

Educational researchers and their living-educational-theories.

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In this, my first contribution to the BERA blog, I hope to stimulate debate by sharing some differences of opinion with other researchers in BERA. My intention is to emphasise the importance of retaining a focus on educational research in BERA whilst acknowledge the value of ideas from education researchers. The importance of a distinction between educational research and education has been highlighted by Geoff Whitty in his BERA Presidential Address

One way of handling the distinction might be to use the terms 'education research' and 'educational research' more carefully. In this paper, I have so far used the broad term education research to characterise the whole field, but it may be that within that field we should reserve the term educational research for work that is consciously geared towards improving policy and practice (Whitty, 2006, p. 172)

My stipulative definition of a distinction between educational and education research, challenges Whitty's understandings.

In my definition, an education researcher conducts research within the conceptual frameworks and methods of enquiry and validation of disciplines or fields of education. The explanations produced by education researchers are offered within these conceptual frameworks. Explanations for the educational actions and educational influences of individuals are **derived** from such conceptual frameworks.

In contrast with education researchers, educational researchers **generate** explanations of their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations within which the practice is located. I call these explanations living-educational-theories. Educational researchers draw insights into these explanations from the disciplines and fields of enquiry of education, without being subsumed within the theoretical frameworks of any discipline or any combination of disciplines.

Using my stipulative definition the majority of articles, published in BERA journals are from education researchers.

Menter (2013) appears to be focusing on educational research when he writes in Research Intelligence:

The attack on educational research takes two forms. First, through reducing the university input, teaching is in danger of becoming deprofessionalised and not having a strong enquiry-based orientation. The emphasis that the current [English] Secretary of State has put on

teaching as a craft is perhaps based on his prejudices against educational theorising and his view of teaching as largely being about the transmission of (incontestable) subject knowledge (p.8)

All the papers in this issue of *Research Intelligence* focus on Teacher Education and all have a similar limitation when viewed within my stipulative definition. They fail to acknowledge teachers as experts developing their expertise by researching their praxis to improve it and generating educational knowledge that contributes to the knowledge-base of education. I have given elsewhere a more detailed analysis of this failure (Whitehead, 2014) to give appropriate recognition to the knowledge-creating capacities of professional educators in a response to the BERA-RSA inquiry into Research and the Teaching Profession (BERA 2014).

From the ground of my stipulative definition of an educational researcher I have tutored and supervised many successfully completed masters and doctoral enquiries. Many of these can be accessed from

<http://www.actionresearch.net/living/living.shtml>

and

<http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/mastermod.shtml>

The educational knowledge generated by these practitioner-researchers offers an educational epistemology for educational researchers that is distinct from the epistemologies used by education researchers.

References

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