**The educational significance of a teaching model for the creation of a culture of inquiry**

**A proposal submitted for consideration for presentation at the 2010 American Educational Research Association Conference in Vancouver.**

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1. **Purposes**

In this paper it will be argued that the educational research community can fulfill all three aspects of the AERA mission by creating a collaborative and interactive process of teaching graduate students whilst in different countries- Canada and UK. In their call for submissions for AERA 2012, Ball and Tyson (2011) share the AERA mission: *“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.”*  The creation of a teaching model where educators create knowledge in a culture of inquiry through action research to improve education, to encourage scholarly inquiry and serve the public good is arguably transformative.

It will be argued that an iterative teaching/learning model of contextual empathy, articulating and reflecting on intentions, facilitating learning and then reviewing the actual process can improve instructional practice and scholarly inquiry. Drawing from recorded conversations and reflections completed during the time of the teaching master’s cohorts and stored on YouTube, critical friends create an environment for co-learning and supporting each other in developing a teaching model.

These action researchers draw insights from the theories of education researchers and provide evidence of the use of research to advance knowledge about education, of scholarly inquiry and of serving the public good.

1. **Perspective(s)**

The main perspective in this presentation is provided by Ball and Tyson (2011) in their call for submissions for AERA 2012 where they state that the AERA mission is sound: *“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.”*

They ask members of AERA for suggestions on what actions should be taken by the **education research community** (our emphasis) to fulfill the second part of the mission. That is, to promote the use of research to improve education and actually serve the public good.

It will be argued that knowing as **education researchers,** whilst necessary, is not sufficient to fulfill the second part of the AERA mission. Evidence will be provided to show that the knowledge produced by two cohorts of masters students, in the implemention of a teaching model for the creation of a culture of inquirycan draw insights from the theories of education researchers, in a way that is both necessary and sufficient to promote the use of research to improve education and serve the public good.

The reasons for choosing the perspectives below is that they had pedagogical significance in the creation of a culture of inquiry. At the heart of the pedagogy is Delong’s (2002) perspective that

the development of a culture of inquiry rests upon supporting the knowledge-creating capacity in each individual in the system. Thus, the researchers start with their own in educational inquiries of, 'How can I improve my practice?'   Out of this perspective emerges an expression of belief that the professional development of each practitioner rests in their own knowledge-creating capacities as they examine their own practice in helping their students and clients to improve their learning.

Drawing on the perspectives of education research assists the researcher in situating their research within the field of educational research and providing language to help them explain their embodied knowledge. They focus on the scholarly significance of the presentation in contributing to a new epistemology for the new scholarship through action research. They focus on the importance of humility in the support of learners and the knowledge that we are all fallible in our knowing. The living truths of action research educational researchers draw on the perspectives outlined by

1. Whitehead’s (2008) Living Educational Theory perspective to understand the world from one’s own point of view, as an individual, claiming originality and exercising judgment, responsibly with universal intent. One includes the unique set of values that are used to give meaning and purpose to their existence. These values are expressed, clarified and evolved as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning. The values flow with a life-affirming energy and are expressed in the relational dynamics of educational relationships.
2. Whitehead’s (1988) perspectives on the importance of studying our *values in action* in our teaching practice using video stressing the importance of the visual records of our practice and communicating our understanding of the value-laden practical activity of education.
3. Delong & Whitehead’s (2011) perspectives on the action research process, visual data and empathetic resonance.
4. McNiff’s (2009) perspectives on action research: the intention is that one person improves their work for their own benefit and the benefit of others.
5. Schön’s (1995) perspective on the need for a new epistemology for the new scholarship.
6. Burke’s distinction between "spectator" truth and "living" truth in which he draws on the work of Gabriel Marcel. The ‘spectator’ truth of **education researchers** is generated by disciplines (e.g., experimental science, psychology, sociology) which:

“… *rationalise reality and impose on it a framework which helps them to understand it but at the expense of oversimplifying it. Such general explanations can be achieved only by standing back from and "spectating" the human condition from a distance, as it were, and by concentrating on generalities and ignoring particularities which do not fit the picture. Whilst such a process is very valuable, it is also very limited because it is one step removed from reality. The "living" "authentic" truth of a situation can be fully understood only from within the situation though the picture that emerges will never be as clear-cut as that provided by "spectator" truth.”*  (Burke,1992, p.222).

1. Noffke’s perspective about the need to address social issues in terms of the interconnections between personal identity and the claim of experiential knowledge, as well as power and privilege in society, *The process of personal transformation through the examination of practice and self-reflection may be a necessary part of social change, especially in education; it is however, not sufficient.* (Noffke, 1997, p. 329).
2. Habermas’ (1976) perspective on using four criteria of social validity in communication and social evolution
3. Thayer-Bacon’s (2003) perspective on fallible knowing.
4. Earl and Katz’s (2009) perspective that a culture of inquiry involves others and makes time for the lengthiness of the collaborative process, the important discussions that make our research better.
5. Marshall’s (1999) perspective on living life as inquiry.
6. Andrews’ (2005) perspective on transformation as the kind of learning that changes people’s values, a moral activity.
7. Four Arrows’ (Don Trent Jacobs) perspective that doctoral research is not doing much to solve the challenges facing us in the twenty-first century.
8. **Methods, techniques, or modes of inquiry**

The mode of inquiry uses Whitehead’s (2009) living theory methodology and McNiff’s (2009) form of narrative for the generation of living theories. Action reflection cycles are used in forming, researching and answering questions of the kind, ‘How do I improve what I am doing?’ The cycles include: the expression of concerns when values are not being lived as fully as the practitioner-researcher believes to be possible; imagining possible improvements; choosing one to act on; action and gather data to make a judgment on the effectiveness of actions; evaluating the effectiveness of actions; modifying the concerns, ideas and actions in the light of the evaluations and the production of an explanation of learning that is submitted to a validation group to help to strengthen the validity of the explanation.

The technique for showing the significance of a relationally dynamic awareness of space and boundaries in explanations of educational influence, involves the use of visual representations of practice.

If a teacher wishes to encourage and support an inquiry habit of mind (Earle & Katz, 2006) and inquiring minds through a culture of inquiry (Delong, 2002), she might try an action-reflection (Whitehead, 1989; McNiff, 2009) process that models for the students how inquiry takes shape. This method emerged over a number of years and research papers and came into a replicable process during the instruction of two cohort programmes in 2010 and 2011. Using Call Recorder, SKYPE conversations were recorded between the researchers during the teaching of a Master’s course Discovering Approaches to Professional Development Master’s over 7 weeks, including 6 Saturdays.

The method emerged to include four steps, all of which are located on YouTube. First, the professor reads and responds to written papers, listens to student concerns in emails and other communications, including SKYPE conversations and determines what she thinks the students need as the next step in the inquiry process, as in a ‘just-in-time’ approach. This process resembles what Kinsella calls “contextual empathy”. Second, she shares her observations, plans and intentions for the next session with the cohort group on SKYPE with her critical friend. He listens, responds and makes suggestions for improvement. It is uploaded to YouTube for public access.

Third, she shares her plan at the next master’s session by playing the conversation as the plan for the day. The events of the day are video recorded and uploaded for her own and the students’ review which is especially helpful for anyone who missed the day. Fourth, she reviews the events with her critical friend through the same process with a view to planning the next session.

The technique for strengthening the validity of research accounts involves the use by validation groups of peers of Habermas’ (1976, pp. 2-3) four criteria of comprehensibility, rightness, truth and authenticity.

4. **Data sources, evidence, objects or materials**

Data will be drawn from the work of two Master of Education cohort programmes and the papers and major research projects that they produced projects (published at http;//www.spanglefish.com/actionresearchcanada). For each of the Master’s students, the individual questions pertained to their personal inquiries to improve their lives and the lives of those they influence.

The students were to conduct, “*an action inquiry ..into an aspect of your educational practice by using the data available to you to improve your own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations.”* The substantiated conclusions include evidence of promoting self-study and action research in medical facilities; evidence of influence in the context of classrooms, schools and school systems; evidence of accounting for an individual’s educational influence in a second language context; evidence of using multi-media to enhance research results. The proposal states that *the research question can be applied in the individual's direct educational context, with innumerable responses and insights, as can be inferred from the following examples:*

*4.1 How can I increase my authenticity in order to contribute to the development of a culture of inquiry?*

*4.2 How can I improve my practice by living my values?*

*4.3 How I do live the values of honesty, compassion, empathic relationships, and authenticity in my teaching?*

*4.4 How do my values in life intrinsically connect to my actions and how do I exercise my influence in my relations with the teachers I support?*

Data will also be drawn from videotaping of class presentations, discussions, local and global SKYPE recordings of collaborative inquiries, located on YouTube.

Evidence, objects and materials to show the effectiveness of ‘I’ questions in improving practice and generating knowledge, in realising the second part of the AERA mission, will also be drawn from masters dissertations at <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml> and masters papers and dissertations at [http://spanglefish.com/actionresearchcanada](http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml) and writings for masters units at <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/mastermod.shtml> .

5. **Results and substantiated conclusions**

Results and substantiated conclusions from action research ‘I’ inquiries that engage with issues of social transformation and the values that carry hope for the future of humanity have been published in the many electronic sites such as Educational Journal of Living Theories as well as in the academy.

The contents below of the major research projects (published at http;//www.spanglefish.com/actionresearchcanada) produced by the masters cohorts in Bluewater will be analysed to demonstrate how such action research ‘I’ inquiries can fulfill the AERA mission satisfying the mission *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.* The analysis will show how the generation of the living educational theories of educational researchers can integrate insights from the theories of education researchers in a way that sustains a connection with both improving practice and generating knowledge. The substantiated conclusions include alternative ways of representing learning; evidence of influence in the context of classrooms, schools and school systems; evidence of accounting for an individual’s educational influence in a supporting learning differences; evidence of using multi-media to enhance research results.

*5.1* Megan Jones*: How can I live my values more fully in my practice and trust my embodied knowledge?*

*5.2* Liz Campbell: *How can I improve my practice by living my values of love and joy more fully?*

*5.3* Karen Spragg*: How I can live transformational philosophical tenets in my role as a system curriculum lead teacher to improve my support of teachers.*

*5.4* Sheryl Elliott*: How can I improve my professional practice as a Secondary School Vice Principal by living my values authentically?*

*5.5* Kristen Weber*: How can I teach in a way that captures my living critical standards of judgement on effective teaching and still uphold my moral responsibility to prepare students for provincial testing?*

*5.6* Tawnya Schlosser: *How can I help primary students to improve their reading skills by involving them as co-researchers?*

*5.7* Cathy Griffin: *How can I improve my practice by living my values of Trust, Love and Authenticity more fully?*

6. **Scholarly significance.**

The originality of the contribution of this presentation to the academic and professional knowledge-base of education is in the systematic way embodied educational values are transformed into educational standards of practice and judgement through the pedagogy of creating a culture of inquiry. The presentation demonstrates how the values and standards can be used critically both to test the validity of educational knowledge-claims and to be a powerful motivator in educational inquiries that can contribute to both halves of the AERA mission *“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.”*

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The values and standards are defined in terms of the AERA mission through the advancement of knowledge about education and through the pedagogy of creating a culture of inquiry that is directly related to improving education and serving the public good.

It can be seen as a response to Schön’s (1995) call for the development of a new epistemology for the new scholarship in demonstrating how the embodied knowledge of professional educators can be made public. It answers Snow’s (2001, p. 9) call for procedures for accumulating such knowledge and making it public and the need for a critical mass of practitioner researchers’ studies.

It demonstrates the potential of Whitehead’s (1998) living theory to effect positive change in the lives of practitioners and those they influence in a variety of settings.

The significance can be understood as action researchers share their research in attempting to live according to their values, in trying to improve the education for all learners and in working to improve the social order for all.

In fulfilling all three parts of the AERA mission the transformative capacity of action researchers can be recognized and understood.

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