"To Know Is Not Enough, Or Is It?" Transformative Education(al) Studies

1.   **Purposes**

In their call for submissions for AERA 2012, Ball and Tyson (2011) state that the AERA mission is sound: *"to advance knowledge about education, to encourage scholarly inquiry related to education, and to promote the use of research to improve education and serve the public good."* They ask members of AERA for suggestions on what actions should be taken by the **education research community** (my emphasis) to fulfill the second part of the mission. That is, to promote the use of research to improve education and actually serve the public good.

It will be argued that knowing as **education researchers,** whilst necessary, is not sufficient to fulfill the second part of the AERA mission. Evidence will be provided to show that the knowing of **self-study educational researchers**, which draws insights from the theories of education researchers, is both necessary and sufficient to promote the use of research to improve education and serve the public good.

2.   **Perspective(s)**

The reasons for choosing the perspectives below is that they emphasize the importance of self-study in the generation of a new epistemology for educational knowledge. They do this through a researcher's decision to understand the world from their own point of view as an individual claiming originality and exercising judgment responsibly with universal intent. The perspectives clearly distinguish between the spectator truths generated by education researchers and the living truths generated by self-study educational researchers.

There has been much discussion on the need for self-study researchers to engage with sociohistorical and sociocultural influences in contribution to the public good. The perspectives focus on the need to go beyond devaluation and demoralization in engaging with issues of power and identity in society in contributing to the public good. In going beyond devaluation and demoralization the perspectives show how this can be done through the use of a relationally dynamic awareness of inclusionality in collaborative enquiries. Finally, the perspectives focus on the importance of strengthening the social validity of our communications as contributions to educational knowledge.

   a) Polanyi's (1958, p. 327) perspective about personal knowledge and responsibility.

   b) Schön's (1995) perspective on the need for a new epistemology for the new scholarship.

   c) Burke's distinction between "spectator" truth and "living" truth in which he draws on the work of Gabriel Marcel. The 'spectator' truth of **education researchers** is generated by disciplines (e.g., experimental science, psychology, sociology) which:

   "… rationalise reality and impose on it a framework which helps them to understand it but at the expense of oversimplifying it. Such general explanations can be achieved only by standing back from and "spectating" the human condition from a distance, as it were, and by concentrating on generalities and ignoring particularities which do not fit the picture. Whilst

such a process is very valuable, it is also very limited because it is one step removed from reality. The "living" "authentic" truth of a situation can be fully understood only from within the situation though the picture that emerges will never be as clear-cut as that provided by "spectator" truth." Burke, A.(1992, p.222).

The living truths of self-study educational researchers draw on the perspective's outlined by Tidwell, Heston and Fitzgerald (2009) in their work on research methods for the self-study of practice.

d) McTaggart's (1992) perspective about the need to go beyond the de-valuation and de-moralisation of economic rationality. It offers a self-study, living theory approach (Whitehead, 2009) that carries hope in transcending these constraints.

e) Noffke's perspective about the need to address social issues in terms of the interconnections between personal identity and the claim of experiential knowledge, as well as power and privilege in society, *The process of personal transformation through the examination of practice and self-reflection may be a necessary part of social change, especially in education; it is however, not sufficient.* (Noffke, 1997, p. 329).

f) Rayner's (2009, 2011) perspective of inclusionality with his reasoning as to why self-identity naturally includes neighbourhood.

g) Walton's (2011) perspective in the collaborative inquiry, *How do we, individually and collectively, integrate research and practice to improve the wellbeing of children?*

h) Habermas' (1976) perspective on using four criteria of social validity in communication and social evolution.

3.   **Methods, techniques, or modes of inquiry**

The mode of inquiry uses Whitehead's (2009) living theory methodology and McNiff's (2009) form of narrative for the generation of living theories. Action reflection cycles are used in forming, researching and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' The cycles include: the expression of concerns when values are not being lived as fully as the practitioner-researcher believes to be possible; imagining possible improvements; choosing one to act on; action and gather data to make a judgment on the effectiveness of actions; evaluating the effectiveness of actions; modifying the concerns, ideas and actions in the light of the evaluations and the production of an explanation of learning that is submitted to a validation group to help to strengthen the validity of the explanation.

The technique for showing the significance of a relationally dynamic awareness of space and boundaries in explanations of educational influence, involves the use of visual representations of practice.

The methods for clarifying and communicating the meanings of energy-flowing values as explanatory principles include the process of empathetic resonance with video data (Huxtable, 2009).

The technique for strengthening the validity of research accounts involves the use by validation groups of peers of Habermas' (1976, pp. 2-3) four criteria of comprehensibility, rightness, truth and authenticity.

4.   **Data sources, evidence, objects or materials**

Data will be drawn from the Transformative Education(al) Studies project (Conolly, Maylwa, Pithouse Morgan, 2010) funded by the National Research Foundation of South Africa.

The introductory statement for the project describes the context:

> *Since the birth of South African democracy, and in the current time, Higher Education in South Africa has been, and is, characterised by a number of disturbing factors: poor undergraduate success and throughputs, particularly among students from the previously disadvantaged communities, slow if any transformation of curricula, a poor profile of community engagement and social action, inadequate and subminimum Higher Education (academic / administrative) staff qualifications, an ageing professoriate, and too few new and young researchers.*

The proposal also points out that the overarching research question, which when applied idiosyncratically yields a broad spectrum of insights and outcomes, is:

"How do I transform my educational practice as .... ?"

The proposal states that *the research question can be applied in the individual's direct educational context, with innumerable responses and insights, as can be inferred from the following examples:*

> *3.1 "How do I transform my educational practice as a teacher of science to first year learners from a disadvantaged educational background?"*
> *3.2 "How do I transform my educational practice as the extended curriculum project co-ordinator in a newly merged university of technology?"*
> *3.3 "How do I transform my educational practice as mentor of first generation Higher Education academics?"*
> *3.4 "How do I transform my educational practice as a novice teacher educator in Higher Education?" .....*

These 'I' questions will be contrasted with the more usual kinds of empirical and conceptual questions (Babbie & Mouton, 2001) asked by education researchers. Questions such as:

EMPIRICAL QUESTIONS

Type of Question	Example
Exploratory What are the key factors?	What are the distinguishing features of a good leader?
Descriptive Are x and y related?	Is there a correlation between parental support and scholastic achievement?
Causal What are the causes of y?	Is alcohol the main cause of liver disease?
Evaluative What was the outcome of x?	Has the new TB awareness programme produced a decline in the number of TB cases?
Predictive What will the effect of x be on y?	What effect will the introduction of a new antibiotic have on population P?
Historical What led to y happening?	What caused the demise of socialism in Central Europe in the late 1980s?

CONCEPTUAL QUESTIONS

Type of Question	Example
Meta-analytic What are the key	What are the key debates in current business risk

debates in domain x?	studies?
Conceptual What is the meaning of conceptx?	What is the meaning of 'sexual harassment?
Theoretical What are the most Plausible theories or models of x?	What are the most widely accepted models, definitions or theories of 'usability'?
Philosophical What is the ideal profile of x?	Do animals have rights?

Evidence, objects and materials to show the effectiveness of 'I' questions in improving practice and generating knowledge, in realising the second part of the AERA mission, will also be drawn from doctoral theses and masters dissertations at http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml and writings for masters units at http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/mastermod.shtml .

5.   **Results and substantiated conclusions**

Results and substantiated conclusions

Results and substantiated conclusions from self-study 'I' enquiries that engage with issues of social transformation and the values that carry hope for the future of humanity have been published in the Educational Journal of Living Theories:

The contents below of Volume 2(3), of December 2009 will be analysed to demonstrate how such self-study 'I' enquiries can fulfill the second part of the AERA mission whilst also satisfying the first part of the mission *to advance knowledge about education, to encourage scholarly inquiry related to education.* The analysis will show how the generation of the living educational theories of educational researchers can integrate insights from the theories of education researchers in a way that sustains a connection with both improving practice and generating knowledge. The substantiated conclusions include the use of activity theory in answering Hooker's question in the context of Rwanda; evidence of promoting learning autonomy in China; evidence of influence in the context of mental health in the Republic of Ireland; evidence of accounting for an individuals educational influence in a teacher education programme in the UK.

Foreword (pp.i-iv) *Margaret Farren*

How can I encourage multi-stakeholder narrative and reflection on the use of ICT in Teacher Professional Development programmes in Rwanda? (pp.324-364) *Mary Hooker*

How can I help my students promote learner autonomy in English language learning? (pp.365-398) *Li Yahong*

How can I design a recovery-oriented e-learning website for people with mental health difficulties? (pp.399-431) *Ronan Mulhern*

How do I create my living theory of accountability as a lecturer in teacher education? (pp.432-439) *Jane Renowden*

6.   **Scholarly significance.**

The significance can be understood as a response to Schön's (1995) call for the development of a new epistemology for the new scholarship in demonstrating how the embodied knowledge of professional

educators can be made public. It answers Snow's (2001, p. 9) call for procedures for accumulating such knowledge and making it public.

Its significance emphasizes the importance of resisting the slippage that occurred in the call for submissions where we, as members of an educational research association, are referred to as 'education researchers'. The slippage is significant because of the limitations of 'education researchers' as spectator researchers whilst acknowledging their significance in fulfilling part one of the AERA mission. A strength of 'education researchers' is that they can *"advance knowledge about education, to encourage scholarly inquiry related to education.* A traditional weakness of 'education researchers' is that of *promoting the use of research to improve education and serve the public good.* Self-study 'educational researchers' have developed forms of research that are directly involved in improving education, serving the public good and generating knowledge. Such researchers draw insights from education researchers in understanding the constraints and opportunities that are open or closed to their attempts to improve practice in their particular contexts. In fulfilling both parts of the AERA mission the different, but complementary roles of both education and educational researchers are recognized and understood. This is why I have emphasized the significance of the Transformative Education(al) Studies Project supported by the National Research Foundation of South Africa. In this project the insights of education researchers are included in the findings and theories of educational researchers.

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