

18 ACTION PLANNING MY FUTURE, JULY 1993 - AUGUST 2009

A) Concern - How do I improve the quality of my educational politics?

1) As I reflect on my relationships with the senior local authority managers from Avon, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire I am struck by the dramatic changes over the last two years from a concern with improving the quality of a social service to survival in the market place. The tension I feel is different from the above experiences of contradiction which have formed my educational development. The tension is due to a conflict between educational and academic values and the values of the market place. I am not one of those who sees no place for market values. I value the industrial and commercial world which helps to sustain my sense of material well-being. I share the concern of many environmentalists and industrialists that it makes good sense to protect our environment. I also see the necessity of sustaining democratic procedures to protect the values of our civilized society in our health and education services against being undermined through the direct influence of market forces.

When I talk of market forces I am meaning those forces which are dominated by the search for profitable return on investment and where free competition rules the market place. It is because these conditions spawn the Maxwells of the world that I insist that we need democratic forms of accountability to ensure the interests of ourselves as citizens are being met.

My concern for education is that the Conservative Government legislation is removing democratic constraints on the free competition of the market place. Local education authorities will no longer be able to protect educational values. Their control over schools is being removed and their services are becoming business units as described above. Teacher Education in University Departments of Education is under serious threat as competition is being stimulated by enabling schools to take on the role of initial teacher education. The qualities of professionalism in the Postgraduate Certificate of Education will not be required by new teachers entering schools. The tension I feel is because I see the government undermining the professionalism I have been seeking to enhance. I share the concerns and analysis of Pamela Lomax and Cynthia Jones (1993):

The current political climate is one in which the values underpinning much of our education are being attacked, at a time when the basis of teachers' professional authority is being dismantled for political and economic reasons..... within this scenario of political mismanagement there are teachers who are working creatively within the system to develop educationally worthwhile outcomes. We believe that it is this creative force of teacher action research that can maintain teacher autonomy and professionalism in the face of current de-skilling changes. (p11)

Intended actions

Thus I need to find a way of acting which will resist the de-professionalisation. The strongest protection could be The General Teaching Council (England and Wales). John Sayer's great achievement has been to bring together some 40 Unions and other bodies in a Forum of Associations with a common mission statement. On the other hand its weakness from a professional point of view is that it does not have a policy on an integrated programme of teachers professional development. The body which does have such a policy but without the potential political power of the GTC is The Education Council supported by Tyrrell Burgess.

My own action plan is to support the development of The Education Council with its commitment to build on the sense of professionalism of individual teachers. I intend to do this in the local and regional context of the University of Bath by linking the action research approach to professional development to building the membership of The Education Council. The way I intend to contribute to this development is through my memberships of The Education Council, The Steering Committee of the Collaborative Action Research Network, and the Council of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and as a BERA observer on the Forum of Associations for the General Teaching Council (England and Wales). I will attempt to develop a coherent policy which develops a theme of my 1988 Presidential Address to the British Educational Research Association on the development of a Research-based Professionalism in Education. Can you think of any other actions I should take to achieve my purpose? If you think my energies are misdirected could you explain why?

Evidence to make a judgement on actions

The submission of discussion and policy papers to the above organisations which focus on strengthening collaborative action in creating The Education Council. Evidence from publicity on seminars and workshops designed to enhance the status of the Council. What further evidence would you wish to see to enable you to make a judgement on the effectiveness of my actions?

B) Concern - How do I contribute to the development of an integrated programme of teacher education?

i) Government policies on teacher professionalism do not contain an integrated approach to professional development. I believe that a profession should have a sense of a process of life-long learning which can enhance professional self-esteem and improve the quality of professional practice.

ii) Tom Russell (1993) has explained why questions of the kind, 'How do I help my pupils to improve the quality of their learning?', should form of the basis of initial teacher education programmes. Given the view of educational theory and educational knowledge presented in this book I think you will understand my concern

that programmes of initial teacher education should be constructed on the basis of a research-based approach to answering such questions. The Action Research and Educational Theory Case Study Collection contains examples of what can be achieved by novice teachers who use this approach. The new postgraduate education programme at Bath has what is known as a Subject Didactics component and an Educational and Professional Studies component. In the past students have expressed some difficulty in integrating the different components of our PGCE programme. I hope to show the students and teacher mentors I work with, that the form of educational theory outlined in this text offers a way of integrating the different components of a novice teacher programme, in a way which can contribute to the construction of living educational theories.

Intended actions

I intend to work at the creation of an integrated programme of teacher education from working with novice teachers on a postgraduate certificate programme through Advanced Certificate, Advanced Diploma, M.Ed., M.Phil., and Ph.D. degrees at Wootton Bassett School in the kind of partnership with the School of Education at the University of Bath described by Kevin Eames (1993a, 1993b). The School is committed to developing an action research approach to professional development. Eight members of staff have expressed interest in registering for an advanced courses module on a questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?'. I intend to tutor this group of teachers from September 1993. I will also be responsible, together with school-based mentors and a senior tutor, for 10 novice teachers on the new postgraduate education programme. This will involve teaching an educational and professional development programme at the University and liaising with novice teachers and teachers in the school. I intend to explore and evaluate the quality of my tutoring on this programme in relation to the quality of my students' educational development. Can you think of anything else I should be doing to achieve my purpose? Can you challenge the purpose with good reasons?

Evidence to make a judgement on actions

Evaluation reports from students, pupils, teachers and myself on the development of an integrated programme of teacher education in relation to the educational development of individual students and teachers.

C) Concern - Does the idea of living educational theories have any validity in national and international contexts as a form of dialogue which enables individuals to contribute to the future of humanity?

Having agreed that educational theory is a form of dialogue which has profound implications for the future of humanity I have offered a way of thinking about the constitution of educational theory which can include any individual who will produce

a description and explanation for their own educational development as they answer questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?.'

Intended actions

The Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) is a forum for communicating and testing the validity of ideas from research. My proposal to present a paper to BERA '93 at Liverpool University, on reconceptualising in-service teacher education has been accepted. I will be proposing the development of an integrated programme of teacher education based on the above ideas.

I am also joint convenor, along with Pamela Lomax, Professor of Education Research at Kingston University, of the 3rd World Congress on Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management to be held at the University of Bath on 6-9 July 1994. The Theme of the Conference is taken from Erica Holley's work, *Accounting for Ourselves*, and should offer the opportunity to test the validity of the above ideas in an international context. Together with Jean McNiff and Pam Lomax I have agreed to edit a series of texts on teachers' professional learning. This text is my personal contribution to the series. If you are reading it, our intention to see it published has been fulfilled, largely I may say, because of Jean's wholehearted support.

I am seeing the value of electronic communications in sustaining my relationships with researchers in Canada and America. Tom Russell, at Queen's University, Kingston, Canada, Mary-Lynn Hamilton at the University of Kansas and Stefinee Pinnegar at Brigham Young University have initiated me into the American Educational Research Association (AERA). The formation of a Special Interest Group on the Self-Study of Teacher Educators, is a forum in which I intend to submit my ideas for validation. I have submitted proposals for the April 1994 Conference in New Orleans

Evidence to make a judgement on actions

Evidence in the publications of those attending the Congress and the AERA and of those they influence that the above ideas have influenced their thinking and their educative relationships with their students. I am thinking of examples such as Tom Russell's (1993) paper to the Canadian Society for Research in Education in which he integrates the three original ideas from my research, along with those from other researchers, in a paper on the authority of experience.

D) Concern - How can I improve my collaboration with colleagues?

I am concerned to share ideas with my colleagues, to test the validity of their ideas and my own and to learn about the ideas of others through collaborative enquiry. I recognise a weakness in my approach to my immediate colleagues in the School of

Education which, with a few exceptions, is not based on care, trust and respect. From my point of view I think this is due to my perception of their acceptance of the power and authority of those individuals who mobilised the University's power against me in one or more of the above experiences. There are colleagues outside the School of Education with whom I would like to work.

Intended action

Three of these colleagues Judi Marshall, David Sims and Peter Reason from the University's School of Management to create a Centre for Action Research for Professional Practice in which we will offer an action research programme for graduate students. We asked Judi to write a statement about what she saw as our shared intentions. I agree with her view that:

We see this programme as an opportunity both to share our experience, thinking and practice with participants, and to create a collaborative learning community in which we can work together on these themes. We realise that this will involve struggles as well as harmonious engagement. We four bring our differences to this endeavour as well as our similarities. Whilst we are all passionately committed to the core principles of action research, we have our individual interpretations and priorities, our own particular constituencies. Also we shall be challenging ourselves and each other to live up to our aspirations, to develop our own practice- this will sometimes be delightful and sometimes uncomfortable or painful. Our meetings so far have had these multiple qualities. We are excited by our collaboration and with the prospect of extending it to others.

Evidence to make a judgement on actions

All four of us see our work with people registered for postgraduate degrees as central to our roles in the University, as activities to which we bring our whole lives. Through this work we are seeking to live in action our fundamental values, and to influence the social and organizational worlds with which we connect. To do this we are continually open to learning alongside our students and colleagues, seeking to improve our practice.

What kind of evidence would you suggest I gather to enable a judgement to be made on the quality and effectiveness of my actions? Can you give good reasons why I should not devote my energy to working collaboratively with my colleagues on the creation of a Centre for Action Research for Professional Practice?

I wonder how you are feeling. Has my story retained your interest? Have I persuaded you that a new form of educational knowledge can be created from the descriptions and explanations which individual learners can produce for their own educational

development? Have I shown you clearly the values which constitute the explanation for my educational development? Did I move you with me in my exploration of how to live as fully as I could the values of freedom, justice truth, and goodness in my educational development? Did you experience these values as explanatory principles in my account? Did I demonstrate sufficient learning about the ideas of others for you to be convinced of my capacity to test my own ideas and those of others? Have I shown the capacity to conduct an original investigation into the nature of educational theory and educational knowledge? Does the story of my educational development and the values and understandings embodied within it have any potential for contributing to the creation of a better social order?

I wonder if you will feel engaged enough to seek out our educative communities and help to strengthen our capacity to support each other within a growing sense of care and community. One of the most delightful texts which I think might persuade you to make contact with our educative community is *The role of Self in Action Research* (Ghaye & Wakefield 1993), a publication from the Collaborative Action Research Network. Tony Ghaye writes in the foreword,

The basic form is a conversation between action researchers, It is a conversation about the issues and concerns that arise from their work and their understanding of it. the conversational form allows two people to express a personal point of view and to respond to each other and to the action research being presented. Action research presented in a conversational form is educational, professional and legitimate. These conversations represent something of the identities of those engaged in them. they convey a sense of self, a sense of relationship with another, and a sense of commitment to understand self, others, and the context in which the professional practice takes place.

I am offering the above account of my educational development as a contribution to such ongoing educative conversations. In the moments of drawing this book to a close I read the fourth of Edward Said's (1993), *Reith Lectures; Is there such a thing as an independent, autonomously functioning intellectual?*.

An amateur is what today the intellectual ought to be, someone who considers that to be a thinking and concerned member of a society one is entitled to raise moral issues at the heart of even the most technical and professionalised activity as it involves one's country, its power, its mode of interacting with its citizens as well as other societies. In addition, the intellectual's spirit as an amateur can enter and transform the merely professional routine most of us go through into something much more lively and radical; instead of doing what one is supposed to do one can ask why one does it, who benefits from it, how can it reconnect with a personal project and original thought..... there is no getting around authority and power, and no getting around the intellectual's relationship to them. How does the intellectual address authority: as a professional supplicant, or as its unrewarded, amateurish conscience?

Reading Said's words brought back memories of a letter I received in 1968 from Ken Merton, the deputy head of my first school, when I posted on the staff room notice board an extract from the 1968 Reith Lectures. This was a month after the Big Kamara incident. It also contained references to authority. Here is the extract which continues to entertain and infuriate me.

11th December 1968

Dear Mr. Whitehead,

Although you personally may not have posted in the Staff Room the excerpt from a Reith Lecture, I regard you as the leader of the group responsible and I accordingly address this letter to you.

This is the second notice exhibited in the Staff Room to offend certain of our colleagues. I agree that the letter is deliberately provocative.... I am sending a copy of this letter to all Main Building Staff on whom I wish to impress the following instructions:-

Any non-official criticisms, (implied or stated) posted for public exhibition, should be torn down.....

Yours sincerely

K. Merton.

This serves to emphasise Said's point that there is no way of getting around power and authority. My life in education, as a teacher and intellectual, can be understood as an attempt to reconstruct educational theory and educational knowledge in the context of power and authority. I have examined this development in relation to groups of individuals who are aligned with my institution and who derived power and authority from their institutional positions and knowledge and use of its procedures. I have also shown some determination in educative relationships with my research students not to violate their sense of integrity. Whilst I have tried to resist speaking on behalf of my students, I will end by embracing the words of Sarah Darlington (1993), an education student from a group tutored by Moira Laidaw for her action research special study.

I find writing hard. T.S. Eliot said:

*Words strain,
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
Under the tension, slip slide, perish,
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
will not stay still.*

And that has been my experience. I am offering a cracked, flawed and faulty reflection on my experiences, but here it is, such as it is.

Sarah was praised by examiners for the astonishingly high quality of her work. I do hope that Sarah and other teachers like her who are the future of the profession find my work authentic, useful, hopeful and entertaining in their lives in education. If you feel directly addressed do please respond. If you feel I could do more or I could direct my activities in more beneficial ways for education do let me know. I have tried to establish a new form of educational knowledge which could be useful in enhancing the knowledge-base of the profession. I know that there is more to do. My own commitment will be to the creation of An Educational Council. I hope we will all make our own individual contributions to the Council whilst exploring the practical implications of our commitment to the education of our students and to improvements in our social order.