Following our conversation café on the 9th August 2013 I want to share the following ideas three.

The first idea concerns ironic validity and follows up some of the points raised about validity on Friday. I'm thinking of Patti Lather's point *The text is resituated as a representation of its 'failure to represent what it points toward but can never reach…. (Lather, 1994, p. 40-41):*

First the practical problem: Today there is as much variation among qualitative researchers as there is between qualitative and quantitatively orientated scholars. Anyone doubting this claim need only compare Miles and Huberman's (1994) relatively traditional conception of validity <'The meanings emerging from the data have to be tested for their plausibility, their sturdiness, their 'confirmability' – that is, their validity' (p.11)> with Lather's discussion of ironic validity:

"Contrary to dominant validity practices where the rhetorical nature of scientific claims is masked with methodological assurances, a strategy of ironic validity proliferates forms, recognizing that they are rhetorical and without foundation, postepistemic, lacking in epistemological support. The text is resituated as a representation of its 'failure to represent what it points toward but can never reach…. (Lather, 1994, p. 40-41)'." (Donmoyer, 1996 p.21.)

Donmoyer, R. (1996) Educational Research in an Era of Paradigm Proliferation: What's a Journal Editor to Do? *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 25, No.2, pp. 19-25.

The second idea concerns the importance of using visual data to communicate the nature of the **living, relational and energy flowing practical principles or values** we use to explain what we are doing and explain our educational influences in our own learning and in the learning of others.

What I've done below is to select 8 images from our video-taped conversation of the 19th July. My selection was made by running the cursor along the 56:09 minute video until I felt the greatest resonance with what I experienced as the expression of your life-affirming and life-enhancing energy. I'm claiming that an explanation of your influence, as you work at living your values as fully as possible, must include this embodied expression of your life-affirming and life-enhancing energy with the flow of values you use to give meaning and purpose to your lives. I'm curious as to whether you think this claim of mine is valid. I did the same with the cursor along the video-clips of William and Kate and Sandra and Nigel talking about developmental possibilities for Sandra (Lynn and Debra – I haven't got video of you – yet!), Sonia at ARNA and Robyn from her web-page.

56:09 minute video of the conversation café on the 19 July 2013 in Quest
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pPStFyFDzMk

The images below are from the conversation plus an image from a 11:46 minute video of William talking at a conference of psychotherapists about the Keynsham Action Research and a 6:14 minute video of Kate talking about mindfulness and Buddhism (and attending to the other).

Nigel

Chris

Surrinder

Joao

Shelagh

Julie

Marie

William on the Keynsham Action Network

11:46 minutes http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=miA9WtadnSM

Kate on mindfulness (I'm feeling 'attended to')

6:14 minutes http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6gLUrg4Shzo

Sandra and Nigel reflecting on the realisation of developmental possibilities for Sandra influenced by Nigel.

20:14 minutes http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5EWsPcJvGw

Jack

Robyn from her web-pages at http://www.actionresearch.net/living/robynpound.html

39:44 minute video of Sonia at the Inaugural Conference of the Action Research Network of the Americas on the 1 May 2013 in San Francisco at:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kSM87sW2lA

The third idea is related to Chris' writings on Self-Study. What I'm suggesting is that Chris has a tendency to 'default' back into the traditional form of scholarly writing within which she feels comfortable but which, I am suggesting, can get in the way of developing a self-study of the kind, 'How do I improve my professional practice as....?

I think that you can see this process of 'defaulting' back into a traditional form of scholarly writing through using the 'abstract' concept of self-study rather than exploring the implications of asking, researching and answering the question, How do I improve my professional practice as....? in the Transformative Education(al) Studies Project in South Africa. You can access the successful proposal at http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/southafrica/TESproposalopt.pdf

With its generic question, 'How do I improve my professional practice as.....?

At the 2012 American Educational Research Association Conference I was the discussant at the TES Symposium and you can access my notes and video at:

http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/aera12/jwdiscussantTESatAERA12.pdf

If you go down to the questions posed by each participant you will see that the generic question, 'How do I improve my professional practice as....? have all been transformed into a 'self-study' question of the kind asked by Theresa Chisanga,

'**How Is the Process of Self-Study Transforming Me as a Professor and University Chaplain in a South African University in a Poor Rural Community?'**

The abstract concept 'self-study' transforms the 'I' question into a question that focuses on 'the process of self-study'. The seriousness of this transformation can be understood in relation to Theresa's contribution to the LHU Colloquium below where her writings show that she 'knows about' self-study in the propositional sense of 'know-that'. Contrast Theresa's writings where she shows that she 'knows-that' with

her acknowledgement on the video-clip below that she does not know yet how to do a self-study.

"Introduction

Having been on the Self-study project with the overarching question of: "how do I improve my practice as a…" I have been fascinated by the kind of ideas and questions evoked and generated by this question. On the surface of it, the question seems to be focussed on the self and it appears that the answer(s) can possibly confirm the claim that researching one's own practice is indeed about self-development and not much more in terms of valid scholarly research (Colloquium objective 2)

Unpacking the question however and digging deeper into it shows that in our kind of practice, you cannot improve your practice without improving others. An effective educator at any level must positively impact the lives of others as their job is just that, transforming the lives of other people through a journey of self-discovery, switching on bulbs in the minds and inspiring them to go out and switch on countless others in their daily encounters and their own practices.

The set up

As a lecturer in an impoverished rural university in South Africa, teaching English language, which, to many of my students is more of a foreign language than a second language, I find that I have to dig deeper within myself in order to meet my students somewhere at all. To this end, Whitehead's (1989) concept of creating a "living educational theory of practice" is necessary. To me, this is a call to researching one's own practice in order to practice at all.

The University is situated in one of the most impoverished regions of the country, the Eastern Cape, in the former Transkei. The schools in the surrounding areas are poorly resourced; they have no libraries, let alone computer and other laboratories. For most of the students therefore, their first experience of these is when they come to the University. Moreover, they have to be taught in English, a language in which they can barely express themselves, let alone comprehend sophisticated academic textbooks and journal articles. To gain admission to the university, it is not essential to have had a 50% pass mark, so there are students who may have scored a 35 or 40% pass for their matric results.

Inheriting these students at university level means that no matter how well trained you are as a university 'educator'; you are probably as challenged as they are in your endeavour. As a lecturer in English language studies at this level, I cannot assume a basic knowledge of English in all my students.

Having been brought up academically with a sense of a traditional university student, the tendency for many lecturers including myself is 'to lecture' i.e., stand in front of the lecture hall with anything between 50-500 students at a time. You quickly learn however that this cannot work in the given situation as you end up only talking to yourself. Yet this is what happens many a time, resulting in a high failure rate which in my university is a well-known fact and always a very 'current' point of discussion. New and innovative ways to deal with this are necessary as my experience is not an uncommon one.

Researching one's practice and coming up with 'living theories of practice' that are plausible and sound is absolutely essential in a situation like this.

A knock at the door: enter Transformative Education/al Studies (TES)

Through the TES project, I have personally become acutely aware of the importance of researching own practice and the relevance of this to scenarios like the one described above where my practice is situated.

The students come to the university totally unprepared for University. They are willing and eager to learn but the learning environment is intimidating and is essentially not ready for them (as they are). They are forced to learn in a medium unfamiliar to them and in which they have no appropriate level of proficiency. Consequently, they are withdrawn and are unable to participate fully. The challenge for the lecturer is enormous and the only recourse is to throw off the expected norms and take on board whatever means would draw the students out and bring some excitement to the learning experience. It is my belief that those of us in situations like these who still hope to teach their disciplines at the same high university level as others can never get there unless our practice is thoroughly researched by us, every detail of what works is recorded as living theory, and this is accepted as serious research, on the basis that it works.

Previously, I had never paid attention to what had worked and carried on more or less instinctively responding to situations as they arose in the learning environment. Now I know that every aspect is important as someone else out there in a similar situation can benefit from another's (my) experience.

Instinctively stopping a lecture when I sensed that I was on a lone journey (without them) and trying to find out where they were was something I did often without thinking. Going over stuff and prompting questions and trying to get a discussion going that involved everyone were some of my ways of making sure we all moved together. More difficult was letting go of the 'need' to finish the 'syllabus' and not waste time on these activities. Very often, many of these 'little things' worked but I would never have thought they were important. At university level, it sometimes takes patience and care to be able to do this. Students are

expected to be independent enough to get as much as they can out of a lecture, move on and go and fill in the gaps as they research further on, on their own. This is a widely acknowledged university practice everywhere and it may be hard to believe that you can be in a situation where more is required of you in order to 'meet' your students and that you have to go more than half way.

It is clear from this that traditional research related to my practice may not be good enough or appropriate since my situation and my students do not fit the standard profile of a traditional university student. It follows therefore that researching my practice in my situation is what would generate the relevant knowledge and information to improve my practice and which others in my situation can share and benefit from. This situation requires a more personalised approach with patience, love and care not only for one's practice but for the people one is working with.

I realise now that the other aspects of my life have helped me in dealing with this special university environment. Apart from being a university lecturer, I also engage many students at a spiritual level as their Chaplain. From this angle, I have had the freedom to go beyond the 'academic gown' appearance and seen the 'inner' of some of my students; where they come from, who they really are and how all of these have a bearing on their academic lives as they struggle to make sense of it all. On this side of my 'broader' practice, my own inner side and guard are let down and a part of me shares openly and easily and the students have access to someone more like themselves. I believe this person is not only more accessible to them but possibly more inspiring as her childhood and the story of her youth mirrors their own. This has to be a more effective lecturer than the 'normal one' as she brings the best out of them.

This infusion of the philosophy of "Ubuntu" into our practice in circumstances such as given above are likely to yield better results. Researching one's practice therefore, right where one is with their peculiar context must be a viable and highly desirable way forward to improve one's practice. The academic world has a reputation for being impersonal. We are embarrassed to talk about love and care but these concepts are the ones that can induce passion and commitment to the academic project of effective and transformative teaching. Having grown up academically and been brought up purely by 'grace' of this nature among particular individuals in the family, among teachers and lecturers who paid attention and went the extra mile, I have reason to believe in this. It is something that can only develop and grow with a deep sense of awareness of one's responsibility, commitment and understanding of what one's practice really means, what Samaras (2011) calls 'personal professional accountability' There is a sense in which this approach is in fact the best and perhaps the only way to bring about transformation in higher education, both for the lecturer and the student. In a world that has gone over the cliff with greed, selfishness and corruption in all areas of human life, there is nothing like self-examination in all that we do in our designated practices that can bring about much needed change in the human condition and how we all do things."

Here is the 41:48 minute video at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9raJinLPGN8 where Theresa is expressing the desire to learn how to do an 'I' enquiry of the kind, 'How do I improve my professional practice as…..?'

What I'm suggesting in relation to Chris' writings is that she moves out of the form of traditional scholarly writing into her 'I' enquiry. Chris – your masters dissertation was highly original and well worth showing how you are evolving this original contribution into your doctoral thesis with your 'I' enquiry.

Love Jack.