

Dear Nigel, Chris, Sandra, Marie, Kate and William, (Joan and Janice)

RE: How are we representing and communicating meanings of the expression of our embodied values and using them as explanatory principles and living standards of judgment?

I'd like to share some ideas on how producing and sharing explanations for our educational influences could enhance the quality and contributions of our productive lives.

What I'm suggesting below is that we could enhancing our contributions to making the world a better place to be by learning how to communicate and evolve the influence of the values and understandings that we believe are carrying hope for the future of humanity. This is consistent with one of the purposes of the Faculty of Education of Liverpool Hope University (2009):

To contribute to the development of knowledge and understanding in all fields of education, characterising all work with values arising from hope and love.

I'm suggesting that we could enhance this influence by learning how to represent and communicate the meanings of the expression of our embodied values. I'm thinking of the unique constellation of values that each of us uses to give life its meaning and purpose. I usually refer to these as our ontological values as they help to constitute who we are and what we do. The value-words we often use to refer to the expression of these embodied values include love, hope, care, compassion, justice, freedom, inclusion, fairness and the procedural value of democracy.

The embodied expression of our values in what we do always flow with energy. We cannot do anything without expressing energy. I experience the energy, flowing with your values, as 'life-affirming'. Hence, my reference below to 'life-affirming energy'.

When I refer to ontological values I experience these as explanatory principles in explanations of our educational influences in learning. I'm thinking here of our educational influence in our own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work. For example, when I experience what I consider to be an unjustified constraint on my freedom, I explain what I do in response to this constraint in terms of my desire to live my value of freedom as fully as I can. The same applies to my other ontological values. I experience my ontological values as explanatory principles in an explanation of why I do what I do and in explaining my educational influence.

Because of my belief in the value of researching our own practice and making public our explanations of educational influence I also use the term 'living standards of judgment'. The idea of standards of judgment comes from epistemology as a theory of knowledge. We use a standard of judgment to evaluate/test the validity of a claim or contribution to knowledge. So, when we

offer what we think is a valid explanation of our educational influence as a claim to knowledge I believe that we evaluate the validity of our explanation in terms of our values as the explanatory principles we use to explain our educational influence.

In addition to other ideas I want to contextualise my note in terms of a methodological guide from the Council of Europe on *Constructing an inclusive institutional culture* (Council of Europe, 2011) and to Joan Walton's (2011) paper on *A Living Theory Approach to Higher Education*. I like the clarity and explicit intentions of the Council of Europe Guide:

The guide is an important part of the Council of Europe's action aimed at facilitating cohesion in our societies, based on the rights but also the responsibilities of every individual and every institution of our societies. (p.4 Thorbjorn Jagland - Secretary General of the Council of Europe).

..... we must take account of the changing institutional structures and competences, particularly in the public services, geared to addressing diversity through social justice, which along can guarantee social cohesion. This guide is designed to illustrate and fuel the debate on the possible ways forward in the social service sector (p.5, Gilda Farrell – Head of the Research and Development Division, DG Social Cohesion, Council of Europe).

My concern about the guide is that it omits any awareness of the significance of the contributions being made by individuals such as ourselves, as knowledge-creators, in generating and sharing our own living theories with the forms of representation and accountability shown below. I am thinking of the awareness shown by Joan Walton (2011) when she advocates a living theory approach in the development of a new epistemology of practice:

Schön contends that Boyer's vision for a new paradigm of scholarship, which includes research, teaching, application and integration, requires a new epistemology of practice that would take the form of action research. This article explores the validity of Schön's assertion through the use of a living theory approach to teaching 'active participation in learning' to a group of second-year undergraduate students, influenced by an ontology of a participative reality and a pedagogy of whole-person learning. The level of engagement by the students, and their reflections on their experience of the module, support Schön's claim; and demonstrate the significance of a living theory approach to action research in realising Boyer's vision as a means of enhancing the quality of students' learning in higher education. (p. 567)

The paragraphs above are communicating my meanings in words alone. They are intended as a 'framing' or 'lens' that might help to focus on meanings that are being expressed through both our embodied knowledge and our words in our living relationships. I shall show how the meanings can be re-presented with both words and video in a way that enhances the validity of the communication of the meanings of embodied values. Huxtable (2009) has shown how digital video can be used to enhance the validity of these communications.

Because I'm sure that we will have different responses to the video-clips, I want to be clear about the lens I'm using to make my own responses.

I have separated the one hour video from our Café Conversation on the 30th November 2011 into four parts for easier viewing. **The urls for the video-clips are only available for viewing by you so please don't share them.** The timings of the video-clips are after the title. The clips provide the data for the visual narrative below which follows the video-clips and that I am offering as part of a validation process to see if we can clarify for ourselves the meanings of the expressions of the embodied values we use to give meaning and purpose to our own lives and can share these meanings with others. I'm not expecting you to view all the four video, but I'd really appreciate it if you could look at where I'm making a claim to know something about the expression of your values to see if my claim still stands in the face of your evaluation.

1) The beginning of Conversation Café on the 30/11/11 with Chris and Nigel. 7:01 minutes



http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dfcVbuuTC_8

2) Nigel sharing with the group his understanding of his values. 7:07 minutes



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1V9cbMPNt14>

3) Nigel and Chris talking about values. 25:39 minutes



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cVLddEM2V50>

4) Sandra and Nigel reflecting on developmental possibilities. 20:14 minutes



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P5EWsPcJvGw>

Developing a visual narrative to clarify and share meanings of the expressions of embodied values

When we are together sharing ideas and experiences in our conversations I experience a space of empathetic responsiveness. By this I mean that I feel valued, listened to and responded to. I also experience you expressing a contextual empathy in the sense that you appear to me to be responsive to the feelings of others. I think of these qualities as inclusional in Rayner's (2011) sense of a relationally dynamic awareness of space and boundaries.

Hence my focus is on **the relationally dynamic communications that reveal the meanings of embodied expression of values**. My desire is to clarify the meanings of these values and to share them as widely as possible. I think that it is worth emphasizing that I am doing this because I believe that using these values as the explanatory principles and living standards of judgment to which we hold ourselves responsible and accountable is contributing to make the world a better place to be. It's because I believe that the traditional form of academic texts that are presented with words alone, cannot adequately communicate the meanings of the values to which we hold ourselves responsible and accountable that I'm suggesting that we need to use visual narratives in explaining our educational influences. I'm thinking of our energy-flowing values as explanatory principles.

Here are images from the video-clips that communicate to me relationally dynamic meanings of love and hope that I experience as being expressed between Nigel and Chris; Nigel and Sandra; Sandra and Chris; and Chris, Nigel and Sandra. Here is an image which carries to me, from the video-clip, what I understand by a flow of life-affirming energy.

1) Valuing integrity in the face of pressures that can violate this integrity.

See Nigel at 3:53 of **Clip 2**. Move the cursor around 3:53 to see if you agree that Nigel is communicating both his embodied resistance (his words together with his bodily expression in his hand movements) to the experience of social influences that are violating his value of integrity together with his passion and determination to sustain his integrity in what he does.



2) Valuing the empowerment of the SENCO team

See Chris at 22:49 of **Clip 3** where I experience Chris communicating a flow of embodied energy with her value of empowerment as I move the cursor between 21:16-23:43



3) Life Affirming Energy and your Empathetic Resonance

As you view Clip 3 between 24:58 to 25:37 and move the cursor backwards and forwards I'm suggesting that you will feel an empathetic resonance with the flows of life-affirming energy around the expressions at 25:14 and 25:34 minutes (see the still images below). I'd also like to check with you that you can understand what Nigel and Chris are talking about in terms of Nigel 'Presencing developmental opportunities' with Chris.



4) Sandra's expression of empathetic responsiveness.

Between 1:32 - 4:50 of Clip 4 I experience Sandra's embodied expression of empathetic responsiveness as I move the cursor backwards and forwards.

This is perhaps one of the most important inclusional values and I believe that Nigel and Chris value highly Sandra's expression of this talent in her everyday relationships, in supporting the award of the Inclusional Quality Mark and in helping to organize the annual celebration ceremony for the IQM



What I'm suggesting is that we could develop over the next year or so explanations of our educational influences in what we are doing in our different settings/contexts that could be presented in visual narratives that show the meanings of our living and embodied values as these are clarified and evolve in what we are doing. In doing this I think we could influence the understandings of the Council of Europe to include the explanations of practitioners in the creation of inclusive institutional cultures. I believe that we could build on Joan Walton's contributions to a living theory approach to higher education by bringing energy-flowing and inclusional values into our institutional cultures and understandings of organizational learning. I am thinking here of the inclusional values we use to explain why we do what we do, to explain our educational influences, and which we use as our living standards of judgment in evaluating the validity of our contributions to knowledge on how to live as fully as possible values that carry hope for the future of humanity.

References

Council of Europe (2011) Constructing an inclusive institutional culture: a methodological guide. Strasbourg; Council of Europe Publishing.

Huxtable, M. (2009) How do we contribute to an educational knowledge base? A response to Whitehead and a challenge to BERJ. *Research Intelligence*, 107, 25-26. Retrieved 11 January 2008 from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/huxtable/mh2009beraRI107.pdf>

Rayner, A. (2011) Space Cannot Be Cut—Why Self-Identity Naturally Includes Neighbourhood. *Integr. Psych. Behav.* (2011) 45:161–184

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