



# Hjördís Þorgeirsdóttir presents her doctoral thesis from University of Iceland and University of Exeter

Wednesday March 16th at 3 pm í the University of Iceland's Aula

The study focuses on how to connect action research and activity theory to promote the professional development of teachers in Iceland.



External Examiner of the thesis was Dr. Bridget Somekh previously professor at Manchester Metropolitan University, the other evaluators were Dr. Karen Walshe lecturer at the University of Exeter and Dr. Jón Torfi Jonasson, professor at the Faculty of Education, School of Education, University of Iceland. Dr. Jón Torfi will discuss Hjördís thesis and present the outcome of the defense that took place at the University of Exeter, December 14<sup>th</sup> 2015.

The supervisors were Dr. Keith Postlethwaite, University of Exeter, Dr. Nigel Skinner University of Exeter and Dr. Hafþór Gudjonsson, University of Iceland.

Dr. Jóhanna Einarsdóttir Dean of School of Education will conduct the ceremony.

## **About the project:**

This thesis investigates the use of action research and activity theory to promote the professional development of teachers in an Icelandic upper secondary school. The purpose of the research was to develop a new model to foster professional development through enhancing the participants' agency to transform their practice. It was carried out with an action research group of twenty-one school professionals and an outside consultant. I termed our approach the Change Room. The research focus was on tensions the participants experienced in their classroom practice. The research used both action research and case study methodology. The teachers experienced tensions in their classroom practice between students' active and passive learning, didactic and dialogic teaching methods, and the requirement to cover the syllabus and to promote deep learning. To resolve these tensions the teachers have developed teaching practices that enhanced active student learning and given more weight to the students' voices. Participation in the action research group enhanced both individual and collective learning of the school professionals. Their agency to change practice was increased and they also developed more cross curriculum agency. The

combination of activity theory and action research in the Change Room provides a new model for enhancing teachers' professional development and collaboration that has potential to transform classroom practice.

### **The doctoral candidate**

Hjördís Þorgeirsdóttir was born in 1956. She holds a MA in sociology and social management from the University of Edinburgh in 1981, Certificate in Educational studies from the University of Iceland 1989 and a MSc in education research from the University of Exeter 2009. Hjördís worked as a teacher in sociology from 1981 to 2002, first with the FNV and then MS. From 2002, she served as Deputy Head of MS. She is married to Þorsteinn Broddason technologist. Their daughter is Elin, BS in psychology from the University of Iceland and her stepson is Thorstein Broddason, economist, married to Dora Heiða Halldórsdóttir and they have two sons. Hjördís has done research with action research group in MS since 2005 and served on the board of the Association for action research laboratory and the action research at the University of Iceland.