# Chapter Eight

## The Making of a Doctor of Education at the University of Bath (1998-2000)

> **Reflection is a necessary but not sufficient condition for learning. Confrontation either by self or others must occur. Teachers need challenge and support if their professional development is to be enhanced (Day 1993-p. 88).**

In this chapter I reflect on my learning experiences from the four assessed papers to present my living educational theory of converting personal first-hand learning into propositional knowledge and converting embodied knowledge into explicit knowledge. This way theory was not used to put it to direct application: it was used to illuminate practice and to generate personal and practical knowledge. The following learning process consists of guided personal reflections on past practices in the light of current theory learnt from the taught part of the EdD programme, tutor suggestions and examiners' comments on written assignments. More importantly, it shows how I used examiners' comments to extend my knowledge.

## The EdD Work between 1998-2000

I joined the EdD programme at the University of Bath in 1998 to extend my MPhil work in the light of innovations in education. It has been an expensive but an enjoyable experience with stimulating conversations with the participants and the staff of the university. At present education and society are going through dramatic changes throughout the world. A great debate is going on to construct a future but without any clear vision in sight. It is a useful and a stimulating experience to be part of this academic debate.

The academic requirements for the completion of EdD are successful completion of two taught compulsory and two optional units, and a 40,000 word dissertation. The successful completion of learning from the four one-week taught units including (1) Educational Research: philosophy and practice (2) Educational Policy (3) Curriculum Philosophy and

practice and (4) International Education and Practice brought me to the writing of this dissertation. A successful completion of each unit involved 8000 words assessed assignment.

The first paper examined International Education as an evolving concept. The second paper explored a new Research Methodology called Problem-based Research Methodology (Robinson 1993). The third paper explored the possible effects of adopting a top-down strategy in educational reforms. The fourth paper evaluated a new model of curriculum development in training. All papers originated from my current practical interests. A brief review of my learning from each assessed paper now follows.

## The First assignment

In the first assignment I aimed to understand the nature of international education in the light of the taught part of the unit, my personal experience and literature review. At the end of my research I found that international education was an evolving concept. In the context of this finding I called my first assignment **International Education in Search of the problem**. The paper presented the learning process, the content and my conclusion from the entire learning process outlined below.

It took much effort and time to complete this assignment. I asked the question: what does the term international education mean to me at the end of the unit? I was not clear about the concept of international education from the taught part of the unit. For example, the title of the unit was international education but the content was on international education in the context of international schools. So I had difficulty in relating the content of the unit to my interest and past experience as an international educator.

My personal interest led me to literature review, which also failed to define the term clearly. I found that international education appeared in many forms and it was an evolving concept. Generally international education was understood as a means of political and economic exploitation of the developing countries and as an effort to bring about global social and cultural unity to match technological advances in communication technology. Probably truth lay between these two extreme views.

The literature review also indicated that formal international education as a discipline of inquiry evolved from comparative education located in universities and international education located in the practical work of aid agencies (See Watson, 1997 and Lowe, 1998)

and their consultants. In this dissertation I have challenged separation of theory from practice in the work of aid agencies. Furthermore, I have made a case for the integration of theory with practice; consultant development with international development with the use of collaborative action research.

According to the study of international schools I found that international schools were a new and a developing context of formal international education. International schools provided international education to the children of international elite. With increased economic activity across the national frontiers, the numbers of the international elite is rapidly on the increase and international schools cater for this lucrative and expanding market. These schools were engaged in developing curriculum for international living and marketing their work in international education at the same time. From the available literature from international schools I was unable to determine if international education was a marketing device, an ideology or both to promote international understanding.

My paper was divided into two parts. The first part was an attempt to define the concept of international education generally and the second part explored international education in the context of international schools. It was clear from the evidence in my paper that there was no consensus on the meaning of international education as a concept generally and in the context of international schools. The title of my paper expressed the current state of the knowledge of the topic.

The examiners suggested that I should be more critical of the literature and synthesise it adequately. Unlike some witnesses to my inquiry I avoided being over critical of international education in international schools. However, I was aware of the two divergent perspectives on international education in international schools: international education as a marketing slogan and an ideology. Personally I thought that my synthesis and creativity lay in finding an appropriate title for my paper and in presenting the state of international education as objectively as possible. One of the examiners acknowledged my contribution but the other examiner made no mention of it.

One of the examiners remarked**:** *"I still do not know the problem of international education."* Initially I was rather surprised at this remark when my paper clearly stated that we did not understand this emergent problem adequately. Of course, I could have presented my version of the problem in my paper. Perhaps that is what this examiner was looking for.

For me the emerging problem of international education is to seek and to create social and cultural convergence in the context of economic and political convergence already emerging due to technological advances. Many models of formal and informal international education exist but all of them require conscious and concerted efforts to improve their quality for the future development of international education. International schools are a typical example of one such model. On the whole I greatly enjoyed my work in this unit which included later stimulating discussions with other international educators.

My understanding of international education has greatly expanded with this dissertation presenting the work of aid agencies and international consultants. The work of aid agencies, like international education in international schools, also lacks adequate research and public knowledge. For example, this dissertation shows how terms like advisors, change agents, consultants were used without clear definitions and the educational problems and their solutions were attempted superficially. This dissertation with my MPhil dissertation (Punia 1992) and the EdD assignments make a useful contribution towards the literature in international education in the context of the work of aid agencies. This dissertation shows how I used collaborative action research to integrate technological development with personal development in enhancing the quality of international aid.

**The second Assignment**

The second assignment was called **In Search of a Problem-based Research Methodology (PBM)**. I explained, applied and evaluated PBM (Robinson 1993) in the context of FIT project in my MPhil dissertation (Punia 1992). In the process described below, my creativity emerged in proposing a new context for the application of this research methodology.

During the EdD unit on '*Education Research: philosophy and practice'* I became familiar with a new research methodology called Problem-based Research Methodology (PBM) (Robinson 1993). Although I was aware of Action Research linking theory and practice but I conceptualised it as teachers' personal research to improve their practice and professional development (Stenhouse 1975, Whitehead 1989). The Problem-based Research Methodology (Robinson 1993) seemed to provide a useful research methodology for consultants like myself engaged in solving educational problems with their clients. Thus PBM captured my interest for a further inquiry. This paper aimed to answer the question: how can consultants guide practitioners in solving their problems and study their theories of action?

Based on her consultancy work Robinson (1993) presents a researcher's perspective to bridge the gap between research and practice in education. According to the author the researchers should work collaboratively with the practitioners in helping them to solve their practical problems and in understanding practitioners' theories of practice. In PBM a problem is the gap between the present practices and the desired state of affairs. Solutions emerge from identifying and removing constraints to solve the defined problem and from achieving stakeholder consensus on the solution.

Robinson (1993) did not clearly explain the special knowledge researchers possessed to help the practitioners in fulfilling this role. DeFillippi (2001) explains the theory available to researchers in the context of project-based learning in management. According to him:

**This theory is associated with the tradition called action science and associated with the work of Christ Argyris and Donald Schon (1974, 1979). Action science seeks to uncover unspoken or taken-for-granted assumptions that prevent learning or that defensively channel experience processing into unreflective self-repeating patterns. Action science intervention requires that project participants engage in significant self-reflection on their learning assumptions or theories-in-use. Such reflection generally occurs under the guidance of a facilitator (p. 5).**

In the EdD assignment I reviewed my MPhil work in the light of PBM. In FIT, and in the subsequent projects, I dealt with ill-structured problems of vocational education. In the FIT project presented in Punia (1992) and in chapter 5 above, the curriculum development problem emerged with the researcher's studies on teachers' planning. A group of senior lecturers involved in one of the studies requested the consultant to take the issue to the principal to improve the current situation. The consultant took this issue to the principal who referred it to the academic board. This initiative led to discussions in the Academic Board and to a subsequent agreement to follow the consultant's lead in solving the problem. The key to the solution to the problem was the change in participant perception of the problem. The consultant, with evidence from his research (nine studies in FIT) and logical arguments, convinced the management and the teachers that curriculum development was the joint responsibility of the stakeholders. The consultant constructed a model of school-based curriculum development based on research findings, which was collaboratively implemented with success. At the end of the project the stakeholders evaluated the project under the leadership of the consultant to determine the success of this project. So the FIT project

seemed to provide a good fit with Robinson (1993) who developed a research methodology from researchers' perspective in helping practitioners in solving their practical problems. Based on previous experience I presented the following reservations about the general use of Robinson (1993).

First, my relationship with FIT was not based on a formal critical dialogue as suggested in Robinson (1993): it was based on mutual trust and respect, a prerequisite to a critical dialogue. *"Trust is based on individual's expectations that others will behave in ways that are helpful or at least not harmful. These expectations, in turn are based both on people's expectations of others, trustworthiness…. and their effective responses to others"* (Williams, 2001- p. 378).

Secondly, my experience and Olson (1987) had found that generally teachers' responses to their work were reasonable under the conditions of their work. Solving educational problems was more a case of an *add-on model* than that of any *deficit models*. Thirdly, practitioners' theories were implicit and they found it difficult to articulate them. Fourthly, finding consensus on solutions is problematic and we rarely solve problems fully. Finally, working with the practitioners was time consuming and costly. In spite of these drawbacks Robinson (1993) provided me with a useful framework to go beyond research on teachers' thinking.

In my paper I proposed an alternative context to use PBM to capture teachers' implicit theories and to bridge the gap between research and practice in education. For me teacher trainers might use PBM in clinical supervision of teachers as a normal part of their work. I had intuitively used this model in this context in the past as a teacher educator but without a discursive consciousness of it.

The study of PBM provided me with a useful methodology to solve ill-structured problems in education and to understand my practical experience as a consultant. Of course every idea can be used creatively. I made a useful contribution in suggesting an alternative context for the use of PBM with enhanced benefits. This paper offers an example of good research useful for academics, practitioners and the researcher (Reason and Marshall 1987).

This assignment was an improvement on the first paper on international education. On the whole the two examiners found this paper interesting and useful. My interest and knowledge in PBM continues to grow. Recently I found an additional resource in Jonassen (1997) who

explores well-structured and ill-structured problem solving in the context of instructional design. Furthermore, with further reflections on my FIT project in this dissertation, I found that I had intuitively set up a system for PBM while linking the planned curriculum with the operational one in **figure 4** in chapter 5. In short my understanding of PBM has expanded considerably as a result of the EdD study and it continues to develop my learning. This assignment highlights the need for theory to interpret practical experience and the use of practical experience to improve theory.

## The Third Assignment

The third assignment examined the top-down policies used in educational change to assess their worth in solving educational problems. The third assignment asked the question: '**to what extent will top-down or centralised initiatives in determining the nature of teaching, the curriculum and assessment be successful?** To answer this question based on my practical experience. I used case studies based on my practical experience as a change agent. There were several reasons for using this approach. Firstly, Fullan (1999), one of the known authorities on change in education wrote: "*Understanding change is just as much a matter of doing reform as it is studying it."* He further declares that the most profound observation is that "*there never will be a definitive theory of change*." (p. 21). Secondly, my literature review clearly showed that there was no general consensus amongst stakeholders on the various terms used in the title of this paper and the criteria for success. Hence the answer to this question would make sense in specific contexts. Thirdly, I was familiar with the substantive knowledge on the subject but I had no previous experience of using case studies to answer such questions. In the light of these considerations I decided to use the case study approach (Stenhouse 1981; Yin 1994; Stake 1995; Bassey 1999, Walker, 2002). Unfortunately I did not discuss my choice of methodology in my paper.

The first examiner approved of my approach from a consultant's perspective and found it interesting and worthwhile. He made some pertinent remarks to further enhance the quality of my assignment in answering the question using case studies. The general outcome from the exploration of these case studies was that there were no generally accepted criteria to determine successes and failures of educational projects. Generally the most powerful stakeholders decided the successes and failures based on political and economical grounds, than educational grounds. Generally top-down strategies do not succeed without adequate support and control from the top and it is an expensive matter.

The second examiner was less appreciative of this approach and he made alternative suggestions. He suggested the use of substantive knowledge on the subject. He also suggested the use of an empirical study to answer this question. The second suggestion taught me that I could have presented my first study on 'teachers' planning' conducted in Hong Kong (See Punia 1992) in exploring the same issue. This study presented vocational teachers' perspective in answering this question in the FE/HE sector in Hong Kong in early eighties.

The Hong Kong study had shown that teachers were left to implement the prescribed curriculum without adequate support and control from the management. Teachers lacked adequate time, teaching materials and adequate training in instructional planning to plan teachers' work. This study had identified some of the conditions necessary for the success of a top-down strategy of curriculum development. Many of the teachers' comments in this study were found valid in my later studies in Fiji Institute of technology (Punia 1992) and in (Ball and Bowe 1992) who studied the implementation of the National Curriculum in schools in the UK. On the whole I found the examiners' comments very useful to extend my understanding of the topic.

## The Fourth Assignment

In the last assignment I examined a new model of curriculum development for training within organisations in the light of my personal experience of management training at MIPAM in the previous chapter. The topic was called **Relations' Approach to Relevance in Curriculum Development in Vocational Education and Training.** This paper answers the question: how do I ensure relevance of my training programmes to improve performance on-the-job? The achievement of relevance of vocational education and training to match the performance needs of the employers, trainees and trainers is a longstanding problem in vocational education and training. Throughout my career I had tried to overcome this problem without significant successes. This new model had the potential to overcome this problem. This model integrated technology with human relations under one system.

Based on a four-year empirical study of training in industrial organisations Kessels and Plomp (1999) proposed a *Relations Approach* to training for the industrial and commercial sector in **figure 8**. They claimed to have improved the quality of training by achieving *consistency* in planning, implementing, evaluating as an integrated system and consistency in

the stakeholder perception of performance needs and stakeholder involvement in training programmes. Thus they had introduced the human dimension in curriculum development to name their approach a 'relations approach to curriculum development'. According to the authors**:** *" it is hypothesised that the integration of a systematic and a relational approach in design standards is responsible for curriculum consistency and subsequently for high quality corporate education."* (p. 684).

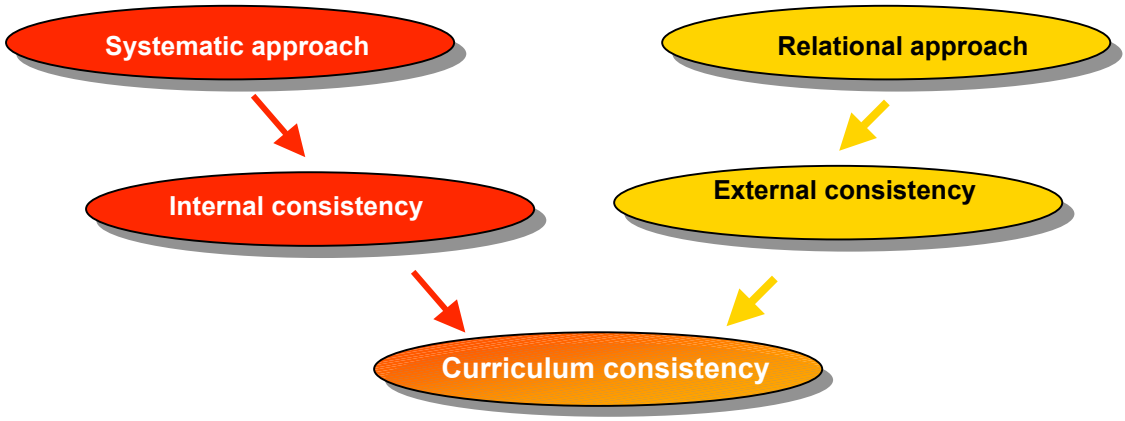


**Figure 8 -Kessels/ Plomp (1999) Curriculum Development Model**

They further suggested that: *"The quality in corporation education is not solely dependent on skilful application of relational approaches of the developer, but on organisational climate which an integrated educational strategy can flourish." (p. 703).*

In the light of the new model in **figure 8,** I reviewed the Trainers' Certificate in Vocational Training in Mauritius in **chapter 7** and the School-based Curriculum Development in FIT in **chapter 5**. I found that in the first case I had failed to achieve the desired results by ignoring the human element of the Kessels/Plomp (1999) model and in the second case I intuitively made use of their model with considerable success in my project. These two cases extended the use of Kessels/Plomp (1999) model beyond the industrial contexts into vocational education and training at large.

I made my own contribution towards the use of training to solve performance problems by offering my own model for Human Resource Development in **figure 9** derived from my personal experience. This model answers the question: how do organisations use training to enhance human performance? In this model I argued that the performance of employees did not depend on training alone. The root cause of poor performance was poor management

(Wright and Geroy, 2001). Training is one of the several interrelated factors such as a proper recruitment strategy, proper staff induction, on-going support, performance appraisal, training, motivation and so on. Thus, I perceived training as an element of a Human Resource Development (HRD) system comprised of several interrelated elements shown in **figure 9**. This model had guided my work at IVTB and MIPAM presented in the previous chapter.

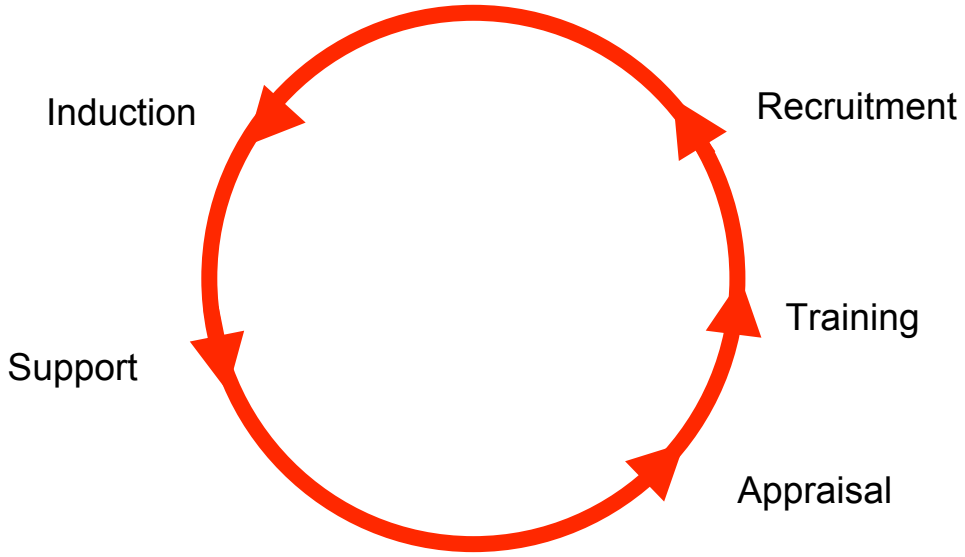


**Fig 9- THE HRD SYSTEM**

The Kessel/ Plomp (1999) model is not always easy to operationalise in practice but it is a significant improvement on existing popular models of curriculum development in vocational education and training with emphasis on the technology of training at the expense of the human element.

With my recent reflections on the MIPAM project in **chapter 7,** I found that I had used this model intuitively without naming and framing it. The Kessel/Plomp (1999) theory of curriculum development enhanced my discursive consciousness (Elliott 1998) of my first-hand experience at MIPAM. This inquiry enhanced my understanding of theory/practice interface in generating new professional knowledge and my understanding of theoretical and practical ways of knowing and knowledge

This final assignment was an improvement on previous assignments, indicating continuous improvement in my written work through additional practice in writing academic papers. In this assignment both examiners appreciated my paper. One of the examiners remarked that I could have said more about the relations' side of the model and I agree with his remarks. My experience of developing a training model at MIPAM would have satisfied this suggestion. The other comment from the two examiners did not make sense to me. They suggested to examining the model from the trainer and trainee perspectives as well. But, it would defeat the very tenet of the Kessels/ Plomp (1999) model to obtain consensus on the needs of all the stakeholders including trainees and trainers. Of course it is difficult to achieve consensus.

**The Emergent Theory/Practice Interface and An Emergent Cognitive Skill of Lifelong Learning.**

In writing up my MPhil dissertation (Punia 1992) I was often puzzled to find that I had learnt certain knowledge through practice before it became public in the literature. I believe I have largely resolved this puzzle through my EdD work. I had not learnt the relationship between the practical and theoretical ways of knowing and knowledge and the relationship between the tacit and explicit knowledge (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995).

Learning from research and learning from action/practice are two different ways of knowing. The first type comes mostly from universities through research whereas the practical knowledge comes from insights from thoughtful action. The first type of knowledge is mostly conceptual while the later is mostly perceptual. Both types have limitations: theoretical/propositional knowledge has to be tested in practice and the practical knowledge has to be validated in propositional knowledge. In essence all human knowledge cannot be transferred to new situations directly: knowledge being of the past has to be owned and contextualised in every new situation. In this process new knowledge is created. Thus, the dance between theory and practice is an ongoing and a creative process. The theory/practice has been conceptualised in many forms: learning from experience (Kolb 1984), action research (Whitehead 1989; Elliott 1991) reflective thinking (Schon 1987). I also learnt that the basic cognitive skill for lifelong learning is primarily a matter of acquiring or increasing language facility in reading and writing (Leamonson (2000). Unfortunately for practitioners, these skills do not form an important part of their professional lives. See **appendix 20** for further details of how I acquired these skills in lifelong learning.

**An Emergent Image of a Professional Educator/Doctor of Education**

The above accounts together with my previous biography indicate that I possessed recent knowledge, skills and values required of an international consultant. I was aware of the learning processes involved in my own professional development. Furthermore, I was able to share my experiences with academic and practitioners alike. Thus, this chapter presents the living educational theory of the making of a professional educator/doctor of education (Thorne and Francis 2001& Powell and McCanley 2002).