
How Do We Make Sense of the Process of Legitimising an Educational Action Research Thesis for the Award of a PhD Degree? A Contribution to Educational Theory

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ABSTRACT The authors have worked together in different ways in relation to an educational action research PhD – ‘Action planning and assessment in guidance contexts: how do I understand and support these processes whilst working with colleagues in Further Education Colleges and a Careers Service?’ (Hughes, 1996). In this article they intend to share their own learning arising from the process of legitimating an educational action research thesis. Hughes indicates how examiners’ judgements made in relation to her PhD thesis assisted her in gaining a greater understanding of: the process of judging and the importance of developing appropriate standards of judgement in relation to action enquiries such as her own; the ways in which such enquiries may be supported and the contribution her research makes. Denley outlines what he learnt in his supervision of Hughes’s action research programme about the difficulties of ensuring a high level of technical competence, whilst encouraging the originality of the researcher in creating her own description and explanation of her own educational development. He also examines his response to the examiners’ rejection of the initial submission. Whitehead outlines what he learnt about the creation of living educational theories, about the inclusion of ‘T’ in claims to educational knowledge and about the politics of educational knowledge in responding to Hughes’s request for support in a resubmission.

Introduction

Issues which we believe deserve more attention in this Journal concern the nature of the educational knowledge and educational theories which are being produced by educational action researchers. These issues also concern the power relationships involved in the legitimisation of such contributions to knowledge. Hence, we are hoping that this article will stimulate a debate on: the preparation and presentation of action research enquiries for submission for higher degrees; the development and interpretation of criteria used for examination; the clarification of roles and responsibilities of all those parties involved; the identification, appointment and remit of external

examiners; the tensions between openness and confidentiality in the ethics of educational action research.

Within this article we will explain what we have learnt in relation to these issues through the process of legitimating an educational action research thesis (Hughes, 1996) in the Academy through the process of PhD examination. We believe that our article provides a basis for a collaborative action research enquiry of the kind, "How did we collaborate in the process of legitimating an original contribution to educational knowledge through educational action research?" Before we share our understanding arising from the above process we will relate our enquiries to recent contributions to this Journal and elsewhere.

In her article on "Finding Theory in Practice", Stella Clark (1996) traced her growing awareness of the importance of theory following an earlier rejection. She explained that she learnt to recognise her own theory, and how it both gave rise to and was itself a product of, her own practice. In our understanding, a theory can explain something. If educational action researchers are generating theories from their enquiries we would expect these educational theories to explain the learning or educational development of the researcher. Whilst understanding Stella's growing awareness we think that there is a need for educational action researchers to explicate their educational theories in a way which can explain their own educational development. Such theories, will of course be contributions to a cumulative body of knowledge and, as researchers, we will need to understand the nature of the appropriate standards of judgement which we can use to test the validity of such claims to knowledge.

In this regard, we are grateful to Pamela Lomax (1994) for drawing attention to the importance of ethical, practical and aesthetic standards of judgement for use in judging action research accounts, and to Janet Clarke (Clarke et al, 1993) and Les Tickle (1995) for setting out criteria for testing the quality of educational action research. We have also used Richard Winter's (1989) six criteria for enhancing the rigour of action research accounts and agree with his idea that action research theories are forms of improvisatory self-realisation (Winter, 1997). Whilst we think we understand the meanings of these standards and criteria as set out in their propositional form we would like to offer a more ostensive definition of the standards we use to test the validity of the claims we make to know our own educational development in our educational action research. The distinction we draw between 'lexical' and 'ostensive' definition is that in the 'lexical' definitions of standards of the above researchers, words are defined in terms of other words. In our 'ostensive' definitions we intend to show and to point to the meanings of the standards which are embodied in our practice, and whose meanings can be clarified in the course of their emergence in practice (Denley, 1988; Whitehead, 1993; Hughes, 1996).

What we wish to do in this article is to stimulate debate through the analysis of the emergence and resolution of tensions in methodology, epistemology and ways of working, between an action researcher (Jacqui

Hughes), a PhD supervisor (Paul Denley) and an authority in action research (Jack Whitehead).[1]

In relation to the issues related to preparing, presenting and legitimising an action research thesis, Hughes will indicate how examiners' judgements made in relation to her thesis have assisted her in gaining a greater understanding of the process of legitimating action research in a University and of the importance of developing appropriate standards of judgement in relation to action enquiries such as her own. She will also consider the ways in which such enquiries may be supported.

In relation to supervising an educational action research PhD programme, Denley will outline what he has learnt about the difficulties of ensuring that the thesis demonstrates a high level of technical competence whilst encouraging the originality of the researcher in creating her own description and explanation of her own educational development (her own living educational theory). He will also examine his response to the examiners' rejection of the initial submission and analyse his own learning as he moved between positions of unconscious and conscious, competence and incompetence, in appreciating the political dimensions in the legitimisation of an action research PhD thesis.

In relation to responding to Hughes's request for support in her resubmission, Whitehead will outline what he has learnt about helping an educational action researcher to create her own living educational theory and to reveal her living 'I' in her contribution to educational knowledge. He will also examine his learning in relation to the politics of educational knowledge, and in relation to the tensions between openness and confidentiality in the ethics of educational action researchers.

In the three presentations below we will move to more personal forms of communication. This will involve each of us telling our story of our relationships and our learning together. Jacqui will begin by discussing her experience of this process of legitimising an educational action research thesis for the award of a PhD degree.

JH: I am going to explain the context and content of my research and then consider the making of judgements about action enquiries, including the development of appropriate standards of judgement, with reference to my experience of the PhD examination process.

Context and Content of My Research

I grew up in a working class home in Cornwall, in the rural south-west of England and was the first in my family to attend the local grammar school. In 1968, I went to University and afterwards trained to be a teacher, becoming a head of department in a comprehensive school. While my children were young, I worked in special education, and with adults attending Adult Basic Education and English as a Second Language provision. In 1985 I began work in the adult guidance field. By this time I

had come to believe that: everyone should have the opportunity to be a valued part of an educational community; education should raise rather than limit individuals' sense of what they are and can achieve; education should focus on starting where individuals are and on supporting their development from that point towards the goals that are important to them; individuals should be offered the opportunity to access education throughout their lives; and people have unique skills and abilities, and are partners in the educational process.

These values underpin my work in guidance and underlie my action enquiry into my own practice and into the use of assessment and action planning processes in guidance contexts.

In 1990, when I began my enquiry, I was staff development officer for an organisation offering vocational guidance and I was also the coordinator of a nationally-funded assessment initiative within the 'Avon' [2] area. In 1991, I was employed on a job share basis by Avon Careers Service to coordinate adult guidance activities within the area. In 1995 my job share and I were appointed as adult guidance coordinator and business development manager for one of the four branches of Learning Partnership West (formerly Avon Careers Service).

I began my research because of my concerns about approaches to assessment in guidance. Particularly within vocational guidance, assessment has often involved techniques and procedures 'done to' clients by expert advisers, with the primary aim of meeting economic and social objectives. I wanted to explore the ways in which I could support the development of client-centred approaches to assessment, while also exploring my own educational development.

During the research I became concerned, too, about the use of action planning in guidance contexts. Through my investigation, I increasingly recognised similarities between approaches to assessment and action planning, and parallels between action planning and the action research paradigm which underpinned my enquiry. During my research I explored the possible theoretical antecedents of action planning and action plans. I studied my own changing understanding and practice in my roles as, coordinator of an assessment initiative, coordinator of adult guidance and as a guidance practitioner incorporating action planning processes in group guidance programmes for adults. I integrated in my analysis the views of colleagues working with me to develop assessment services and group guidance programmes, the views of staff involved in developing, implementing, and managing action planning and action plan initiatives in a range of contexts, and the perceptions of adult guidance clients and BTEC students attending programmes incorporating action planning and action plans.

My thesis is titled 'Action planning and assessment in guidance contexts: how can I understand and support these processes while working with colleagues in further education colleges and a careers service?' (Hughes, 1996). It presents an action research approach to improving understanding of action planning and assessment in guidance within further education

college and careers service provision in the former county of Avon between 1990 and 1995. Within the thesis I integrate the elements within my enquiry to provide an original, holistic description, explanation and representation of my search for understanding of and my learning about these issues, and about my own educational development. Within this synthesis, I also offer original contributions to educational knowledge and theory by providing a new understanding of the theoretical origins of action planning, and the ways in which these can influence my own and others' guidance practice (Hughes, 1996). In addition, I proffer a new 'process' model which incorporates assessment in guidance within the action planning cycle.

However, while it is important that you should be aware of the context and content of my thesis, I am not asking you to judge my claims to have contributed to educational knowledge. My intention is, through consideration of my experience of two PhD vivas and the process of resubmission, to discuss my learning in relation to the epistemological debate concerning the making of judgements about action enquiries, including the development of appropriate standards of judgement. I also wish to indicate ways in which I have been supported and suggest how my understanding of the contributions I have made has been enhanced through the above experience.

My original thesis was examined in November 1994 by an internal examiner from the University of Bath and by an external examiner who was an expert in the guidance field (with a positivist research approach). I, naively as it turned out, thought that the latter examiner would be able to assess research undertaken from a different perspective. The written comments from the examiners and others which were made on my thesis (discussed below and detailed in the introduction to my thesis, Hughes, 1996), and the focus of the questions asked during the viva indicated that this was not the case, and highlighted the above issues concerning criteria and the making of appropriate judgements. The examiners' joint recommendation was that I should be allowed to resubmit.

**Considering the Process of Making Judgements
about Action Enquiries: including the development
of appropriate standards of judgement, with
reference to my own research and my first viva**

Lomax (1994) notes that judgements about an action research dissertation should include consideration of both the "quality of the action research as a process of disciplined intervention and the quality of the report through which it is communicated". However, she stresses that it is "important to see both the action research process and the way it is reported as a means not as an end in itself". The intention is for education practitioners to "make sense of their practices and to improve them". In so doing Whitehead (1993) argues they assist in the creation of educational theory and knowledge through the description and explanation of their own educational development as they strive to improve the quality of their own practice. Here,

practitioners are conceived "not as the implementers of educational theory but rather as professionals who theorise in practice, and whose deliberations are often moral in nature" (Noffke, 1994, p. 11).

My thesis demonstrates and explicates my contribution to knowledge through the explanation of my own educational development as a practitioner researcher, as I endeavoured in my roles as assessment and then adult guidance coordinator in Avon, to support my own and my colleagues' understanding in relation to assessment and action planning in guidance. The thesis details, from my perspective at the time, the ongoing cyclical process of working with colleagues in relation to these issues during the period between 1990 and 1995. Thus, I demonstrate how I attempted to improve my practice. I also explore the ways in which I informed the longer-term thinking, policy and practice of those with whom I worked in relation to these processes. I thus explore the ways in which I attempted to influence the social context in which I work. I also consider the ways in which my personal involvement supported my changing understanding of assessment and action planning, and of my practice as an assessment and guidance coordinator, practitioner and researcher. I therefore consider that I tried to improve my own educational practices, to improve the situation in which my practice is located and to increase my understanding of assessment, action planning and my own practice (see Whitehead, 1993, discussing Carr & Kemmis's work).

The search for appropriate standards by which to judge research other than traditional scientific research is recognised to be of vital importance in what Denzin & Lincoln (1994) refer to as the present "crisis of legitimation". Thus, Clarke et al (1993), while noting that the making of "yet another set of technical prescriptions as a means of controlling others' research" must be avoided, tentatively suggest criteria which may be appropriate when judging action research. Lomax (1994), discussing the making of judgements about the action research of teachers involved in an in-service Masters programme, similarly suggests possible standards and the criteria which might apply at each stage of the research process.

However, Lomax points out that a major difficulty in relation to the standards of judgements applied "resides in the issue of who is competent to judge". Eisner (1993) raised the issue of "determining who is competent to appraise" the form and content of different research approaches in his presidential address to the American Educational Research Association in 1993. He noted that "the ability to make sense of a form of research depends upon one's experience with that form and upon one's conception about what counts as research".

The issue of criteria and standards was of particular importance and relevance in relation to the judgements made upon my own research in my first viva. The University of Bath (1995) specifies four criteria to be used in examining PhD theses. These are related to (1) industry, application and scholarship; (2) originality; (3) the production of material worthy of publication; and (4) knowledge and understanding of the writings of others. There is, however, much debate about the meanings of such criteria when

applied by different judges in particular cases (Elliott & Sarland, 1995). This issue is now a focus of research sponsored by the Economic and Social Research Council.

Throughout my action research enquiry I endeavoured to ensure the validity of my claims to knowledge. I therefore subjected the process, findings and my accounts of the research to critical reflection, and review by: requesting colleagues to evaluate my effectiveness at the time and in retrospect, and to comment on the veracity of my accounts; ensuring rigour in my use of interviews and questionnaires; utilising a written journal to assist the process of systematic ongoing reflection, planning and action; working with my tutor as a 'critical friend'; presenting my research for public debate and criticism.

Thus, I ensured that colleagues were offered opportunities to comment on my effectiveness throughout the research. I also presented my accounts of my practice to those who had worked with me so that they could indicate the extent to which they considered that I had offered accurate and true reflections of the processes, events and outcomes discussed. I also ensured that my use of interviews and questionnaires to explore the views of staff, adult guidance clients and BTEC students involved in action planning initiatives was rigorous, and that I checked the authenticity of my accounts of the process and findings with those who had taken part. The full narrative of my educational journey lies within the written journals I kept over the years between 1990 and 1995.

These journals offer a detailed account of the research process incorporating my systematic reflections, plans and actions during the research cycles within this period. They provide the basis for the description and explanation of my practice provided in the thesis. Throughout my enquiry my tutor, Paul Denley, acted as a critical friend. I debated my research with him producing papers to clarify, justify, analyse and explain my enquiry.

In addition, recognising that theses have a limited readership and are but one way of making research public, I used a range of approaches to ensure that I made my research process and findings accessible to a variety of audiences, offering them for public debate and criticism as part of the 'quality control' process. I therefore made a series of presentations to research seminars at the University of Bath and discussed my enquiry with colleagues there, in other universities, in further education colleges, in adult guidance and with those working in careers guidance with young people. I also worked in collaboration with colleagues in Avon's further education colleges and in Avon Careers Service (now Learning Partnership West), offering elements of the research in discussion and in writing for the critical comment of my peers. Furthermore, I produced a report (Hughes, 1991) incorporating my assessment model which was circulated for comment and criticism within and outside Avon.

My rationale for beginning the research was, as I have indicated, to explore my own educational development as I endeavoured to improve my own and others' understanding and practice, in relation to assessment and

action planning in guidance contexts. In the thesis, I examine and evidence the ways and extent to which my own understanding of my practice as a guidance coordinator, guidance practitioner and researcher had changed during and as a result of the research process. I also explore and evidence the ways in which my work with colleagues had supported the development of my own and others' understanding concerning assessment, action planning and action plans within guidance contexts. I locate the research in the context of local and national developments in relation to guidance, assessment, action planning and action plans.

The reason I have stressed the processes of validating my claims to knowledge is in response to the statements made during the first examination of my thesis. The examiners commented in their joint report that, "We did not doubt that the individual had learned a good deal, nor that she had influenced her fellow workers" (Hughes, 1996, p. xxiii). One of the examiner's commented additionally that:

This is a thoughtful piece of work, and the researcher shows herself to be extremely knowledgeable and up to date with recent developments in the policy and practice of action planning ... (but) ... One of the aims of research at this level is to make an original contribution to knowledge: however much of the thesis is merely an introspective description of the researcher's own practice. She has undoubtedly learned a lot about her practice through this exercise, but the outside world learns little, because the interventions are specific to a particular context. (Hughes, 1996)

I would argue that the above comments indicated that at least one of the examiners considered that I had gained knowledge of my own practice and had demonstrated my effectiveness in working with colleagues, but felt that these claims were not relevant when making judgements concerning the research. However, Lomax (1986) argues that "The validity of what we claim would seem to be the degree to which it was useful (relevant) in guiding practice ... and its power to inform and precipitate debate about improving practice in the wider community".

I had explored the ways and extent to which I had gained knowledge of my own practice, and supported my own and others' understanding in relation to assessment and action planning in guidance contexts. I therefore suggest that these aims should also have been considered by the original examiners when making judgements upon the research and the dissertation.

The examiners made the following comments and requests in relation to further work on the thesis. They stated that, "We were not clear to what body of public knowledge this had made a contribution. For example, the individual effectively operated as an organisational change agent, but we could not determine an original contribution to the understanding of this. This part of the thesis requires more variation of contexts and/or a broader empirical dimension involving other similar workers" (Hughes, 1996, p. xxiii). The examiners considered that "We would learn more by comparing and contrasting aspects of practice in different contexts than from a study of the

experience of just one worker" (Hughes, 1996, p. xxiii). However, while, as is indicated above, my research may have applicability and relevance for others, my intention was not to explore effective strategies for change agents. My enquiry was intended, like Evans's (1995), to make a contribution to educational knowledge as I researched my attempts to improve: my practice (both in working with colleagues and in relation to assessment and action planning and guidance); my understanding of these practices; and the situations in which my practice was located, that is, in work with colleagues in Avon's further education colleges and its careers service.

My enquiry was therefore of the kind which Bassey characterises as, "the study of a singularity rather than the search for a generalisation" (Lomax & Parker, 1995). The value of the findings of such a study "lies in the extent to which someone can relate their experience to the singularity and so learn from it" (Bassey, 1995).

In addition, the examiners focused on my use of questionnaires to ascertain the views of adult clients attending group guidance workshops and BTEC students. They commented that "The existing evidential base is very slim for work at this level and we strongly recommend the extension of the sample". One of the examiners suggested that there were a number of "interesting hypotheses which could be tested". However, my intention was to ascertain whether these clients and students shared the perceptions held by the staff working with them as to the ways in which the process, plans and helpers assisted. The questionnaires were sent to three groups of adult clients who had attended the group guidance workshops I had co-run during the second research cycle and to the three groups of BTEC students taught by the further education staff I had interviewed. These questionnaires and the interviews I conducted with adult clients and BTEC students were therefore used as part of the process of triangulation not to test 'interesting hypotheses'.

I therefore considered that the above judgements and suggestions were inappropriate in relation to my action enquiry. I recognised, however, that in my first submission I had not sufficiently identified or made accessible what my contributions to knowledge were. I had not communicated what I had learned. In the absence of such explicit explanations, the examiners were unclear as to the focus of the research.

Response to the First Viva

This examination, in November 1994, caused me to re-evaluate my research and thesis. The examiners had recommended that I should be allowed to resubmit, but appeared to me to require a resubmission underpinned by a different philosophical perspective from that which underlay my enquiry and dissertation. This was a particularly painful time for me as I tried to make sense of my conflicting feelings. On the one hand, I was convinced that my research did make a worthwhile contribution to knowledge; on the other, two experienced academics seemed to consider it inadequate.

During this period and for the remainder of the research, I continued, as I had throughout my enquiry, to keep a reflective journal. My journal has enabled me to remember and re-experience that time, and my feelings about it. Immediately after the viva, I was particularly helped by my partner, who has worked in careers guidance and further education, and acted as a critical reader throughout the research. In December, I sought the views of Jack Whitehead, a member of the School of Education at the University of Bath. Together, they supported me in my belief in the quality of my research, in my conviction that the judgements applied had been inappropriate and in my determination to address these issues in a positive way.

Jack Whitehead indicated that he considered that I had a case for a review on the basis that the external examiner had appeared, as revealed in her written comments, to conduct the viva from a different philosophical position from that espoused in my thesis. The University of Bath's regulations included the following as grounds for a review: "that there is positive evidence of prejudice, bias or inadequate assessment on the part of one or more of the examiners". In addition, the regulations had been amended in 1991, to include the following additional basis for a review "that there were genuine academic differences in philosophical approach or paradigms" (University of Bath, 1994, p. 34).

While we therefore considered that there were grounds for a review, I did not particularly wish to go down this route, except as a last resort. I felt that, while I might succeed, the process would be time-consuming and emotionally draining. In addition, while I felt that the judgements applied had been inappropriate, I acknowledged that the thesis was too long and that I had not made my contributions to knowledge sufficiently clear and accessible. In December 1994, I asked to meet with the internal examiner and the then Director of Studies, to explore a way forward. As a result of this meeting I produced a strategy which involved restructuring the thesis, and producing a preface which explicated the dissertation and my contributions to knowledge. This, I felt, would allow me to continue with the research in a constructive way which was in keeping with and added to the debate concerning the qualitative methodology I had employed. However, I also indicated that I would request a review if the external examiner, who did not appear to accept the paradigm within which I had carried out my enquiry, did not withdraw from this role.

Over the next 2 months I contacted the university regularly to ascertain progress on this issue. On 8 February 1995, the examiner's joint report permitting a resubmission was agreed by the Board of Studies for Education at the University of Bath. If I was to request a review, I had to do so within 14 days. I was in a quandary as to what I should do and contacted the Chair of the Board of Studies. On 17 February 1995, I was informed in writing that the external examiner had "offered to resign examinership of the thesis".

I was, of course, pleased by this development. In addition, during the period between the viva and the external examiner's resignation, I had submitted an article on the origins of action planning and action plans, and their effects on practice to the *Journal of Guidance and Counselling* (Hughes,

1995). I now heard that the article had been accepted. At this point I needed to return to my thesis and put the strategy I had agreed with the university into action.

This was a lot harder to do than perhaps it sounds. My energy and confidence were at a low ebb. At that time and since, however, I experienced the support of colleagues who assisted me in clarifying and aiding my thinking on an ongoing basis. Thus, since 1994, Jack Whitehead and Robyn Pound (who is carrying out research at the University of the West of England into her practice as a health visitor incorporating action planning into her work with clients) have, alongside my tutor Paul Denley, acted as critical friends. Until this time, I had worked on my PhD principally on my own, as do the majority of higher degree students, particularly those studying on a part time basis, while continuing to carry out their often demanding jobs (Parker, 1998). In 1995, I joined the action research group at the University of Bath. The individuals in this group have also provided ongoing support over the last 2 years, commenting critically on my work in order to assist my understanding. In addition, I continued to share my research with my colleagues, and made presentations to conferences organised by the Institute of Careers Guidance and the National Association for Educational Guidance for Adults in order to offer the processes and outcomes involved in my research for further critical review.

As I have indicated above, the viva had highlighted important issues concerning educational action research, its status and the standards of judgement employed to appraise such enquiries. However, I also recognised that in my resubmission I needed to address the accessibility of my research, particularly the clarity with which my claims to knowledge were expressed and presented. If I believed in what I had done, how could I make this clear to my examiners and other readers?

During the period between my first viva and the resubmission of my thesis on 1 May 1996, I therefore reflected further on my enquiry, on the original contributions I had made, and on the way in which I could present my research process and my findings. Over the next arduous 14 months, I substantially revised and rewrote the thesis.

I began my resubmission with some brief reflections which put my research in its personal context and reaffirmed my values. These reflections were followed by a preface. This addressed the issue of accessibility by explicating the thesis and the research, and by clarifying my contributions for the examiners and other readers. The preface therefore explained and described the structure and form of the thesis, identified the original contributions my research made to educational knowledge, considered the validity criteria against which my research might be judged and outlined the content of the thesis. To clarify the processes involved in my enquiry, the outcomes of it and the ways in which I had endeavoured to make public and validate my enquiry, I produced a diagrammatic representation of my research to assist in the process of accounting for myself (Lomax & Parker, 1995).

In my original dissertation, submitted in 1994, I had incorporated my deliberations on the research process and my findings within one volume. On reflection, I considered that this form did not assist readers to access and understand the research. I therefore endeavoured to find a presentational mode which supported the reader and which also recognised the importance of the processes involved, as well as the outcomes of the research. As a result, I fundamentally restructured and shortened the thesis.

My Second Viva and Retrospective Reflections on my Learning

During the period between the resignation of my original examiner, and the resubmission of my rewritten and restructured thesis, Paul Denley, Jack Whitehead and I discussed the issue of who the University might appoint as the new external examiner. Eventually, a respected senior academic was asked to fulfil this role and I was required to attend a second viva in September 1996.

Prior to my first viva, my thesis had been given to an academic identified by the School of Education Research Committee to act as an internal 'Reader' to give comments on the readiness of the Thesis for submission. He had indicated that while there was "quite a lot of tidying up to do... (and) ... some presentational matters to sort out ... I haven't encountered any major problems". Prior to my second viva, my thesis was read by a second reader from the School of Education. He made some positive comments, but also criticised the methodology, while commenting that "This is not a field, substantively about which I know very much and nor am I a great exponent of action research". Wherever possible I addressed the suggestions he had made and the thesis was resubmitted at the end of April 1996. Prior to the second viva, I spent substantial amounts of time with my tutor, with Jack Whitehead, with my critical friend Robyn Pound, with members of the Action Research Group at the University of Bath and with my partner, considering the kinds of questions I might be asked and the ways in which I might respond to these. By the time I attended the second viva, I felt prepared in a way that I had not been when I attended the first examination.

The experience of my second viva was very different from the first. The examiners informed me within moments of beginning the viva that they intended to pass the thesis, considered it an excellent piece of writing and wished to spend the next hour discussing points of interest arising from it. I was at first somewhat non-plussed. I had expected to have another battle to fight. Instead, the examiners' questions indicated that they understood that my research had been undertaken from an action research perspective and that they were in sympathy with this. Although I was very pleased, it took some time before I actually began to believe that this time my contributions to knowledge had both been understood and accepted.

Reflection on the experience of my first and second viva, and on the process of producing a resubmission has, I feel, enhanced my understanding

in relation to the making of judgements about action enquiries and has highlighted the importance of developing appropriate standards of judgement. In addition, the experience has indicated ways in which such enquiries may best be supported. In particular, it highlighted for me the importance both of having additional critical friends who are actively involved in their own action research and of being part of an ongoing action research group of supportive, yet critical, peers. Through presenting and discussing my research with these colleagues, I learned what they, as action researchers, saw to be its flaws. In addition, discussion with them about their enquiries helped me to clarify and understand elements of my own. So why hadn't I sought the support of action researchers such as Jack Whitehead and joined the University of Bath's action research group earlier?

I think there are several reasons for my reticence. Although I had discussed my enquiry with Jack before I began it and it was his enthusiasm for action research that had encouraged me to carry out an action enquiry, I was somewhat disconcerted by him. I felt that he had his own very clear vision of what action research was and that I might be in danger of 'losing' rather than 'finding' a unique way of carrying out my enquiry. I'm sure he will not take offence if I also point out that his ideas can sometimes be rather difficult to understand. In addition, I considered and still consider Paul, to be an understandable, approachable and supportive tutor, and an effective critical friend. Furthermore, while in my work roles and as an essential element within my enquiry I collaborated very closely with colleagues, I liked having the opportunity to think and be on my own rather than being part of a group. I had also imagined action research group meetings as involving fierce and perhaps rather unconstructive personal criticism. I therefore attended and gave papers to other research groups at the University of Bath, but did not attend the action research group meetings.

When I was asked to resubmit I recognised that I perhaps needed the support both of additional critical friends actively involved in their own action research and of such a group. However, the first action research meeting I attended – a weekend seminar at the University of Bath – rather confirmed my fears. One of the participants was a well known action researcher from another institution who I had not met before, but whose work I had read and by which I had been impressed. A colleague was being subjected to rigorous and critical questioning bordering, I felt, on the vicious, by this individual. However, I discovered later that this colleague had, ultimately, found the questioning helpful and that the intention of the group was to assist, not to destroy! I also discovered that the seminar had been quite unusual in its tenor and that the majority of meetings, while necessarily critical, were more supportive in tone. I have therefore been a member of the University of Bath's action research group for the last 2 years and, alongside my three critical friends and my partner, the colleagues in this group have assisted my thinking in this last phase of my enquiry.

In retrospect I recognise that, though it was a painful experience which I would rather not have had, the first viva led me to maintain my integrity, to reflect on my values and to present my contributions to educational

knowledge with greater clarity. In addition, in rethinking the thesis I was able to find an original form to represent the content of and the processes involved in my action enquiry, thus also making a significant contribution to the debate concerning the ways in which action enquiries may be explored and represented. Furthermore, in rewriting the thesis I recognised that I was also able to make a contribution to the debate concerning standards of judgement and criteria for action enquiries. Finally, and most importantly, I am convinced that my action research approach to improving my practice has helped me to maintain a commitment to my own educational development, and to the education of others as they take part in guidance and assessment processes and plan their careers.



We would now like to move to Paul's perceptions of the process of legitimising Jacqui's educational action research thesis for the award of a PhD degree:

PD: I have been a lecturer in the School of Education for seven years. Prior to that I worked as Science Editor in a unit in Bristol producing resource materials for local schools and promoting resource-based and individualised learning. During my time working in this unit I was registered as a part-time PhD student at the University of Bath.

To begin with, Jack Whitehead was my sole supervisor, but later another member of staff shared the supervision with Jack through to completion. My research was on the development of an approach to what I termed 'practitioner research' to evaluate innovations in science teaching with a particular focus on the use of a semi-quantitative classroom observation system. I found Jack to be both a stimulating and a frustrating supervisor. He provided a constant source of new ideas and opened up new pathways to explore but at the same time gave little guidance about which might end up as blind alleys. My joint supervisor on the other hand was far more helpful to me in clarifying direction for the research and particularly in developing the framework for the final thesis.

In my thesis (Denley, 1988), I resisted describing my approach as 'action research'. I was influenced at the time by writers such as Hopkins (1985) who preferred to support the notion of 'classroom research by teachers', and felt that the term action research had been 'hi-jacked' and directed to certain more overtly political ends. Another key influence was Schön (1983) and his development of 'reflective practice'. I was concerned about the use and abuse of the term 'action research' and did try to distance myself from it. In the intervening years I have continued to have an empathy for action research approaches, but have remained on the periphery of action research within the School of Education. My perception and understanding of Jack's approach to action research in terms of his conception of 'living theory' has always seemed to very quickly get into a

deep philosophical and, perhaps, even esoteric consideration of epistemological and methodological issues drawing on a wide range of literature from within and beyond education. I have been unwilling to get drawn into this perhaps from a concern about where it will lead. At several points since completing my own PhD and coming to work at the University, Jack has tried to encourage me to go back to issues raised towards the end of my research relating to standards of judgement for educational enquiries and to adopt a more overt action research stance to improving my own practice. My areas of interest are to do with curriculum development in my subject area and continuing professional development of science teachers, but in a more general and far less intensive way than Jack.

Soon after starting work in the School of Education, I supervised a PhD which was basically grounded in an action research methodology. This research explored the parallels between action research and a constructivist approach to teaching (Ritchie, 1995). The research student was engaged in a number of inter-related cycles of reflective enquiry into the development of classroom practice with primary teachers in the context of both initial and continuing teacher education courses in science. The research was conducted in a very rigorous and systematic way, and the final thesis, although lengthy, did present knowledge claims in what I considered to be a clear and accessible manner. Questioning in the viva addressed a number of concerns raised principally by the External Examiner, but the final outcome was that these could be addressed by minor amendments and that the recommendation of a pass be made.

The period during which this research was being completed and examined overlapped with the start of my supervision of Jacqui's PhD. Against the background of a successful outcome in this first case, I felt reasonably confident about my ability to supervise Jacqui's work, and advise her regarding the process of submission and preparation for the examination. Concerns had been raised about the length of the thesis and about the clarity with which evidence for the claims being made was identified, but I felt that she had addressed these satisfactorily.

It is only now in the context of writing this article that I have been asked by Jack to reflect on why I did not involve him in Jacqui's research at an earlier stage. It was not a conscious action. As far as I was concerned I did not see the need for me to take any steps to involve Jack. In fact, because I knew that Jack and Jacqui knew one another outside the University, I did not feel any duty to put her in contact with him. I think that had this not been the case I might have thought differently. I was confident about Jacqui's progress; the feedback from an internal reader in the School of Education had not identified any serious weaknesses in the draft thesis. Jack has suggested that my own experience of him as a supervisor might have influenced me. If this was the case, it was at a subconscious level; I never discouraged Jacqui from seeking advice from Jack or discussing her research with him. She seemed happy with the supervision I was giving and did have opportunities to present her research more formally to Jack (and others) through seminars in the School. It could well be, however, that if she

had started to have more contact with Jack I might have raised some concerns with her about where that might lead based on my own experience. I could have been concerned that the direction of her research might have been guided more towards questions of what constituted educational theory and how it might be legitimated in a political context, rather than concentrating on what I saw to be its major strengths in terms of its insights into the products of and the processes involved in action planning.

Obviously, the experience of the first examination was a challenging one. At the same time that I knew I should be very positive and supportive to Jacqui in facing the very negative reaction to her work, and confronting the examiners' recommendation that she should be allowed to resubmit, my own confidence had been severely damaged. I knew that Jack would be angry about the outcome and the way in which the action research approach was being challenged. (It was not until discussing the matter in preparing this article that I was aware that his anger was also directed against me.) At this point Jacqui herself took the initiative and turned to Jack who I knew would rush to fill the void left by my uncertainty about how to respond to the issues raised by the examiners.

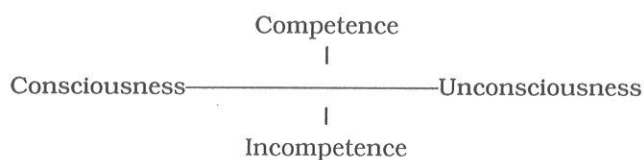
Once I had recovered from the initial shock, I could see how Jack was working with Jacqui to restructure the thesis and, in doing so, to bring out what he considered to be the major claim to originality in the work all along. During the preparation for submission I probably took a secondary role to Jack. In the light of an unsuccessful outcome of the first examination, I was prepared to let Jacqui draw on Jack's experience, but realised at the same time that this could well change her whole perspective on what she had done and its importance. I had no problems with the proposed restructuring or the notion of developing a commentary on the research to form a preface to the thesis. I was a little uneasy about the way in which Jacqui was developing, with Jack, ideas about the claims to know. However, I could see that Jacqui's own understanding of the issues was growing, that she had much more ownership of the second submission than the first, and that she had managed to rebuild her confidence in her research and its strengths.

What I appreciated as I saw the differences between the first and second submissions was that I had been satisfied with a technical piece of writing with a high level of rigorous analysis of data. I had not appreciated how much further Jacqui would want to go in creating an original contribution to educational knowledge herself. The whole process has challenged some of my own ideas and broadened my understanding of the issues to do with the representation of such enquiries.

The major learning for me in this has been to raise my awareness of the need to see supervision and legitimation of educational research within the political context in which it takes place. In the process of identifying a suitable External Examiner for Jacqui's thesis I was content to support the recommendation of a well-known academic who would be able to engage with what I had seen as the substantive content of the enquiry. What I had not expected was that this examiner's methodological stance would have such a profound bearing on events. The concerns raised indicated a lack of

understanding and a questioning of the adequacy of or even a disrespect for action research as an appropriate approach to address the sort of question relating to practice which Jacqui had formulated. I had expected, naively, that the examiner, if not actually sympathetic to the methodology, would at least be open to it. The recommendations from the examination almost suggested that Jacqui's work should be reconceptualised and made to fit into another paradigm rather than being examined against criteria appropriate to its own. It is to her credit that she chose not to do this, but to propose the higher risk strategy of remaining true to her values and rewriting almost the whole thesis in order to present her enquiry in a more accessible way.

One way of representing my learning shows the relationship between the two dichotomies of 'consciousness–unconsciousness' and 'competence–incompetence' (Dubin, 1962).



I experienced a shift from thinking that I was 'consciously competent' to realising that I was in fact 'unconsciously incompetent' at the time of Jacqui's first examination through my naiveté in failing to appreciate the political dimension in the legitimation of educational knowledge. Through work in developing the resubmission I may now have at least moved into 'conscious incompetence' and may one day find myself where I thought I was in the first place!



Jack will now discuss what he has learnt about living standards of judgement and the politics of educational knowledge through the process of helping to legitimise a living educational theory, action research PhD thesis:

JW: I recall the mixture of emotions with which I related to Jacqui and Paul when Jacqui asked for my help in a resubmission. I read the whole of the first submission and the written comments of the examiners which had been given to Jacqui. When I read a comment that the sample wasn't representative enough, I recalled Lawrence Stenhouse's (1980) Presidential Address to the British Educational Research Association, on a study of samples and the study of cases. This issue is also of recent concern to contributors to Educational Researcher (Donmoyer, 1996) on the importance of being aware of different paradigmatic perspectives in judging research. Seeing a judgement of a study of a singularity (Bassey, 1995) in terms of a 'representative sample' raised a question about

the adequacy of the examiner's assessment. Jacqui has already explained why she decided not to question the examiners' judgements within the formal procedures which were open to her.

I could see an original contribution to knowledge in Jacqui's Thesis, but in my view it had not been communicated clearly. I felt angry with Paul because I believed that if we had worked together a much stronger thesis would have been submitted. I wrote to Jacqui to say:

I have no doubt that you have fulfilled those criteria for the award of a PhD related to your industry and your ability to relate your enquiry to the wider field of knowledge. I think the nature of your original contribution to educational knowledge and theory needs more explication.

Later I commented that if the same examiners were asked to review their judgements, given their perspectives, I thought that they would be unlikely to change their minds. If new examiners were appointed then, "If my own judgement on the thesis is confirmed, that it would be criticised on the criteria relating to its contribution to knowledge, then you would be in the position of feeling that the thesis had been judged fairly but still required some additional work related to the above criteria". I therefore suggested that Jacqui should clarify her original contribution and I made suggestions as to the ways in which she might do this.

In helping Jacqui with her resubmission, I was clear that her thesis was an original contribution to my own field of educational research, living educational theory. I believed in Jacqui's ability to describe and explain her own professional learning, that is her ability to create her own living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989). I also believed in her ability to create a form of representation within which she could communicate the nature of her learning in terms of her enquiry into action planning and assessment in guidance contexts. What I learnt in working with Jacqui on her resubmission was the importance of time in the process of understanding that one's own description and explanation of one's own learning could constitute a living educational theory. Moyra Evans (1995) writes about a similar experience working with me as a supervisor in a section of her PhD Thesis on 'Creating my own living educational theory':

I'd heard Jack Whitehead talk often about creating living educational theories. I originally thought these were something like a home spun version of the real thing, not having quite that professional finish that marked them out as desirable. Living educational theories were something lesser mortals had to make do with, whilst Piaget and Dewey and others were the quality versions that every serious student wanted to possess. They were also rather frightening entities when I contemplated trying to construct one. I feared getting it wrong, but I was also excited at the prospect of creating something which had the potential to be

good. The combination of fear and excitement frequently had me procrastinating for ages while I weighed up everything in my mind many times over, before I dared to start.

Jack never knew how long it took me to understand his concept of the living educational theory – I wonder if I resisted it purely because it was a notion so removed from the immediate, relentless, practical demands of the everyday life of classrooms or school management. We don't usually talk about theories in school. The climate is very much one of 'doing', and the acts of doing are premised on a relatively straightforward set of expectations which are laid out in the staff handbook, or the National Curriculum, or other curriculum documents. We talk about what happens and what we are going to do about it, but we don't usually refer to theories – of any sort. Theories belong to the academy; I belong to the school.

It was Saturday morning, November 26th 1994, and we had spent Friday talking about epistemology. 'I've been thinking,' said Jack, "About where your epistemology is grounded." I'd also been thinking about this. Epistemology was similar to living educational theories in being 'un-user-friendly'! Jack spelt it out. "It's like this", he said, drawing on the table with his fingers. "The Whitehead epistemology is grounded in Polanyi's work on personal knowledge; Elliott's work is grounded in Gadamer's theory of hermeneutics; Kemmis and Carr's work is grounded in Habermas and critical theory, but your work is grounded in your practice." Overnight I had come to the same conclusions, but was unsure of the status of this knowledge. "But is that good enough?" I asked. "Yes", he said, "it's like this – all of us have been engaged in exploring propositional knowledge. We've been playing with words, but you have been working on practice. You have been exploring your emergence as a confident 'I' in your role as a deputy head interested particularly in staff development." So what you're saying is that my theories about my practice are grounded in my lived experiences? That I draw my explanations – my theories – of my practice not from propositional knowledge directly – from the writings of others, but from my actual experiences in my role as a deputy head? And I make sense of them through my stories?" "Yes", he said. We were both excited at the sudden clarity of this explanation, I particularly, as I had been struggling to place my work in the spectrum of action researchers for some time. I had recognised that my work was different, but had been trying to fit it into a pre-existing category. Perhaps the concept of the emerging 'I' needed its own family. (Evans, 1995, p. 232)

Jacqui's response reinforced what Moyra was saying about time and conversation. It takes time for individuals to feel that they can make original contributions to educational knowledge in creating their own living educational theories. In particular, I learnt something about how I encourage an action researcher to embrace their own 'I' in their research question. Jacqui included 'I' in her title in the question: How do I understand and support these processes, whilst working with colleagues in Further Education Colleges and a Careers Service? I think my encouragement has something to do with my communication in my supervision of a faith in I-You relationships (Buber, 1923). I do encourage my students to engage in self-studies in relation to asking, answering and researching questions of the kind, "How do I improve my practice?" Whilst this is not the place for a detailed account of the epistemological significance of the inclusion of 'I' as a living contradiction in claims to educational knowledge, I will simply draw your attention to the accounts on the World Wide Web of those educational action researchers who have embraced the experience of existing as living contradictions in both their theories and practice.[3]

When we began to collaborate on this article, I wanted to name the first examiners and publicly question their competence in relation to their judgements. In my text, *The Growth of Educational Knowledge: creating your own living educational theories* (Whitehead, 1993), I name those who submitted evidence to Boards of Studies, Senate and Academic Staff Committee which led to such written claims as "You have exhibited forms of behaviour which have disturbed the good order and morale of the School of Education" and "Your activities and writings are a challenge to the present and proper organisation of the University and not consistent with the duties the University wishes you to pursue in teaching and research" and "Your thesis contains no matter worthy of publication".

I had two reasons for naming such individuals. The first was to engage in public debate about their judgements. The second was to expose a process of 'institutional bullying' by which I mean the mobilisation of institutional power to privilege one set of arguments above another, rather than to permit the force of 'better argument' to determine a judgement. I had experienced this kind of 'bullying' by the employer of a previous student whose thesis was embargoed for 5 years from its submission in 1990. The thesis contained politically sensitive data concerning claims about resources to schools being made by a local education authority. At no small risk to himself he argued the case for his work being made public in a telling chapter on 'The right to know' (Adams, 1990). He drew on Pring's (1994) analysis of the right to know in relating respect for an individual's right as a person with the public's right to know. The courage of Ron Adams and the clarity of his analysis remains an inspiration, when I am faced with anxieties over imaginary or real fears of reprisals on exercising my academic freedom (Whitehead, 1993, p. 94).

I know the issue of 'naming' raises important ethical issues in educational research. As a matter of principle I accept the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Ethical Guidelines when I am

working with others as participants in the research. Trust is essential in action research and I work on the principle that those I am researching with have the right to confidentiality if they wish it. However, in my self-study of my own educational development in my workplace and society, I accept the value of academic freedom under the law. I do not accept anyone else's right to control my enquiry into my own educational development or to exercise censorship over my writing.

In the terms of a recent Equal Opportunities Review (Riley, 1996) I would justify my past 'naming' of individuals who mobilised power relations in the way described above on the grounds of academic freedom within the law and of the public's 'right to know' (Adams, 1990):

Academic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions. (Education Reform Act, 1998)

The damage to the individual in terms of stress and distress and to the University in terms of misusing human resources and not enabling students to maximise their potential is obvious, quite apart from the depressing effect on morale generally and the ever present danger of expensive litigation and damaging publicity. These outcomes are a contradiction of the University's stated commitments to equality, diversity and excellence. Speedy and effective action needs to be taken, publicised, [my emphasis] monitored and evaluated. (Riley, 1996, p. 6)

One of the telling arguments which persuaded me that Jacqui and Paul were correct in insisting that the examiners of Jacqui's first submission should not be named in this article was that their judgements were already open to question. The University's procedures permitted such questioning on the grounds of bias, prejudice and inadequate assessment. Jacqui could have questioned the judgements within the procedures if she had so decided. This questioning had been made possible in 1991 by a change in the University regulations which had previously held that "under no circumstances could examiners' judgements be questioned". Another telling argument was a political one. Jacqui argued that it was prudent not to name the examiners because the reader might be distracted, by mistakenly attributing the feeling of malice on the part of the author and that this would detract from the quality of the argument being made.

I also learnt something of theoretical importance from Jacqui in her original insight about the importance of explicating the theoretical antecedents of the action planning processes used in adult guidance and assessment (Whitehead, 1997). In working with her on the development of her own living educational theory I strengthened my commitment to encourage each educational action researcher to describe and explain their educational development in their own unique form of representation (Lomax

& Parker 1995; McNiff et al, 1996). My commitment to explore alternative forms of data representation, to the propositional form, has also received support in Eisner's (1993) Presidential Address to the American Educational Research Association and in his questions: "How do we display what we have learned? What forms can we trust? What modes are legitimate? How shall we know?" (Eisner, 1997). From Jacqui I also learnt how the most rigorous attention to the relationship between evidence and claims to knowledge could be integrated within a narrative of an individual's educational development (Hughes, 1996).

My learning was also enhanced in terms of how to include an aesthetic judgement in judging a claim to educational knowledge (Laidlaw, 1996). In relation to Jacqui's work, the aesthetic judgement I have in mind is related to Plato's dialogue on poetic inspiration, the *Phaedrus*, where Socrates makes a point about the exercise of the art of a dialectician in which both the One and the Many are held together. He is referring to the art of the dialectician in which both the capacity for synthesis and the capacity for analysis are exercised together. In creating her own unique form of representation within which she held a number of rigorous enquiries, I could appreciate how Jacqui held together her own enquiry with the many enquiries of others. When I experience such a unified account by an educational action researcher I am drawn to Bataille's (1987, p. 8) point where he says that, he has subordinated all else to the search for a standpoint that brings out the fundamental unity of the human spirit. I draw the inspiration which helps to sustain my own motivation from such accounts.

Given Noffke's (1997) claim that living educational theories appear incapable of relating issues of personal identity and experiential knowledge with issues of power and privilege in society, I would like to encourage those who are persuaded by Noffke's arguments to look at the evidence above, and in the other 'living theory' theses, which I believe shows how living educational theories can embrace all of these issues as they are experienced by ourselves as action researchers in our workplaces.

In relation to my learning with Jacqui and Paul in the process of legitimising an educational action research PhD thesis, I would say that Jacqui's determination to continue to a successful submission could be explained by the strength of her values of integrity, justice, freedom and truth, as well as by the support provided by her loving family, friends and caring supervisor. In this respect I am still exploring the implications of Rorty's (1989) dropping of a demand for a theory which unifies the public and private. He is content to treat the demands of self-creation and of human solidarity as equally valid, yet forever incommensurable in his turn against theory and toward narrative. What Jacqui's living theory shows me is that it is possible to create descriptions and explanations for one's own self-creation in a way which embraces and explores the implications of a freely chosen commitment to live one's values in the public domain.

Conclusions

Through this article we have described, from our differing viewpoints, the events leading up to the successful completion and examination of a PhD action enquiry. We have also tried to relate our learning, through this case, to the process of representing and legitimating such enquiries in the context of an examining system which has evolved within a different dominant paradigm. The intention was to engage the reader with the politics and practice of the generation of educational knowledge in order to raise issues about the representation and legitimisation of educational action research at the highest academic level.

We wish to be clear that it is not our intention to use this article as a vehicle to complain about unfair treatment or to be vindictive about inappropriate examiners. Procedures were followed correctly, and Jacqui received the support and advice to which she was entitled throughout her time as a registered student. There are clear internal procedures laid down for complaints and reviews of judgements which were fully understood and could have been followed. Our concerns are broader than this specific case. By exposing our perceptions of the examination to public scrutiny we realise that we are opening up a process which most institutions keep closed. We would be very surprised if similar situations as are described here have not occurred in other institutions. Indeed, we know that there is a wide variation between institutions as to the ease or difficulty with which action enquiries are legitimated.

In revealing the process from the inside in one institution, we may experience conflicts of loyalty in raising our heads about the parapet but we return to the values contained in the statement cited in the Notes below, from the University's Academic Assembly, about "freedom, truth and democracy ... rational debate ... integrity". Thus, we do not take the step of presenting our story lightly, but with the belief that there is a need to address these values more openly in order to advance our thinking, influence and improve practice, and in an attempt to resolve some of the tensions which may be experienced by others in similar circumstances.

We would like the debate to be taken forward through the exploration of the issues we have raised of:

- the preparation and presentation of action research enquiries for submission;
- the development and interpretation of criteria used for examination;
- the clarification of roles and responsibilities of all those parties involved;
- the identification, appointment and remit of external examiners;
- the tensions between openness and confidentiality in the ethics of educational action researchers.

Lessons have been learned by all of us for our future practice, but particularly by JW and PD for our supervision and preparation for

examination of research students. We feel that it is time for a broader debate into these issues within our own institution and the Academy.

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Notes

- [1] Both Paul and Jack are members of the Academic Assembly of the University of Bath and are committed to the following values: "High sounding phrases like 'values of freedom, truth and democracy', 'rational debate', 'integrity', have been used. It is easy to be cynical about these and to dismiss them as hopelessly idealistic, but without ideals and a certain agreement about shared values a community cannot be sustained, and will degenerate. These are the phrases in which members of Academic Assembly have chosen to convey their concept of this community" (*The Idea of a University*, Academic Assembly, University of Bath, 1988).
- [2] The county of Avon ceased to exist, as a result of local government reorganisation, in 1996. It was replaced by four unitary authorities.
- [3] Action research theses from the Action Research Group can be viewed at the Internet address <http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw>

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