pravičnosti državnega financiranja izobraževanja v Sloveniji in možnosti za njeno povečanje: raziskovalni projekt v okviru* CRP *'Vzgoja in izobraževanje ter šport.'* Ljubljana: Inštitut za ekonomska raziskovanja.

Boyle, P., and J. A. Bowden. 1997. 'Educational Quality Assurance in Universities: An Enhanced Model.' *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education* 22 (2): 111–21.

Brennan, J. L., and T. Shah. 2000. *Managing Quality in Higher Education: International Perspective on Institutional Assessment and Change*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Brown, M. A., and D. M. Wolf. 1993. 'Allocating Budgets Using Performance Criteria.' In *The Funding of Higher Education: International Perspectives*, edited by G. Altbach and D. B. Johnstone, 173–87. New York: Garland.

Bush, T., and J. West-Burnham, eds. 1994. *The Principles of Educational Management*. New York: Longman.

Byrne, J. V. 1999. 'Taking Charge of Change: A Leadership Challenge for Public Higher Education.' *Higher Education Management* 11 (1): 69–79.

Carr, J. F., and D. E. Harris. 2001. *Succeeding with Standards: Linking Curriculum, Assessment, and Action Planning*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Carr, W., and S. Kemmis. 1995. *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research*. London: Falmer.

Castells, M. 1998. *End of Millennium*. Vol. 2, *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Christians, C. G. 2000. Ethics and Politics in Qualitative Research. In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, 133–55. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Clark, B. R. 1998. *Creating Entrepreneurial Universities: Organizational Pathways of Transformation*. Oxford: Pergamon.

Collins, J. C., and J. I. Porras. 1997. *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*. New York: Harper.

Confrey, J. 1987. 'Bridging Research and Practice.' *Educational Theory* 37 (4): 383–94.

Cooksy, L. J. 2000. 'Commentary: Auditing the off-the-Record Case.' *American Journal of Evaluation* 21 (1): 122–28.

Cornelissen, J., and R. Thorpe. 2002. 'Measuring a Business School's Reputation: Perspectives, Problems and Prospects.' *European Management Journal* 20 (2): 172–8.

Creswell, J. W. 1998. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions*. London: Sage.

Dadds, M. 2002. 'Taking Curiosity Seriously: The Role of Awe and Wanda in Research-Based Professionalism.' *Educational Action Research* 10 (1): 9–26.

Davidoff, S. 1997. 'School Organization Development in a Changing Political Environment.' In *International Action Research*, edited by S. Hollingsworth, 100–11. London: Falmer.

Davies, B., and L. Ellison. 1999. *Strategic Direction and Development of the School*. London: Routledge.

Day, C. 1997. 'Being a Professional in Schools and Universities: Limits, Purposes and Possibilities for Development.' *British Educational Research Journal* 23 (2): 193–208.

Deal, T. E. 1993. 'The Culture of Schools.' In *Educational leadership and School Culture*, edited by M. Shaskin and H. J. Walberg, 3–18. Berkeley, CA: McCutchan.

Denzin, N. K. 2000. 'The Practices and Politics of Interpretation.' In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, 897–922. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. K., and Y. S. Lincoln, eds. 2000. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Drucker, P. F. 1990. *Managing the Non-Profit Organisation*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Erčulj, J. 2003. 'School Culture in Slovene Primary Schools: Aspects of the Local and the Global.' PhD thesis, Manchester Metropolitan University.

Elliott, J. 1991. *Action Research for Educational Change*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Fidler, B. 1996. *Strategic Planning for School Improvement*. London: Pitman.

Filipović, V., ed. 1979. *Filozofska hrestomatija*. Zagreb: Nakladni zavod matice Hrvatske.

Finch, J. 1997. 'Power Legitimacy and Academic Standards.' In *Standards and Quality in Higher Education in Europe*, edited by J. Brennan, P. de Vries and R. Williams, 146–56. London: Kingsley.

Foucault, M. 1977. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of Prison*. New York: Pantheon.

———. 1988. *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1997–1984*. London: Routledge.

———. 1989. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. London: Routledge.

Fullan, M., and A. Hargreaves. 1992. *Teacher Development and Educational Change*. London: Cassel.

———. 1995. *What's Worth Fighting for in Your School?* Buckingham: Open University Press.

———. 1998. *What's Worth Fighting for Out There*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Glaser, B., and L. Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine.

Glasser, W. 1994. *Dobra šola: vodenje učencev brez prisile*. Radovljica: Regionalni izobraževalni center.

Goldring, E. B. 1997. 'Educational Leadership: Schools, Environments and Boundary Spanning.' In *Educational Management: Strategy, Quality and*

Resources, edited by M. Preedy, R. Glatter, and R. Levaćić, 290–9. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Gombrich, R. F. 2000. 'British Higher Education Policy in the Last Twenty Years: The Murder of a Profession.' Http://www.atm.damtp.cam.ac.uk/people/mem/papers/lhce/uk-higher-education.html

Gough, N. 1999. 'Globalisation and School Curriculum Change: Locating a Transnational Imaginary.' *Journal of Education Policy* 14 (1): 73–84.

Green, D., ed. 1995. 'What is Quality in Higher Education?' Buckingham: Open University Press.

Green, M. F. 1997. 'Leadership and Institutional Change: A Comparative View.' *Higher Education Management* 9 (2): 135–46.

Greenwood, D. J., and M. Levin. 2000. 'Reconstructing the Relationships between Universities and Society through Action Research.' In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, 85–106. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Grint, K. 1997. *Leadership: Classical, Contemporary, and Critical Approaches.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Guba, E., and Y. S. Lincoln. 1989. *Fourth Generation Evaluation.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Habermas, J. 1984. *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalisation of Society.* Boston: Beacon.

Hamel, G., and C. K. Prahalad. 1994. *Competing for the Future.* Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press.

Hammersley, M., ed. 1993. *Educational Research: Current Issues.* London: Sage.

——. 1997. 'A Defence of Realism.' Manuscript.

Handy, C. B. 1985. *Understanding Organisations.* Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Hannerz, U. 1993. 'Mediations in the Global Ecumene.' In *Beyond Boundaries: Understanding Translation and Anthropological Discourse*, edited by G. Palsson, ed. 41–57. Oxford: Berg.

Hanrahan, M. 1998. 'Academic Growth through Action Research: A Doctoral Student's Narrative.' In *Action Research in Practice*, edited by B. Atweh, S. Kemmis, and P. Weeks, 302–26. London: Routledge.

Hargreaves, D. H., and D. Hopkins. 1991. *The Empowered School: The Management and Practice of Development Planning.* London: Cassell.

Hawking, S. W. 1990. *Kratka zgodovina časa.* Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba.

——. 2002. *Vesolje v orehovi lupini.* Tržič: Učila.

Hopkins, D. 1989. *Evaluation for School Development.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Hughes, J. 1990. *The Philosophy of Social Research.* New York: Longman.

Janesick, V. J. 2000. 'The Choreography of Qualitative Research Design.' In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, 379–98. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Jelovac, D. 2000. *Podjetniška kultura in etika.* Portorož: Visoka strokovna šola za podjetništvo.

Jongbloed, B., and H. van der Knoop. 1999. 'Budgeting at the Institutional Level: Responding to Internal Pressures and External Opportunities.' In *From the Eye of the Storm: Higher Education's Changing Institution*, edited by B. Jongbloed, P. Maassen, and G. Neave, 141–64. Doordrecht: Kluwer.

Katz, D., and R. L. Kahn. 1978. *Social Psychology of Organisations.* New York: Wiley.

Kemmis, S. 1981. 'Action Research and Post-Modernism.' *Curriculum Perspectives* 11 (4): 59–66.

———. 1993. 'Action Research.' In *Educational Research: Current Issues*, edited by M. Hammersley, 177–90. London: Open University Press.

Kemmis, S., and R. McTaggart. 1988. *The Action Research Planner.* Geelong: Deakin University Press.

———. 2000. 'Participatory Action Research.' In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, 567–605. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kemmis, S., and M. Wilkinson. 1998. 'Participatory Action Research and the Study of Practice.' In *Action Research in Practice*, edited by B. Atweh, S. Kemmis, and P. Weeks, 21–36. London: Routledge.

King, C. 1995. 'Making it Happen: Reflections on a Varied Career.' In *Implementing Change from within Universities and Colleges*, edited by M. Slowey, 41–50. London: Kogan Page.

Kirn, A. 1996. 'Paraznanost kot neresni tekmec znanosti?' *Raziskovalec* 25 (2): 16–21.

Koren, A. 1999. *Ravnatelj med osamo in sodelovanjem.* Ljubljana: Šola za ravnatelje.

Koren, A., and Trnavčevič, A. 2002. 'Markets and Autonomy for Learning Schools.' In *Leading Schools for Learning: Proceedings of the 10th Annual Conference of the European Network for Improving Research and Development of Educational Management*, edited by D. Oldroyd, 59–68. Ljubljana: National Leadership School; Koper: School of Management.

Kralj, J. 1992. *Politika podjetja v tržnem gospodarstvu.* Maribor: Ekonomsko poslovna fakulteta.

Kump, S. 1995. *Samoevalvacija v visokem šolstvu.* Ljubljana: Andragoški center Slovenije.

Kvale, S. 1996. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London: Sage.

Leitch, R., and C. Day. 2000. 'Action Research and Reflective Practice: Towards a Holistic View.' *Educational Action Research* 8 (1): 179–93.

Leithwood, K., D. Jantzi, and R. Steinbach. 1998. *Changing Leadership for Changing Times*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Lincoln, Y. S., and E. Guba. 1985. *Naturalistic Inquiry*. London: Sage.

——. 1994. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. London: Sage.

——. 2000. 'Paradigmatic Controversies, Contradictions, and Emerging Confluences.' In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, 163–88. Thousand Oaks, ca: Sage.

Lynch, M. 2000. 'Against Reflexivity as an Academic Virtue and Source of Privilege Knowledge.' *Theory, Culture and Society* 17 (3): 1–25.

Marentič Požarnik, B. 1998. 'Izpopolnjevanje univerzitetnih učiteljev za boljše poučevanje kot del kulture kakovosti: izkušnje, prototip, modeli za ljubljansko univerzo.' In *Za boljšo kakovost študija*, edited by B. Mihevc and B. Marentič Požarnik, 29–48. Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta / Slovensko društvo za visokošolsko didaktiko.

——. 2000. 'Iz dnevnika neke evalvacije: zapravljena priložnost za strokovni dialog.' *Šolski razgledi* 51 (14): 5.

——. 2001. 'Uspešna prenova terja enakopravnejši položaj "alternativne" raziskovalne paradigme in učitelja raziskovalca.' *Sodobna pedagogika* 52 (2): 64–80.

Marentič Požarnik, B., and B. Mihevc, eds. 1997. *Za uspešnejši začetek študija*. Ljubljana: Center za pedagoško izobraževanje Univerze v Ljubljani.

McNiff, J., P. Lomax, and J. Whitehead. 1996. *You and Your Action Research Project*. London: Routledge.

McNiff, J., J. Whitehead, M. Laidlaw, and Bath Action Research Group. 1992. *Creating a Good Social Order through Action Research*. London: Hyde.

Merriam, S. 1998. *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Miglič, G. 1999. 'Pregled razvoja akcijskega raziskovanja in pogled na njegovo prihodnost.' *Sodobna pedagogika* 49 (5): 140–53.

Mills, C. W. 1959. *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Mintzberg, H. 1983. *Power in and around Organization*. Englewood Cliffs, nj: Prentice Hall.

——. 1994. *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning*. New York: Prentice Hall.

———. 2001. 'The Professional Bureaucracy.' In *Management and Decision-Making in Higher Education Institutions*, edited by I. Jenniskens, 171–94. Eschende: CHEPS.

Morgan, G. 1995. *Images of Organization.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Morris, M. 2000. 'Ethical Challenges.' *American Journal of Evaluation* 21 (1): 119–20.

Murgatroyd, S., and C. Morgan. 1993. *Total Quality Management and the School.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Nacionalni program visokega šolstva Republike Slovenije. 2002. *Uradni list Republike Slovenije,* no. 20.

Nóvoa, A., and W. de Jong-Lambert. 2002. 'The Education of Europe: Apprehending EU Educational Policies.' Paper presented at ECER Post-Graduate and New Researchers' Pre-Conference, Lisbon, 11–14 September.

O'Hanlon, C. 1996. 'Is There a Difference between Action Research and Quality Development? Within or beyond the Constrains?' In *Professional Development through Action Research in Educational Settings*, edited by C. O'Hanlon, 73–88. London: Falmer.

Pechar, H. 1996. 'Academic Staff in Austrian Universities: Conditions and Challenges.' *Higher Education Management* 8 (2): 59–68.

Pels, D. 2000. 'Reflexivity: One Step up.' *Theory, Culture and Society* 17 (3): 26–54.

Peshkin, A. 1988. 'In Search of Subjectivity: One's Own.' *Educational Researcher* 17 (7): 17–21.

Peters, T. J., and R. H. Waterman 1982. *In Search of Excellence.* New York: Harper and Row.

Petrovec, D. 2001. 'Kakovost diplomantov kot zrcalna slika kakovosti predavateljev.' In *Razvoj visokega šolstva v Sloveniji*, edited by B. Stanovnik, L. Golič and A. Kralj, 213–19. Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti.

PHARE. 1993. *Quality Management and Quality Assurance in European Higher Education: Methods and Mechanisms.* Luxemburg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

———. 1997. *Top Handbook: Institutional Management of Universities.* Luxemburg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

———. 1998. *Quality Assurance in Higher Education.* Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

Plevnik, T., and A. Žižmond, eds. 2000. *Vzgoja in izobraževanje v Republiki Sloveniji.* Ljubljana: Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport.

Pounder, J. 2000. 'Towards a Model of Institutional Effectiveness in Higher Education.' *Higher Education Management* 12 (2): 81–96.

Power, M. 1994. *The Audit Explosion*. London: White Dove.

Preskill, S. L., and H. Preskill. 1997. 'Meeting the Postmodern Challenge: Pragmatism and Evaluative Inquiry for Organizational Learning.' In *Evaluation and the Postmodern Dilemma*, edited by L. Marbry, 155–69. London: JAI.

Robbins, S. P. 1991. *Organizational Behavior*. 5th ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Robertson, J. 2000. 'The Three Rs of Action Research Methodology: Reciprocity, Reflexivity and Reflection-on-Reality.' *Educational Action Research* 8 (2): 307–26.

Ryan, J. 1999. *Representing Race/Ethnicity in Multiethnic Schools: A Critical Case Study*. Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters.

Sagadin, J. 1993. *Poglavja iz metodologije pedagoškega raziskovanja*. Ljubljana: Zavod Republike Slovenije za šolstvo in šport.

Sallis, E. 1993. *Total Quality Management in Education*. London: Kogan Page.

Scheele, J. P., P. A. M. Maassen, and D. F. Westerheijden, eds. 1998. *To be Continued . . . : Follow-up of Quality Assurance in Higher Education*. Utrecht: Elsevier.

Schein, E. H. 1999. *The Corporate Culture Survival Guide: Sense and Nonsense about Culture Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Scholz, C., and W. Hofbaner. 1990. *Organisationskultur*. Weisbaden: Gabler.

Schon, D. A. 1983. *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*. London: Temple Smith.

Schwandt, T. 1997. *Qualitative Inquiry: A Dictionary of Terms*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Schwaninger, M. 1994. *Management-Systeme*. Frankfurt: Campus.

Scott, W. R. 1981. *Organisations, Rational, Natural and Open Systems*. New York: Prentice-Hall.

Scott, P. 1997. 'The Postmodern University.' In *The Postmodern University?* Edited by A. Smith and F. Webster, 36–47. Buckingham: Society for Research into Higher Education in Open University Press.

Seymour, D. 1993. *Causing Quality in Higher Education*. Phoenix: Oryx.

Smith, A., and F. Webster. 1997. 'Changing Ideas of the University.' In *The Postmodern University?* Edited by A. Smith and F. Webster, 1–14. Buckingham Society for Research into Higher Education in Open University Press.

Stake, R. E. 1995. *The Art of Case Study Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

———. 1997. 'The Fleeting Discernment of Quality.' In *Evaluation and the Postmodern Dilemma*, edited by L. Marbry, 41–60. London: JAI.

——. 2000. 'Case Studies.' In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, 435–54. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stanovnik, B., L. Golič, and A. Kralj, 2001. *Razvoj visokega šolstva v Sloveniji: zbornik referatov na posvetu*. Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti.

Stoner, J. A. F., and R. E. Freeman. 1992. *Management*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Strathern, M. 2000. 'The Tyranny of Transparency.' *British Educational Research Journal* 26 (3): 309–21.

Stringer, E. T. 1996. *Action Research: A Handbook for Practitioners*. London: Sage.

Stronach, I. 1997. 'Evaluation with the Lights Out: Deconstructing "Illuminative Evaluation" and "New Paradigm" Research.' In *Evaluation and the Postmodern Dilemma*, edited by L. Marbry, 21–40. London: Jai.

——. 1999. 'Shouting Theatre in Crowded Fire.' In *Evaluation* 5 (2): 173–93.

——. 2000. 'Quality is the Key, But Is Education the Lock? Turning Education Around through Quality Procedures.' In *Ways towards Quality in Education*, edited by I. Stronach and N. Trunk Širca, 27–37. Ljubljana: Open Society Institute Slovenia and National Leadership School; Koper: College of Management.

Stronach, I., Erčulj, J., A. Koren, S. Marinšek, P. Peček, N. Trunk Širca, A. Trnavčevič, and S. Roncelli Vaupot. 1998. 'Educational Research As an Intercultural Practice: Unloading the Dice.' *Lecture at the European Conference on Educational Research*, Ljubljana, 17–20 September.

Stronach, I., B. Corbin, O. McNamara, S. Stark, and T. Warne. 2002. 'Towards an Uncertain Politics of Professionalism: Teacher and Nurse Identities in Flux.' *Journal of Educational Policy* 17 (1): 109–38.

Stufflebeam, D. L. 1997. 'A Standards-Based Perspective on Evaluation.' In *Evaluation and the Postmodern Dilemma*, edited by L. Marbry, 61–88. London: JAI.

Štern, A. 2001. 'Mož, ki bi bil docent.' *Demokracija* 6 (26): 49.

Tavčar, M. I. 1997. *Razsežnosti strateškega management*. Koper: Visoka šola za management.

——. 2002. *Strateški management*. Koper: Visoka šola za management

Thune, C. 2002. 'The First Part of the Chairman's Report: ENQA and the European Process from Bologna to Berlin.' *The European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education Newsletter*, no. 8:2–3.

Toš, N. 1988. *Metode družboslovnega raziskovanja*. Ljubljana: DZS.

Trnavčevič, A. 1996. *Marketing v izobraževanju*. Ljubljana: Šola za ravnatelje.

Trowler, P. R. 1998. *Academics Responding to Change: New Higher Education Frameworks and Academic Cultures.* Buckingham: The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.

Trunk Širca, N. 1995. 'Planning Process in a Group of Slovene Primary Schools and Approaches to School Development Planning.' Master's thesis, Manchester Metropolitan University.

Tsoukas, H. 1997. 'The Tyranny of Light: The Temptations and the Paradoxes of the Information Society.' *Futures* 29 (9): 827–43.

Ule, A. 1992. *Sodobne teorije znanosti.* Ljubljana: Znanstveno in publicistično središče.

———. 1996. 'Znanost in paraznanost: koliko je poti k resnici.' *Raziskovalec* 25 (2): 22–5.

Visoka šola za management. 1999. *Poročilo 1995–1999.* Koper: Visoka šola za management.

Watson, G., and M. Crossley. 2001. 'Beyond the Rational.' *Educational Management in Administration* 29 (1): 113–25.

Wheatly, M. 1994. *Leadership and the New Science.* San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Wheelen, T. L., and J. D. Hunger. 1995. *Strategic Management and Business Policy.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Winch, C. 1996. *Quality and Education.* Oxford: Blackwell.

Woolgar, S., ed. 1988. *Knowledge and Reflexivity: New Frontiers in the Sociology of Knowledge.* London: Sage.

Wolff, K. D., ed. 1997. *Autonomy and External Control: The University in Search of the Golden Mean; The Erfurt Declaration towards the Responsible University in the Twenty-First Century.* München: Iudicium.

Wolski, S. T., E. Chojnacka, and B. Macukow. 1997. *Some Concepts of Education Quality Improvement.* Lodz: Technical University of Lodz.

Yin, R. K. 1994. *Case Study Research.* London: Sage.

Zakon o spremembah in dopolnitvah zakona o visokem šolstvu (zvis-a). 1999. *Uradni list Republike Slovenije,* no. 99.

Zakon o spremembah in dopolnitvah Zakona o visokem šolstvu (zvis-d). 2004. *Uradni list Republike Slovenije,* no. 63.

Zakon o usmerjenem izobraževanju. *Uradni list Republike Slovenije,* no. 11.

Zakon o visokem šolstvu. *Uradni list Republike Slovenije,* no. 67.

Zelvys, R. 2000. 'Managing the Quality of Education in Lithuania.' In *Ways towards Quality in Education,* edited by I. Stronach and N. Trunk Širca, 137–48. Ljubljana: Open Society Institute Slovenia and National Leadership School; Koper: College of Management.

Zgaga, P. 1997. 'Autonomia Not Autarkia: A Case Study from Slovenia.' In *Autonomy and External Control: The University in Search of the Golden*

Mean; The Erfurt Declaration towards the Responsible University in the Twenty-First Century, edited by D. K. Wolff, 111–26. München: Iudicium.

———, ed. 1998. *Development of Higher Education in Slovenia*. Ljubljana: Ministry of Education and Sport.

———. 2000. 'Educational Policy and Quality in Education.' *Ways towards Quality in Education*, edited by I. Stronach and N. Trunk Širca, 39–50. Ljubljana: Open Society Institute Slovenia and National Leadership School; Koper: College of Management.

———. 2001. 'Evropski Visokošolski Prostor: Novi Izzivi za Slovensko Visoko Šolstvo.' In *Razvoj visokega šolstva v Sloveniji*, edited by B. Stanovnik, L. Golič, and A. Kralj, 291–9. Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti.

Reviews

The content or the topic of the monograph is a study of organisational development and introduction of quality systems in higher education or at the level of an individual institution. The monograph consists of four content units. (1) 'No Boundaries for Higher Education;' here the author presents higher education in Europe and the main features of higher education in Slovenia. She also outlines characteristics of the selected institution, which will serve as a case study and where she will carry out the action research. The author critically discusses the Europeanisation of higher education area, which has been significantly influenced by the EU through various programs and projects, as well as by the Bologna process. (2) 'Action Research in Theory and Practice;' the concept of action research and the importance of ethics are both presented here, as the action research is carried out in practice itself over a longer period of time. The author presented the action research in a framework of the research tradition in social sciences in Slovenia. (3) 'Case Study;' here, the author describes four cycles (years) of action research. In the study, the author examines introduction of self-evaluation (quality system) and establishment of the academic community of the higher education institution. (4) 'Amodel;' with this chapter the author concludes a monograph and demonstrates the contribution of the action research to theory and practice.

In this research, self-evaluation is defined as a process that concerns all the basic processes in the functioning of a higher education institution. The author is aware of both the advantages and disadvantages of the chosen research approach and draws attention to the specific circumstances or conditions that must be ensured in order for such an action research to be realised at all.

The field of quality in higher education is important both in international space as well as on national levels, also in Slovenia. There are many works written in the field of self-evaluation in Slovenia, within the last ten years in particular, mostly at the undergraduate level of education.

According to my knowledge, the present monograph is the first action research carried out on the level of the entire higher education

institution, which comprehensively and in-depth demonstrates the field of self-evaluation in higher education. An action study of the functioning practice of a higher education institution is rare even in the international area. I think that the monograph is important both for Slovene and international science and will contribute to the development of professional and scientific terminology, as well as it contributes to understanding of practice and development of theory.

Borut Rončević

The main theme of the monographic publication is the study of quality systems in higher education and self-evaluation processes at the institutional level. The monographic publication consists of four content units.

- In the first unit: 'No Boundaries for Higher Education,' the author presents higher education in the world and especially in Europe, as well as the main features of higher education in Slovenia and the selected institutions – case study. She introduces the European Higher Education Area, by emphasizing that culture, traditions, ideas, knowledge and people travel, and when they get introduced or positioned in local environments, both locally and globally change. A considerable credit to the Europeanisation of higher education is given to European Union programs, such as Erasmus and the Bologna Process.
- The second unit: 'Action Research in Theory and Practice' focuses on research concepts, where the Slovenian tradition of research in the field of social sciences, related case studies and action research as well as its validity and reliability are presented in more detail. An important emphasis is given to the ethics of action research, since it encourages thinking on the improvement of the next cycle of the research and improvement practices through reflection.
- In the third unit, the study itself is described through four cycles (study years) of the action research. In the study, the author examined the processes for establishing an academic community of a higher education institution in which they introduced a quality system through the process of self-evaluation.

• In the fourth unit: 'Non-Model: Dialogue between Theory and Practice,' contribution to theory and practice is described.

The monographic publication deals with the creation of a self-evaluation model, a model of continuous development and improvement as the basis for institutional development – all of which is interwoven in a case study based on action research. We could say that this is an experiment in the chosen institution. The author also draws attention to the special characteristic of researchers in practice (which an action research actually is), who need not only awareness and sense of ethics, but also a lot of courage. In this study, self-evaluation is defined as a process that concerns all the basic processes of the institution's operation, while the objectives of the research are to obtain in-depth knowledge and understanding of the process of institutional self-evaluation and the introduction of self-evaluation as an element of the quality system, in the case of a selected higher education institution.

The field of self-evaluation is very important in the Slovene and also in the European area and as it is changing constantly, the present monographic publication contributes to the development of professional and scientific terminology and contributes to understanding the practice. In the Slovene area we find several articles and individual chapters in the field of self-evaluation, many of them from the field of university education. The present monographic publication, according to my knowledge of the field, is the first trying to present a comprehensive and in-depth presentation of the field of self-evaluation in higher education from various aspects: students, teachers and other stakeholders. The action research at the level of studying the entire (higher education) institution is also rare in the international area. From this point of view, the monograph is important in the context of national as well as international science.

Jaka Vadnjal

Prof. Dr. Nada Trunk Širca has been professionally active in the area of higher education since 1995, also exploring it actively. The contents of this monograph are the study of organisational development and the introduction of quality systems in higher education. In the first part, the author presents higher education in Europe and the main features of higher education in Slovenia. The author critically discusses the Europeanisation of the higher education area which has been significantly influenced by the EU through various programs and projects, as well as the Bologna process. In the second part, the concept of action research with an emphasis on ethics is presented, as the action research is carried out in practice at a selected higher education institution over a longer period of time, comprehensively and in-depth illustrating the area of self-evaluation in higher education. In the third part, the author records the four cycles (years) of the action research. With the last part, the author concludes the monograph and demonstrates the contribution of the action research to theory and practice. The field of quality in higher education is important both in international area and at national levels, also in Slovenia. The monograph contributes to the understanding of the practice and to the development of the theory in the field of quality and management of higher education.