

**Jack Whitehead's curriculum proposal for programme GS 570 on 'A Special Topic in Educational Leadership' at Bishop's University, Lennoxville, 5-16 July 1999.**

**Action Research Approaches to Educational Leadership**

**PURPOSE**

I see the purpose of these sessions to enable you to carry out an action enquiry into an aspect of your educational leadership, to understand the fundamental principles of action research and to locate the significance of the approach in institutional, local, provincial and national governmental policies.

**ORGANISATION**

I'd like to start the sessions by focussing on your understanding of what constitutes an educational enquiry into educational leadership. I'd like to lead into the design of short action enquiries into areas of your own choosing. I am thinking of enquiries which will use the group as a peer learning set in which issues and problems related to your enquiry will be addressed and discussed in detail. A final draft of the action enquiry report will then form the basis for your self and peer assessments.

I'd like the sessions to progress in three stages:

**CONTENT**

**1. What Constitutes an Educational Enquiry into your Educational Leadership?**

I want you to give examples of educational enquiries drawn from your professional practice. I'd like to relate these to examples in the literature on different approaches to action and other forms of educational research. After this I want to encourage you formulate your own personal action enquiry (this may be an individual or group enquiry). There will be an initial focus on producing short pieces of autobiographical writing to help you to locate your enquiries in your particular contexts and to explain the unique constellation of values which provide your professional motivations.

The main texts for this phase will be

- i) Ghaye, A. & Ghaye, K. (1998) Teaching and 'learning through Critical Reflective Practice. London; David Fulton. See Chapter 3, Reflection-on-values:being a professional' and Chapter 4, Reflection-on-practice: resolving teaching concerns.
- ii) Connelly, F. M. & Clandinin, D.J. (Eds.) (1999) Shaping a Professional Identity: Stories of Educational Practice. University of Western Ontario; Althouse Press. See Chapter 11, Stories to Live By: Teacher Identities on a Changing Professional Knowledge Landscape.

Additional Reading: A review of 'Doing Leadership Differently: Gender, Power and Sexuality in a Changing Business Culture'. Amanda Sinclair (1998) Melbourne University Press, in *Management in Education: The future of educational leadership*. Vol. 12, No.5, p.24.

## **2. Formulating and Carrying Out an Action Enquiry**

A draft of your action enquiry 'design' will be a focus for group discussion. Questions will be raised about the feasibility of the enquiry and about the kind of data which will be needed to enable you to make judgements on the quality and effectiveness of your enquiry. As you carry out your enquiry there will be opportunities for reporting back to the group on issues and problems arising. During this time it is envisaged that we will consider the integration of the methods and conceptual frameworks from the disciplines of education into an educational enquiry e.g. conceptual analysis, theories of learning, the use of autobiography and narrative in the presentation of qualitative research.

In this phase of the programme there will be an emphasis on talking about enquiries which are at the forefront of the educational enquiries published in *Educational Researcher* over the past three years. These will include:

Donmoyer, R. (1996) *Educational Research in an Era of Paradigm Proliferation: What's a Journal Editor to do?* Vol. 25, No.2, pp 19-25.

Berliner, D.C., Resnick, L.B., Cuban, L., Cole, N., Popham, W.J., Goodlad, J.I. (1997) "The Vision Thing": *Educational Research and AERA in the 21st Century - Part 2: Competing Visions for Enhancing the Impact of Educational Research*. Vol. 26, No.5, pp.12-27.

Eisner, E. (1997) *The Promise and Perils of Alternative Forms of Data Representation*. Vol. 26, No.6, pp. 4-10.

Rhine, S. (1998) *The Role of Research and Teachers' Knowledge Base in Professional Development*. Vol. 27, No.5, pp. 27-31.

Korthagen, F. A.J. & Kessels, J.P.A. (1999) *Linking Theory and Practice: Changing the Pedagogy of Teacher Education*, Vol. 28, No.4, pp. 4-17.

Anderson, G.L. & Herr, K. (1999) *The New Paradigm Wars: Is There Room for rigorous Practitioner Knowledge in Schools and Universities*. *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 28, No.5, pp. 12-21,40.

See also Pam Lomax's Presidential Address to the British Educational Research Association on *Working Together for Educative Community through Research*, *British Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 25, No.1, pp. 5-21, 1999.

## **3. Final Draft of Action Enquiry Report.**

Participants will present a final draft of their enquiry report. These will be used to share evidence concerning claims to knowledge which emerge from the enquiries. Questions of validity, justification and rigour will be raised and discussed, as will questions concerning the politics of educational knowledge. The latter will focus on the legitimisation of different conceptions of educational theory from a dialectical perspective. The idea that each participant's description and explanation of their own professional learning constitutes their own living educational theory as a

form of improvisatory self-realisation will be considered. The final draft of the participant's enquiry will form the basis for triangulated self/peer/tutor assessment.

Educational Conversations in this phase of the enquiry will include our engagement with ideas from the self-study movement published in:

Hamilton, M.L. (Ed) (1998) *Reconceptualizing Teaching Practice: Self-Study in Teacher Education*, London; Falmer. See Chapter 15, Cole, A.L. & Knowles, G. *The Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices and the Reform of Teacher Education*.

## **ASSESSMENT**

4-6000 word assignment involving an evaluative case report on the professional enquiry or a portfolio assessment which includes 1500-3000 words of connecting narrative.

The criteria for assessment will include:

To what extent have you:

- I) Researched a good quality educational question related to your own professional practice in a way which has enhanced your educational knowledge?
- ii) Explained your professional learning in a way which has appropriately integrated knowledge from other sources?
- iii) Demonstrated your ability to identify your concerns, action plan, act and gather data to enable you to judge the extent to which you are living your educational values through your practice?
- iv) Considered how your inquiry might help to improve your educational practices and/or those of others.

Bishop's University operate a marking system on a 45 credit masters programme. The pass mark for this 3 credit course is 70 marks.

In presenting your account you should bear in mind, Connelly's and Clandinin's (1990) point about validity criteria for narrative inquiry:

"We think a variety of criteria, some appropriate to some circumstances and some to others, will eventually be the agreed-upon norm. It is currently the case that each inquirer must search for, and defend, the criteria that best apply to his or her work."

Connelly, F.M. & Clandinin, J. (1990) Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, Vol. No.5, pp. 2-14.



Additional Bibliography from the 1997 Action Research Module at the University of Bath.

- Carr, W. & Kemmis, S. (1986) *Becoming Critical*. London; Falmer Press.
- Denzin, M. & Lincoln, Y. (1994) *A Handbook of Qualitative Research*. London; Sage.
- Eames, K. (1988) Evaluating a teacher research's choice of action research. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*. Vol.13, No.3, pp. 212-218.
- Eames, K. (1995) How do I, as a teacher and an educational action-researcher, describe and explain the nature of my professional knowledge? Ph.D. University of Bath. Accessible from the Web at <http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw>
- Eisner, E. (1993) Forms of Understanding and the Future of Educational Research. *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 22, No.7, pp. 5-11.
- Eisner, E. (1997) The Promise and Perils of Alternative Forms of Data Representation. *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 28, No.6, pp. 4-10.
- Elliott, J. (1989) The Professional Learning of Teachers. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 'New Directions for Educational Theory'. Vol.19, No.1. pp.81-101
- Hamilton, D. et al (Eds) (1977) *Beyond the Numbers Game*. Macmillan.
- Hammersley (1979) *Analysing Ethnographic Data*, Part 1, Block 6, DE304, Research Methods, Open University. See also D'arcy's response to Hammersley in *Educational Action Research*, Vol. 2, No.2. 1994. pp. 291-293.
- Holley, E. (1997) *My Living Educational Theory: How do I as a teacher-researcher contribute to the development of living educational theory through an exploration of my values in my professional practice?* M.Phil. Thesis, University of Bath. Accessible from the Web at <http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw>
- Hollingsworth, S. (Ed.) (1997) *International Action Research*, London, Washington; Falmer.
- Hopkins, D. (1985) *A Teacher's Guide to Action Research*. Open University Press.
- Kemmis, S. & MacTaggart, R. (1982) *The Action Research Planner*, Deakin University Press.
- Laidlaw, M. (1994) The Democratising Potential of Dialogical Focus in action research enquiries. *Educational Action Research*, Vol.2, No.2. pp. 223-241
- Laidlaw, M. (1996) *My Living Educational Theory: How can I create my own living educational theory as I offer you an account of my educational development?* Ph.D. Thesis, University of Bath. Accessible from the Web at address <http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw>
- Lomax, P. (1989) *The Management of Change*. Clevedon; Multilingual Matters.
- Lomax P. (1994) *The Narrative of an Educational Journey: Crossing the Tracks*. Kingston University
- Lincoln, T.S. & Guba, E.G. (1985) *Naturalistic Enquiry*, New York; Sage.
- McNiff, J. (1992) *Action Research Principles and Practice*. London; Routledge.
- McNiff, J., Lomax, P. & Whitehead, J. (1996) *You and Your Action Research Project*, London; Routledge.
- McKernan, J. (1996) *Curriculum Action Research*. London; Kogan Page.
- O Hanlon, C. (1996) *Professional Development through Action Research in Educational Settings*. London, Washington; Falmer.
- Reason, P. & Rowan, J. (1982) *Human Inquiry: A Sourcebook of New Paradigm Research*. Chichester, New York; Wiley.
- Rowland, S. (1993) *The Enquiring Tutor*. London; Falmer.
- Sherman, R. & Webb, R. (1988) *Qualitative Research in Education, Focus and Methods*. The Falmer Press.

Shipman, M. (1985) Educational Research: Principles, Policies and Practices, London; Falmer  
Supporting Teacher Research Into Classroom Teaching. Avon L.E.A. Guidelines 1988/89.  
Walker, R. (1985) Doing Research, Cambridge University Press.  
Whitehead, J. (1989) How do we improve research-based professionalism in education? British  
Educational Research Journal, Vol.15, No.1, pp3-17.  
Whitehead, J. (1993) The Growth of Educational Knowledge: creating your own living educational  
theories.  
Whitehead, J. (1997) An original contribution to educational knowledge and professionalism: a  
commentary on two papers presented at AERA, Chicago, 1997, in Lomax, P. (Ed) (1997)  
Dimensions of the educative relationship: case studies from teaching and teacher education.  
Kingston; Kingston University.  
Winter, R. (1989) Learning from Experience, London; Falmer Press.

Zuber-Skerritt, O. (1996) New Directions in Action Research, London, Washington; Falmer  
The first five issues of the International Journal, Educational Action Research Vol, 1. nos 1-3 and  
Vol2, nos. 1-2, will also provide relevant literature.

Those references marked in BOLD are useful introductory texts.

Note:

The above forms of action research related to living educational theory are now integrated into the  
action research programmes of the Centre for action Research in Professional Practice (CARPP) at  
the University of Bath. Further details and resources can be downloaded from the CARPP web-site  
and action research homepage at the University of Bath.

See <http://www.actionresearch.net> go into the Master's Programme for details of the portfolio  
assessment module and a full M.A. dissertation by Terese Burke on the enquiry, 'How do I improve  
my practice as a learning support teacher?'

This section also contains the newsletters for newly formed teacher-researcher groups at the  
Hucclecote Centre and at Corsham School in the UK.

The Whitehead 1989 paper on the creation of living educational theories can be downloaded from  
the JW's Writings section of the homepage at <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/livtheory.doc>