
**CREATING OUR LIVING EDUCATIONAL THEORIES IN TEACHING
AND LEARNING TO CARE:
Using Multi-Media To Communicate The Meanings
And Influence Of Our Embodied
Educational Values**

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I enjoyed Jacqui Vincent's contribution to issue 17 of this journal. She wrote about [Teaching and Learning to Care](#). I particularly identified with her point that 'we certainly know the merits of providing Tender Loving Care to our students' (Vincent, 2002).

The questions I am asking myself are about the development of shared meanings of loving care. They are about the evidence that demonstrates the educational merits of loving care. It isn't that I doubt these merits or my embodied experience of the educational influence of loving care. What I am questioning is whether, as teacher-researchers, we have made public our embodied knowledge of loving care in our educational relationships. I am thinking of 'making public' in a way that can be communicated to others with standards for judging the validity of our claims to know the educational influence of loving care. I am hopeful that you will join in a co-enquiry into these and related questions, as I respond to Jacqui Vincent's article.

The relevance of the questions to the global knowledge-base of professional educators can be judged in relation to the present perceived lack of procedures for systematizing the personal professional knowledge of educators. The relevance can also be seen in the perceived lack of influence of the archived research knowledge on improving educational practice. Hiebert, Gallimore and Stigler (2002) and Snow (2001) have expressed these perceptions well:

In spite of the continuing efforts of researchers, archived research knowledge has had little effect on the improvement of practice in the average classroom. We explore the possibility of building a useful knowledge base for teaching by beginning with practitioners' knowledge (Hiebert, Gallimore and Stigler, 2002).

The challenge is to enhance the value of personal knowledge and personal experience for practice. Good teachers possess a wealth of knowledge about teaching that cannot currently be drawn upon effectively in the preparation of novice teachers or in debates about practice. The challenge here is not to ignore or downplay this personal knowledge, but to elevate it. The knowledge resources of excellent teachers constitute a rich resource, but one that is largely untapped because we have no procedures for systematizing it. Systematizing would require procedures for accumulating such knowledge and making it public, for connecting it to bodies of knowledge established through other methods, and for vetting it for correctness and consistency. If we had

agreed-upon procedures for transforming knowledge based on personal experiences of practice into public knowledge, analogous to the way a researcher's private knowledge is made public through peer-review and publication, the advantages would be great. For one, such knowledge might help us avoid drawing far-reaching conclusions about instructional practices from experimental studies carried out in rarefied settings. Such systematized knowledge would certainly enrich the research-based knowledge being increasingly introduced into teacher preparation programs. And having standards for the systematization of personal knowledge would provide a basis for rejecting personal anecdotes as a basis for either policy or practice (Snow, 2001, p.9).

My only point of disagreement with Snow is with her thinking that having standards for the systematization of personal knowledge will provide a basis for rejecting personal anecdotes as a basis for either policy or practice. In my view the development of such standards will strengthen the quality and validity of the stories we live by, rather than providing a basis for rejecting the narrative base of educational enquiry, policy and practice. Connelly and Clandinin describe stories to live by:

Stories to live by, the phrase used throughout this book to refer to identity, is given meaning by the narrative understandings of knowledge and context. Stories to live by are shared by such matters as secret teacher stories, sacred stories of schooling, and teachers' cover stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999, p.4).

One of the most important living educational standards of practice that I can think of loves care. I am suggesting that readers of *Teaching Today for Tomorrow* might like to engage in a co-enquiry to see if we can develop some shared understandings of how we are living this value in our educational relationships. I am thinking of how the educational relationships in which we participate influence the learning of others and educate the social formations in which we live and work.

The idea that you could be having an influence in the education of social formations may not be one at the forefront of your thinking. Its importance to me has been highlighted by the recent invasion of Iraq by US and UK forces with the subsequent deaths of thousands of Iraqis and hundreds of coalition forces. The fact that social formations are still engaged in warfare tells me that there is something wrong with the education of our social formations. Hence my emphasis on the educational influence of loving care. A world organised through such a principle would, it seems to me, be less likely to engage in such destructive activity than our present social orders. So I want to stress the importance of bringing loving care more fully into the world as an educational standard that can influence both the lives of individuals and the learning of social formations.

In this attempt to develop a co-enquiry with you, I want to suggest that in order to develop a shared understanding of what we mean by loving care in our educational relationships, then we will need to show each other what we are doing in these relationships (Fletcher & Whitehead, 2003; Whitehead & Delong, 2003). While most of my research publications have been in the form of journal articles of the kind published in *Teaching Today for Tomorrow*, I do see the need to develop multi-media forms of

representation for accounts of my educational influence with my students and within the social formations where I live and work (<http://actionresearch.net/multi.shtml>).

Just to see if there is any interest from readers of *Teaching Today for Tomorrow* in developing such a co-enquiry into the development of living educational standards of judgement, such as loving care, I would like to direct your attention to the Brislington Training School web-site. This was developed in partnership with the University of the West of England, where my wife Joan Whitehead is Professor of Education and Dean of the Faculty of Education.

You can access this website at:

<http://pathways2002.uwe.ac.uk/trainingschool>

I am suggesting that we develop a conversation that is focused on the possibility of developing shared meanings of loving care by linking video-clips of our practice to our living standards of educational practice and judgement. Having expressed a concern about the damage to education that can be done by imposing externally defined 'targets' (DeLong & Whitehead, 1998) I do think that the way the Brislington Training School has shown how video-clips being integrated with literacy targets in English, Art and Design and Design and Technology, may spark off our imaginations and take our co-enquiry forward. You can go see how the video-clips are integrated with targets at:

<http://pathways2002.uwe.ac.uk/trainingschool/English/LitAct2001/overview/overview.htm>

Some readers might like to see if the action research methodology used at Brislington Training School is useful in their own schools. It was most heartening to see the approach to action research developed at the University of Bath and advocated by Moira Laidlaw in her 2002/3 pre-service guide at:

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

being used as the methodology for the development of the Brislington Training School at:

<http://pathways2002.uwe.ac.uk/trainingschool/methodology/action-research.htm>

I imagine that you will be interested in these URLs not only because of the imaginative use of educational technology but because of the stimulus they could provide for the compilation of e-portfolios of your professional learning. I have also been heartened by the interest being shown by other educators and educational researchers in the creation and testing of their living educational theories (Whitehead, 1989; Smith, 2002; Levy, 2003) in their explanations of their own professional learning. You might like to access some of the accounts of teacher-researchers who are creating their own living educational theories in their continuing professional development for their masters and doctoral degrees at:

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

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

<http://www.jeanmcniff.com>

I do hope that you will visit Jean's website and download the booklet on Action Research in Professional Practice (McNiff, 2002). Jean has made this booklet freely available to celebrate our 21 years of working together. I think you will find it helpful in constructing your own living educational theory in your work in education as you seek to enhance the learning of others, your own learning and the education of the social formations in which we are working and living. You might also like to help to develop the interconnecting branching networks of communication of professional educators on the web by sharing your own accounts with the teacher-researcher network at <http://www.teacherresearch.net> supported by Sarah Fletcher (2003) at the University of Bath. You can see some of this work in the sections for the John Bentley School and the Westwood St. Thomas School at <http://www.actionresearch.net>. I also hope that this paper serves to enhance the values we can find in each other's lives and work.

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