

Dear Shelagh, Tracey, Joy and all,

I'm responding to your recent writings, which I've enjoyed, to see if I can help with an introductory 'framing' that can help a reader to locate your writings as a contribution to educational knowledge about continuing professional development.

What I'm hoping I can do is to place 'alongside' (Pound, 2009) your educational enquiry some ideas that will captivate your imaginations and that you can use in your own CPD and your writings. I'm also hoping that you can integrate and reference the ideas in ways that strengthen the contributions your writings make to the knowledge-base of education.

In your introductory comments it would be wise to describe briefly the masters module that you have been working with:

Active Learning and Knowledge Creating Research

http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/huxtable/LLCCPD/Active_learning_module.html

Gifted and Talented Education

http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/huxtable/LLCCPD/G%26T_ed_module.html

There are five ideas I'm placing alongside your own which might be useful for your introductory 'framing'. These are:

- i) An action research approach to continuing professional development that includes the creation of your own living educational theory.
- ii) The use of narrative in creating your description and explanation of your educational influences in your own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work. These explanations include your engagement with the ideas of others.
- iii) The use of narrative and action reflection cycles in clarifying the meanings of the embodied values you express in your practice and which you use as explanatory principles in your explanations of educational influences in learning.
- iv) The importance of a validation group to strengthen the validity of your interpretations.
- v) An outline of the structure/organisation of your writings to help your reader with a 'prior organiser' about what is to come.

An action research approach to continuing professional development:

- a) See the urls on the homepage of <http://www.actionresearch.net> and in particular the section on [Action planning in improving practice and in generating educational knowledge](#) at: <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/arplanner.htm>
- b) McNiff, J. & Whitehead, (2010) You and Your Action Research Project: Third Edition. London & New York; Routledge.

Narrative

a) K. Attard (2012) The role of narrative writing in improving professional practice. *Educational Action Research*, 20(1); 161-176

“The use of narratives in the social sciences has drastically increased throughout recent decades. They are mainly used as a way of collecting data and as a way of promoting professional development. This article sheds light on how a practitioner-researcher engaged in narrative writing and how this helped in what is hereby termed a reflective odyssey. More specifically, the main focus here is how the very act of writing when keeping a personal journal can act as a catalyst for ongoing reflective thought. Therefore, narratives were firstly used by the practitioner-researcher as a form of personal professional development. However, they also acted as data in the longitudinal process of understanding how narrative writing can aid in the continuous striving for improving professional practice. Original narrative extracts are presented throughout the text to back the claims made for narrative writing. This gives a unique opportunity to the reader to get a glimpse of the practitioner-researcher’s thought processes and dilemmas. The roles of writing in meaning creation and representation; pushing thinking into unforeseen directions; and the promotion of ‘conversing with oneself’ and self-understanding are discussed in this article.

Keywords: narrative writing; practitioner-research; reflective practice; self-study; construction of meaning”

b) The works of Eisner are well worth engaging with. His 2005 book contains the other three articles below.

Eisner, E. (1988) *The Primacy of Experience and the Politics of Method*, *Educational Researcher*, 17(5); 15-20.

Eisner, E. (1993) *Forms of Understanding and the Future of Educational Research*. *Educational Researcher*, 22(7); 5-11.

Eisner, E. (1997) *The Promise and Perils of Alternative Forms of Data Representation*. *Educational Researcher*, 26(6); 4-10.

Eisner, E. (2005) *Reimagining Schools: The selected works of Elliot W. Eisner*, Oxford & New York; Routledge.

c) See also Jean Clandinin’s writings, especially in:

Clandinin, J. (Ed) (2007) *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*, Thousand Islands, London, New Dehli; Sage.

See some quotes from Clandinin’s writings at:

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/clandinin/clandinin1996to07.pdf>

Clarifying the meanings of embodied values

a) Whitehead, J. (2012) Educational Research for Social Change with Living Educational Theories, 1(1); 5-21. Retrieved 10 May 2012 from http://ersc.nmmu.ac.za/view_edition.php?v=1&n=1 . You will have register (simple and free) to download this paper.

Take care with your word limit (excluding Appendices and References). This would usually be 5000 words plus or minus 10%.

Tracey- your draft is already 6982 words and will need editing, especially if the final submission is to include some of the ideas above.

Validity

The importance of ‘robust evidence’ is linked to the validity of an evidence-based explanation of educational influence in learning. I use and advocate two procedures for strengthening the validity of such explanations.

The first procedure is grounded in Polanyi’s (1958) acceptance of responsibility for searching for the truth and stating one’s findings (p. 299). It is focused on realizing the crippling mutilations imposed by an objectivist framework. Polanyi believes, as I do, that once the veil of ambiguities covering up these mutilations has been definitely dissolved – many fresh minds will turn to the task of reinterpreting the world as it is, and as it then once more will be seen to be (p. 381). The procedure requires a commitment to personal knowledge in the sense of a decision to understand the world from one’s own point of view, as a person claiming originality and exercising his personal judgement responsibly with universal intent (p. 327).

The second procedure is grounded in Habermas’ (1976) understanding of the importance of four criteria of social validity in reaching understandings between individuals. For me, this means subjecting accounts of professional learning to validation groups, usually constituted by between 3-8 peers. The participants are asked to respond to an account/explanation in ways that can help to strengthen the validity of the claims being made. Drawing on Habermas’ four criteria (pp 2-3) participants are asked:

- i) How could the comprehensibility of the account be strengthened?
- ii) How could the evidence used to justify the assertions be strengthened?
- iii) How could the awareness of the normative background that is influencing the interpretations be strengthened?
- iv) How could the authenticity of the account be strengthened in the sense of showing over time and interaction that the values espoused by the practitioner-researcher were being lived as fully as possible?

I have made many masters dissertations and doctoral theses available on <http://www.actionresearch.net> in the masters programme and living theory sections. In offering a living theory approach to professional development, using emerging technologies I ask you to bear in mind MacIntyre’s (1988) point that:

The rival claims to truth of contending traditions of enquiry depend for their vindication upon the adequacy and explanatory power of the histories which the resources of each of those traditions in conflict enable their adherents to write. (MacIntyre, 1988, p. 403)

Outline of the organisation of your writings as a prior organiser for your reader

When you have clarified your meanings for yourself in a writerly text, the production of the readerly text usually involves an introduction to your writings that outlines their organisation so that your reader has some idea of what is to come.

For a March 2012 review of Action Research in the Educational Workplace see:

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/reviewARworkplacebook.pdf>

References

Attard, K. (2012) The role of narrative writing in improving professional practice. Educational Action Research, 20(1); 161-176. You can access a copy for our research purposes from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/jack/kattardnarrativeear0312EAR.pdf>

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Pound, R. (2009) Robyn Pound Health Visitor. Retrieved 10 May 2012 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/robynpond.html>

Whitehead, J. (2012) Educational Research for Social Change with Living Educational Theories, 1(1); 5-21. Retrieved 10 May 2012 from http://ersc.nmmu.ac.za/view_edition.php?v=1&n=1 . You will have register (simple and free) to download this paper.