Submission for a keynote symposium linked to the Practitioner-Researcher Special Interest Group

Explicating A New Epistemology For Educational Knowledge With Educational Responsibility

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Chair: Margaret Farren, Dublin City University

Discussant: Christine Jones, Bath and North East Somerset Local Authority

Overview

The overall coherence of the symposium is in the explication of the epistemology transformation of educational knowledge under discussion in Open Dialogue in the 2008 issues 102, 103, 104 and 105 of Research Intelligence. The new epistemology has been created in the explanations that practitioner-researchers have produced for their educational influences in learning. These include explanations of their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which they are living, working and researching. The idea of living educational theories is introduced to distinguish these explanations from the explanations of education researchers who are making their contributions to knowledge in disciplines of education other than a discipline of educational enquiry. The data-base for the explication of the new epistemology will include over 30 doctorates that have been successfully completed between 1988-2009.

Epistemological coherence is provided by a new unit of appraisal, living standards of judgment and a living logic of inclusionality. The unit of appraisal is the individual's explanation of their educational influence in learning. The meanings of living standards of judgment are clarified in the course of their emergence in the practice of educational enquiries in doctoral and other research programmes. The clarification includes the use of principles of rigor and personal and social validity. A living logic of inclusionality forms the epistemological coherence through integrating insights from propositional and dialectical theories without the usual problem arising between adherents of propositional and dialectical logic denying the rationality of the other's logic.

Methodological coherence is provided by narratives that integrate action reflection cycles in enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?' Some of the narratives will include video-data, from educational relationships, to clarify ostensively and develop meanings of living standards of judgment. These standards include the value of educational responsibility for distinguishing the research as educational.

Conceptual coherence is provided by a view of educational research that is distinguished by the expression of educational responsibility in educational relationships in educational spaces. In this view of educational research the contributions of education researchers provide insights for the generation of educational theory.

Evidence will be presented to show the demonstrable international significance of living theory educational research upon practice, policy and theory in the UK, the Republic of Ireland, China, Japan, Canada, Croatia, India and South Africa.

Supporting Statement

In the sense that educational researchers are seeking to contribute to educational knowledge it is always timely to present ideas that claim to be contributing to the reconstruction of what counts as educational theory. The contributions to the symposium can be understood as an answer to the call made in 1995 by Donald Schon to develop a new epistemology for educational knowledge from action research into teachers' professional practice. The contributions can also be understood as a response to Snow's 2001 call in her Presidential Address to AERA to develop procedures for systematizing and making public the knowledge-base of practitioners. The presentations are also consistent with current ideas that show how narratives can communicate explanations of educational influence in living educational theories. In this symposium educational researchers are viewed as distinct from education researchers in seeking to contribute to forms of educational knowledge that can explain an individual's educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of social formations.

To ensure the high quality of the research data as well as the quality of the analyses, the analyses include the research programmes of practitioner-researchers who have engaged in several years of educational enquiry into their practice for their successfully completed doctoral or other research degrees.

In focusing on learning for action with action, McNiff draws evidence from five living theory doctorate research programmes successfully completed at the University of Limerick over the past three years with the titles:

My living educational theory of inclusional practice.

Working with collaborative projects: my living theory of a holistic educational practice.

My living theory of learning to teach for social justice: How do I enable primary school children with specific learning disability (dyslexia) and myself as their teacher to realise our learning potentials?

Towards a living theory of caring pedagogy: interrogating my practice to nurture a critical, emancipatory and just community of enquiry.

A living theory of a practice of social justice: realising the right of Traveller children to educational equality.

Each practitioner-researcher expresses educational responsibility in distinguishing his or her research as educational. As part of this educational responsibility they produce research narratives in which they hold themselves to account for living their ontological values as fully as they can.

Each contributor to the symposium recognizes the importance of addressing the sociocultural influences of postcolonialism and Renowden focuses on this in researching accountability with professional identity in her enquiry, 'How do I develop my postcolonial living theory of educationally responsible practice?'

Practitioner researchers cannot do anything without expressing energy. An assumption that gives coherence to the symposium, and that is open to question, is the belief that educational relationships involve the expression of a life-affirming energy with values. Huxtable focuses on forms of representation that can communicate such flows of energy with values of educational responsibility, loving recognition and respectful connectedness in her educational enquiry, 'How do I improve what I am doing in my professional practice and make an original contribution to the knowledge-base of education?'

From the ground of the expression of educational responsibility in educational relationships, the practitioner-researchers contributing to the symposium, as well as the successfully completed living theory doctorates drawn on in the analyses, use new units of appraisal, living logics and standards of judgment in their claims to

educational knowledge. Whitehead explicates these units, logics and standards in his analysis of educational theories and a living theory methodology that can be used in explaining educational influences in learning.

Individual Contributions

Learning for action in action

Jean McNiff, York St. John University, UK.

Background to the research

This paper explains how I hold myself accountable for my professional learning as I seek to influence the development of new institutional epistemologies that are grounded in a commitment to personal accountability in professional practice. It traces the educational journey of five teacher-researchers and myself as their supervisor. Having completed their masters studies with me through a British university, using a self-study action research methodology, the teachers now wished collectively to undertake their doctoral studies at an Irish university, eventually locating at the University of Limerick. Six years on, the successful completions of all five doctorates (Appendix 1) provide a strong evidence base for the legitimation of a new epistemology of educational knowledge in Ireland, with potential global significance.

Focus of the enquiry

The project was marked by a focus on reciprocal learning in the pursuit of social justice. For the teachers, it was for social justice on behalf of marginalised children. For me, it was for educational justice in relation to legitimating the teachers as educational theorists, and also for epistemological justice in legitimating their workplace-based knowledge as valid theory. This involved strengthening new institutional epistemologies (Schön 1995) that accepted personal ways of knowing, informed by living logics and values (Whitehead and McNiff 2006). Over time, we researched our practices as a group who could demonstrate the realisation of educational influence in our own and one another's learning. Each thesis shows this value of learning for action through action, some using a multimedia form. My enquiry focused on explaining my pedagogical practices in relation to influencing the professional learning of my colleagues and myself, by interrogating our own and one another's normative assumptions, in order to challenge unwarranted truth claims in the public sphere.

My interactive presentation makes a case for the development of relational and transformational epistemologies that can promote sustainable social and cultural practices. It also raises questions about the responsibilities of intellectuals in demonstrating their accountability for social wellbeing through the development of appropriate institutional epistemologies for the production of the kind of knowledge and form of educational theory that can contribute to human wellbeing. The presentation will also include some of the research being undertaken at York St John University that is contributing to current debates in the area.

Research methods

Our individual and collective research methodologies became transformational action enquiries, grounded in a view of history as an infinite process of new beginnings (Said 1997). We came to appreciate ourselves as actively making history by improving present practice for future sustainability, through developing cultures of enquiry focused on dialogically constituted communicative action (Habermas 1987). We came to appreciate that we were learning for action through action. Furthermore, we began to ask, 'What kind of action? Action for what?' and, since we all aimed for justice for the people in our care, we effectively transformed the University motto, 'Eagna chun Gnímh' (Learning for Action), into the living realisation of our living values and logics.

Theoretical frameworks

We tested the validity of our work against the ideas of action theorists, such as Taylor (1992), linking justice with political philosophy; of political philosophers such as Said (1997) and Chomsky (1986), linking personal accountability with social sustainability; and Polanyi (1958), positioning personal knowledge as the basis of social action. We demonstrated methodological rigour (Winter 1989) in our accounts. The content of each thesis explains the processes of transformative action, the communicability of which is strengthened by its transformational form. Each text demonstrates ironic validity (Lather 2004), by interrogating its unarticulated assumptions, and subjecting its findings and evidence base to rigorous social validation.

Evidence base

The five theses comprise an evidence base with several functions. It demonstrates the values-based knowledge of the teachers, and a focus on achieving social justice for children. It is evidence of my educational influence in the teachers' learning; and evidence of the development of new institutional epistemologies for a new scholarship of educational knowledge. In each case, the validity of the evidence may be tested against the values that informed the practice, as living standards of judgement. Testing the validity of the evidence base points to the educational significance of the research.

Contribution to new educational knowledge

The educational significance of the research lies in the capacity of all participants to explain their accountability for their practices, and so contribute to the development of new institutional epistemologies grounded in the values of justice and the exercise of originality and critical engagement. The idea of 'learning for action through action' takes on new meaning, as the work of our group shows how the linguistic form becomes live, and so returns education to its living practitioners.

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APPENDIX 1

Cahill, M. (2007) *My Living Educational Theory of Inclusional Practice*. PhD thesis, University of Limerick. Retrieved 9th January 2008 from ***http://www.jeanmcniff.com/margaretcahill/index.html***

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Linking accountability with professional identity: how do I develop my postcolonial living theory of educationally responsible practice?

Jane Renowden, St Mary's University College, UK.

Background to the research

In this paper I explore the potentials of my research as a senior lecturer in a higher education supervisory position for the development of a new epistemology of educational knowledge with social responsibility. I trace the development of my postcolonial commitments through the experience of my transition from mainly content-based classroom teaching to knowledge-creating higher education pedagogies, and I link this with Foucault's (1977) ideas of the development from specific and universal intellectual (see below). My professional learning journey, now at doctoral level, has been characterised by an increasingly strong link between a desire to demonstrate professional accountability and the creation of my professional identity as fulfilling my potentials for a dialogically-constituted practice that honours the other's capacity for original thinking and creative engagement. I theorise my practice as a form of public accountability through demonstrating the validity of my claims to be influencing my own and others' learning for good.

Focus of the enquiry

The focus of the enquiry is therefore my practice as I interrogate what I am doing and produce evidence against which I test the validity of my claims to be acting in the public good. My understanding of 'the good' is that it resides in the living practices of people as they work collaboratively for social sustainability. Sustainability implies that a process contains its own capacity for infinitely renewable self-transformation. My practice therefore focuses on how I can support student teachers and myself as their supervisor to develop relational forms that encourage independent thinking through rational debate and stringent critique, within a caring dialogically-constituted context of critically reflective practice.

Research methods

I adopt a self-study action research approach to enquiring into my practice, as I encourage student teachers and myself to interrogate the normative epistemologies and cultural assumptions of our social contexts and our own thinking. This involves drawing on the work of critical deconstruction and action theorists, such as Derrida (1976) and Butler (1999), who explain the futility of working within the regulatory strictures of an imaginary Law. My methodologies are grounded in a view of identity as continually self-transforming, as a realisation of the values of growth through unfettered freedom and the practise of freedom as development (Sen 1999). My data gathering focuses on those episodes that show the development of critical thinking and critically reflective practices through the problematisation of normative cultural assumptions and organisational epistemologies. I continually subject my data and evidence to the critique of others, to ensure that I do not fall into the trap of self-deception through believing in the stable nature of my capacity for self-critique while using a form of logic that is grounded in assumptions about the inviolable nature of normative epistemologies.

Theoretical frameworks

My theoretical frameworks are to do with the politics of knowledge generation, within a postcolonialist frame of intellectual and social emancipation, grounded in a politics of deconstruction. To fulfil my values of accountability in exercising my own freedom, and encouraging others to do the same, I draw on the work of Freire (1993) and Memmi (2003), which enables me to realise that my professional narrative contains examples of how, in my knowledge creating practices, I have been both the oppressor and the oppressed. I strengthen my understanding of how to free myself from the crippling limitations of such colonialist practices through drawing

on Foucault's ideas of the archaeology of knowledge-power, and I strengthen my professional identity in relation to his (1977) insights about the transformational processes involved in moving from specific to universal intellectual.

Evidence base

As evidence to test the claims above, I look to the assignments of my students together with my own reflective journal and writings, using my values as my living standards of judgment (Whitehead and McNiff 2006). I trace the development of our reciprocal learning, as I encourage them to become independent thinkers, while their feedback on my practice encourages me to do the same. Collectively, our storied accounts show the development of dialogically-constituted communities of practice (Wenger 1998), whose aims are to engage in communicative action (Habermas 1988) for personal and social wellbeing.

Contribution to new educational knowledge

The educational significance of my research is in the demonstration of my educational influence in my students' and my own learning, and my claim to have developed a critical emancipatory epistemology of practice. By developing emancipatory intellectual and social practices, I claim that I am contributing to a new epistemology of educational knowledge through my practice of emancipatory critical pedagogy that values the inclusion of the other (Habermas 1998) as a prerequisite for social sustainability.

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How do I improve what I am doing in my professional practice and make an original contribution to the knowledge-base of education?

Marie Huxtable, University of Bath, UK.

Background to the research

There has been much discussion in BERA and AERA about the appropriate forms of representation for the educational theories generating by practitioner-researchers in their educational research (Eisner, 1988, 1993, 1997, 2005; Bruce Ferguson, Whitehead 2008a, Laidlaw, 2008; Adler Collins, 2008). Recent discussions in 2008 issues 102, 103, 104 and 105 of Research Intelligence have suggested that an epistemological transformation in what counts as educational knowledge is underway in the living educational theories being produced by practitioner-researchers.

Focus of the enquiry.

In my work as a senior educational psychologist in Bath & North East Somerset Authority I have a systemic responsibility to organize both the APEX (Able Pupils Extending Opportunities) programme on extending educational opportunities for children and young people and the leadership programme on Gifts and Talents in Education. In this self-study of my professional practice I make a contribution to educational knowledge through explicating the relationally dynamic standards of judgment that can be used to validate and legitimate my embodied educational knowledge in the Academy.

The explanations of educational influence in my own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of social formations include the narratives of the teachers and pupils whose work I have supported. They include analyses of, and creative educational responses to, government and local government policies on gifts and talents in education. The explanations of educational influence I present include the recognition, expression, clarification and communication of energy flowing values of loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility.

Research methods

The living theory methodology (Whitehead, 2008b) developed in this thesis draws insights from a range of methods from phenomenological, ethnographic, case study, grounded theory and narrative approaches to educational research (Cresswell, 2007). It includes a multi-media narrative to explicate the meanings of the energy flowing values and understandings that constitute the explanatory principles of educational influences in the thesis. Rigour is enhanced using the methods advocated by Winter (1989) and social validity is enhanced using the principles advocated by Habermas (1976, 2002).

Theoretical frameworks

The paper draws on:

- Whitehead's (1989, 2008) living theory and living theory methodology.
- Hymer's (2007) generative-transformational framework for gift creation.
- Rayner's (2005) idea of inclusionality.
- Biesta's (2006) ideas on moving beyond a language of learning into a language of education through the exercise of educational responsibility.

Contribution to new educational knowledge

The significance of the paper is in the contribution it makes to an educational knowledge-base of practice, theory and systemic influence, in the development of a new, inclusional educational epistemology.

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Generating educational theories that can explain educational influences in learning

Jack Whitehead, University of Bath, UK.

Background to the research

There has been much discussion in BERA and AERA about the appropriate standards of judgment for evaluating the quality and validity of the educational knowledge generated by practitioner-researchers.

The 1988 BERA Presidential Address focused on the development of a research-based approach to professionalism in education through the generation of living educational theories. By 2008 over 30 living theory doctorates had been legitimated in the Academy with new units of appraisal, living logics and standards of judgment, in explanations of educational influences in learning.

The research answers the call made by Schön (1995) for the development of a new epistemology for the scholarship of teaching and by Snow (2001) to develop methodologies for making public the professional knowledge of teachers.

Foci of the enquiries.

There are three research questions addressed in this presentation:

1) Can the explanations produced by individuals to explain their educational influences in learning be used as appropriate units of appraisal in the generation of educational theory?

2) What are the logics of the explanations that individuals produce for their educational influences in their own learning?

3) Which living standards of judgment for evaluating the validity of explanations of educational influences in learning have been legitimated in the Academy?

Research methods

The appropriateness of the action reflection cycles used in the generation and development of living educational theories rests in showing their usefulness in clarifying the meanings of ontological values in educational relationships and in forming these values into living epistemological standards of judgment.

Visual narratives are used in multi-media explanations of educational influences in learning.

The methods for enhancing the robustness of the validity and rigour of the explanations include the use of Habermas' (1976) four criteria of social validity and Winter's (1989) six criteria for enhancing rigour.

Lather's (1991) catalytic validity is used to justify claims about the educational influence of the ideas generated in one context for individuals working and researching in different contexts in the UK, Ireland, Canada, Croatia, India, China, Japan and South Africa.

Theoretical frameworks

Answers to the research questions include the following analytic frames.

Adler-Collins' (2000) safe space; Bernstein's(2000) mythological discourse; Biesta's (2006) language of education; Bourdieu's (2000) ideas of habitus and social formation; Charles'(2007) guiltless recognition and societal reidentification; Delong's (2002) culture of inquiry; Farren's (2005) pedagogy of the unique and web of

betweenness; Habermas'(1976, 1987, 2002) notions of social validity, learning and the inclusion of the other; Hymer's (2007) idea of giftedness; Ilyenkov's(1977) dialectical logic; Lohr's (2006) love at work; McNiff's(2006) my story is my living educational theory; Merleau-Ponty's(1972) notion of embodiment; Rayner's(2006) idea of inclusionality; Vasilyuk's (1996) psychology of experiencing; Whitehead's (1989) idea of living educational theories; Laidlaw's (1996) idea of living standards of judgement; Winter's (1989) criteria of rigour;

|Contribution to new educational knowledge

1) The generation of a new epistemology for educational knowledge (Whitehead, 2008 a &b) .
2) The explication of a living theory methodology for making public the embodied knowledge of professional practitioners.
3) An understanding of educational theory as the explanations that individuals produce for their educational influences in learning.

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