How Can I Improve My Practice as a Senior Inclusion Officer in contributing to the development of the Knowledge and Skills of Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) through my involvement in the implementation of the National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination

Background to the topic

The 2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy sets out the Government's vision that all those working with children and young people should have the knowledge and skills to help children and young people achieve the outcomes as stated in the Every Child Matters (2003) agenda.

The government commissioned the Teacher Development Agency (TDA) to develop a framework of nationally accredited training for teachers new to role of Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) which would involve leading the coordination of the provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in schools. This was in response to the Education and Skills Select Committee's Report on Special Educational Needs (2006). The National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination, which came into place in September 2009, is now mandatory for SENCOs new to role. I contributed to the successful bid which has made one of our local universities, Bath Spa University, a provider, and I have been involved in the development of the programme which is at masters level

Foci of Enquiry

My research focuses on:

- my contribution and influence in ensuring that SENCOs have the appropriate skills and knowledge in order that they contribute to improving outcomes for children with SEN and disabilities;
- how my knowledge base informs educational practice;
- the development of new living standards of judgement derived from the values I hold which contribute to the improvement of educational practice.

Research Methods
My methods will include the use of action reflection cycles (Lewin, 1946, Schon,1995, Carr and Kemmis, 1986, Whitehead, 1989). Eisner (1993) explains that the relevance of different forms of representation in research is growing and throughout my inquiry, I have used video to reflect on my practice (Farren and Whitehead, 2006, Jones, 2009). The use of narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Clandinin & Murphy, 2009) is used throughout. I draw on Habermas' (1976) four criteria of social validity and Winter's (1989) six principles in relation to the rigour of my research. My inquiry will be further validated by a validation group who meet weekly.

Theoretical Frame

For my inquiry, I use a living theory methodology (Whitehead, 2008) whereby practitioners create their own educational theories by making explicit the meanings of their embodied educational values as explanatory principles in explanations of their influence. In adopting a living theory methodology, I explore the implications of such questions as, 'How can I improve my practice?' and 'What are the educational influences in my own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of social formations?' In this exploration I generate my own living educational theory as I explain these educational influences in learning in the professional context of special educational needs (Jones, 2009).

Contribution to Knowledge

This paper is significant in its contribution to the development of a new epistemology for educational knowledge (Schon,1995; BERA symposium, 2009) and to an understanding of the influence of living standards of judgement on the development of educational policy and practice. It makes a contribution to understanding how multi-media narratives (Huxtable, 2009; Jones 2009) can be used to communicate the meanings of embodied expressions of the energy-flowing values that contribute to the educational principles that can explain educational influences in improving practice in relation to special educational needs.

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