PART THREE

THE LOGIC OF THE QUESTION, HOW DO I IMPROVE MY PRACTICE?

3.1 Narrative

Having moved through the 1977 to 1989 papers with their enquiries into educational research methodologies and educational theories, I want to turn to the issue of the logic of education. This takes me back to 1970, when I accepted the disciplines approach to educational theory.

In 1970, I was studying the philosophy of education with two of its originators, Professors Paul Hirst and Richard Peters when their book was published on, The Logic of Education (Hirst & Peters, 1970). The following statements from this text will serve to highlight my need for a logic of the question, 'How do I improve my practice?'.

"Of course detailed practical decisions in these areas will depend in part on empirical facts which it is the business of psychologists, sociologists and historians to contribute. But such facts are only relevant to practical decisions about educational matters in so far as they are made relevant by some general view of what we are about when we are educating people. It is the purpose of this book to show the ways in which a view of education must impose such a structure on our practical decisions.

The thesis of this book, therefore, has relevance at a time when there is much talk of 'integrated studies'. For one of the problems about 'integration' is to understand the way in which 'wholeness' can be imposed on a collection of disparate enquiries…… This book, however contains no such exhaustive treatment of the issues raised by the analysis put forward, though it does contain suggestions for further reading for those who wish to explore them. All it attempts to do is to sketch the ways in which this conception of education must impose its stamp on the curriculum, teaching, relationships with pupils, authority structure of the school or college community." (p. 15/16)

The logic of education which structured the disciplines approach to educational theory, led its proponents to impose a conceptual structure on practical decisions, to impose wholeness on disparate entities and to impose its stamp on the curriculum.

However, what I needed was a logic of my question, 'How do I improve my practice?'. I needed a logic which could include my experience of education as a creative and critical process of transformation which was open to the possibilities which life itself permitted.

Gadamer (1975, p.333) highlighted the importance of developing a logic of the question and drew my attention to Collingwood's (1939, pp.29-43) ideas on the logic of question and answer. Here is what I wrote to my master's degree students in 1990 on the primacy of asking a question, in an M.Ed. Tutorial booklet for an Action Research Module at the University of Bath. The heading of the section was, *"What constitutes an enquiry as 'educational'? The primacy of asking a question".*

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"I want to start by claiming that you and I are similar in that you, like me, are conscious of asking yourself a question of the form, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'. I also want to locate such questioning within the value-laden contexts of your practical activities in education. I also want to test the validity of my assumption that you are also a reflective practitioner in the sense that you can offer a description and explanation for you own educational activities when asked for one. My third assumption is that you will recognise in your actions, a form of problem solving in which you have experienced a tension because you are not living fully your values in your practice, you will have imagined ways of improving the quality of your practice, chosen a plan to act on, acted and evaluated your effectiveness in the process of change.

From the basis of these three assumptions I want to convince you of the value of

describing and explaining your own educational development. What I have in mind is the development of a new view of educational theory which is constituted by the descriptions and explanations which individual learners are producing for their own educational development. I have characterised this view as a 'living' educational theory because it is embodied in yours and other learners' living practice (Whitehead 1989). It is 'embodied' in the sense that your descriptions and explanations of present practice contain both an evaluation of past practice and an intention to produce an improvement in practice which is not, as yet, in existence. It is this crucial human capacity to engage in goal directed activities which permits the development of a 'living' theory. When I use the term 'values' I am thinking of those qualities which we use to give our lives their particular forms. I see values, as qualities whose meaning becomes clarified in the course of their emergence in practice in particular contexts. We will be exploring the nature of educational values in the next session and I will be suggesting that we adopt a view of an educational enquiry as a form of enquiry in which we ask questions of the kind, 'How do I live more fully my values in my practice?'.

Starting from this base in your capacities to make sense of your life experiences I want to locate our present activities within their social context. I want to do this because I see an understanding of the processes, of living values more fully in practice, as located in particular social contexts. Part of our social context consists of the ideas and practices of other individuals and I thus judge a process as 'educative' partly in terms of the evidence which shows an integration of the ideas of others in one's own understandings. For example as part of the process of answering the question, 'What constitutes an enquiry as educational?', I will integrate some ideas from Gadamer and Collingwood.

Gadamer's ideas appealed to me because I could identify with his emphasis on the importance of forming a question. For Gadamer, questioning is a 'passion'. He says that questions press upon us when our experiences conflict with our preconceived opinions.

He believes that the art of questioning is not the art of avoiding the pressure of opinion.

"It is not an art in the sense that the Greeks speak of techne, not a craft that can be taught and by means of which we would master the knowledge of truth".

Drawing on Plato's Seventh Letter, Gadamer distinguishes the unique character of the art of dialectic. He does not see the art of dialectic as the art of being able to win every argument. On the contrary, he says it is possible that someone who is practising the art of dialectic, i.e. the art of questioning and of seeking truth, comes off worse in the argument in the eyes of those listening to it. (Gadamer, 1975. p.330).

According to Gadamer, dialectic, as the art of asking questions, proves itself only because the person who knows how to ask questions is able to persist in his questioning. I see a characteristic of this persistence as being able to preserve one's openness to the possibilities which life itself permits. The art of questioning is that of being able to continue with one's questions. Gadamer refers to dialectic as the art of conducting a real conversation.

"To conduct a conversation requires first of all that the partners to it do not talk at cross purposes. Hence its necessary structure is that of question and answer. The first condition of the art of conversation is to ensure that the other person is with us.... To conduct a conversation.... requires that one does not try to out-argue the other person, but that one really considers the weight of the other's opinion. Hence it is an art of testing. But the art of testing is the art of questioning. For we have seen that to question means to lay open, to place in the open. As against the solidity of opinions, questioning makes the object and all its possibilities fluid. A person who possesses the 'art' of questioning is a person who is able to prevent the suppression of questions by the dominant opinion.... Thus the meaning of a sentence is relative to the question to which it is a reply (my emphasis) , i.e. it necessarily goes beyond what is said in it. The logic of the human sciences is, then, as appears from what we have said a logic of the question. Despite Plato we are not very ready for such a logic." (pp. 330-333)

I was shocked by this last sentence. What could it mean? Despite Plato we are not very

ready for a logic of question and answer. I read on with increasing excitement to the point where he states that R.G. Collingwood developed the idea of a logic of question and answer, but unfortunately did not develop it systematically before he died. Having assimilated Gadamer's views on the art of conversation and of the necessity of finding a common language I then found myself disagreeing with the following ideas on the relationship between 'I', 'language' and 'the world'.

"Our enquiry has been guided by the basic idea that language is a central point where 'I' and the world meet or, rather, manifest their original unity." (p. 431)

The basic difference between Gadamer's enquiry and my own is that I do not hold that language is a central point where 'I' and the world manifest their original unity. I begin with the experience of 'I' as a living contradiction in the world in which I am conscious of holding values which are at the same time negated in practice. I have no understanding of any 'original unity'. If there is to be unity I see my enquiry as an attempt to understand how to create a unity between 'I' and the world.

I did however find myself in complete accord with the following ideas of Collingwood (1939, Chapter 5. Question and Answer) on the relationship between a dialectical, or question and answer form, and the propositional form,

"I began by observing that you cannot find out what a man means by simply studying his spoken or written statements, even though he has spoken or written with perfect command of language and perfectly truthful intention. In order to find out his meaning you must also know what the question was (a question in his own mind, and presumed by him to be in yours) to which the thing he has said or written was meant as an answer(p.31).....

Here I parted company with what I called propositional logic, and its offspring the generally recognized theories of truth. According to propositional logic (under which denomination I include the so-called 'traditional' logic, the 'idealistic' logic of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the 'symbolic' logic of the nineteenth and twentieth) truth or falsehood, which are what logic is chiefly concerned with, belongs to propositions as such (p.33-34)......

By 'right' I do not mean 'true'. The 'right' answer to a question is the answer which enables us to get ahead with the process of questioning and answering. ....It follows, too, and this is what especially struck me at the time, that whereas no two propositions can be in themselves mutually contradictory, there are many cases in which one and the same pair of propositions are capable of being thought either that or the opposites, according as the questions they were meant to answer are reconstructed in one way or in another".
(Collingwood, 1939. P. 37. Chapt.5)

I accept and live with Collingwood's point below that there is an intimate and mutual dependence between theory and practice, *'thought depending upon what the thinker learned by experience in action, action depending upon how he thought of himself and the world'.* I also accept the implications of working in education as a vocation in the sense that education, as a value-laden practical activity places a responsibility on the educator to live values in practice. I see educators as moral agents in Collingwood's sense below.

" There were, I held, no merely moral actions, no merely political actions, and no merely economic actions. Every action was moral, political, and economic. But although actions were not to be divided into three separate classes - the moral, the political and the economic - these three characteristics, their morality, their politicality, and their economicity, must be distinguished and not confused as they are, for example, by utiliarianism, which offers an account of economicity when professing to offer one of morality (p.149).....The rapprochement between theory and practice was equally incomplete. I no longer thought of them as mutually independent: It was that the relation between them was one of intimate and mutual dependence, thought depending upon what the thinker learned by experience in action, action depending upon how he thought of himself and the world".(Collingwood, 1939. P.150)

These assumptions are open to challenge. They will not be abandoned lightly but have been opened up for your criticism because of my commitment to a view of research-based professionalism in education in which it is a responsibility of the researcher to submit her or his work to public tests of validity. I relate this commitment to Macintyre's view (1988) that,

"The rival claims to truth of contending traditions of enquiry depend for their vindication

upon the adequacy and the explanatory power of the histories which the resources of each of those traditions in conflict enable their adherents to write." (p. 403)

I intend to make your criticisms welcome and to 'practise what I preach' in the sense of helping to develop a conversational research community in which you experience the value of academic freedom in helping to take your own enquiries forward.

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At the time of writing the above in 1980, I was searching for a logic of my question, 'How do I improve my practice?', which contained 'I' as a living contradiction, I exercised my critical judgements in 1982 in producing, 'A Dialectician's Guide for Educational Researchers (5.2). Here are some extracts from the booklet to illustrate my critical engagements with the ideas of others on linguistic and materialist concepts.

"The problem of conceptualising 'I'.

'I' exists in the question, 'How do I improve this process of education here?, **as a** concrete living individual. My own investigation of this question has lasted some fourteen years. I am still investigating the question. In the fourteen years the 'I' has changed. In any attempt to understand my analysis of my educational development it is important to comprehend that 'I' has become a materialist concept whose essence is my personality. By personality I am meaning the total system of activity which forms and develops throughout my life and whose evolution constitutes the essential components of my biography (Sève, 1978).

I will attempt to clarify the nature of my problem of conceptualising 'I' by reference to the work of Hegel and Sève. Hegel says;

" 'I' is in essence and act the universal, and such partnership is a form, though an external form of universality. All other men have it in common with me to be 'I'; just as it is common to all my sensations and conceptions to be mine. But 'I' in the abstract, as such, is the mere act of self-concentration or self-relation,, in which we make abstraction from all conception and feeling, from every state of mind and every peculiarity of nature, talent and experience. To this extent, 'I' is the existence of a wholly abstract universality, a principle of abstract freedom. Hence thought viewed as a subject, is what is expressed by the word 'I'; and since I am at the same time in all my sensations, conceptions and statements of consciousness, thought is everywhere present, and is a category that runs through all these modifications."

I take it that the above statement is referring to 'I' as an abstract universal. In contrast to this idea I posit myself in my enquiry as the concrete singular 'I', who as a materialist 'I', is asking the question, 'How do I improve this process of education here?'. That is, I am looking at the subject of my enquiry as my own 'I' in the process of investigating my problem.

In looking upon 'I' as a materialist concept I need to distinguish my materialist use of the term 'concept', from the term as it is used by linguistic philosophers. Consider the statement made by Peters and Hirst (1970) that understanding what it is to have a concept involves both grasping a principle and the ability to use words correctly. Contrast this statement with the idea of a concept use by Sève (1978).

According to Sève, the task of conceptual thought is to express the logic of the essential processes through which the development of the object is brought about. Doing which, he says, the concepts absolutely do not tell us how the singular concrete is in general but in general how the singular concrete is produced. He says that in this way the essence can then be reached in its concrete reality, the singular grasped in the generality of the concept.

In dialectical forms of abstraction the essence is not what appears common to the object and to others which are compared to it. It is the necessary internal movement of the

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object grasped in itself. The generality of the concept is not constituted by eliminating the singular but by raising the singular to the level of its internal logic (i.e. it constitutes the 'specific logic of the specific object').

I would distinguish my materialist use of the term 'concept' from its purely linguistic use by contrasting having a concept in the linguistic sense with being a concept in a materialist sense. As Peters and Hirst (1970) say, we can look upon understanding what it is to have a concept in the sense of grasping a principle and the ability to use words correctly. In my materialist view, understanding what it is to be a concept involves a reflection upon the process through which one's own concrete singularity was produced and the struggle to live correctly. In other words we can contrast:

*   Having a concept with Being a concept.
*   Grasping a principle with a reflection upon the process through which one's own concrete singularity was produced.
*   The ability to use words correctly with the struggle to live correctly.

The point about my dialectical view of 'I' as a materialist concept is that I am attempting to show how in general the concrete singular is produced. I am not accepting Hegel's point that 'I' is the existence of a wholly abstract universality, a principle of abstract freedom. I am taking 'I' as a wholly concrete singular which is a principle of concrete freedom.

I would also distinguish my materialist 'I' from the 'I' of Hegel at the point where Hegel says;

"And when the individual 'I', or in other words personality is under discussion (of a personality in its own nature universal) such a personality is a thought and falls within the province of thought only."

When I use 'I', I am using the word to mean my personality as a singular concrete person with actual corporeal existence as a thinking body.

I am raising the issue of 'I' as a materialist concept, as a problem to be worked through in the course of my analysis. I am conscious that in a linguistic form of conceptual analysis, such as the ones carried out by Peters (1966) in exploring enquiries of the form, 'What ought I to do?', my 'I' would be treated as inessential to the analysis as it would be subsumed under the concept 'person' or 'teacher'. These concepts would be used in a propositional form of discourse which would conform to the Law of Contradiction.

In my dialectical enquiry, 'I' is a concept which exists as a living contradiction in the sense that it is constituted by mutually opposite determinations. In my work the 'I' becomes a materialist concept in the sense that it is raised to the level of its internal logic and shows how in general the concrete singular is produced......." (5.2, pp. 29-32)

"Drawing on the work of Sartre (1963), Kosok (1976), Ilyenkov (1977) and Sève (1978), I will suggest that one way forward in the presentation of a dialectical theory of human development would be to take our own development, as dialectical psychologists, as both the object and the subject of study and to offer dialectical descriptions and explanations for this development.

In his work, 'Towards a Dialectical Theory of Development', Riegel (1975) points out that contradiction is an essential part of such a dialectical theory;

As soon as the development task is completed and synchrony attained, new questions, doubts and contradictions arise within the individual and within society. With this shift of emphasis, contradiction and discordance have become essential parts of a dialectical theory of development. In the continuous process of transformation and change, the

individual, the society and even outer nature are never at rest and in their restlessness, they are rarely in perfect harmony.

His clearest statement on contradiction is to be found in the paper, *'Dialectical Operations: The Final Period of Cognitive Development'*, (1973). Riegel says that the issues of identity and contradiction separate Hegel's dialectical logic from the logic of his predecessor's, especially Aristotle and Kant. Riegel quotes the following passage from Hegel to distinguish the formal logic of Kant and Aristotle from the dialectical logic of Hegel;

"But it is one of the basic prejudices of traditional logic and of common sense concept that contradiction is not such an essential and immanent determination as identity; indeed, if we were to consider a rank order and if both determinations were to be kept separate, contradiction would have to be accepted as deeper and more essential. For identity, in contrast to it, is only the recognition of the singular immediate, the dead being, but contradiction is the source of all motion and vitality; only in so far as something contains contradiction does it move, have drive and activity."

In my critical analysis of Riegel's notion of contradiction I say that Riegel contradicts his own assertions in the form of his presentation but that his contradiction provides us with a way forward. I suggest a way forward can be found with the assistance of the following four insights.

Sartre says that each questioner must understand how the questioned – that is one's self – exists one's own alienation, how one struggles to transcend this alienation and in the process of transcending the alienation becomes alienated once more.

Ilyenkov in his exposition of dialectical logic in action poses the problem of contradiction: *Contradiction as the concrete unity of mutually exclusive opposites is the real nucleus of dialectics, its central category ..... If any object is a 'living contradiction', what must the thought (statement about the object) be that expresses it?*

Kosok shows how any open-ended non-linear dialectic process can be depicted as a self-

linearizing form which reveals transition structures as nodal points of self-reflection.

Sève points out that a materialist conception of an individual's dialectical development would attempt to show how in general the concrete individual was produced in the division of labour. The effort would be to raise the explanation, for the dialectical development of the concrete individual, to the logic of its development in a way which could show how in general concrete individuals were produced within the division of labour.

If we take ourselves, in the division of labour, to exist as living contradictions in the sense that our dialectical unities, expressed in 'I', contain mutually opposed determinations, then it could well be that we should, as dialectical psychologists, be showing how we ourselves develop. In this way we could overcome the problem of starting our analysis from within the logic (and linguistic form) which excludes the basis of contradiction from which we are working. By starting with our own 'I' in the division of labour we must however be careful to distinguish this 'I' from the Hegelian 'I'.

I am saying that by starting our investigations with our 'I' in the division of labour, not as the Hegelian 'I' in the sense of abstract freedom but as the embodiment of concrete freedom, then we would discover dialectical forms for the presentation of a dialectical theory of development which would include the existence of our 'I' as living contradictions and would not eliminate such contradictions within the formal structure of our linguistic representations of our practice. In this way I am suggesting that we would overcome Ilyenkov's problem of contradiction, we could take Sartre's point seriously, demonstrate how an open-ended nonlinear dialectic process can be depicted as a self-linearizing form which reveals transition stuctures and raise the explanation, for the dialectical development of the concrete individual, to the level of the logic of the development of the specific logic of the specific object." (5.2, pp. 113-116)

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In Ilyenkov's (1977) view the problem of raising 'the explanation, for the dialectical development of the concrete individual, to the level of the logic of the development of the specific logic of the specific object', required 'writing' Logic, because a full description cannot be any means be given by a 'definition' but only by 'developing the essence of the matter' (1977, p. 9). One of the reasons Ilyenkov may have failed to answer his question 'If an object exists as a living contradiction what must the thought be that expresses it?', may have been that he focused on 'writing logic', rather than studying the logic of his explanations for his learning in enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?'

The next paper, (3.2) 'How do I improve my professional practice as an academic and educational manager?', presents such a dialectical explanation for my educational development. I ground the analysis within my living contradictions in my workplace.

"I am offering the following account of my struggle to support the good order and the power of truth of a University as part of my enquiry into the relationship between action, educational theory, the politics of truth and social evolution. I see this enquiry as developing from my earlier analysis of an individual's educational development which has provided the basis for personally orientated action research (Whitehead, 1985b). I am now attempting to produce a basis for social orientated action research which will incorporate my earlier ideas". (3.2, p. 95).

Contradictions within my workplace have influenced my educational enquiries. However, they have been omitted from my writings between 1977-1989. I am thinking of my existence as a living contradiction in the process of resisting the termination of my employment in 1976, of living with the rejection of two Ph.D. submissions in 1980 and 1982 and of responding to a disciplinary hearing within the University in 1987. The tension of the second Ph.D. rejection moved me to exercise my critical judgements in

clarifying my materialist conception of 'I' as a living contradiction and the need for me to develop a 'specific logic of the specific object'. I clarified these ideas in producing the booklet '*A Dialectician's Guide for Educational Researchers*' (5.2, pp. 29-32, 113-116). This booklet was published for a round-table discussion at BERA, 1982. It needs more scholarly attention to referencing, It does however contain significant evidence on the nature of my critical judgements in relation to my own ideas and the ideas of others. These are documented in the narrative introductions.

As I continued to explore the implications for my learning, in my existence as a living contradiction, I moved my enquiry forward with the questions:

"Can I relate action research to social evolution through an analysis of an individual's educational development? I think Foucault (1980) points the way to answer this question through his idea that as a university academic I occupy a specific position in the economy which is linked to the politics of truth within our society. If I use this idea to show how I am changing power relations which are related to that regime of truth which is essential to the structure and functioning of our society and our world have I not established the practical principle that this individual's actions can be related to social evolution?" (3.2, p.99)

The second paper (3.3) continues my engagement with the politics of educational knowledge. It is focused on the legitimisation of an educational action research thesis for the award of a Ph.D. Degree within such a regime of truth. Following the examiners' initial rejection on grounds which included a point that the sampling was not representative enough, I was asked to help with the resubmission. In the paper I share an analysis with Jacqui Hughes, the researcher, and Paul Denley, the supervisor, of some of the power relations involved in living through such contradictions in the process of legitimising Hughes' Ph.D. thesis. This is what Denley says about his learning with me about the politics of educational knowledge in the process of our collaboration as I helped Jacqui to construct her own living educational theory:

"What I appreciated as I saw the differences between the first and second submissions was that I had been satisfied with a technical piece of writing with a high level of rigorous analysis of data. I had not appreciated how much further Jacqui would want to go in creating an original contribution to educational knowledge herself. The whole process has challenged some of my own ideas and broadened my understanding of the issues to do with the representations of such enquiries.

The major learning for me in this has been to raise my awareness of the need to see supervision and legitimation of educational research within the political context in which it takes place." (3.3, p. 442)

The processes of 'collaborating' in an analysis of my learning in the context of a Ph.D. supervision moves me into Part Four of my analysis. I focus my enquiry and analysis on my educative relationships with Ph.D. researchers. To be successful these researchers must, like myself, satisfy their examiners that they have demonstrated appropriate standards of originality of mind and critical judgement. In Part Four I will focus on revealing the meanings of the values which are now forming these living standards of originality of mind and critical judgement in disciplining my educational enquiry, 'How do I help you to improve your learning?'. I use these standards in my claims to know my educative influences on my students and their learning.

Here are the two papers which explore the implications of existing as a living contradiction in my workplace as I encounter the power of truth and the truth of power in the politics of educational knowledge. I am using the power of truth and the truth of power in Foucault's (1977) sense. By 'truth' he means the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true. The struggles 'around truth' are not 'on behalf' of the truth, but about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays.

In the paper 3.2, I respond to the contradictions which affected my research in the sense that they contained a threat to my employment. They questioned my value of academic

freedom and my view of educational knowledge in the curriculum of the School of Education:

"I was thus faced with holding together my support for the power of truth in researching the politics of truth within my University with the truth of power within the University which was attempting to block this research." (3.2, p. 98)

In the paper 3.3, I respond to judgements on an action research thesis which claimed that the sample needed extending. This judgement, supported by the regime of truth in my University, contradicted my understanding of action research.

3.2) (1991) A Dialectical Analysis of an Individual's Educational Development and a Basis for Socially Orientated Action Research.

3.3) (1998) How do we Make Sense of the Process of Legitimising an Educational Action Research Thesis for the Award of a Ph.D. degree - a contribution to educational theory (With Jacqui Hughes and Paul Denley).

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Whitehead, J. (1991) A Dialectical Analysis of an individual's Educational Development and a Basis for Socially Orientated Action Research.

Proceedings of the First World Congress on Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management. Colins, J.C. & Chippendale, P.J. (Ed.), Vol. 1, 1991, Brisbane, Acorn Press.

8

HOW DO I IMPROVE MY PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AS AN ACADEMIC AND EDUCATIONAL MANAGER?

A DIALECTICAL ANALYSIS OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND A BASIS FOR SOCIALLY ORIENTATED ACTION RESEARCH.

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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines a dialectical approach to educational action research and attempts to synthesise a process of personal development with a process of social evolution. The dialectical approach is characterised as a process of question and answer in which an individual "I" exists as a living contradiction in questions of the kind, "How do I improve my practice?". The potential of educational action research for social evolution is examined in terms of an individual's responses to contradictions in the workplace. These contradictions involve the loss of one's employment, the denial of one's originality, the denial of the right to ask questions, being disciplined for what one writes and then having one's research legitimated in the MEd Curriculum of a University School of Education.

Like critical action research (Carr and Kemmis 1986) the dialectical approach will be shown to incorporate a consideration of values and power. This will be shown in two examples of action research and the processes of educational management. The first involves my own academic development in relation to the good order and politics of truth of a University. The second involves my contribution to the educational management of a comprehensive school. From these examples it is argued that the dialectical approach can generate valid explanations for the educational development of an individual in a way which shows that the production of a living form of educational theory from such explanations can have implications for social evolution.

INTRODUCTION

The heuristic potential of action research is currently being explored in a variety of forms and fields of knowledge within this Congress. In the field of education, action research has become a major force in teachers' professional development, in educational management and educational theory. My own contribution to the field has focussed on my claim to know my own educational development in the course of my enquiry, "How do I improve the quality of my practice?" My early methodological questions progressed into epistemological enquiries related to the values, logic, unit of appraisal and standards of judgement which could be used to test claims to know the nature and processes of education (Whitehead & Foster 1984). I became interested in trying to create a dialectical form of educational theory for producing valid explanations for the educational development of an individual (Whitehead 1985a). My attempts to gain academic legitimacy for this dialectical approach to educational knowledge developed into questions concerning the good order and politics of truth in a University (Whitehead 1985b). These have led to the questions in this paper concerning educational action research and social evolution. I want to explore with you the potential of an individual's action research, for linking educational theory and the politics of educational knowledge with social evolution, in the context of academic and institutional management.

The dialectical nature of my enquiry, "How do I improve my practice?" can be distinguished from other approaches to action research as it is an attempt to answer the question of contradiction posed by Ilykenkov:

> Contradiction as the concrete unity of mutually exclusive opposites is the real nucleus of dialectics, its central category ... If any object is a "living contradiction", what must the thought/statement about the object be that expresses it? (Ilyenkov 1977).

In looking at video-tapes of my own teaching I came to appreciate that "I" existed in my question as a living contradiction in Ilyenkov's sense that I hold two mutually exclusive opposites together in practice. I could experience myself holding certain educational values whilst at the same time denying them in my practice. For example I could experience myself valuing my pupil's capacities to learn by enquiry whilst at the same time closing down their opportunity for doing so by the way I structured my lessons (Whitehead 1977). I believe that the incorporation of "I" as a living contradiction in explanations for the educational development of individuals, has distinguished an original contribution to the action research movement by researchers associated with the School of Education of the University of Bath (Elliott 1989, Lomax 1989, McNiff 1988, Whitehead 1989). The characteristic action research methodology which incorporates "I" and which has developed from this work has the form: I experience problems or concerns when some of my values are denied in my practice; I imagine ways of improving my practice and choose a course of action; I act and gather evidence which will enable me to make a judgement on the effectiveness of my actions; I evaluate the outcomes of my actions; I modify my concerns, ideas and actions in the light of my evaluation.

In analysing this claim to know my own educational development I took the unit of appraisal to be the individual's claim to know her or his own educational development. The standards of judgement I used to characterise my claim to knowledge as "educational" included the form of the action research cycle above, Ilyenkov's criteria for characterising dialectical logic, the values defined by Peters (1966) and the aesthetic/spiritual values in Buber's characterisation of the I-You relationship (Whitehead 1985a).

I then examined the possibility of moving from such a dialectical base into a living form of educational theory. By a "living" theory I mean that the explanations generated by the

theory to explain the educational development of individuals contain an evaluation of past practice and evidence of present practice which includes the "I's" intention (a human goal) to produce something valued which is not yet in existence. I now claim that it is possible to construct such a theory from the explanations which individuals produce for their own educational development (Whitehead 1989b).

My enquiry moved into the politics of truth as I encountered the power relations which legitimated the judgements, on two PhD submissions to the University of Bath. These judgements stated that I had not shown an ability to conduct original investigations or to test my own ideas or those of others and that my work did not contain matter worthy of publication. These power relations also legitimated the instruction that under no circumstances could I question the competence of my examiners. In understanding these power relations I have used Foucault's insights into the conflict between the truth of power and the power of truth in an analysis of the procedures and rules which surround the legitimation of a dialectical claim to educational knowledge in a University.

I accept Foucault's (1977) distinction between the "specific intellectual" as opposed to the 'universal intellectual'. He says that for a long period the "left" intellectual was acknowledged as a master of truth and justice. The specific intellectual was a spokesperson of the universal in the sense of moral, theoretical and political choices. In opposition to the universal intellectual, he describes the specific intellectual in terms of an engagement in a struggle at the precise points where their own conditions of life or work situate them. Foucault takes care to emphasise that by "truth" he does not mean "the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted". By "truth", he means the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true. The struggles "around truth" are not "on behalf"

of the truth, but about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays.

I am offering the following account of my struggle to support the good order and the power of truth of a University as part of my enquiry into the relationship between action research, educational theory, the politics of truth and social evolution. I see this enquiry as developing from my earlier analysis of an individual's educational development which has provided the basis for personally orientated action research (Whitehead 1985b). I am now attempting to produce a basis for socially orientated action research which will incorporate my earlier ideas.

EXTENDING THE EDUCATIONAL ENQUIRY FROM A PERSONAL INTO A SOCIAL ORIENTATION - SOCIAL CONCERNS GROUNDED IN CONTRADICTIONS

I wish to characterise this extension into a socially orientated action research by a dialogical form of presentation. This choice was influenced by Kilpatrick's (1951) point that educational theory is a form of dialogue which has profound implications for the future of humanity. I will begin to extend this social orientation by acknowledging my identification with the meanings in the following conversation between David Bohm (1988) George Wikman and others in which Bohm is affirming the value of originality in the perception of new meanings and relating this perception to social change.

> **David Bohm:** ... What actually has value would be to have a constantly creative culture. Now I suggest that such creativity is related to a constant discovery of new meanings. Generally speaking we start from old meanings and commonly make small changes in them. Sometimes we may, however, perceive a big change of meaning. An idea changes in a fundamental way

although, of course some old features are still carried along, no matter how big the change is.

George Wikman: But what is it that really happens when you perceive a new meaning?

David Bohm: That's the creative step. If I say that meaning is being and something new is perceived in a meaning, something has changed in being. For example, all the perceptions that took place in science changed the meaning of the world for us and this changed the world. It first changed in the sense that we saw it differently: but science also changed the physical, the somatic level. The entire earth has been changed and it could have changed a lot more, for the better or for the worse. Therefore, at least in my own experience, being and meaning are there together.

And I'm proposing this more generally. So if somebody sees a different meaning to society or to life, that will change society. Every revolution has come from somebody seeing a different meaning in human society. For example, the meaning that some people saw was that of a very static society, where everybody was in his place and the top was overlooking the bottom. Then other people saw a different meaning, according to which people should be equal. That different meaning was the power that generated the change...... (Pylkannen, 1989)

The new meaning I am seeking to share is in showing what it means for individual researchers to speak on their own behalf as they attempt to transcend the truth of power through the power of truth in their workplace. This meaning is extended in the second enquiry as I explore the nature of educative relationships within the power of truth. I argue that "educational" researchers who are making claims to educational and professional knowledge should be showing how they are enabling the professionals and their pupils and students to speak on their own behalf. It is the idea that researchers should be showing what it means for themselves to be living more fully their values in their workplace and showing how they are enabling the "researched" to speak on their own behalf which I am offering as a basis for socially orientated, educational action research.

As a dialectician who is interested in moving understanding forward through a process of question and answer I accept the category of contradiction as the nucleus of dialectics. I also believe that social change and transformation can be understood in terms of the attempts by human beings to resolve their consciously lived contradictions. Because of these assumptions I will begin with the five experiences of contradiction which have moved me into the present phase of my enquiry. I am hoping that you will identify with these contradictions and my responses in the sense that they raise fundamental questions about human existence. I am thinking of questions concerning the appropriate response to: being sacked; having one's originality and the right to ask questions denied; being told that one's research and teaching were inconsistent with one's duties to the employer; being asked to teach a curriculum based upon the research and writings which were at the focus of the earlier contradictions.

Whilst these contradictions are socially and historically located within a particular time and culture I am interested in exploring the potential significance of the ensuing actions for social evolution. What I have in mind is the possibility that you will identify with the experience of the truth of power which denies the individual the right to practice his or her vocation; which denies the individual the right to ask questions; which refuses to acknowledge the individual's contribution to knowledge; which mobilises other power relations to try to prevent the individual teaching and researching a chosen area. I think you will identify with these experiences in the historical sense that many other individuals have been subjected to such power relations and that the course of social evolution can partly be understood in terms of the responses which individuals and groups have made to these

experiences of oppression. In my own case I am hoping that you will identify with my responses to the following contradictions in the sense that you will feel moved by them to help to generate a living form of educational theory which has implications for social evolution through its goal of human betterment.

Holding Together the Academic Vocation and Having One's Employment Terminated

The first major contradiction I had to come to terms with involved both my economic well being and my sense of vocation to make a contribution to the reconstruction of educational theory through my work in the University. Being informed that my employment was terminated meant that I experienced the contradiction of holding together my sense of vocation together with the denial of my sense of vocation in the grounds given below to sack me. The grounds given for terminating my employment were;

> The Academic Staff Committee's grounds for recommending that a new appointment should not be offered are as follows:-
>
> 1. That you have not given satisfaction in the teaching of prescribed courses assigned to you.
>
> 2. That there is an absence of evidence to suggest that you have pursued research of sufficient quality for the assessors to be assured of your ability to perform adequately the duties of a University Lecturer; the objectives being to make acknowledged scholarly contributions to the advancement of your subject as well as to perform proper teaching and other administrative tasks.
>
> 3. That you have exhibited forms of behaviour which have harmed the good order and morale of the School of Education.

The power behind these judgements was reinforced by their acceptance by the University Senate. Given the force of the judgements I think you will appreciate how much energy and commitment were required to overthrow them. I owe my existence as a tenured academic of the University to the commitment, values, actions and political and legal understandings of other individuals both within and outside the University (Whitehead 1985b). I simply wish to share this insight with you as an acknowledgement that my past and future contributions to education, in the University, are grounded in those individuals who refused to accept the above judgements on my work. Because they engaged in the necessary political activities they overcame the power relations which were attempting to sustain these judgements. In recognition of their ethical and political commitments I could not in future jeopardise this tenure in the quest for promotion in the University of Bath. In the University promotion is now accompanied by a loss of tenure.

Holding Together Originality and the Right to ask Questions with their Denial.

The second and third contradictions are focussed on my failure to gain academic legitimacy for two Phd Theses I submitted to the University in 1980 and 1982 entitled, "Educational Practice and its Theory" and "A Dialectical Approach to Education". The second contradiction is grounded in the denial of my originality by the University's examiners and Board of Studies for Education. I am thinking of my claim to originality in my decision to ground my understanding of the world within personal knowledge (Polanyi 1959). The ability to make original contributions to one's subject is traditionally respected in academic life. These original contributions are often submitted for PhD examination in which

examiners are asked to judge the originality of the text. When my examiners were asked the question as to whether I had demonstrated an ability to conduct original investigations, to test my own ideas and those of others, they claimed that I had not shown such an ability. These judgements were accepted by the Board of Studies for Education and my appeal against these judgements was rejected by the Board of Studies in November 1980. My approach to overcoming this contradiction has been a public one. I have great faith in the truth seeking capacities of human beings. That is why I believe I must subject my claims of originality to public test in contexts such as this World Congress. Just as I have faith in our truth seeking capacities I have faith that our creativity and originality together with our critical abilities will move our ideas forward. In time you will be able to judge whether I have shown an ability to conduct original investigations, to test my own ideas and those of others or whether my examiners were correct in denying that I had shown these abilities. Whether you make your own judgements public is up to you. The third contradiction was grounded in a judgement on the University Regulations that once examiners had been appointed by the Senate under no circumstances could their competence be questioned. Given that I wished to question the competence of my examiners on the grounds of political bias, prejudice and inadequate assessment I had to hold such questioning together with the force of an instruction from the University that under no circumstances could I question their competence.

I overcame this contradiction on 1st June 1990 with a presentation to a research seminar at the Centre for the Study of Management Learning at the University of Lancaster on 1st June 1990 (Whitehead 1990). I outlined my arguments for demanding the right to question the competence of my examiners on the grounds of bias, prejudice and inadequate assessment. In presenting the evidence which I believe would convince any rational individual that there is a case to answer I felt protected by the law which guarantees my academic freedom to ask questions.

Holding Together the Power of Truth and the Truth of Power

I experienced my fourth contradiction on May 1st 1987 when I attended a meeting held under the authority of the University Council to hear complaints about my activities and writings which had been made to the University by two Professors of Education. I was in no doubt that my activities and writings were being viewed as incompatible with the duties the University wished me to pursue in teaching and research. I was thus faced with holding together my support for the power of truth in researching the politics of truth within my University together with the truth of power within the University which was attempting to block this research.

Holding Together the Acceptance of my Research in the School's Curriculum with the Above Contradictions.

I experienced my fifth contradiction at the Board of Studies of Education on May 9th 1990 when the Board agreed to send to Senate two proposals on action research modules for the MED programme - the highest level of taught course in the School of Education. The upsurge of interest in action research approaches to professional development has convinced the majority of staff in the School of Education that we should offer taught courses on action research. These modules, whilst drawing on the work of other academics, clearly reference my research and writings over my seventeen years in the University. Hence I was faced with the experience of contradiction of holding together the experience of the Board of Studies legitimating my research and writings in the taught MED programme with the experience of the University's and Board of Studies denial of the legitimacy of this

knowledge in previous judgements on my research. So I am in the position of being asked to teach a curriculum which includes references to the activities, writings, teaching and research whose legitimacy has been denied in judgements which are still in force.

MOVING THE ENQUIRY FORWARD

The fourth and fifth contradictions are related and I will now outline the action cycle I am using to resolve these contradictions by moving my enquiry forward into the good order and politics of truth within the University. What I mean by good order is related to the values of the Academic Assembly of the University.

> High sounding phrases like "values of freedom, truth and democracy", "rational debate", "integrity", have been used. It is easy to be cynical about these and to dismiss them as hopelessly idealistic, but without ideals and a certain agreement about shared values a community cannot be sustained, and will degenerate. These are the phrases in which members of Academic Assembly have chosen to convey their concept of this community. (The Idea of a University. Academic Assembly, University of Bath, 1988).

The Statutes of the University enable Academic Assembly to remain a democratic forum to discuss any matter of concern to the University and to pass resolutions to Senate. It is this capacity to support the power of truth against the truth of power through dialogue and democratic decision making which has focussed my attention on the value of Academic Assembly in sustaining and promoting the good order of the University. Given this context my next question is, Can I relate action research to social evolution through an analysis of an individual's educational development? I think Foucault (1980) points the way to answer this question through his idea that as a university academic I occupy a specific position in the economy which is linked to the politics of truth within our society. If I use this idea to show how I am changing power relations which are related to that regime of truth which is essential to the structure and functioning of our society and our world have I not established the practical principle that this individual's actions can be related to social evolution?

My question is related to Bohm's earlier point about a constantly creative culture. I am trying to show what it means for an academic to try to constitute a "good" order in his workplace through giving a new meaning to the relationship between the power of truth and the truth of power - a meaning which is part of the process of transcending the truth of power through the power of truth. I think my proposals for a socially orientated educational action research rests on the extent to which you identify these contradictions as intrinsic to the power relations in your own societies and forms of life.

I claim that these contradictions can be understood in terms of a conflict between the power of truth and the truth of power. At one pole of the contradictions in my workplace is the power of truth in the values embodied by the Academic Assembly. At the other pole of the contradiction are the negations of these values in judgements which have been upheld by the truth of power of the University Council, Senate and a Board of Studies. I thus see my educational development in the good order and politics of truth in the University as an examination of what it takes to move the power of truth into an ascendancy over the truth of power. I propose to try to achieve this through public debate and dialogue within the above bodies and in contexts such as this, outside the University.

I want to make a distinction between action research and educational action research in terms of values. If action research is characterised by a particular form of systematic enquiry then there is no necessity to justify the value base of the enquiry in defining the research as "action research". Action research could, in these terms, be used to increase the efficiency of activities which could be morally unacceptable. In claiming that my research is

"educational" I am committing myself to upholding the values of good order. I am not willing to accept the term 'educational' to describe activities which are undermining these values.

In undertaking educational action research I accept the responsibility of making public the values which I use to characterise my activities as "educational". In showing what it means for an individual's educational development to try to live by the values which are embodied in the Academic Assembly's notion of good order and in trying to ensure the ascendancy of the power of truth over the truth of power I am attempting to establish a basis for a socially orientated, educational action research.

I am not restricting my view of "educational development" to the traditional view of educational institutions such as schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities. I see any development in which individuals are learning what it means to live more fully their values in their practice as potentially "educational". The generality of my account and hence its relationship to social evolution rests upon the way in which others identify their contradictions with my own and find it useful in making sense of their own lives in their own action enquiry in the workplace.

The kind of enquiry I have in mind is like the first one below in which I move from an examination of the concerns created by the experience of contradiction, to the design of an action plan, to acting, evaluating and modifying concerns, plans and actions.

I now want to present the evidence on the development of my latest action cycles. The first concerns the educational management of my own learning in the good order and politics of truth within the University of Bath. The second presents evidence from my enquiry, "How do I improve the quality of my contribution to the educational management of a comprehensive school?". The evidence demonstrates my support for the introduction of an action research approach to professional development with its commitment to democratic procedures within the school. I want to use the second example to illustrate a point about the nature of educative relationships which I believe will challenge the validity of the propositional writings of many "educational" researchers particularly those researching the professional learning of teachers. At the end of each enquiry I will briefly review how I see the present position.

Constructing an Action Plan and Acting

The experiences of the contradiction and conflicts discussed above led me to submit a paper to the Secretary of the Board of Studies of the School of Education, under an item dealing with the Good Order of the School of Education, for a meeting on 9th May 1990. I wished to raise the issues concerning the above contradictions in relation to the organisation and curriculum of the School. The Head of the School of Education sought the advice of the Secretary and Registrar who ruled that the matter was not appropriate business for the Board of Studies.

Evaluation and Modified Plan

This rejection was followed by a discussion with the Head of School. My evaluation was that, if I was to set out my reasons for believing that the item was appropriate matter under the University Statutes, for consideration by the Board of Studies, then the rationality of my case would convince him to include it on the Agenda. This led me to respond with the reasons why I believed that the matter was appropriate for the Board of Studies and why I believed the matter was related to the good order of the School of Education in relation to the University Statutes. The Head of School is responsible to the Vice-Chancellor for the

good order of the School of Education and my response was based on my feeling that I had not communicated my intentions clearly enough. I am seeking to place material before the Board of Studies which will reveal fundamental contradictions in its judgements relating to the organisation of teaching, research and the curricula of the School. I am also trying to explain how such contradictions have arisen and what might be done to resolve them. At its meeting on 20th June 1990, the Board decided that it should discuss the issue and I may now submit my material to the next meeting in October 1990.

I can also locate my understanding of the value of Academic Freedom in relation to the politics of truth, in the context of the invitation to present a paper on my research to this Congress. Following complaints made by two Professors of Education about my activities and writings at the hearing on 1st May 1987, the University require me to submit such papers to the Head of School before publication so that I might be told if I am prejudicing the University's relationships. I have submitted this paper to the Head of School in the context of the Educational Reform Act which states that:

> ... academic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions.

Criteria for Judging Effectiveness

In the design of an action plan I always encourage my students to include the details of the kind of evidence they would need to enable them to make a judgement on their effectiveness. I also encourage them to make explicit the criteria on which these judgements are based. I will make a similar demand of myself evaluating the effectiveness of my actions. I would expect to see my research papers showing a developing understanding of an individual's educational development in relation to the good order and politics of truth in a university. In making judgements with universal intent I judge my effectiveness in terms of the extent to which my ideas are useful to others in their attempts to make sense of their own educational practice. If my questioning is fundamental and we experience ourselves as existing in more creative rather than hostile cultures then I would expect others to participate in the creation of a public living educational theory which could be shown to have profound implications for the future of humanity (Kilpatrick 1951). I believe that this will occur as we explore and share what it means for our educational development as we live more fully the values of freedom, truth, democracy, rational debate and integrity, in our workplace and world and create a living educational theory through dialogue.

In evaluating my past practice I am aware of the social relations which protected my job, when my employment was terminated in 1976, and the social relations implicit in my use of the ideas of others in making sense of my own life. For example I owe my ability to articulate my decision to understand the world from my own point of view as a person claiming originality and exercising his judgement with universal intent to Polanyi's (1959) insights into the grounds of personal knowledge. I use this insight in defining the unit of appraisal in my claim to educational knowledge. I take the unit to be an individual's claim to know her or his own educational development. In developing my understanding of the implications of the standards of judgement I use in testing my claims to educational knowledge for social evolution I have been influenced by Habermas' views in communication and the evolution of society. I accept Habermas' (1976) point that the validity claims I am making in my attempt to communicate can be judged in terms of coherence, values, truth and authenticity (Whitehead 1989b). When I consider the validity of my claims to educational knowledge I also draw upon MacIntyre's (1988) insight that the rival claims to truth of contending traditions of enquiry depend for their vindication upon

the adequacy and the explanatory power of the histories which the resources of each of those traditions in conflict enable their adherents to write. I thus see the extension of my enquiry into questions concerning social evolution to be related to the ground of my judgements in personal knowledge in that the judgements are being made responsibly with universal intent.

In addition to these points concerning validity I am interested in developing an understanding of an appropriate concept of rigour for action research. Winter (1989) has proposed six principles for the rigorous conduct of action-research which he refers to as Reflexive and Dialectical Critique, Collaborative Resource, Risk, Plurality of Structure, and Theory, Practice, Transformation. These principles, whilst open to refinement, for example in the understanding of the values which are required to conduct a rigorous form of educational action research, are the principles which I accept as appropriate for judging the rigour of my own enquiry.

I now want to move the context of my enquiry from the educational management of my professional development as an academic researcher into the context of my contribution to the educational management of a comprehensive school. I have shown what it means for a dialectical action researcher to speak on his own behalf. I now want to show what it means to engage in a dialectical form of action research in which one's professional colleagues are being encouraged to develop democratic forms of decision making and being enabled to speak, in the research, on their own behalf.

DIALECTICAL ACTION RESEARCH IN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF A SCHOOL

I now want to extend my action enquiry into the social base of a secondary school through answering the question, "How do I improve my contribution to the educational management of a Comprehensive School through my activities as Chair of Governors?"

Concerns

In particular I want to focus on the values of rationality and democracy and present the evidence to show how I am trying to embody these values in my form of life. Following on from my previous analysis I want to show what it means for me to be engaged in action research in which the power of truth is in the ascendancy over the truth of power. I want to do this by showing what it means to empower a teacher to speak on his own behalf rather than for me, as a researcher, to make a claim to knowledge about the professional learning of teachers without enabling teachers to speak for themselves. In judging my efforts to improve the quality of my contribution to the educational management of a secondary school I wish to focus on the value of rationality as it is embodied in the action research cycle and the value of democractic procedures in staff selection.

I will relate my enquiry to the evidence provided by the Acting Head of the school in relation to the acceptance of an action research approach to professional development and to the first democratic election for a staff development tutor. The extracts from the school's and the Local Education Authority's (L.E.A.) policy documents below show that I have moved my contribution from a position where I was part of a management structure supporting forms of professional development which did not incorporate the above view of rationality to a position which supported the above view of rationality in the way described below.

Actions

Over the past four years Avon L.E.A., has paid the University of Bath a consultancy fee to enable me to spend some time promoting action research with teachers. In March 1990 Avon L.E.A. published a booklet on 'You and Your Professional Development', which, commits the Authority to providing the majority of its INSET (Inservice Education of Teachers) support through an action-research approach to professional development.

The following extracts from a paper from the the Acting Head of the School to the Senior Management Team dated 5/3/90 show clearly the integration of an action-research approach into the School's policy for staff development for 1990-91.

> We have for a long time at Culverhay been very concerned about an INSET Policy which requires teachers to LEAVE their classes with a supply teacher, often with no expertise in the subject area, and for understandable reasons without the same commitment to the progress of the pupils.
>
> The advantage to the School of teachers engaged in this form of INSET is also questionable, although we have tried to reduce the problems of "cascading" by having a "reporting back" form, which is then circulated to the relevant members of staff.
>
> From the L.E.A. draft Staff Development Policy, it is clear that INSET should now be much more CLASSROOM based, and resources should be allocated to support teachers as they carry out their work. Several Culverhay Staff have been involved in such INSET/STAFF DEVELOPMENT over the last few years, and the most recent example was the STRICT initiative (Supporting Teacher Research Into Classroom Teaching).
>
> Staff are gaining experience in "action research" techniques, which basically follows the pattern shown below:-
>
> 1. The teacher identifies or is presented with a problem, and chooses a colleague to work with to help find a solution.....
>
> 2. The teacher works with the colleague both inside and outside the classroom, with the aim of devising an approach which will improve the quality of education provided.....
>
> 3. The lesson is taught, and information collected as the class proceeds which will highlight whether or not the approach is a successful one......
>
> 4. Following the class, the lesson is assessed by the two teachers....
>
> 5. The next stage requires a new improved approach to the topic to be devised, building on the experience gained from the research.....
>
> Thus the cycle of events can be continued, with both colleagues benefitting professionally from the experience, and the quality of the classroom teaching hopefully improving as a result.

The following extract from the Acting Head shows my own commitment to the democractic principle of staff selecting their own staff development tutor.

> We have been asked by the L.E.A. to appoint a Staff Development Tutor. This position should be assessed annually. The role/qualities of this person are outlined below:-
>
> 1. The Staff Development Tutor (S.D.T.)will be required to help staff decide on which aspects of their classroom work they wish to develop through Action Research.

2. The S.D.T., to be effective, needs to be accepted by his or her colleagues as equal partners. He or she needs to be able to work alongside teachers in an open and supportive way..... The Chair of Governors and I are both happy to see the Staff select and appoint a S.D.T. for 1990-91. (School Policy document 20/4/90).

Evaluation

My claim to be improving my contribution to the educational management of Culverhay School rests upon the evidence of the integration of an action research approach to professional development in the school's policy and practices. It was grounded in my view of the rationality of action research as an approach to improving the quality of education with teachers and pupils and the the support for the extension of democratic practices in the workplace. The latter was exemplified in the process of staff selection of their own Staff Development Tutor.

I want to emphasise that the evidence I have presented for my claim to be contributing to improvements in educational management of a school, was provided in the writings of a teacher. These were not my words, they were his. In seeing my contribution to educational management as a form of educative relationship I think my claims to educational knowledge of such relationships rest upon the acknowledgement by others of the value they have found in my activities, research and writings.

Modified Plans

On 26th June 1990 the local authority agreed to fund a curriculum innovation on technical and vocational education in the school. The teaching and learning styles favoured by this innovation are similar to the form of action cycle described above. My plans are to support the development of a school-based action research group to help the teachers to answer questions of the kind, "How do I improve my practice?" in relation to this innovation. I will be helping to gather evidence and to evaluate the practitioners' research reports in an attempt to see if it is possible to produce reports in which both the pupils and the teachers are speaking on their own behalf. I would like to extend this idea of "speaking on your own behalf", into "educational" research in general, by asking a number of questions of my professional and academic colleagues.

In submitting my ideas for your criticism I am conscious of the vulnerability which comes from an openness to change because one recognises failure and error. I want you to recognise an original contribution to educational research. I may not receive such recognition because you may rightly refuse this acknowledgement. I trust that your acknowledgements or refusals will rest upon the power of your rational criticism in support of the power of truth and that you will present your criticisms openly and in a public arena.

In presenting my ideas in the above form I am conscious that it may contain an implicit criticism of your own ideas. I am thinking of those of you who claim to belong to an educational research community and who, whilst believing that your research is "educational", do not show what your research means for your own or others' educational practice. I am addressing the following points and questions to all those who believe that their research is "educational research".

FURTHER QUESTIONS

I am assuming that we share the conviction that it was right to abandon the disciplines approach to education research (dominant in the 1960s and 1970s) because it was both mistaken (Hirst 1983) and, by virtue of the ideological power of its proponents, because it was exercising a damaging influence on the views of teachers and academics. The power of many of your criticisms helped to create a climate in which alternative views began to emerge. My worry is that you have replaced the ideological hegemony of the disciplines approach with the hegemony of your own critical/interpretative and thus propositional forms which are clearly identified through their organising concepts as a philosophy of education (Carr 1989 and Carr and Kemmis 1986, Rudduck 1989), a sociology of education (Whitty 1986) a history of education (Hamilton 1989, 1990) and a psychology of education (Calderhead 1988). I recognise these texts as having value for my educational discourse but they contain no synthesis which enables education to be viewed in a way which is holistic and dynamic. If you believe your research to be "educational" in whose sense is it 'educational'? Can you substantiate a claim to be "educational researchers" without an examination of your own or another's educational development? I am hoping that you will respond to my questions in a way which can help to establish a personal and social basis for educational action research and help to create a living educational theory which may indeed have "profound implications for the future of humanity". In asking such questions I am wondering if you experience contradictions in your workplace. Watkins (1987) in his research on the contested workplace has argued that "during work experience the contradictions of work are exposed and thus may serve to undermine the existing social relations of work by revealing both the oppositional forms and the stark 'reality' of the workplace". As well as conducting research on students I wonder whether such researchers have a responsibility to conduct research on themselves in their own workplace as they show what it means for their educational development to live more fully their values in their practice.

My questions concerning the potential of action research and educational theory for social evolution have emerged from my recognition of the power relations which protected my job in the University and in the legal protection given to me as an academic by the Education Reform Act of 1988. This act protects my right to question freely and to test received wisdom. It also protects the freedom of academics to put forward new ideas and controversial and unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions.

In offering a case study of an individual's educational development and questioning its relationship to social evolution I am opening myself once again to criticism. I am thinking of the charges of arrogance, of making ridiculous and unsubstantiated claims, of trying to claim a potential for action research which it does not have, or of being incomprehensible from the Deakin point of view! I may indeed be mistaken. Yet of all the criteria I have mentioned in this paper for judging its validity I wish to return to Habermas' criteria of authenticity where he says that it is only through watching a person through time, in action, will we be able to judge that person's authenticity. I must leave you to judge freely and wisely in the hope that you will feel moved to go public on your judgements on my research. I hope that you will do this within a dialogue which shows how you are trying to live more fully your educational values in your workplace as you support the power of truth against the truth of power. In this way, as I have argued, will you not be making your own contribution to the evolution of our society through education?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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How Do We Make Sense of the Process of Legitimising an Educational Action Research Thesis for the Award of a PhD Degree? A Contribution to Educational Theory

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ABSTRACT The authors have worked together in different ways in relation to an educational action research PhD – 'Action planning and assessment in guidance contexts: how do I understand and support these processes whilst working with colleagues in Further Education Colleges and a Careers Service?' (Hughes, 1996). In this article they intend to share their own learning arising from the process of legitimating an educational action research thesis. Hughes indicates how examiners' judgements made in relation to her PhD thesis assisted her in gaining a greater understanding of: the process of judging and the importance of developing appropriate standards of judgement in relation to action enquiries such as her own; the ways in which such enquiries may be supported and the contribution her research makes. Denley outlines what he learnt in his supervision of Hughes's action research programme about the difficulties of ensuring a high level of technical competence, whilst encouraging the originality of the researcher in creating her own description and explanation of her own educational development. He also examines his response to the examiners' rejection of the initial submission. Whitehead outlines what he learnt about the creation of living educational theories, about the inclusion of 'I' in claims to educational knowledge and about the politics of educational knowledge in responding to Hughes's request for support in a resubmission.

Introduction

Issues which we believe deserve more attention in this Journal concern the nature of the educational knowledge and educational theories which are being produced by educational action researchers. These issues also concern the power relationships involved in the legitimisation of such contributions to knowledge. Hence, we are hoping that this article will stimulate a debate on: the preparation and presentation of action research enquiries for submission for higher degrees; the development and interpretation of criteria used for examination; the clarification of roles and responsibilities of all those parties involved; the identification, appointment and remit of external

examiners; the tensions between openness and confidentiality in the ethics of educational action research.

Within this article we will explain what we have learnt in relation to these issues through the process of legitimating an educational action research thesis (Hughes, 1996) in the Academy through the process of PhD examination. We believe that our article provides a basis for a collaborative action research enquiry of the kind, "How did we collaborate in the process of legitimating an original contribution to educational knowledge through educational action research?" Before we share our understanding arising from the above process we will relate our enquiries to recent contributions to this Journal and elsewhere.

In her article on "Finding Theory in Practice", Stella Clark (1996) traced her growing awareness of the importance of theory following an earlier rejection. She explained that she learnt to recognise her own theory, and how it both gave rise to and was itself a product of, her own practice. In our understanding, a theory can explain something. If educational action researchers are generating theories from their enquiries we would expect these educational theories to explain the learning or educational development of the researcher. Whilst understanding Stella's growing awareness we think that there is a need for educational action researchers to explicate their educational theories in a way which can explain their own educational development. Such theories, will of course be contributions to a cumulative body of knowledge and, as researchers, we will need to understand the nature of the appropriate standards of judgement which we can use to test the validity of such claims to knowledge.

In this regard, we are grateful to Pamela Lomax (1994) for drawing attention to the importance of ethical, practical and aesthetic standards of judgement for use in judging action research accounts, and to Janet Clarke (Clarke et al, 1993) and Les Tickle (1995) for setting out criteria for testing the quality of educational action research. We have also used Richard Winter's (1989) six criteria for enhancing the rigour of action research accounts and agree with his idea that action research theories are forms of improvisatory self-realisation (Winter, 1997). Whilst we think we understand the meanings of these standards and criteria as set out in their propositional form we would like to offer a more ostensive definition of the standards we use to test the validity of the claims we make to know our own educational development in our educational action research. The distinction we draw between 'lexical' and 'ostensive' definition is that in the 'lexical' definitions of standards of the above researchers, words are defined in terms of other words. In our 'ostensive' definitions we intend to show and to point to the meanings of the standards which are embodied in our practice, and whose meanings can be clarified in the course of their emergence in practice (Denley, 1988; Whitehead, 1993; Hughes, 1996).

What we wish to do in this article is to stimulate debate through the analysis of the emergence and resolution of tensions in methodology, epistemology and ways of working, between an action researcher (Jacqui

Hughes), a PhD supervisor (Paul Denley) and an authority in action research (Jack Whitehead).[1]

In relation to the issues related to preparing, presenting and legitimising an action research thesis, Hughes will indicate how examiners' judgements made in relation to her thesis have assisted her in gaining a greater understanding of the process of legitimating action research in a University and of the importance of developing appropriate standards of judgement in relation to action enquiries such as her own. She will also consider the ways in which such enquiries may be supported.

In relation to supervising an educational action research PhD programme, Denley will outline what he has learnt about the difficulties of ensuring that the thesis demonstrates a high level of technical competence whilst encouraging the originality of the researcher in creating her own description and explanation of her own educational development (her own living educational theory). He will also examine his response to the examiners' rejection of the initial submission and analyse his own learning as he moved between positions of unconscious and conscious, competence and incompetence, in appreciating the political dimensions in the legitimation of an action research PhD thesis.

In relation to responding to Hughes's request for support in her resubmission, Whitehead will outline what he has learnt about helping an educational action researcher to create her own living educational theory and to reveal her living 'I' in her contribution to educational knowledge. He will also examine his learning in relation to the politics of educational knowledge, and in relation to the tensions between openness and confidentiality in the ethics of educational action researchers.

In the three presentations below we will move to more personal forms of communication. This will involve each of us telling our story of our relationships and our learning together. Jacqui will begin by discussing her experience of this process of legitimising an educational action research thesis for the award of a PhD degree.

> *JH: I am going to explain the context and content of my research and then consider the making of judgements about action enquiries, including the development of appropriate standards of judgement, with reference to my experience of the PhD examination process.*

Context and Content of My Research

I grew up in a working class home in Cornwall, in the rural south-west of England and was the first in my family to attend the local grammar school. In 1968, I went to University and afterwards trained to be a teacher, becoming a head of department in a comprehensive school. While my children were young, I worked in special education, and with adults attending Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language provision. In 1985 I began work in the adult guidance field. By this time I

had come to believe that: everyone should have the opportunity to be a valued part of an educational community; education should raise rather than limit individuals' sense of what they are and can achieve; education should focus on starting where individuals are and on supporting their development from that point towards the goals that are important to them; individuals should be offered the opportunity to access education throughout their lives; and people have unique skills and abilities, and are partners in the educational process.

These values underpin my work in guidance and underlie my action enquiry into my own practice and into the use of assessment and action planning processes in guidance contexts.

In 1990, when I began my enquiry, I was staff development officer for an organisation offering vocational guidance and I was also the coordinator of a nationally-funded assessment initiative within the 'Avon' [2] area. In 1991, I was employed on a job share basis by Avon Careers Service to coordinate adult guidance activities within the area. In 1995 my job share and I were appointed as adult guidance coordinator and business development manager for one of the four branches of Learning Partnership West (formerly Avon Careers Service).

I began my research because of my concerns about approaches to assessment in guidance. Particularly within vocational guidance, assessment has often involved techniques and procedures 'done to' clients by expert advisers, with the primary aim of meeting economic and social objectives. I wanted to explore the ways in which I could support the development of client-centred approaches to assessment, while also exploring my own educational development.

During the research I became concerned, too, about the use of action planning in guidance contexts. Through my investigation, I increasingly recognised similarities between approaches to assessment and action planning, and parallels between action planning and the action research paradigm which underpinned my enquiry. During my research I explored the possible theoretical antecedents of action planning and action plans. I studied my own changing understanding and practice in my roles as, coordinator of an assessment initiative, coordinator of adult guidance and as a guidance practitioner incorporating action planning processes in group guidance programmes for adults. I integrated in my analysis the views of colleagues working with me to develop assessment services and group guidance programmes, the views of staff involved in developing, implementing, and managing action planning and action plan initiatives in a range of contexts, and the perceptions of adult guidance clients and BTEC students attending programmes incorporating action planning and action plans.

My thesis is titled 'Action planning and assessment in guidance contexts: how can I understand and support these processes while working with colleagues in further education colleges and a careers service?' (Hughes, 1996). It presents an action research approach to improving understanding of action planning and assessment in guidance within further education

college and careers service provision in the former county of Avon between 1990 and 1995. Within the thesis I integrate the elements within my enquiry to provide an original, holistic description, explanation and representation of my search for understanding of and my learning about these issues, and about my own educational development. Within this synthesis, I also offer original contributions to educational knowledge and theory by providing a new understanding of the theoretical origins of action planning, and the ways in which these can influence my own and others' guidance practice (Hughes, 1996). In addition, I proffer a new 'process' model which incorporates assessment in guidance within the action planning cycle.

However, while it is important that you should be aware of the context and content of my thesis, I am not asking you to judge my claims to have contributed to educational knowledge. My intention is, through consideration of my experience of two PhD vivas and the process of resubmission, to discuss my learning in relation to the epistemological debate concerning the making of judgements about action enquiries, including the development of appropriate standards of judgement. I also wish to indicate ways in which I have been supported and suggest how my understanding of the contributions I have made has been enhanced through the above experience.

My original thesis was examined in November 1994 by an internal examiner from the University of Bath and by an external examiner who was an expert in the guidance field (with a positivist research approach). I, naively as it turned out, thought that the latter examiner would be able to assess research undertaken from a different perspective. The written comments from the examiners and others which were made on my thesis (discussed below and detailed in the introduction to my thesis, Hughes, 1996), and the focus of the questions asked during the viva indicated that this was not the case, and highlighted the above issues concerning criteria and the making of appropriate judgements. The examiners' joint recommendation was that I should be allowed to resubmit.

Considering the Process of Making Judgements about Action Enquiries: including the development of appropriate standards of judgement, with reference to my own research and my first viva

Lomax (1994) notes that judgements about an action research dissertation should include consideration of both the "quality of the action research as a process of disciplined intervention and the quality of the report through which it is communicated". However, she stresses that it is "important to see both the action research process and the way it is reported as a means not as an end in itself". The intention is for education practitioners to "make sense of their practices and to improve them". In so doing Whitehead (1993) argues they assist in the creation of educational theory and knowledge through the description and explanation of their own educational development as they strive to improve the quality of their own practice. Here,

practitioners are conceived "not as the implementers of educational theory but rather as professionals who theorise in practice, and whose deliberations are often moral in nature" (Noffke, 1994, p. 11).

My thesis demonstrates and explicates my contribution to knowledge through the explanation of my own educational development as a practitioner researcher, as I endeavoured in my roles as assessment and then adult guidance coordinator in Avon, to support my own and my colleagues' understanding in relation to assessment and action planning in guidance. The thesis details, from my perspective at the time, the ongoing cyclical process of working with colleagues in relation to these issues during the period between 1990 and 1995. Thus, I demonstrate how I attempted to improve my practice. I also explore the ways in which I informed the longer-term thinking, policy and practice of those with whom I worked in relation to these processes. I thus explore the ways in which I attempted to influence the social context in which I work. I also consider the ways in which my personal involvement supported my changing understanding of assessment and action planning, and of my practice as an assessment and guidance coordinator, practitioner and researcher. I therefore consider that I tried to improve my own educational practices, to improve the situation in which my practice is located and to increase my understanding of assessment, action planning and my own practice (see Whitehead, 1993, discussing Carr & Kemmis's work).

The search for appropriate standards by which to judge research other than traditional scientific research is recognised to be of vital importance in what Denzin & Lincoln (1994) refer to as the present "crisis of legitimation". Thus, Clarke et al (1993), while noting that the making of "yet another set of technical prescriptions as a means of controlling others' research" must be avoided, tentatively suggest criteria which may be appropriate when judging action research. Lomax (1994), discussing the making of judgements about the action research of teachers involved in an in-service Masters programme, similarly suggests possible standards and the criteria which might apply at each stage of the research process.

However, Lomax points out that a major difficulty in relation to the standards of judgements applied "resides in the issue of who is competent to judge". Eisner (1993) raised the issue of "determining who is competent to appraise" the form and content of different research approaches in his presidential address to the American Educational Research Association in 1993. He noted that "the ability to make sense of a form of research depends upon one's experience with that form and upon one's conception about what counts as research".

The issue of criteria and standards was of particular importance and relevance in relation to the judgements made upon my own research in my first viva. The University of Bath (1995) specifies four criteria to be used in examining PhD theses. These are related to (1) industry, application and scholarship; (2) originality; (3) the production of material worthy of publication; and (4) knowledge and understanding of the writings of others. There is, however, much debate about the meanings of such criteria when

applied by different judges in particular cases (Elliott & Sarland, 1995). This issue is now a focus of research sponsored by the Economic and Social Research Council.

Throughout my action research enquiry I endeavoured to ensure the validity of my claims to knowledge. I therefore subjected the process, findings and my accounts of the research to critical reflection, and review by: requesting colleagues to evaluate my effectiveness at the time and in retrospect, and to comment on the veracity of my accounts; ensuring rigour in my use of interviews and questionnaires; utilising a written journal to assist the process of systematic ongoing reflection, planning and action; working with my tutor as a 'critical friend'; presenting my research for public debate and criticism.

Thus, I ensured that colleagues were offered opportunities to comment on my effectiveness throughout the research. I also presented my accounts of my practice to those who had worked with me so that they could indicate the extent to which they considered that I had offered accurate and true reflections of the processes, events and outcomes discussed. I also ensured that my use of interviews and questionnaires to explore the views of staff, adult guidance clients and BTEC students involved in action planning initiatives was rigorous, and that I checked the authenticity of my accounts of the process and findings with those who had taken part. The full narrative of my educational journey lies within the written journals I kept over the years between 1990 and 1995.

These journals offer a detailed account of the research process incorporating my systematic reflections, plans and actions during the research cycles within this period. They provide the basis for the description and explanation of my practice provided in the thesis. Throughout my enquiry my tutor, Paul Denley, acted as a critical friend. I debated my research with him producing papers to clarify, justify, analyse and explain my enquiry.

In addition, recognising that theses have a limited readership and are but one way of making research public, I used a range of approaches to ensure that I made my research process and findings accessible to a variety of audiences, offering them for public debate and criticism as part of the 'quality control' process. I therefore made a series of presentations to research seminars at the University of Bath and discussed my enquiry with colleagues there, in other universities, in further education colleges, in adult guidance and with those working in careers guidance with young people. I also worked in collaboration with colleagues in Avon's further education colleges and in Avon Careers Service (now Learning Partnership West), offering elements of the research in discussion and in writing for the critical comment of my peers. Furthermore, I produced a report (Hughes, 1991) incorporating my assessment model which was circulated for comment and criticism within and outside Avon.

My rationale for beginning the research was, as I have indicated, to explore my own educational development as I endeavoured to improve my own and others' understanding and practice, in relation to assessment and

action planning in guidance contexts. In the thesis, I examine and evidence the ways and extent to which my own understanding of my practice as a guidance coordinator, guidance practitioner and researcher had changed during and as a result of the research process. I also explore and evidence the ways in which my work with colleagues had supported the development of my own and others' understanding concerning assessment, action planning and action plans within guidance contexts. I locate the research in the context of local and national developments in relation to guidance, assessment, action planning and action plans.

The reason I have stressed the processes of validating my claims to knowledge is in response to the statements made during the first examination of my thesis. The examiners commented in their joint report that, "We did not doubt that the individual had learned a good deal, nor that she had influenced her fellow workers" (Hughes, 1996, p. xxiii). One of the examiner's commented additionally that:

> This is a thoughtful piece of work, and the researcher shows herself to be extremely knowledgeable and up to date with recent developments in the policy and practice of action planning ... (but) ... One of the aims of research at this level is to make an original contribution to knowledge: however much of the thesis is merely an introspective description of the researcher's own practice. She has undoubtedly learned a lot about her practice through this exercise, but the outside world learns little, because the interventions are specific to a particular context. (Hughes, 1996)

I would argue that the above comments indicated that at least one of the examiners considered that I had gained knowledge of my own practice and had demonstrated my effectiveness in working with colleagues, but felt that these claims were not relevant when making judgements concerning the research. However, Lomax (1986) argues that "The validity of what we claim would seem to be the degree to which it was useful (relevant) in guiding practice ... and its power to inform and precipitate debate about improving practice in the wider community".

I had explored the ways and extent to which I had gained knowledge of my own practice, and supported my own and others' understanding in relation to assessment and action planning in guidance contexts. I therefore suggest that these aims should also have been considered by the original examiners when making judgements upon the research and the dissertation.

The examiners made the following comments and requests in relation to further work on the thesis. They stated that, "We were not clear to what body of public knowledge this had made a contribution. For example, the individual effectively operated as an organisational change agent, but we could not determine an original contribution to the understanding of this. This part of the thesis requires more variation of contexts and/or a broader empirical dimension involving other similar workers" (Hughes, 1996, p. xxiii). The examiners considered that "We would learn more by comparing and contrasting aspects of practice in different contexts than from a study of the

experience of just one worker" (Hughes, 1996, p. xxiii). However, while, as is indicated above, my research may have applicability and relevance for others, my intention was not to explore effective strategies for change agents. My enquiry was intended, like Evans's (1995), to make a contribution to educational knowledge as I researched my attempts to improve: my practice (both in working with colleagues and in relation to assessment and action planning and guidance); my understanding of these practices; and the situations in which my practice was located, that is, in work with colleagues in Avon's further education colleges and its careers service.

My enquiry was therefore of the kind which Bassey characterises as, "the study of a singularity rather than the search for a generalisation" (Lomax & Parker, 1995). The value of the findings of such a study "lies in the extent to which someone can relate their experience to the singularity and so learn from it" (Bassey, 1995).

In addition, the examiners focused on my use of questionnaires to ascertain the views of adult clients attending group guidance workshops and BTEC students. They commented that "The existing evidential base is very slim for work at this level and we strongly recommend the extension of the sample". One of the examiners suggested that there were a number of "interesting hypotheses which could be tested". However, my intention was to ascertain whether these clients and students shared the perceptions held by the staff working with them as to the ways in which the process, plans and helpers assisted. The questionnaires were sent to three groups of adult clients who had attended the group guidance workshops I had co-run during the second research cycle and to the three groups of BTEC students taught by the further education staff I had interviewed. These questionnaires and the interviews I conducted with adult clients and BTEC students were therefore used as part of the process of triangulation not to test 'interesting hypotheses'.

I therefore considered that the above judgements and suggestions were inappropriate in relation to my action enquiry. I recognised, however, that in my first submission I had not sufficiently identified or made accessible what my contributions to knowledge were. I had not communicated what I had learned. In the absence of such explicit explanations, the examiners were unclear as to the focus of the research.

Response to the First Viva

This examination, in November 1994, caused me to re-evaluate my research and thesis. The examiners had recommended that I should be allowed to resubmit, but appeared to me to require a resubmission underpinned by a different philosophical perspective from that which underlay my enquiry and dissertation. This was a particularly painful time for me as I tried to make sense of my conflicting feelings. On the one hand, I was convinced that my research did make a worthwhile contribution to knowledge; on the other, two experienced academics seemed to consider it inadequate.

During this period and for the remainder of the research, I continued, as I had throughout my enquiry, to keep a reflective journal. My journal has enabled me to remember and re-experience that time, and my feelings about it. Immediately after the viva, I was particularly helped by my partner, who has worked in careers guidance and further education, and acted as a critical reader throughout the research. In December, I sought the views of Jack Whitehead, a member of the School of Education at the University of Bath. Together, they supported me in my belief in the quality of my research, in my conviction that the judgements applied had been inappropriate and in my determination to address these issues in a positive way.

Jack Whitehead indicated that he considered that I had a case for a review on the basis that the external examiner had appeared, as revealed in her written comments, to conduct the viva from a different philosophical position from that espoused in my thesis. The University of Bath's regulations included the following as grounds for a review: "that there is positive evidence of prejudice, bias or inadequate assessment on the part of one or more of the examiners". In addition, the regulations had been amended in 1991, to include the following additional basis for a review "that there were genuine academic differences in philosophical approach or paradigms" (University of Bath, 1994, p. 34).

While we therefore considered that there were grounds for a review, I did not particularly wish to go down this route, except as a last resort. I felt that, while I might succeed, the process would be time-consuming and emotionally draining. In addition, while I felt that the judgements applied had been inappropriate, I acknowledged that the thesis was too long and that I had not made my contributions to knowledge sufficiently clear and accessible. In December 1994, I asked to meet with the internal examiner and the then Director of Studies, to explore a way forward. As a result of this meeting I produced a strategy which involved restructuring the thesis, and producing a preface which explicated the dissertation and my contributions to knowledge. This, I felt, would allow me to continue with the research in a constructive way which was in keeping with and added to the debate concerning the qualitative methodology I had employed. However, I also indicated that I would request a review if the external examiner, who did not appear to accept the paradigm within which I had carried out my enquiry, did not withdraw from this role.

Over the next 2 months I contacted the university regularly to ascertain progress on this issue. On 8 February 1995, the examiner's joint report permitting a resubmission was agreed by the Board of Studies for Education at the University of Bath. If I was to request a review, I had to do so within 14 days. I was in a quandary as to what I should do and contacted the Chair of the Board of Studies. On 17 February 1995, I was informed in writing that the external examiner had "offered to resign examinership of the thesis".

I was, of course, pleased by this development. In addition, during the period between the viva and the external examiner's resignation, I had submitted an article on the origins of action planning and action plans, and their effects on practice to the *Journal of Guidance and Counselling* (Hughes,

1995). I now heard that the article had been accepted. At this point I needed to return to my thesis and put the strategy I had agreed with the university into action.

This was a lot harder to do than perhaps it sounds. My energy and confidence were at a low ebb. At that time and since, however, I experienced the support of colleagues who assisted me in clarifying and aiding my thinking on an ongoing basis. Thus, since 1994, Jack Whitehead and Robyn Pound (who is carrying out research at the University of the West of England into her practice as a health visitor incorporating action planning into her work with clients) have, alongside my tutor Paul Denley, acted as critical friends. Until this time, I had worked on my PhD principally on my own, as do the majority of higher degree students, particularly those studying on a part time basis, while continuing to carry out their often demanding jobs (Parker, 1998). In 1995, I joined the action research group at the University of Bath. The individuals in this group have also provided ongoing support over the last 2 years, commenting critically on my work in order to assist my understanding. In addition, I continued to share my research with my colleagues, and made presentations to conferences organised by the Institute of Careers Guidance and the National Association for Educational Guidance for Adults in order to offer the processes and outcomes involved in my research for further critical review.

As I have indicated above, the viva had highlighted important issues concerning educational action research, its status and the standards of judgement employed to appraise such enquiries. However, I also recognised that in my resubmission I needed to address the accessibility of my research, particularly the clarity with which my claims to knowledge were expressed and presented. If I believed in what I had done, how could I make this clear to my examiners and other readers?

During the period between my first viva and the resubmission of my thesis on 1 May 1996, I therefore reflected further on my enquiry, on the original contributions I had made, and on the way in which I could present my research process and my findings. Over the next arduous 14 months, I substantially revised and rewrote the thesis.

I began my resubmission with some brief reflections which put my research in its personal context and reaffirmed my values. These reflections were followed by a preface. This addressed the issue of accessibility by explicating the thesis and the research, and by clarifying my contributions for the examiners and other readers. The preface therefore explained and described the structure and form of the thesis, identified the original contributions my research made to educational knowledge, considered the validity criteria against which my research might be judged and outlined the content of the thesis. To clarify the processes involved in my enquiry, the outcomes of it and the ways in which I had endeavoured to make public and validate my enquiry, I produced a diagrammatic representation of my research to assist in the process of accounting for myself (Lomax & Parker, 1995).

In my original dissertation, submitted in 1994, I had incorporated my deliberations on the research process and my findings within one volume. On reflection, I considered that this form did not assist readers to access and understand the research. I therefore endeavoured to find a presentational mode which supported the reader and which also recognised the importance of the processes involved, as well as the outcomes of the research. As a result, I fundamentally restructured and shortened the thesis.

My Second Viva and Retrospective Reflections on my Learning

During the period between the resignation of my original examiner, and the resubmission of my rewritten and restructured thesis, Paul Denley, Jack Whitehead and I discussed the issue of who the University might appoint as the new external examiner. Eventually, a respected senior academic was asked to fulfil this role and I was required to attend a second viva in September 1996.

Prior to my first viva, my thesis had been given to an academic identified by the School of Education Research Committee to act as an internal 'Reader' to give comments on the readiness of the Thesis for submission. He had indicated that while there was "quite a lot of tidying up to do... (and) ... some presentational matters to sort out ... I haven't encountered any major problems". Prior to my second viva, my thesis was read by a second reader from the School of Education. He made some positive comments, but also criticised the methodology, while commenting that "This is not a field, substantively about which I know very much and nor am I a great exponent of action research". Wherever possible I addressed the suggestions he had made and the thesis was resubmitted at the end of April 1996. Prior to the second viva, I spent substantial amounts of time with my tutor, with Jack Whitehead, with my critical friend Robyn Pound, with members of the Action Research Group at the University of Bath and with my partner, considering the kinds of questions I might be asked and the ways in which I might respond to these. By the time I attended the second viva, I felt prepared in a way that I had not been when I attended the first examination.

The experience of my second viva was very different from the first. The examiners informed me within moments of beginning the viva that they intended to pass the thesis, considered it an excellent piece of writing and wished to spend the next hour discussing points of interest arising from it. I was at first somewhat non-plussed. I had expected to have another battle to fight. Instead, the examiners' questions indicated that they understood that my research had been undertaken from an action research perspective and that they were in sympathy with this. Although I was very pleased, it took some time before I actually began to believe that this time my contributions to knowledge had both been understood and accepted.

Reflection on the experience of my first and second viva, and on the process of producing a resubmission has, I feel, enhanced my understanding

in relation to the making of judgements about action enquiries and has highlighted the importance of developing appropriate standards of judgement. In addition, the experience has indicated ways in which such enquiries may best be supported. In particular, it highlighted for me the importance both of having additional critical friends who are actively involved in their own action research and of being part of an ongoing action research group of supportive, yet critical, peers. Through presenting and discussing my research with these colleagues, I learned what they, as action researchers, saw to be its flaws. In addition, discussion with them about their enquiries helped me to clarify and understand elements of my own. So why hadn't I sought the support of action researchers such as Jack Whitehead and joined the University of Bath's action research group earlier?

I think there are several reasons for my reticence. Although I had discussed my enquiry with Jack before I began it and it was his enthusiasm for action research that had encouraged me to carry out an action enquiry, I was somewhat disconcerted by him. I felt that he had his own very clear vision of what action research was and that I might be in danger of 'losing' rather than 'finding' a unique way of carrying out my enquiry. I'm sure he will not take offence if I also point out that his ideas can sometimes be rather difficult to understand. In addition, I considered and still consider Paul, to be an understandable, approachable and supportive tutor, and an effective critical friend. Furthermore, while in my work roles and as an essential element within my enquiry I collaborated very closely with colleagues, I liked having the opportunity to think and be on my own rather than being part of a group. I had also imagined action research group meetings as involving fierce and perhaps rather unconstructive personal criticism. I therefore attended and gave papers to other research groups at the University of Bath, but did not attend the action research group meetings.

When I was asked to resubmit I recognised that I perhaps needed the support both of additional critical friends actively involved in their own action research and of such a group. However, the first action research meeting I attended – a weekend seminar at the University of Bath – rather confirmed my fears. One of the participants was a well known action researcher from another institution who I had not met before, but whose work I had read and by which I had been impressed. A colleague was being subjected to rigorous and critical questioning bordering, I felt, on the vicious, by this individual. However, I discovered later that this colleague had, ultimately, found the questioning helpful and that the intention of the group was to assist, not to destroy! I also discovered that the seminar had been quite unusual in its tenor and that the majority of meetings, while necessarily critical, were more supportive in tone. I have therefore been a member of the University of Bath's action research group for the last 2 years and, alongside my three critical friends and my partner, the colleagues in this group have assisted my thinking in this last phase of my enquiry.

In retrospect I recognise that, though it was a painful experience which I would rather not have had, the first viva led me to maintain my integrity, to reflect on my values and to present my contributions to educational

knowledge with greater clarity. In addition, in rethinking the thesis I was able to find an original form to represent the content of and the processes involved in my action enquiry, thus also making a significant contribution to the debate concerning the ways in which action enquiries may be explored and represented. Furthermore, in rewriting the thesis I recognised that I was also able to make a contribution to the debate concerning standards of judgement and criteria for action enquiries. Finally, and most importantly, I am convinced that my action research approach to improving my practice has helped me to maintain a commitment to my own educational development, and to the education of others as they take part in guidance and assessment processes and plan their careers.

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We would now like to move to Paul's perceptions of the process of legitimising Jacqui's educational action research thesis for the award of a PhD degree:

> *PD: I have been a lecturer in the School of Education for seven years. Prior to that I worked as Science Editor in a unit in Bristol producing resource materials for local schools and promoting resource-based and individualised learning. During my time working in this unit I was registered as a part-time PhD student at the University of Bath.*

To begin with, Jack Whitehead was my sole supervisor, but later another member of staff shared the supervision with Jack through to completion. My research was on the development of an approach to what I termed 'practitioner research' to evaluate innovations in science teaching with a particular focus on the use of a semi-quantitative classroom observation system. I found Jack to be both a stimulating and a frustrating supervisor. He provided a constant source of new ideas and opened up new pathways to explore but at the same time gave little guidance about which might end up as blind alleys. My joint supervisor on the other hand was far more helpful to me in clarifying direction for the research and particularly in developing the framework for the final thesis.

In my thesis (Denley, 1988), I resisted describing my approach as 'action research'. I was influenced at the time by writers such as Hopkins (1985) who preferred to support the notion of 'classroom research by teachers', and felt that the term action research had been 'hi-jacked' and directed to certain more overtly political ends. Another key influence was Schön (1983) and his development of 'reflective practice'. I was concerned about the use and abuse of the term 'action research' and did try to distance myself from it. In the intervening years I have continued to have an empathy for action research approaches, but have remained on the periphery of action research within the School of Education. My perception and understanding of Jack's approach to action research in terms of his conception of 'living theory' has always seemed to very quickly get into a

deep philosophical and, perhaps, even esoteric consideration of epistemological and methodological issues drawing on a wide range of literature from within and beyond education. I have been unwilling to get drawn into this perhaps from a concern about where it will lead. At several points since completing my own PhD and coming to work at the University, Jack has tried to encourage me to go back to issues raised towards the end of my research relating to standards of judgement for educational enquiries and to adopt a more overt action research stance to improving my own practice. My areas of interest are to do with curriculum development in my subject area and continuing professional development of science teachers, but in a more general and far less intensive way than Jack.

Soon after starting work in the School of Education, I supervised a PhD which was basically grounded in an action research methodology. This research explored the parallels between action research and a constructivist approach to teaching (Ritchie, 1995). The research student was engaged in a number of inter-related cycles of reflective enquiry into the development of classroom practice with primary teachers in the context of both initial and continuing teacher education courses in science. The research was conducted in a very rigorous and systematic way, and the final thesis, although lengthy, did present knowledge claims in what I considered to be a clear and accessible manner. Questioning in the viva addressed a number of concerns raised principally by the External Examiner, but the final outcome was that these could be addressed by minor amendments and that the recommendation of a pass be made.

The period during which this research was being completed and examined overlapped with the start of my supervision of Jacqui's PhD. Against the background of a successful outcome in this first case, I felt reasonably confident about my ability to supervise Jacqui's work, and advise her regarding the process of submission and preparation for the examination. Concerns had been raised about the length of the thesis and about the clarity with which evidence for the claims being made was identified, but I felt that she had addressed these satisfactorily.

It is only now in the context of writing this article that I have been asked by Jack to reflect on why I did not involve him in Jacqui's research at an earlier stage. It was not a conscious action. As far as I was concerned I did not see the need for me to take any steps to involve Jack. In fact, because I knew that Jack and Jacqui knew one another outside the University, I did not feel any duty to put her in contact with him. I think that had this not been the case I might have thought differently. I was confident about Jacqui's progress; the feedback from an internal reader in the School of Education had not identified any serious weaknesses in the draft thesis. Jack has suggested that my own experience of him as a supervisor might have influenced me. If this was the case, it was at a subconscious level; I never discouraged Jacqui from seeking advice from Jack or discussing her research with him. She seemed happy with the supervision I was giving and did have opportunities to present her research more formally to Jack (and others) through seminars in the School. It could well be, however, that if she

had started to have more contact with Jack I might have raised some concerns with her about where that might lead based on my own experience. I could have been concerned that the direction of her research might have been guided more towards questions of what constituted educational theory and how it might be legitimated in a political context, rather than concentrating on what I saw to be its major strengths in terms of its insights into the products of and the processes involved in action planning.

Obviously, the experience of the first examination was a challenging one. At the same time that I knew I should be very positive and supportive to Jacqui in facing the very negative reaction to her work, and confronting the examiners' recommendation that she should be allowed to resubmit, my own confidence had been severely damaged. I knew that Jack would be angry about the outcome and the way in which the action research approach was being challenged. (It was not until discussing the matter in preparing this article that I was aware that his anger was also directed against me.) At this point Jacqui herself took the initiative and turned to Jack who I knew would rush to fill the void left by my uncertainty about how to respond to the issues raised by the examiners.

Once I had recovered from the initial shock, I could see how Jack was working with Jacqui to restructure the thesis and, in doing so, to bring out what he considered to be the major claim to originality in the work all along. During the preparation for submission I probably took a secondary role to Jack. In the light of an unsuccessful outcome of the first examination, I was prepared to let Jacqui draw on Jack's experience, but realised at the same time that this could well change her whole perspective on what she had done and its importance. I had no problems with the proposed restructuring or the notion of developing a commentary on the research to form a preface to the thesis. I was a little uneasy about the way in which Jacqui was developing, with Jack, ideas about the claims to know. However, I could see that Jacqui's own understanding of the issues was growing, that she had much more ownership of the second submission than the first, and that she had managed to rebuild her confidence in her research and its strengths.

What I appreciated as I saw the differences between the first and second submissions was that I had been satisfied with a technical piece of writing with a high level of rigorous analysis of data. I had not appreciated how much further Jacqui would want to go in creating an original contribution to educational knowledge herself. The whole process has challenged some of my own ideas and broadened my understanding of the issues to do with the representation of such enquiries.

The major learning for me in this has been to raise my awareness of the need to see supervision and legitimation of educational research within the political context in which it takes place. In the process of identifying a suitable External Examiner for Jacqui's thesis I was content to support the recommendation of a well-known academic who would be able to engage with what I had seen as the substantive content of the enquiry. What I had not expected was that this examiner's methodological stance would have such a profound bearing on events. The concerns raised indicated a lack of

understanding and a questioning of the adequacy of or even a disrespect for action research as an appropriate approach to address the sort of question relating to practice which Jacqui had formulated. I had expected, naively, that the examiner, if not actually sympathetic to the methodology, would at least be open to it. The recommendations from the examination almost suggested that Jacqui's work should be reconceptualised and made to fit into another paradigm rather than being examined against criteria appropriate to its own. It is to her credit that she chose not to do this, but to propose the higher risk strategy of remaining true to her values and rewriting almost the whole thesis in order to present her enquiry in a more accessible way.

One way of representing my learning shows the relationship between the two dichotomies of 'consciousness–unconsciousness' and 'competence–incompetence' (Dubin, 1962).

<pre>
                        Competence
                            |
Consciousness───────────────────────Unconsciousness
                            |
                       Incompetence
</pre>
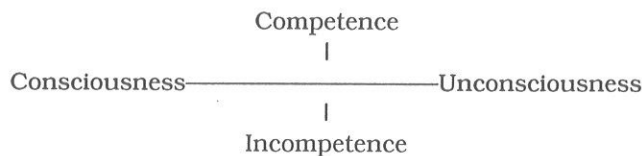
I experienced a shift from thinking that I was 'consciously competent' to realising that I was in fact 'unconsciously incompetent' at the time of Jacqui's first examination through my naiveté in failing to appreciate the political dimension in the legitimation of educational knowledge. Through work in developing the resubmission I may now have at least moved into 'conscious incompetence' and may one day find myself where I thought I was in the first place!

<p align="center">✪✪✪✪</p>

Jack will now discuss what he has learnt about living standards of judgement and the politics of educational knowledge through the process of helping to legitimise a living educational theory, action research PhD thesis:

> JW: I recall the mixture of emotions with which I related to Jacqui and Paul when Jacqui asked for my help in a resubmission. I read the whole of the first submission and the written comments of the examiners which had been given to Jacqui. When I read a comment that the sample wasn't representative enough, I recalled Lawrence Stenhouse's (1980) Presidential Address to the British Educational Research Association, on a study of samples and the study of cases. This issue is also of recent concern to contributors to Educational Researcher (Donmoyer, 1996) on the importance of being aware of different paradigmatic perspectives in judging research. Seeing a judgement of a study of a singularity (Bassey, 1995) in terms of a 'representative sample' raised a question about

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*the adequacy of the examiner's assessment. Jacqui has already
explained why she decided not to question the examiners'
judgements within the formal procedures which were open to her.*

I could see an original contribution to knowledge in Jacqui's Thesis, but in
my view it had not been communicated clearly. I felt angry with Paul
because I believed that if we had worked together a much stronger thesis
would have been submitted. I wrote to Jacqui to say:

*I have no doubt that you have fulfilled those criteria for the award
of a PhD related to your industry and your ability to relate your
enquiry to the wider field of knowledge. I think the nature of your
original contribution to educational knowledge and theory needs
more explication.*

Later I commented that if the same examiners were asked to review their
judgements, given their perspectives, I thought that they would be unlikely
to change their minds. If new examiners were appointed then, "If my own
judgement on the thesis is confirmed, that it would be criticised on the
criteria relating to its contribution to knowledge, then you would be in the
position of feeling that the thesis had been judged fairly but still required
some additional work related to the above criteria". I therefore suggested that
Jacqui should clarify her original contribution and I made suggestions as to
the ways in which she might do this.

In helping Jacqui with her resubmission, I was clear that her thesis
was an original contribution to my own field of educational research, living
educational theory. I believed in Jacqui's ability to describe and explain her
own professional learning, that is her ability to create her own living
educational theory (Whitehead, 1989). I also believed in her ability to create
a form of representation within which she could communicate the nature of
her learning in terms of her enquiry into action planning and assessment in
guidance contexts. What I learnt in working with Jacqui on her
resubmission was the importance of time in the process of understanding
that one's own description and explanation of one's own learning could
constitute a living educational theory. Moyra Evans (1995) writes about a
similar experience working with me as a supervisor in a section of her PhD
Thesis on 'Creating my own living educational theory':

*I'd heard Jack Whitehead talk often about creating living
educational theories. I originally thought these were something like
a home spun version of the real thing, not having quite that
professional finish that marked them out as desirable. Living
educational theories were something lesser mortals had to make do
with, whilst Piaget and Dewey and others were the quality
versions that every serious student wanted to possess. They were
also rather frightening entities when I contemplated trying to
construct one. I feared getting it wrong, but I was also excited at
the prospect of creating something which had the potential to be*

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good. The combination of fear and excitement frequently had me procrastinating for ages while I weighed up everything in my mind many times over, before I dared to start.

Jack never knew how long it took me to understand his concept of the living educational theory – I wonder if I resisted it purely because it was a notion so removed from the immediate, relentless, practical demands of the everyday life of classrooms or school management. We don't usually talk about theories in school. The climate is very much one of 'doing', and the acts of doing are premised on a relatively straightforward set of expectations which are laid out in the staff handbook, or the National Curriculum, or other curriculum documents. We talk about what happens and what we are going to do about it, but we don't usually refer to theories – of any sort. Theories belong to the academy; I belong to the school.

It was Saturday morning, November 26th 1994, and we had spent Friday talking about epistemology. 'I've been thinking,' said Jack, "About where your epistemology is grounded." I'd also been thinking about this. Epistemology was similar to living educational theories in being 'un-user-friendly'! Jack spelt it out. "It's like this", he said, drawing on the table with his fingers. "The Whitehead epistemology is grounded in Polanyi's work on personal knowledge; Elliott's work is grounded in Gadamer's theory of hermeneutics; Kemmis and Carr's work is grounded in Habermas and critical theory, but your work is grounded in your practice." Overnight I had come to the same conclusions, but was unsure of the status of this knowledge. "But is that good enough?" I asked. "Yes", he said, "it's like this – all of us have been engaged in exploring propositional knowledge. We've been playing with words, but you have been working on practice. You have been exploring your emergence as a confident 'I' in your role as a deputy head interested particularly in staff development." So what you're saying is that my theories about my practice are grounded in my lived experiences? That I draw my explanations – my theories - of my practice not from propositional knowledge directly – from the writings of others, but from my actual experiences in my role as a deputy head? And I make sense of them through my stories?" "Yes", he said. We were both excited at the sudden clarity of this explanation, I particularly, as I had been struggling to place my work in the spectrum of action researchers for some time. I had recognised that my work was different, but had been trying to fit it into a pre-existing category. Perhaps the concept of the emerging 'I' needed its own family. (Evans, 1995, p. 232)

Jacqui's response reinforced what Moyra was saying about time and conversation. It takes time for individuals to feel that they can make original contributions to educational knowledge in creating their own living educational theories. In particular, I learnt something about how I encourage an action researcher to embrace their own 'I' in their research question. Jacqui included 'I' in her title in the question: How do I understand and support these processes, whilst working with colleagues in Further Education Colleges and a Careers Service? I think my encouragement has something to do with my communication in my supervision of a faith in I–You relationships (Buber, 1923). I do encourage my students to engage in self-studies in relation to asking, answering and researching questions of the kind, "How do I improve my practice?" Whilst this is not the place for a detailed account of the epistemological significance of the inclusion of 'I' as a living contradiction in claims to educational knowledge, I will simply draw your attention to the accounts on the World Wide Web of those educational action researchers who have embraced the experience of existing as living contradictions in both their theories and practice.[3]

When we began to collaborate on this article, I wanted to name the first examiners and publicly question their competence in relation to their judgements. In my text, *The Growth of Educational Knowledge: creating your own living educational theories* (Whitehead, 1993), I name those who submitted evidence to Boards of Studies, Senate and Academic Staff Committee which led to such written claims as "You have exhibited forms of behaviour which have disturbed the good order and morale of the School of Education" and "Your activities and writings are a challenge to the present and proper organisation of the University and not consistent with the duties the University wishes you to pursue in teaching and research" and "Your thesis contains no matter worthy of publication".

I had two reasons for naming such individuals. The first was to engage in public debate about their judgements. The second was to expose a process of 'institutional bullying' by which I mean the mobilisation of institutional power to privilege one set of arguments above another, rather than to permit the force of 'better argument' to determine a judgement. I had experienced this kind of 'bullying' by the employer of a previous student whose thesis was embargoed for 5 years from its submission in 1990. The thesis contained politically sensitive data concerning claims about resources to schools being made by a local education authority. At no small risk to himself he argued the case for his work being made public in a telling chapter on 'The right to know' (Adams, 1990). He drew on Pring's (1994) analysis of the right to know in relating respect for an individual's right as a person with the public's right to know. The courage of Ron Adams and the clarity of his analysis remains an inspiration, when I am faced with anxieties over imaginary or real fears of reprisals on exercising my academic freedom (Whitehead, 1993, p. 94).

I know the issue of 'naming' raises important ethical issues in educational research. As a matter of principle I accept the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Ethical Guidelines when I am

working with others as participants in the research. Trust is essential in action research and I work on the principle that those I am researching with have the right to confidentiality if they wish it. However, in my self-study of my own educational development in my workplace and society, I accept the value of academic freedom under the law. I do not accept anyone else's right to control my enquiry into my own educational development or to exercise censorship over my writing.

In the terms of a recent Equal Opportunities Review (Riley, 1996) I would justify my past 'naming' of individuals who mobilised power relations in the way described above on the grounds of academic freedom within the law and of the public's 'right to know' (Adams, 1990):

> *Academic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions. (Education Reform Act, 1998)*

> *The damage to the individual in terms of stress and distress and to the University in terms of misusing human resources and not enabling students to maximise their potential is obvious, quite apart from the depressing effect on morale generally and the ever present danger of expensive litigation and damaging publicity. These outcomes are a contradiction of the University's stated commitments to equality, diversity and excellence. Speedy and effective action needs to be taken, publicised, [my emphasis] monitored and evaluated. (Riley, 1996, p. 6)*

One of the telling arguments which persuaded me that Jacqui and Paul were correct in insisting that the examiners of Jacqui's first submission should not be named in this article was that their judgements were already open to question. The University's procedures permitted such questioning on the grounds of bias, prejudice and inadequate assessment. Jacqui could have questioned the judgements within the procedures if she had so decided. This questioning had been made possible in 1991 by a change in the University regulations which had previously held that "under no circumstances could examiners' judgements be questioned". Another telling argument was a political one. Jacqui argued that it was prudent not to name the examiners because the reader might be distracted, by mistakenly attributing the feeling of malice on the part of the author and that this would detract from the quality of the argument being made.

I also learnt something of theoretical importance from Jacqui in her original insight about the importance of explicating the theoretical antecedents of the action planning processes used in adult guidance and assessment (Whitehead, 1997). In working with her on the development of her own living educational theory I strengthened my commitment to encourage each educational action researcher to describe and explain their educational development in their own unique form of representation (Lomax

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& Parker 1995; McNiff et al, 1996). My commitment to explore alternative forms of data representation, to the propositional form, has also received support in Eisner's (1993) Presidential Address to the American Educational Research Association and in his questions: "How do we display what we have learned? What forms can we trust? What modes are legitimate? How shall we know?" (Eisner, 1997). From Jacqui I also learnt how the most rigorous attention to the relationship between evidence and claims to knowledge could be integrated within a narrative of an individual's educational development (Hughes, 1996).

My learning was also enhanced in terms of how to include an aesthetic judgement in judging a claim to educational knowledge (Laidlaw, 1996). In relation to Jacqui's work, the aesthetic judgement I have in mind is related to Plato's dialogue on poetic inspiration, the Phaedrus, where Socrates makes a point about the exercise of the art of a dialectician in which both the One and the Many are held together. He is referring to the art of the dialectician in which both the capacity for synthesis and the capacity for analysis are exercised together. In creating her own unique form of representation within which she held a number of rigorous enquiries, I could appreciate how Jacqui held together her own enquiry with the many enquiries of others. When I experience such a unified account by an educational action researcher I am drawn to Bataille's (1987, p. 8) point where he says that, he has subordinated all else to the search for a standpoint that brings out the fundamental unity of the human spirit. I draw the inspiration which helps to sustain my own motivation from such accounts.

Given Noffke's (1997) claim that living educational theories appear incapable of relating issues of personal identity and experiential knowledge with issues of power and privilege in society, I would like to encourage those who are persuaded by Noffke's arguments to look at the evidence above, and in the other 'living theory' theses, which I believe shows how living educational theories can embrace all of these issues as they are experienced by ourselves as action researchers in our workplaces.

In relation to my learning with Jacqui and Paul in the process of legitimising an educational action research PhD thesis, I would say that Jacqui's determination to continue to a successful submission could be explained by the strength of her values of integrity, justice, freedom and truth, as well as by the support provided by her loving family, friends and caring supervisor. In this respect I am still exploring the implications of Rorty's (1989) dropping of a demand for a theory which unifies the public and private. He is content to treat the demands of self-creation and of human solidarity as equally valid, yet forever incommensurable in his turn against theory and toward narrative. What Jacqui's living theory shows me is that it is possible to create descriptions and explanations for one's own self-creation in a way which embraces and explores the implications of a freely chosen commitment to live one's values in the public domain.

Conclusions

Through this article we have described, from our differing viewpoints, the events leading up to the successful completion and examination of a PhD action enquiry. We have also tried to relate our learning, through this case, to the process of representing and legitimating such enquiries in the context of an examining system which has evolved within a different dominant paradigm. The intention was to engage the reader with the politics and practice of the generation of educational knowledge in order to raise issues about the representation and legitimation of educational action research at the highest academic level.

We wish to be clear that it is not our intention to use this article as a vehicle to complain about unfair treatment or to be vindictive about inappropriate examiners. Procedures were followed correctly, and Jacqui received the support and advice to which she was entitled throughout her time as a registered student. There are clear internal procedures laid down for complaints and reviews of judgements which were fully understood and could have been followed. Our concerns are broader than this specific case. By exposing our perceptions of the examination to public scrutiny we realise that we are opening up a process which most institutions keep closed. We would be very surprised if similar situations as are described here have not occurred in other institutions. Indeed, we know that there is a wide variation between institutions as to the ease or difficulty with which action enquiries are legitimated.

In revealing the process from the inside in one institution, we may experience conflicts of loyalty in raising our heads about the parapet but we return to the values contained in the statement cited in the Notes below, from the University's Academic Assembly, about "freedom, truth and democracy ... rational debate ... integrity". Thus, we do not take the step of presenting our story lightly, but with the belief that there is a need to address these values more openly in order to advance our thinking, influence and improve practice, and in an attempt to resolve some of the tensions which may be experienced by others in similar circumstances.

We would like the debate to be taken forward through the exploration of the issues we have raised of:

- the preparation and presentation of action research enquiries for submission;
- the development and interpretation of criteria used for examination;
- the clarification of roles and responsibilities of all those parties involved;
- the identification, appointment and remit of external examiners;
- the tensions between openness and confidentiality in the ethics of educational action researchers.

Lessons have been learned by all of us for our future practice, but particularly by JW and PD for our supervision and preparation for

examination of research students. We feel that it is time for a broader debate into these issues within our own institution and the Academy.

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Notes

[1] Both Paul and Jack are members of the Academic Assembly of the University of Bath and are committed to the following values: "High sounding phrases like 'values of freedom, truth and democracy', 'rational debate', 'integrity', have been used. It is easy to be cynical about these and to dismiss them as hopelessly idealistic, but without ideals and a certain agreement about shared values a community cannot be sustained, and will degenerate. These are the phrases in which members of Academic Assembly have chosen to convey their concept of this community" (*The Idea of a University*, Academic Assembly, University of Bath, 1988).

[2] The county of Avon ceased to exist, as a result of local government reorganisation, in 1996. It was replaced by four unitary authorities.

[3] Action research theses from the Action Research Group can be viewed at the Internet address http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw

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