**Active Learning and Knowledge Creating Research Module**

***How do I influence the learning of others through living my proclaimed values?***

***I’m suggesting that the writings for this unit should begin with a ‘framing’ for the reader the contextualises your writings in relation to the following.***

AERA seeks *“to advance knowledge about education, to encourage scholarly inquiry related to education, and to promote the use of research to improve education and serve the public good.”* (Ball and Tyson, 2011). BERA seeks to *encourage the pursuit of educational research and its application for both the improvement of educational practice and for the public benefit* (BERA, 2010).

Ball and Tyson claim that educational researchers have been vigilant and effective in promoting ‘the use of research to improve education and serve the public good’.

By researching the implications of asking, researching and answering my question, ‘How do I influence the learning of others through living my proclaimed values?’ I intend to show how this research can generate the kind of educational knowledge that is both necessary and sufficient to fulfill both halves of the AERA mission in i) advancing knowledge about education and encouraging scholarly enquiry related to education and ii) promoting the use of research that improves practice and serves the public good.

In relation to advancing knowledge about education I shall relate my enquiry to Schön’s (1995) call for the development of a new epistemology of reflective practice, by creating my own living educational theory as an explanation of my educational influence in the learning of others (Whitehead, 1989):

*The epistemology appropriate to the new scholarship must make room for the practitioner's reflection in and on action. It must account for and legitimize not only the use of knowledge produced in the academy, but the practitioner's generation of actionable knowledge in the form of models or prototypes that can be carried over, by reflective transfer, to new practice situations. The new scholarship calls for an epistemology of reflective practice, which includes what Kurt Lewin described as action research. But in the modern research university and other institutions of higher education influenced by it, reflective practice in general, and action research in particular, are bound to be caught up in a battle with the prevailing epistemology of technical rationality.* (Schon, 1995, p. 34)

The methodology I use draws on Dadds’ and Hart’s idea of methodology inventiveness, Clandinin and Rosiek’s idea of narrative inquiry and Whitehead’s living theory methodology (Whitehead, 2009, 11)

In relation to methodological inventiveness I am committed to making explicit the relationship between the purposes of my practice which the research seeks to serve and the integrity with which I make methodological choices about ways of achieving these purposes:

*If our aim is to create conditions that facilitate methodological inventiveness, we need to ensure as far as possible that our pedagogical approaches match the message that we seek to communicate. More important than adhering to any specific methodological approach, be it that of traditional social science or traditional action research, may be the willingness and courage of practitioners – and those who support them – to create enquiry approaches that enable new, valid understandings to develop; understandings that empower practitioners to improve their work for the beneficiaries in their care. Practitioner research methodologies are with us to serve professional practices. So what genuinely matters are the purposes of practice which the research seeks to serve, and the integrity with which the practitioner researcher makes methodological choices about ways of achieving those purposes. No methodology is, or should, cast in stone, if we accept that professional intention should be informing research processes, not pre-set ideas about methods of techniques…* (Dadds & Hart, p. 169, 2001)

In my methodological choices I have been influenced by Clandinin’s and Rosiek’s (2007) points about the importance of ontological and epistemological commitments in narrative inquiry in which I privilege individual lived experience in meaning making and in which my representations are emerging from first-person lived experience:

*“Although it may seem extremely abstract, understanding the ontological as opposed to epistemological starting point of Marxist-influenced social theory is necessary for understanding the style and content of this scholarship as well as its relationship with narrative inquiry. A mode of inquiry founded in epistemological commitments – such as positivism – takes accurate description of the world as its primary objective. Epistemic principles, in this case, determine the way the accuracy of research conclusions will be assessed. A mode of inquiry founded in ontological commitments – such as Marxism or critical theory – takes transformation of those ontological conditions as its primary objective. For the Marxist influenced scholar, research and analysis is an intervention that seeks to change the material conditions that underlie oppressive social conditions.*

*As remarked on earlier, narrative inquiry shares with Marxism an explicit grounding in ontological commitments as well as the goal of generating scholarship that transforms the ontological conditions of living. The difference between the two traditions of inquiry are located in the specifics of those commitments and their conceptions of intervention. Scholarship grounded in Marxism privileges the macrosocial material conditions of life as the primary influence on human life and thinking. The relational texture of everyday life, including the personal, religious, historical and cultural narratives that provide meaning to that life, are treated as derivative of the macrosocial conditions of life. Furthermore, these narratives are frequently considered obstacles to be overcome on the way to a more realistic understanding of the causes of human experience.*

*The narrative inquirer, by way of contrast, privileges individual lived experience as a source of insights useful not only to the person himself or herself but also to the wider field of social science scholarship generally. As described in the comparison to post-positivism, this approach to analyzing human experience is grounded in a pragmatic relational ontology. It takes the immediacy of lived experiences, specially its narrative qualities, as a fundamental reality to be examined and acted on. According to this view, all representations of experience – including representations of the macrosocial influences on that experience – ultimately arise from first-person lived experience and need to find their warrant in their influence on that experience.”* (Clandinin and Rosiek, 2007, pp. 49-50)

In my methodological choices I have been influence by McNiff’s and Whitehead’s (2011) ideas on action research in which questions of the kind, ‘How do I improve what I am doing?’ can be explored through action reflection cycles (p.90) such as those below

1. **What is my concern?**

I proclaim to live my life through the embedded values I hold that I describe as co-operative values. Are these values evident in my practice as an educator? How do they manifest themselves? What is the experience of the learners? How do my values influence the learning of others? Do my lived values enhance or diminish my effectiveness as an educator? How do/will I know this?

Examples to focus on in a variety of contexts and settings – working with team on journal; with Jayne as ESNC; with Helen in BEFA; with Sam as ESCN. (I’d focus on the production of the Special Issue of the Journal of Co-operative Studies with your Guest Editorial)

1. **Why am I concerned?**

I want to be an effective educator. I think I will be able to improve my practice with a better understanding of how my embedded values affect my role and relationship with learners, shape my practice and influence their learning.

I suggest that you draw attention to the values in your guest editorial for the Special Issue of the Journal of Co-operative Studies (Breeze, 2011):

*I find the suite of six organisational values (self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity) and the four ethical values (honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others), can be interpreted readily from an educational perspective. They provide a language to explore my motives and actions and scaffold my reflection.* (p.2)

1. **What am I going to do about it?**

Reflect upon educational influences on my own learning.

Investigate learning relationships between myself and those learning with me.

Develop skills and understandings to make valid judgments of my educational influence on learners and their learning

1. **What data will I gather to help me to judge my effectiveness?**

Interviews with learners. Personal reflections. Possible video/s of me in practice. Feedback from learners. Others?? – The contributions to the Special Issue of the Journal of Co-operative Studies – video of you exploring the meanings and sharing of co-operative values with the Thursday evening CPD group.

1. **How does the data help me to clarify the meanings of my embodied values as these emerge in practice?**

Do I need to start collecting data to answer this? – You already have a large amount of data in the contributions to the Special Issue. We could work on a video in a couple of weeks to clarify further the meaning of your embodied values as these emerge in practice. I’d like to show you a method I’ve called empathetic resonance with digital technology and visual data, to establish and share co-operatively meanings of the energy-flowing values that you use as explanatory principles and living standards of judgement in you explanations of educational influence. You might find useful the paper I’m presenting on 14th April at a Symposium of the American Educational Research Association Conference. The paper is on ‘To Know Is Not Enough – Or Is It?’ and you can access the latest draft at <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/jwaera12noffke200212.pdf>

1. **What values-based explanatory principles do I use to explain my educational influence?**

??? - I think that you use the following:

*I find the suite of six organisational values (self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality, equity and solidarity) and the four ethical values (honesty, openness, social responsibility and caring for others), can be interpreted readily from an educational perspective. They provide a language to explore my motives and actions and scaffold my reflection.* (Breeze, 2011, p.2)

What we could do, using a visual narrative and empathetic resonance is to communicate the importance of flows of life-affirming and life-enhancing energy with your values as the explanatory principles you use to explain your educational influence.

1. **How do I use my values-based standards of judgment in evaluating the validity of my claims to be improving my practice?**

How do I/ will I judge myself? What are my standards of judgment?

As you have worked at editing the special issue of the Journal of Co-operative Studies (Breeze, 2011, pp. 2-4) I think that you have already used your values-based students of judgment, informed by your co-operative values in evaluating the validity of your claims to be improving your practice in the course of your editing of the Special Issue. I think that you are now having an influence in raising an awareness of the meanings of co-operative values in the Thursday evening CPD sessions and that a video-tape of a session in a couple of weeks could help with data on your continuing enquiry into improving your practice.

1. **How will I strengthen the validity of my values-based explanations of my educational influences in learning?**

**????**

**I usually** answer such questions about validity by stressing the importance of the use of validation groups in responding to questions about strengthening validity, drawing on a process of validation influenced by the ideas of Habermas:

*“The speaker must choose a comprehensible expression (verständlich) so that speaker and hearer can understand one another. The speaker must have the intention of communicating a true (wahr)proposition (or a propositional content, the existential presuppositions of which are satisfied) so that the hearer can share the knowledge of the speaker. The speaker must want to express his intentions truthfully (wahrhaftig) so that the hearer can believe the utterance of the speaker (can trust him). Finally, the speaker must choose an utterance that is right (richtig) so that the hearer can accept the utterance and speaker and hearer can agree with one another in the utterance with respect to a recognized normative background. Moreover, communicative action can continue undisturbed only as long as participants suppose that the validity claims they reciprocally raise are justified.”* (Habermas, 1976, pp. 2-3)

What I’ve done in advocating that we provide a validation group for each other, to help to strengthen the validity of our explanations of educational influence as contributions to educational knowledge, is to use a derivation of Habermas’ four criteria of social validity, in the following four questions:

How could the comprehensibility of the account be improved?

1. How could the evidence used to justify assertions to improved?
2. How could be awareness of the sociocultural and socialhistorical influences in the accounts be improved?
3. How could be authenticity of the accounts be improving in showing that the researcher is committed to living their values as fully as possible?

Whilst using Habermas’ four criteria of social validity I also stress the importance of Polanyi’s (1958) understanding of Personal Knowledge and the importance of accepting personal responsibility for the validity of one’s own accounts:

I must understand the world from my point of view, as a person claiming originality and exercising his personal judgement responsibly with universal intent (p.327)

I think that you might identify with Polanyi’s point about ‘the crippling mutilations imposed by an objectivst framework’, especially when considering the energy-flowing values and understanding that carry hope for the future of humanity.

“Chapter 13. The Rise of Man

I have arrived at the opening of this last chapter without having suggested any definite theory concerning the nature of things; and I shall finish this chapter without having presented any such theory. This book tries to serve a different and in a sense perhaps more ambitious purpose. Its aim is to re-equip men with the faculties which centuries of critical thought have taught them to distrust. The reader has been invited to use these faculties and contemplate thus a picture of things restored to their fairly obvious nature. This is all the book was meant to do. For once men have been made to realize the crippling mutilations imposed by an objectivist framework – once the veil of ambiguities covering up these mutilations has been definitely dissolved – many fresh minds will turn to the task of reinterpreting the world as it is, and as it then once more will be seen to be.” (p. 381)

**References**

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