

Fulfilling the Objects of the British Educational Research Association

A symposium to be presented at the British Educational Research Association Conference, 4-6th September 2012 in Manchester, UK.

With convenor, Jack Whitehead, Liverpool Hope University; discussant: Dr. Joan Walton, Liverpool Hope University. Paper presentations by Je Kan Adler-Collins of Fukuoka University; Nigel Harrison, Liverpool Hope University and Children's Service of Bath and North East Somerset, UK; Margaret Farren of Dublin City University and Jack Whitehead of Liverpool Hope University.

Overview

The overall coherence of the symposium is provided by a form of educational research that fulfills the Objects of the British Educational Research Association to encourage the pursuit of educational research and its application for both the improvement of educational practice and for the public benefit (BERA, 2010).

Following Ball's and Tyson's (2011) claim that educational researchers around the world have much to do to promote educational research to improve practice and serve the public good, the symposium presents educational research that can improve educational practice for the public benefit and make original contributions to educational knowledge. These contributions are influenced by Boyer's (1991) understanding of the scholarships of discovery, application, integration and teaching, by Schon's (1995) call for a new epistemology for the new scholarship, by values of co-operative (Breeze, 2011) and collaborative enquiries (Walton 2011a & b) and by Whitehead's (2010) ideas on generating living educational theories.

Ontological coherence is provided by the inclusive values to which the practitioner-researchers hold themselves accountable to living as fully as they can in developing knowledge and understanding that contributes to education and wellbeing with values arising from love and hope (Liverpool Hope University 2010).

Epistemological coherence is provided by energy-flowing inclusive values and living standards of judgment for evaluating the validity of the contributions of educational knowledge. The inclusive values are shown by practitioner-researchers to exist in living boundaries between Eastern, Western and African cultures. Their clarification includes principles of rigor and personal and social validity and responsibility.

Methodological coherence is provided by narrative and autoethnographic explanations that integrate action reflection cycles in enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?' The methodology includes the expression of empathetic resonance with digital video-data from professional practice to clarify and develop ostensively the meanings of the inclusive values and living standards of judgment.

Conceptual coherence is provided by a view of educational research that is distinguished from other forms of research by the expression of educational responsibility. In this view of educational research the contributions of education and educational researchers provide insights for the generation of educational theory by practitioner researchers who pursue improvements in practice for the public benefit and to generate contributions to educational knowledge.

Evidence will be presented to show the influence of this form of research upon practice, policy and theory in international contexts.

Supporting Statement

The relevance of the theme is at the heart of fulfilling the Objects of BERA to encourage the pursuit of educational research and its application for both the improvement of educational practice and for the public benefit. It is timely in the sense of its national and international significance in that it offers a response to the 2012 theme of the American Educational Research Association of 'To Know Is Not Enough'. The response shows that the knowing of practitioner-researchers can be sufficient to advance knowledge about education, to promote scholarly enquiry related to education and to encourage research that improves practice and serves the public good. The presentations in the symposium are focused on research from Japan, Ireland and the UK and show influences on practice, policy and theory.

The quality of the research has been established through the use of Habermas' (1976) four criteria of social validity by peer review. These criteria concern the comprehensibility, the adequacy of the evidence, the awareness of the normative background and the authenticity, established through time and interaction.

The influences on practice are focused on research that integrates questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?' in the:

- i) integration of a curriculum for the healing nurse within a Japanese University;
- ii) use of e-learning and multi-media narratives in improving workplace learning and contributions to knowledge within an Irish University;
- iii) use of educational conversations in developing a living theory of organizational learning within an Inclusion and Education Service of an English Local Authority;
- iv) use of living educational theories that draw insights across cultural boundaries in improving practice and generating knowledge in India, Canada, Africa, China, Japan and Europe (including the UK, The Republic of Ireland, Norway and Croatia).

The influences on policy are focused on the integration of a living theory approach to continuing professional development and knowledge-creation within universities in the UK, the Republic of Ireland, Canada, Australia and South Africa.

The influences on theory are focused on the academic legitimation of the living educational theories of practitioner-researchers in Universities and peer-reviewed publications around the world.

Names of authors and their affiliations:

Je Kan Adler-Collins –Fukuoka University, Japan,
Nigel Harrisson - Children's Service of Bath and North East Somerset.
Margaret Farren – Dublin City University.
Jack Whitehead, - Liverpool Hope University.

Individual Contributions

i) Je Kan Adler-Collins - How am I contributing to sustaining educational conversations for the new scholarship across cultural boundaries and differences?

Abstract

Background

Schön (1995) has argued that if the new scholarship is to mean anything, it must imply a kind of action research with norms of its own, which will conflict with the norms of technical rationality - the prevailing epistemology built into the research universities.

Working and researching in the UK, Japan and China I am aware of the importance of sustaining educational conversations across cultural boundaries for generating educational knowledge that has a humanizing influence in global contexts. I have contributed to research into a sustained educational conversation with Whitehead through processes of tutoring for a masters degree between 1997-2000 with a focus on the creation of safe-spaces for complementary medicine in the UK; supervision for a doctoral degree between 2001-2007 with a focus on the implementation of a curriculum for the healing nurse in Japan and then as peers in our work at a University in Japan, at Beijing University of Chinese Medicine, and at two UK Universities. This has included developing insights into an Ubuntu (Charles, 2007) way of being from South Africa. These research conversations have been sustained over 14 years and I now offer insights into the norms that can be used to legitimate the educational knowledge emerging from the new scholarship of teaching in higher education, across cultural boundaries and differences.

Foci

Can cross-cultural standards of judgment be used to legitimate claims to educational knowledge from research into the new scholarship?

How can multi-media narratives be used to communicate the meanings of these standards of judgment?

Methods

Using action research cycles I communicate the meanings of the energy-flowing and values-laden standards of judgment in the course of their emergence in enquiries into improving professional practices in nursing.

Visual narratives are used with empathetic resonance to clarify and evolve the meanings of energy-flowing values.

Validation Groups are used to strengthen the validity of the explanations. This includes the integration of the insights I use from the most advanced social theories of the day.

Framing

The presentation is grounded in the expression of inclusive ontological values from a Buddhist perspective. The framing for the generation of knowledge includes both living educational theories and living theory methodologies.

Findings

The communication of meanings of relationally dynamic standards of judgment, that include flows of energy and values across different cultural boundaries can transform what counts as educational knowledge in the Academy.

ii) Nigel Harrison - How can I continue to improve my practice as a manager and a leader in Children's Services at a time of transformational change?

Abstract

Background

Present financial constraints and policy changes are transforming Children's Services. Whilst transformational change is a journey where learning takes place (Harvey and Denton, 1999) there are few studies by leaders about how they learn from mistakes in difficult times (Golman, Boyatzis and McKee 2002) with values that can have a globalizing influence.

Foci

The research focuses on creating a 'learning organisation' in developing an environment of mutual trust and openness with a capacity for anticipating, reacting and responding to change, complexity and uncertainty (Malhora 1996).

In particular I focus on:

- Contributing to the understanding of myself, embedded within a context of others and of systems, which creates a knowledge base that can be shown to inform and influence educational practice;
- The development of new living standards of judgment relating to transformational change and the way people and systems interact.

Methods

Within a living theory methodology (Whitehead, 2008) action reflection cycles are used as a method to engage with the question of improving practice; to clarify and evolve the meanings of explanatory values and understandings. The methods include procedures for strengthening the validity and rigor of the explanations with validation groups that focus on questions of comprehensibility, truth, rightness and authenticity (Habermas, 1976) and apply Winter's (1989) six principles of rigor. Within this methodology, methods are used from grounded theory, ethnomethodology, narrative enquiry, phenomenology and case study (Cresswell, 2007) and autoethnography to enhance the range of the data collection and the validity of the interpretations.

Framing

The research can be located within an autoethnographic framework Ellis and Bochner (2000, p. 739). Whitehead and McNiff (2006) suggest that Living Theory allows for the generation of explanations of educational influence in ones own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of organisations. Such explanations are dynamic, generative and transformational; they support the learner to liberate and understand themselves in their own lives and learning, in relation to others. The robustness of the theoretical frameworks of living educational theories will be judged by their global spread in processes of valid and legitimated enquiry.

Findings

This paper contributes to knowledge of how transformational change can be managed by creating a learning organization where all concerned are able to explore their contributions and judge those contributions against their own living standards of judgment and the standards of the learning organization.

iii) Margaret Farren - How are the Ontological Values and Understandings of Practitioner-researchers related to Epistemological Standards of Judgment in Digital Video Representations of the Practice of Masters Degree Supervision?

Abstract

Background

When Boyer (1990) called for a new scholarship of teaching and Schon (1995) called for a new epistemology for the new scholarship, digital technologies such as multi-media and web-based accounts of educational practices were in their infancy. Recent developments in digital technologies are helping to extend the forms of representation open to educational researchers.

Foci

The focus of this presentation is practitioner-research in the M.Sc. eLearning in Education and Training Management, a two-year part-time programme at Dublin City University. The focus on the standards of judgment used to judge practice-based research.

Methods

The methods are those used by practitioner-researchers on the master's programme to bring their embodied knowing and ontological values into the public domain. This includes the use of a validation group of peers. Data from validation meetings that encourage each participant to discuss his/her research provides evidence of their own learning and their influence in the learning of others.

The video clips of validation meetings will also be used to explicate the educational values of 'pedagogy of the unique' and 'web of betweenness' to which I hold myself accountable. The values are clarified in the course of their emergence in practice with other practitioner-researchers as we learn co-operatively in relation to one another.

Framing

From a five-year doctoral research programme into my educational practices with students in higher education, I shall show how I generate my own living educational theory as I engage practitioner-researchers in enquiries into their learning (Farren, 2005, 2011). This includes both improvements in my educational practice and an original contribution to educational knowledge as judged by peers. It also includes an analysis of my educational influences in legitimating the living educational theories of practitioner-researchers in the Academy. The framing for the analysis draws on the theories of Barnett, Van Manen, Varela, Thompson and Rosch.

Findings

These show how the meanings of the living standards of judgment of a pedagogy of the unique and a web of betweenness, from a perspective of inclusionality (Rayner, 2002, 2011), require multimedia forms of representation to adequately communicating the meanings.

iv) Jack Whitehead - Can educational influences in learning be explained with values emerging from hope and love?

Abstract

Background

There has been much discussion in BERA and AERA about the appropriate standards of judgment for evaluating the quality and validity of educational research. Schön (1995) has called for the development of a new epistemology for the scholarship of teaching. Snow (2001) has called for the development of methodologies for making public the professional knowledge of teachers. McGettrick et.al. (2010) have called for a new professionalism in education with a focus on values arising from hope and love (Liverpool Hope University, 2010).

Foci

The research questions:

- 1) Can values emerging from hope and love form the explanatory principles used by individuals to explain their educational influences in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of the social formations in which they live and work?
- 2) Can multi-media narratives communicate the meanings of the embodied practical principles that individuals use to explain their educational influences in learning?
- 3) How are the living boundaries that sustain and transform what counts as educational knowledge in Academies around the world legitimating the embodied knowledge of practitioner-researchers?

Methods

Action reflection cycles are used to clarify and develop the meanings of ontological values in educational relationships. Methods of validation (Habermas, 1976) show how these energy-flowing values can be formed into living epistemological standards of judgment. Visual narratives are used in explaining educational influences in learning with methods of empathetic resonance and validity. These include Winter's (1989) six criteria for enhancing rigour. Lather's (1991) catalytic validity is used to show the influences of ideas from the research in international contexts including India, China, South Africa, Canada, Europe and Australia.

Framing

Answers to the research questions include the following analytic frames.

Biesta's (2006) language of education; Bourdieu's (2000) ideas of habitus and social formation; Charles' (2007) guiltless recognition and societal reidentification; DeLong's (2002) culture of inquiry; Farren's (2005) pedagogy of the unique and web of betweenness; Huxtable's (2011) living theory praxis; McNiff's (2006) my story is my living educational theory; Rayner's (2006) idea of inclusionality; Vasilyuk's (1996) psychology of experiencing;

Walton's (2011) co-operative enquiry; Whitehead's (1989, 2008) ideas of living educational theories and living theory methodology; Laidlaw's (1996) idea of living standards of judgment.

Findings

The use of multi-media narratives can communicate shared meanings of the energy-flowing explanatory principles used by practitioner-researchers across cultural boundaries to explain their educational influences in learning.