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The Use of Personal Educational Theories in In-Service Education

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offerings. The nature of the research design (i.e., the lack of control and the possibility of contamination) counsels us to be guarded in the inferences we can draw from the data. Suffice to say that we are excited about the promise suggested by this paper of a delivery system for the professional development and continuing education of teachers that utilizes something as maligned yet ubiquitous as the university course.

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4. For strategies for doing this see Gibbons, Maurice and Gary Phillips, *Helping Students Through the Self-Education Crisis*. Vancouver: Challenge Education Associates, 1980.
5. See Footnote 3 (i) above.
6. See Footnote 1 above.
7. This instrument was taken from Knowles, 1975, p.61.
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The Use of Personal Educational Theories in In-Service Education

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Introduction

A great deal has been written and discussed in recent months about the value and importance of continuing teacher education. It is becoming obvious to most people involved in education that the initial training of teachers should not be seen as adequate for a complete teaching career. Indeed a recent HMI report has directed attention at the quality of initial teacher education.

'Nevertheless, at a time when there are considerably more trained teachers available than there are posts for them to occupy in schools, it is disturbing to find nearly a quarter of the teachers in the present sample considered poorly or very poorly equipped for the task they are given to do'.

(The New Teacher in School. HMSO 1982)

There is a great need for practising teachers to up-date their ideas and methods, to be given an opportunity to meet with other teachers to exchange experiences and to learn about new ideas put forward by researchers. This should prove not only of value in a practical way, in improving a teacher's awareness of

his teaching, but should also prove a great stimulus to the teacher's will to improve the quality of education for his pupils.

Personal Educational Theories

Despite the general acceptance of the need for wider in-service training, it still remains for the most part an academic ideal and movement towards a greater availability of in-service courses is slow. Leicester University has recently launched an initial teacher education course which is closely related to local schools. Student teachers are intended to learn via supervision by a discussion with the teacher-supervisors in the school departments. This is much more than just an extension of teaching-practice. It is a completely new approach to what is now recognised as a predominantly practical activity. The theory to be learned is now seen more and more as an extension of the practice rather than as vice versa or as two separate disciplines of the one activity.

For several years now work along these lines has been carried out by a number of teacher/researchers in the School of Education of the University of Bath

and reported on this Journal (Whitehead 1977/1980). Researchers have pursued the idea of in-service research taking the form of learning to observe one's own classroom activities as well as those of others. Teacher-researchers are encouraged to reflect on their own practice, to recognise problem areas, to imagine solutions, to try out the solution through a process of trial and error, to evaluate the outcomes and to modify the problems in the light of the evaluations.

This is then extended into theory in the form of an explanation for one's own practice. This process has ensured that the theory generated from such research is grounded in the important area of the classroom: it ensures that explanations and theoretical observations and analyses remain linked closely with what has actually proved to be of value in the school environment: it ensures that the theory evolving out of the personal research programmes is tailor-made for the individual who is putting it into practice. The personal explanation which constitutes an individual's personal educational theory grows out of his own practical experience. This means that his own values in education are included as well as the unique personality traits which make up an individual teacher.

In the place of an educational theory which is constituted in terms of the disciplines of education teacher-researchers are encouraged to generate their own personal educational theories which have arisen from their own attempts to sustain or improve a process of education with their pupils.

A number of teacher/researchers have successfully completed their studies and have demonstrated the feasibility of this approach in their MEd dissertations in part or total fulfilment of University requirements (Green 1979; Hayes 1980; Peters 1980; Barrett 1982; Foster 1982).

Foster, for example, has examined the nature of the explanations for the lives of three science teachers who were trying to improve the process of education for their pupils. The form and content of the explanations are presented in four research reports which are supported by audio and video-tapes. Foster claims, with some justification, that the explanations can contribute to an educational theory which is not separated from educational practice and which can be of assistance in solving the practical educational problems faced by other educators.

Green (1980) describes his research with an art teacher 'seen from a classroom commitment to improve art education'. Green collected his data by video-taping the lesson, with a radio microphone recording, by taking colour photographs at the times when the teacher was helping children with their work, and by recording conversations about the lessons and the teacher's approach with the teacher.

Using these four techniques Green claims to be able to reconstruct the way in which the teacher solved problems of the kind, 'How do I improve this process of education here?'

The systematic and self-critical form of the explanations given by the teacher/researcher, for the way in which practical educational problems were overcome, had the form suggested below for the development of personal educational theories.

In order to overcome the problem of presenting an explanation for what happens in any one classroom, the teacher/researchers use audio and video-recordings to supplement the written documentation. The three types of evidence have helped to reconstruct after the event, a record of what actually took place during a lesson with a particular group of pupils. It cannot, of course, give a completely accurate and full picture, but it is a great improvement on the purely verbal description.

The teacher in the centre of the research is not merely a 'research object', a specimen in a scientific study. The teacher, whether carrying out his own research on himself or being observed by another researcher, has a valuable contribution to offer. He is acknowledged to have opinions, feelings, a personality, values, aims etc; and the researchers are encouraged to consult those participating in the research at every stage of the process. There is no sense at any time of secrecy, of hidden reports – no destructive criticism. The teachers are able to make their own comments openly and honestly for themselves about themselves. This approach fulfils Eggleston's (1979) request that we think of teachers as professionals with whom rather than on whom we do research. He believes that effective teaching is more likely to be achieved when the teacher himself is operating in reflective and empirical modes and that teachers operating in this way cease to be tiresome intervening variables and become self-conscious instruments of educational processes.

Whilst Eggleston is asking for teachers to be seen as professionals 'with whom rather than on whom we do research' he is not calling for new methods of educational enquiry. On the contrary he is accepting the criticisms of the dominant 'scientific' method and saying that we must improve rather than transform it. He acknowledges that these methods have failed to live up to expectations, i.e. yield statistically significant results in favour of one treatment and failed to facilitate the elucidation of mechanisms, yet says that this may however not be due to inherent defects in the method. He concludes that it would be premature to deny access of educational researchers to the potentially powerful means of testing hypotheses.

In contrast to Eggleston's acceptance of the assumptions built into much contemporary educational research we have Chambers (1982) and Hamilton (1982) seriously questioning these assumptions.

Peter Chambers, in his presidential address to the British Educational Research Association, concludes that the assumptions, the traditions and the expectations built into British higher education are themselves wrong, or at least dysfunctional to the tasks of training teachers and advancing professional knowledge.

David Hamilton, in his work 'On Pedagogy and the Democratisation of Educational Inquiry', has called for a sharp break with the past. He says that the development of a new science of pedagogy should not, as before, be a top-down science applied monolithically in schoolrooms. He says that it should honour the experience, the insight and, indeed, the shortcomings of those charged with its application.

The relevance of personal educational theories for improving the quality of education in the nation's schools can perhaps be appreciated in terms of the 'curriculum reviews' which are being carried out in most if not all educational authorities. Many authorities are using the experiences of HMIs in their 'Curriculum 11-16 A review of progress' to assist schools in carrying out their curriculum reviews. HMI stresses the importance of making regular visits to classrooms and the importance of stressing to those involved that the review is intended to affect classroom practice and the quality of the pupils' learning.

The teacher/researcher who is concerned with improving the quality of the pupils' learning could approach his problems in a systematic and self-critical enquiry which takes the following form of development in a personal educational theory.

I experience a problem when some of my educational values are not being lived in the classroom.

I imagine a solution to my problem.

I act in the direction of the solution.

I evaluate the outcomes of my actions.

I modify my problems, ideas and actions in the light of my evaluation.

The particular content for a personal educational theory, which is grounded in the 'I' of the individual and has the above form, could be directly related to the 'Educational Aims' commended by the Secretaries of State (The School Curriculum 1981). These aims are recommended as a checklist against which local authorities and schools could test their curricular policies and their application to individual schools. Take the first of these aims as an example:

1) To help pupils to develop lively enquiring minds, the ability to question and argue rationally and to apply themselves to tasks, and physical skills:

An individual teacher could be helped to develop his or her personal educational theory in the following way. Let us take as examples the development of lively enquiring minds with the ability to question and argue rationally. This example formed the basis of a previous report to this Journal (Whitehead 1977). Once a teacher accepts a particular educational aim then it is in the nature of aims for them to be good reasons to explain particular actions. If, for example, we wanted a reason from a teacher as to why he was *reorganising his learning resources* in a particular way it would be reasonable for the teacher to say that, because he values the development of lively enquiring minds with the ability to question and argue rationally, he was reorganising his resources because he believes that this will give him a better chance than previously of achieving this aim.

With the aid of video and audio tapes of his or her classroom practices the teacher could construct his own personal explanations for the process of education in his or her classroom and submit this explanation for public criticism. The submission of the explanation to public criticism is most important if we want the personal educational theories to gain academic legitimacy. This legitimacy requires that we understand the criteria we use to test an explanation. By taking the criteria set out by the Secretaries of State as 'Educational Aims', and using these in the development of personal educational theories it could well be that a direct link between educational theory and the process of improving the quality of educational practice could be forged.

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Some Implications of Information Technology

David I. Roberts

Clwyd

'In ten or fifteen years the single telephone line and the ordinary three or four channel TV will seem as old fashioned and quaint as the old crystal set seem to us', said Mr. Patrick Jenkins, the Industry Minister recently (Observer, 14 March, 1982). If this is so, how are schools going to face up to and use this development?

As this year has been designated 'Information Technology Year 1982' it appeared an opportune moment to explore some of the possibilities that the new technology holds for schools. Although Information Technology Year, which has the support of the government, is designed to promote a wider appreciation of the opportunities, benefits and challenges of new technology for all sectors of the community, this essay will restrict itself to schools. The three main areas which will be explored are education about computers; the computer as a resource for learning and teaching; the computer as an aid for administration and management. There will be repercussions for subject areas but also for the methodology of teaching and learning.

Back in 1969 Postman and Weingartner (1971, page 149) wrote:

'Development in electronic information processing makes the school as it presently exists unnecessary'.

While the pupils:

'have to live with TV, film and LP record, communication satellites and the laser beam, their teachers are still talking as if the only medium on the scene is Gutenberg's printing press . . . unless

our schools can switch to the right business, their clientele will either go elsewhere or go into a severe case of "future shock"'.

1. Main Frame Computers

Computers have been around for a number of years but they were large and expensive and were normally sited in local government offices, industry and colleges and universities. They did offer a service for schools which could be fed initially by sending through the post, batches of pupils work. An improvement on this was the 'multi-access' system where by using a tele-typewriter or visual display unit, and being linked by telephone line to the computer, the user could 'interact' with the computer.

There are advantages to being a remote computer user – there are no running and maintenance costs for the computer and the large computers have a huge storage capacity, high speed and a large number of ready written programs. But the difficulties were the cost and uncertainty of using post office telephone lines and the rationing of computing time between users.

However the advent of the micro-computer has made a self-contained desk-top computer available to vast numbers of schools. In addition they have the facilities of graphics, light pens, fast printers, videotex and voice recognition not previously available on the larger machines (Sledge, 1979).

As an example of what the main-frame could, and still can, offer schools, I will give an outline of the