

Wednesday 1st June 2011 15.30 – 17.30

Panel 2.1 Symposium of research from the Centre for the Child and Family, Liverpool Hope University – 5 papers

De Grey 125

1. Keynsham Kind – a project to enhance well-being through the process of well-becoming.

Dr Marian Naidoo, Email: marian@naidoo.org.uk

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Keynsham Kind is a project focused on enhancing well-being in the community of Keynsham in Bath and North East Somerset in the UK. It is both a complex and ambitious project and places living theory action research at its heart. As we engage with others in Keynsham the need grows stronger to join with the people in building a better community, sharing actions and plans for improving well-being, acting with others and gathering our data to make a judgment on our effectiveness in enhancing well-being through well-becoming and evaluating our effectiveness in living our values as fully as we can.

The intention of Keynsham Kind is to engage in a process of enquiry that involves members of the community of Keynsham in engaging in their own process of enquiry. Through our practice we will help contribute to an improvement in the way members of the community can begin to help itself through its practice. From this we hope that a more vibrant, self-directed and sustainable community generated social capital can be achieved.

As we engage with others in this project we are holding ourselves to account for living as fully as we can the values we associate with well-being. The project rightly starts by asking the following of all involved: - Who am I? What do I do? How can I improve what I do?

2. Researching to improve my practice in living boundaries

Marie Huxtable

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I am researching to improve my practice in the role of a senior educational psychologist, with a systemic responsibility for developing inclusive gifted and talented education in an English Local Authority. During the presentation I will provide an account of some of what I have done to contribute to enhancing the educational experiences of young people with values-based explanations by working in living boundaries. These living boundaries (Whitehead, 2008) are created between, for instance, the school curriculum and the personal curriculum of a young learner, and the world of the Academy and that of the workplace-based practitioner-researcher. I am particularly interested in the knowledge created of self in and of the world through learners and educators creating knowledge through a living theory action research process (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006) as illustrated by Bogna and Zovko (2008), Mounter (2007) and Cartwright (2008). I will give an account of my living theory research as an example of that which distinguishes research in a practitioner researcher group affiliated to the Centre for the Child and Family and Liverpool Hope University. The paper will clarify:

Values-based explanations of how talents and knowledge can be developed and offered in living boundaries by all learners, as gifts to themselves and others.

- My living theory praxis as a contribution to an educational knowledge base, an educational epistemology and forms of evaluation and accountability.
- A relationally dynamic approach to research and developing praxis.
- A creative use of multi-media narrative/s, to understand and communicate meanings of energy-flowing values.

References:

Bogna, B. and Zovko, M. (2008) Pupils as Action Researchers: Improving Something Important in Our Lives. *Educational Journal of Living Theories*.1(1) pp, 1-49.

Cartwright, S. (2008) *How Can I Enable The Gifts And Talents Of My Students To Be In The Driving Seat Of Their Learning?* Masters Module Gifts, Talents and Education. University of Bath.

Mounter, J. (2007) *Can children carry out action research about learning, creating their own learning theory?* Master Module Understanding Learners and Learning. University of Bath.

Whitehead, J. (2008) How are living educational theories being produced and legitimated with cultural diversity from the arts, philosophy, psychology, sociology, education and religion? Presented at: *Cultures in Resistance Conference. The 7th Conference of the Discourse, Power, Resistance Series*, Manchester Metropolitan University, 18-20 March 2008.

Whitehead, J. and McNiff, J. (2006) *Action Research Living Theory*. London: Sage.

3. How do I sustain an expression of loving insight in my life and work as an educator?

Dr Catherine Forester

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MacLure (1996, 283) emphasizes the importance of resisting telling an inauthentic 'smooth story of self' in the narrative of an action researcher. Walton (2011) emphasizes the importance of distinguishing knowledge and understanding with values emerging from love and hope. Whitehead and McNiff (2006, p. 45) point out that,

'We know what happens when people are prevented from exercising their capacity to question, the gradual loss of excitement, and the quietude of acceptance.' (Whitehead & McNiff 2006, p. 45)

This presentation focuses on a narrative of my learning to sustain an expression of loving insight in my life and work as an educator. This narrative includes a struggle with macro-cosmic issues that focus on both a lack of meaning in existence and living a loving and productive life as my values find expression in my one-to-one dealings with my students.

The narrative is given meaning by my dream of a society in which we are all normal – all different – all unique – where we all belong and no-one is measured against another and the values that underpin this dream are the values of service, love and insight founded in an empathetic communion with the other. I shall explain how naming my values accessed a grace that knows no vulnerability. It warms me from deep within. I know why I do what I do. It shields me from without. It does not stand in conflict with any other. It is because it is who I am. It is my virtue – the best I can be in this life.

References

MacLure, M. (2006) Telling Transitions: Boundary Work in Narratives of Becoming an Action Researcher *British Educational Research Journal*, 22(3), 273-286.

Walton, J. (2011) The Centre for the Child and Family: Strategic Map – 2011-12. Liverpool; Liverpool Hope University.

Whitehead, J. & McNiff, J. (2006) *Action Research: Living Theory*. London: Sage.

4. Transforming the world through transforming self

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Donald Schön (1995:29) states that we should think about practice as a setting for the generation as well as the application of knowledge and should explore not only how research findings can be used to improve practice, but what kinds of knowing are already embedded in competent practice.

Coming into the academic world from a professional context, I was aware of the separation between research and practice, and of a resulting mutual loss for each. I created the Centre for the Child and Family at Liverpool Hope University as a means of addressing this issue, taking as the meta-research question: 'How can we, individually and collectively, integrate research and practice across disciplines and between professions to enable a demonstrable improvement in the wellbeing of children and young people?' The intention is to create a national and international network of people who have a shared intent to ground research in the values-based practice of committed professionals, based on a belief that the transformation of the world will only be achieved through the transformation of each individual within that world.

This presentation will include the story of a group of early years practitioners, who integrated collaborative inquiry and a living theory approach to action research (Whitehead & McNiff 2006) as a means of creating knowledge that is grounded in practice. The inquiry demonstrated a means by which the singularity of each individual developed within a collaborative environment can have a transformational influence on wider socio-cultural contexts.

References

Schön, D. (1995) Knowing-in-Action: The New Scholarship Requires a New Epistemology. *Change*, November/December, 27-34.

Whitehead, J. & McNiff, J. (2006) *Action Research: Living Theory*, London, Sage.

5. How do I improve what I am doing in seeking to live and evolve my values as fully as I can and contribute to educational knowledge?

Professor Jack Whitehead

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My research is influenced by the guiding vision and orientation of the Centre for the Child and Family in Liverpool Hope University. These are to generate knowledge which directly improves the world and engage in research to create ways of living and working that have a humanising influence on children, families and wider society. It is also influenced by the wider mission of the Faculty of Education in its aspirations to develop knowledge and understanding that will contribute to the education and wellbeing of all as a globally significant endeavour whilst characterizing all work with values arising from love and hope.

The presentation will show how I am responding to the research question: *How do we integrate research and practice, across disciplines and between professions, to enable a demonstrable improvement in the wellbeing of children and young people?* It will show how I am contributing to the creation of a distinctive approach to scholarship through the integration of research, teaching, and the application of knowledge in practice. This includes the development of a living theory approach to action research and the integration and evolution of this approach in professional and community settings, to discover better

ways of improving` the wellbeing of children, families, communities and wider society` (Walton, 2010).

The research will draw on data from the livinglearning website at <http://www.livinglearning.org.uk/>, from the Aiming High for Children project at Liverpool Hope University, from the community-based project coordinated by William House and facilitated by Marian and Shaun Naidoo in Keynsham and from the global networks of practitioner-researchers contributing to <http://www.actionresearch.net> and to <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/>

Walton, J. (2010) The Centre for the Child and Family: Strategic Map 2011 – 2012. Retrieved 4 March 2011 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/walton/CfCFStrategicMap2011.pdf>