

## **8 1990 –HOW DO I IMPROVE MY PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AS AN ACADEMIC AND EDUCATIONAL MANAGER? A DIALECTICAL ANALYSIS OF AN INDIVIDUAL'S EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND A BASIS FOR SOCIALLY ORIENTATED ACTION RESEARCH.**

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper outlines a dialectical approach to educational action research and attempts to synthesise a process of personal development with a process of social evolution. The dialectical approach is characterised as a process of question and answer in which an individual 'I' exists as a living contradiction in questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?'. The potential of educational action research for social evolution is examined in terms of an individual's responses to contradictions in the workplace. These contradictions involve the loss of one's employment, the denial of one's originality, the denial of the right to ask questions, being disciplined for what one writes and then having one's research legitimated in the M.Ed Curriculum of a University School of Education.

Like critical action research (Carr and Kemmis 1986) the dialectical approach will be shown to incorporate a consideration of values and power. This will be shown in two examples of action research and the processes of educational management. The first involves my own academic development in relation to the good order and politics of truth of a University. The second involves my contribution to the educational management of a comprehensive school. From these examples it is argued that the dialectical approach can generate valid explanations for the educational development of an individual in a way which shows that the production of a living form of educational theory from such explanations can have implications for social evolution.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The heuristic potential of action research is currently being explored in a variety of forms and fields of knowledge within this Congress. In the field of education, action research has become a major force in teachers' professional development, in educational management and educational theory. My own contribution to the field has focussed on my claim to know my own educational development in the course of my enquiry, 'How do I improve the quality of my practice?'. My early methodological questions progressed into epistemological enquiries related to the values, logic, unit of appraisal and standards of judgement which could be used to test claims to know the nature and processes of education (Whitehead & Foster 1984). I became interested in trying to create a dialectical form of educational theory for producing valid explanations for the educational development of an individual (Whitehead 1985a). My attempts to gain academic legitimacy for this dialectical approach to educational knowledge developed into questions concerning the good order and politics of truth in a University (Whitehead 1985b). These have led to the questions in this paper concerning educational action research and social evolution. I want to explore with you the potential of an individual's action research, for linking

educational theory and the politics of educational knowledge with social evolution, in the context of academic and institutional management.

The dialectical nature of my enquiry, 'How do I improve my practice?' can be distinguished from other approaches to action research as it is an attempt to answer the question of contradiction posed by Ilyenkov,

*"Contradiction as the concrete unity of mutually exclusive opposites is the real nucleus of dialectics, its central category ... If any object is a 'living contradiction', what must the thought/statement about the object be that expresses it?" (Ilyenkov 1977).*

In looking at video-tapes of my own teaching I came to appreciate that 'I' existed in my question as a living contradiction in Ilyenkov's sense that I hold two mutually exclusive opposites together in practice. I could experience myself holding certain educational values whilst at the same time denying them in my practice. For example I could experience myself valuing my pupil's capacities to learn by enquiry whilst at the same time closing down their opportunity for doing so by the way I structured my lessons (Whitehead 1977). I believe that the incorporation of 'I' as a living contradiction in explanations for the educational development of individuals, has distinguished an original contribution to the action research movement by researchers associated with the School of Education of the University of Bath (Elliott 1989, Lomax 1989, McNiff 1988, Whitehead 1989). The characteristic action research methodology which incorporates 'I' and which has developed from this work has the form: I experience problems or concerns when some of my values are denied in my practice; I imagine ways of improving my practice and choose a course of action; I act and gather evidence which will enable me to make a judgement on the effectiveness of my actions; I evaluate the outcomes of my actions; I modify my concerns, ideas and actions in the light of my evaluation.

In analysing this claim to know my own educational development I took the unit of appraisal to be the individual's claim to know her or his own educational development. The standards of judgement I used to characterise my claim to knowledge as 'educational' included the form of the action research cycle above, Ilyenkov's criteria for characterising dialectical logic, the values defined by Peters (1966) and the aesthetic/spiritual values in Buber's characterisation of the I-You relationship (Whitehead 1985a).

I then examined the possibility of moving from such a dialectical base into a living form of educational theory. By a 'living' theory I mean that the explanations generated by the theory to explain the educational development of individuals contain an evaluation of past practice and evidence of present practice which includes the "I's" intention (a human goal) to produce something valued which is not yet in existence. I now claim that it is possible to construct such a theory from the explanations which individuals produce for their own educational development (Whitehead 1989b).

My enquiry moved into the politics of truth as I encountered the power relations which legitimated the judgements, on two PhD submissions to the University of Bath. These judgements stated that I had not shown an ability to conduct original investigations or to test my own ideas or those of others and that my work did not contain matter worthy of publication. These power relations also legitimated the instruction that under no circumstances could I question the competence of my examiners. In understanding these power relations I have used Foucault's insights into the conflict between the truth of power and the power of truth in an analysis of the procedures and rules which surround the legitimation of a dialectical claim to educational knowledge in a University.

I accept Foucault's (1977) distinction between the 'specific intellectual' as opposed to the 'universal intellectual'. He says that for a long period the 'left' intellectual was acknowledged as a champion of truth and justice. The intellectual was a spokesperson of the universal in the sense of moral, theoretical and political choices. In opposition to the universal intellectual, he describes the specific intellectual in terms of an engagement in a struggle at the precise points where their own conditions of life or work situate them. Foucault takes care to emphasise that by 'truth' he does not mean *'the ensemble of truths which are to be discovered and accepted'*. By 'truth', he means the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and specific effects of power attached to the true. The struggles 'around truth' are not 'on behalf' of the truth, but about the status of truth and the economic and political role it plays.

I am offering the following account of my struggle to support the good order and the power of truth of a University as part of my enquiry into the relationship between action research, educational theory, the politics of truth and social evolution. I see this enquiry as developing from my earlier analysis of an individual's educational development which has provided the basis for personally orientated action research (Whitehead 1985b). I am now attempting to produce a basis for socially orientated action research which will incorporate my earlier ideas.

## **EXTENDING THE EDUCATIONAL ENQUIRY FROM A PERSONAL INTO A SOCIAL ORIENTATION - SOCIAL CONCERNS GROUNDED IN CONTRADICTIONS**

I wish to characterise this extension into a socially orientated action research by a dialogical form of presentation. This choice was influenced by Kilpatrick's (1951) point that educational theory is a form of dialogue which has profound implications for the future of humanity. I will begin to extend this social orientation by acknowledging my identification with the meanings in the following conversation between David Bohm (1988) George Wikman and others in which Bohm is affirming the value of originality in the perception of new meanings and relating this perception to social change.

*" David Bohm: ... What actually has value would be to have a constantly creative culture. Now I suggest that such creativity is related to a constant discovery of new meanings. Generally speaking we start from old meanings and commonly make*

*small changes in them. Sometimes we may, however, perceive a big change of meaning. An idea changes in a fundamental way although, of course some old features are still carried along, no matter how big the change is.*

*George Wikman: But what is it that really happens when you perceive a new meaning?*

*David Bohm: That's the creative step. If I say that meaning is being and something new is perceived in a meaning, something has changed in being. For example, all the perceptions that took place in science changed the meaning of the world for us and this changed the world. It first changed in the sense that we saw it differently: but science also changed the physical, the somatic level. The entire earth has been changed and it could have changed a lot more, for the better or for the worse. Therefore, at least in my own experience, being and meaning are there together.*

*And I'm proposing this more generally. So if somebody sees a different meaning to society or to life, that will change society. Every revolution has come from somebody seeing a different meaning in human society. For example, the meaning that some people saw was that of a very static society, where everybody was in his place and the top was overlooking the bottom. Then other people saw a different meaning, according to which people should be equal. That different meaning was the power that generated the change.....". (Pylkannen, 1989)*

The new meaning I am seeking to share is in showing what it means for individual researchers to speak on their own behalf as they attempt to transcend the truth of power through the power of truth in their workplace. This meaning is extended in the second enquiry as I explore the nature of educative relationships within the power of truth. I argue that 'educational' researchers who are making claims to educational and professional knowledge should be showing how they are enabling the professionals and their pupils and students to speak on their own behalf. It is the idea that researchers should be showing what it means for themselves to be living more fully their values in their workplace and showing how they are enabling the 'researched' to speak on their own behalf which I am offering as a basis for socially orientated, educational action research.

As a dialectician who is interested in moving understanding forward through a process of question and answer I accept the category of contradiction as the nucleus of dialectics. I also believe that social change and transformation can be understood in terms of the attempts by human beings to resolve their consciously lived contradictions. Because of these assumptions I will begin with the five experiences of contradiction which have moved me into the present phase of my enquiry. I am hoping that you will identify with these contradictions and my responses in the sense that they raise fundamental questions about human existence. I am thinking of questions concerning the appropriate response to: being sacked; having one's originality and the right to ask questions denied; being told that one's research and teaching were inconsistent with one's duties to the employer; being asked to teach a

curriculum based upon the research and writings which were at the focus of the earlier contradictions.

Whilst these contradictions are socially and historically located within a particular time and culture I am interested in exploring the potential significance of the ensuing actions for social evolution. What I have in mind is the possibility that you will identify with the experience of the truth of power which denies the individual the right to practice his or her vocation; which denies the individual the right to ask questions; which refuses to acknowledge the individual's contribution to knowledge; which mobilises other power relations to try to prevent the individual teaching and researching a chosen area. I think you will identify with these experiences in the historical sense that many other individuals have been subjected to such power relations and that the course of social evolution can partly be understood in terms of the responses which individuals and groups have made to these experiences of oppression. In my own case I am hoping that you will identify with my responses to the following contradictions in the sense that you will feel moved by them to help to generate a living form of educational theory which has implications for social evolution through its goal of human betterment.

### **Holding Together the Academic Vocation and Having One's Employment Terminated**

The first major contradiction I had to come to terms with involved both my economic well being and my sense of vocation to make a contribution to the reconstruction of educational theory through my work in the University. Being informed that my employment was terminated meant that I experienced the contradiction of holding together my sense of vocation together with the denial of my sense of vocation in the grounds given below to sack me. The grounds given for terminating my employment were:

"The Academic Staff Committee's grounds for recommending that a new appointment should not be offered are as follows:-

1. That you have not given satisfaction in the teaching of prescribed courses assigned to you.
2. That there is an absence of evidence to suggest that you have pursued research of sufficient quality for the assessors to be assured of your ability to perform adequately the duties of a University Lecturer; the objectives being to make acknowledged scholarly contributions to the advancement of your subject as well as to perform proper teaching and other administrative tasks.
3. That you have exhibited forms of behaviour which have harmed the good order and morale of the School of Education."

The power behind these judgements was reinforced by their acceptance by the University Senate. Given the force of the judgements I think you will appreciate how

much energy and commitment were required to overthrow them. I owe my existence as a tenured academic of the University to the commitment, values, actions and political and legal understandings of other individuals both within and outside the University (Whitehead 1985b). I simply wish to share this insight with you as an acknowledgement that my past and future contributions to education, in the University, are grounded in those individuals who refused to accept the above judgements on my work. Because they engaged in the necessary political activities they overcame the power relations which were attempting to sustain these judgements. In recognition of their ethical and political commitments I could not in future jeopardise this tenure in the quest for promotion in the University of Bath. In the University promotion is now accompanied by a loss of tenure.

### **Holding Together Originality and the Right to Ask Questions with their Denial.**

The second and third contradictions are focussed on my failure to gain academic legitimacy for two Ph.D. Theses I submitted to the University in 1980 and 1982 entitled, 'Educational Practice and its Theory' and 'A Dialectical Approach to Education'. The second contradiction is grounded in the denial of my originality by the University's examiners and Board of Studies for Education. I am thinking of my claim to originality in my decision to ground my understanding of the world within personal knowledge (Polanyi 1959). The ability to make original contributions to one's subject is traditionally respected in academic life. These original contributions are often submitted for Ph.D. examination in which examiners are asked to judge the originality of the text. When my examiners were asked the question as to whether I had demonstrated an ability to conduct original investigations, to test my own ideas and those of others, they claimed that I had not shown such an ability. These judgements were accepted by the Board of Studies for Education and my appeal against these judgements was rejected by the Board of Studies in November 1980. My approach to overcoming this contradiction has been a public one. I have great faith in the truth seeking capacities of human beings. That is why I believe I must subject my claims of originality to public test in contexts such as this World Congress. Just as I have faith in our truth seeking capacities I have faith that our creativity and originality together with our critical abilities will move our ideas forward. In time you will be able to judge whether I have shown an ability to conduct original investigations, to test my own ideas and those of others or whether my examiners were correct in denying that I had shown these abilities. Whether you make your own judgements public is up to you. The third contradiction was grounded in a judgement on the University Regulations that once examiners had been appointed by the Senate under no circumstances could their competence be questioned. Given that I wished to question the competence of my examiners on the grounds of political bias, prejudice and inadequate assessment I had to hold such questioning together with the force of an instruction from the University that under no circumstances could I question their competence.

I overcame this contradiction on 1st June 1990 with a presentation to a research seminar at the Centre for the Study of Management Learning at the University of Lancaster on 1st June 1990 (Whitehead 1990). I outlined my arguments for

demanding the right to question the competence of my examiners on the grounds of bias, prejudice and inadequate assessment. In presenting the evidence which I believe would convince any rational individual that there is a case to answer I felt protected by the law which guarantees my academic freedom to ask questions.

### **Holding Together the Power of Truth and the Truth of Power**

I experienced my fourth contradiction on May 1st 1987 when I attended a meeting held under the authority of the University Council to hear complaints about my activities and writings which had been made to the University by two Professors of Education. I was in no doubt that my activities and writings were being viewed as incompatible with the duties the University wished me to pursue in teaching and research. I was thus faced with holding together my support for the power of truth in researching the politics of truth within my University together with the truth of power within the University which was attempting to block this research.

### **Holding Together the Acceptance of my Research in the School's Curriculum with the Above Contradictions.**

I experienced my fifth contradiction at the Board of Studies of Education on May 9th 1990 when the Board agreed to send to Senate two proposals on action research modules for the M.Ed. programme - the highest level of taught course in the School of Education. The upsurge of interest in action research approaches to professional development has convinced the majority of staff in the School of Education that we should offer taught courses on action research. These modules, whilst drawing on the work of other academics, clearly reference my research and writings over my seventeen years in the University. Hence I was faced with the experience of contradiction of holding together the experience of the Board of Studies legitimating my research and writings in the taught M.Ed. programme with the experience of the University's and Board of Studies' denial of the legitimacy of this knowledge in previous judgements on my research. So I am in the position of being asked to teach a curriculum which includes references to the activities, writings, teaching and research whose legitimacy has been denied in judgements which are still in force.

### **MOVING THE ENQUIRY FORWARD**

The fourth and fifth contradictions are related and I will now outline the action cycle I am using to resolve these contradictions by moving my enquiry forward into the good order and politics of truth within the University. What I mean by good order is related to the values of the Academic Assembly of the University.

"High sounding phrases like 'values of freedom, truth and democracy', 'rational debate', 'integrity', have been used. It is easy to be cynical about these and to dismiss them as hopelessly idealistic, but without ideals and a certain agreement about shared values a community cannot be sustained, and will degenerate. These are the phrases in which members of Academic Assembly have chosen to convey

their concept of this community". (The Idea of a University. Academic Assembly, University of Bath, 1988).

The Statutes of the University enable Academic Assembly to remain a democratic forum to discuss any matter of concern to the University and to pass resolutions to Senate. It is this capacity to support the power of truth against the truth of power through dialogue and democratic decision making which has focussed my attention on the value of Academic Assembly in sustaining and promoting the good order of the University. Given this context my next question is, Can I relate action research to social evolution through an analysis of an individual's educational development? I think Foucault (1980) points the way to answer this question through his idea that as a university academic I occupy a specific position in the economy which is linked to the politics of truth within our society. If I use this idea to show how I am changing power relations which are related to that regime of truth which is essential to the structure and functioning of our society and our world have I not established the practical principle that this individual's actions can be related to social evolution?

My question is related to Bohm's earlier point about a constantly creative culture. I am trying to show what it means for an academic to try to constitute a 'good' order in his workplace through giving a new meaning to the relationship between the power of truth and the truth of power - a meaning which is part of the process of transcending the truth of power through the power of truth. I think my proposals for a socially orientated educational action research rests on the extent to which you identify these contradictions as intrinsic to the power relations in your own societies and forms of life.

I claim that these contradictions can be understood in terms of a conflict between the power of truth and the truth of power. At one pole of the contradictions in my workplace is the power of truth in the values embodied by the Academic Assembly. At the other pole of the contradiction are the negations of these values in judgements which have been upheld by the truth of power of the University Council, Senate and a Board of Studies. I thus see my educational development in the good order and politics of truth in the University as an examination of what it takes to move the power of truth into an ascendancy over the truth of power. I propose to try to achieve this through public debate and dialogue within the above bodies and in contexts such as this, outside the University.

I want to make a distinction between action research and educational action research in terms of values. If action research is characterised by a particular form of systematic enquiry then there is no necessity to justify the value base of the enquiry in defining the research as 'action research'. Action research could, in these terms, be used to increase the efficiency of activities which could be morally unacceptable. In claiming that my research is 'educational' I am committing myself to upholding the values of good order. I am not willing to accept the term 'educational' to describe activities which are undermining these values.



In undertaking educational action research I accept the responsibility of making public the values which I use to characterise my activities as 'educational'. In showing what it means for an individual's educational development to try to live by the values which are embodied in the Academic Assembly's notion of good order and in trying to ensure the ascendancy of the power of truth over the truth of power I am attempting to establish a basis for a socially orientated, educational action research.

I am not restricting my view of 'educational development' to the traditional view of educational institutions such as schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities. I see any development in which individuals are learning what it means to live more fully their values in their practice as potentially 'educational'. The generality of my account and hence its relationship to social evolution rests upon the way in which others identify their contradictions with my own and find it useful in making sense of their own lives in their own action enquiry in the workplace.

The kind of enquiry I have in mind is like the first one below in which I move from an examination of the concerns created by the experience of contradiction, to the design of an action plan, to acting, evaluating and modifying concerns, plans and actions.

I now want to present the evidence on the development of my latest action cycles. The first concerns the educational management of my own learning in the good order and politics of truth within the University of Bath. The second presents evidence from my enquiry, 'How do I improve the quality of my contribution to the educational management of a comprehensive school?'. The evidence demonstrates my support for the introduction of an action research approach to professional development with its commitment to democratic procedures within the school. I want to use the second example to illustrate a point about the nature of educative relationships which I believe will challenge the validity of the propositional writings of many 'educational' researchers particularly those researching the professional learning of teachers. At the end of each enquiry I will briefly review how I see the present position.

### **Constructing an Action Plan and Acting**

The experiences of the contradiction and conflicts discussed above led me to submit a paper to the Secretary of the Board of Studies of the School of Education, under an item dealing with the Good Order of the School of Education, for a meeting on 9th May 1990. I wished to raise the issues concerning the above contradictions in relation to the organisation and curriculum of the School. The Head of the School of Education sought the advice of the Secretary and Registrar who ruled that the matter was not appropriate business for the Board of Studies.

### **Evaluation and Modified Plan**

This rejection was followed by a discussion with the Head of School. My evaluation was that, if I was to set out my reasons for believing that the item was appropriate matter under the University Statutes, for consideration by the Board of Studies, then

the rationality of my case would convince him to include it on the Agenda. This led me to respond with the reasons why I believed that the matter was appropriate for the Board of Studies and why I believed the matter was related to the good order of the School of Education in relation to the University Statutes. The Head of School is responsible to the Vice-Chancellor for the good order of the School of Education and my response was based on my feeling that I had not communicated my intentions clearly enough. I am seeking to place material before the Board of Studies which will reveal fundamental contradictions in its judgements relating to the organisation of teaching, research and the curricula of the School. I am also trying to explain how such contradictions have arisen and what might be done to resolve them. At its meeting on 20th June 1990, the Board decided that it should discuss the issue and I may now submit my material to the next meeting in October 1990.

I can also locate my understanding of the value of Academic Freedom in relation to the politics of truth, in the context of the invitation to present a paper on my research to this Congress. Following complaints made by two Professors of Education about my activities and writings at the hearing on 1st May 1987, the University require me to submit such papers to the Head of School before publication so that I might be told if I am prejudicing the University's relationships. I have submitted this paper to the Head of School in the context of the Educational Reform Act which states that:

*"... academic staff have freedom within the law to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions."*

### **Criteria for Judging Effectiveness**

In the design of an action plan I always encourage my students to include the details of the kind of evidence they would need to enable them to make a judgement on their effectiveness. I also encourage them to make explicit the criteria on which these judgements are based. I will make a similar demand of myself evaluating the effectiveness of my actions. I would expect to see my research papers showing a developing understanding of an individual's educational development in relation to the good order and politics of truth in a university. In making judgements with universal intent I judge my effectiveness in terms of the extent to which my ideas are useful to others in their attempts to make sense of their own educational practice. If my questioning is fundamental and we experience ourselves as existing in more creative rather than hostile cultures then I would expect others to participate in the creation of a public living educational theory which could be shown to have profound implications for the future of humanity (Kilpatrick 1951). I believe that this will occur as we explore and share what it means for our educational development as we live more fully the values of freedom, truth, democracy, rational debate and integrity, in our workplace and world and create a living educational theory through dialogue.

In evaluating my past practice I am aware of the social relations which protected my job, when my employment was terminated in 1976, and the social relations implicit in

my use of the ideas of others in making sense of my own life. For example I owe my ability to articulate my decision to understand the world from my own point of view as a person claiming originality and exercising his judgement with universal intent to Polanyi's (1959) insights into the grounds of personal knowledge. I use this insight in defining the unit of appraisal in my claim to educational knowledge. I take the unit to be an individual's claim to know her or his own educational development. In developing my understanding of the implications of the standards of judgement I use in testing my claims to educational knowledge for social evolution I have been influenced by Habermas' views in communication and the evolution of society. I accept Habermas' (1976) point that the validity claims I am making in my attempt to communicate can be judged in terms of coherence, values, truth and authenticity (Whitehead 1989b). When I consider the validity of my claims to educational knowledge I also draw upon MacIntyre's (1988) insight that the rival claims to truth of contending traditions of enquiry depend for their vindication upon the adequacy and the explanatory power of the histories which the resources of each of those traditions in conflict enable their adherents to write. I thus see the extension of my enquiry into questions concerning social evolution to be related to the ground of my judgements in personal knowledge in that the judgements are being made responsibly with universal intent.

In addition to these points concerning validity I am interested in developing an understanding of an appropriate concept of rigour for action research. Winter (1989) has proposed six principles for the rigorous conduct of action-research which he refers to as Reflexive and Dialectical Critique, Collaborative Resource, Risk, Plurality of Structure, and Theory, Practice, Transformation. These principles, whilst open to refinement, for example in the understanding of the values which are required to conduct a rigorous form of educational action research, are the principles which I accept as appropriate for judging the rigour of my own enquiry.

I now want to move the context of my enquiry from the educational management of my professional development as an academic researcher into the context of my contribution to the educational management of a comprehensive school. I have shown what it means for a dialectical action researcher to speak on his own behalf. I now want to show what it means to engage in a dialectical form of action research in which one's professional colleagues are being encouraged to develop democratic forms of decision making and being enabled to speak, in the research, on their own behalf.

## **DIALECTICAL ACTION RESEARCH IN THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF A SCHOOL**

I now want to extend my action enquiry into the social base of a secondary school through answering the question, 'How do I improve my contribution to the educational management of a Comprehensive School through my activities as Chair of Governors?'

### **Concerns**

In particular I want to focus on the values of rationality and democracy and present the evidence to show how I am trying to embody these values in my form of life. Following on from my previous analysis I want to show what it means for me to be engaged in action research in which the power of truth is in the ascendancy over the truth of power. I want to do this by showing what it means to empower a teacher to speak on his own behalf rather than for me, as a researcher, to make a claim to knowledge about the professional learning of teachers without enabling teachers to speak for themselves. In judging my efforts to improve the quality of my contribution to the educational management of a secondary school I wish to focus on the value of rationality as it is embodied in the action research cycle and the value of democratic procedures in staff selection.

I will relate my enquiry to the evidence provided by the Acting Head of the school in relation to the acceptance of an action research approach to professional development and to the first democratic election for a staff development tutor. The extracts from the school's and the Local Education Authority's (L.E.A.) policy documents below show that I have moved my contribution from a position where I was part of a management structure supporting forms of professional development which did not incorporate the above view of rationality to a position which supported the above view of rationality in the way described below.

## **Actions**

Over the past four years Avon L.E.A., has paid the University of Bath a consultancy fee to enable me to spend some time promoting action research with teachers. In March 1990 Avon L.E.A. published a booklet on 'You and Your Professional Development', which commits the Authority to providing the majority of its INSET (Inservice Education of Teachers) support through an action-research approach to professional development.

The following extracts from a paper from the the Acting Head of the School to the Senior Management Team dated 5/3/90 show clearly the integration of an action-research approach into the School's policy for staff development for 1990-91.

*"We have for a long time at Culverhay been very concerned about an INSET Policy which requires teachers to LEAVE their classes with a supply teacher, often with no expertise in the subject area, and for understandable reasons without the same commitment to the progress of the pupils.*

*The advantage to the School of teachers engaged in this form of INSET is also questionable, although we have tried to reduce the problems of "cascading" by having a "reporting back" form, which is then circulated to the relevant members of staff.*

*From the L.E.A. draft Staff Development Policy, it is clear that INSET should now be much more CLASSROOM based, and resources should be allocated to support teachers as they carry out their work. Several Culverhay Staff have been involved in*

such INSET/STAFF DEVELOPMENT over the last few years, and the most recent example was the STRICT initiative (Supporting Teacher Research Into Classroom Teaching).

Staff are gaining experience in "action research" techniques, which basically follows the pattern shown below:-

1. The teacher identifies or is presented with a problem, and chooses a colleague to work with to help find a solution.....

2. The teacher works with the colleague both inside and outside the classroom, with the aim of devising an approach which will improve the quality of education provided.....

3. The lesson is taught, and information collected as the class proceeds which will highlight whether or not the approach is a successful one.....

4. Following the class, the lesson is assessed by the two teachers....

5. The next stage requires a new improved approach to the topic to be devised, building on the experience gained from the research.....

Thus the cycle of events can be continued, with both colleagues benefitting professionally from the experience, and the quality of the classroom teaching hopefully improving as a result."

The following extract from the Acting Head shows my own commitment to the democratic principle of staff selecting their own staff development tutor.

" We have been asked by the L.E.A. to appoint a Staff Development Tutor. This position should be assessed annually. The role/qualities of this person are outlined below:-

1. The Staff Development Tutor (S.D.T.) will be required to help staff decide on which aspects of their classroom work they wish to develop through Action Research.

2. The S.D.T., to be effective, needs to be accepted by his or her colleagues as equal partners. He or she needs to be able to work alongside teachers in an open and supportive way..... The Chair of Governors and I are both happy to see the Staff select and appoint a S.D.T. for 1990-91." (School Policy document 20/4/90).

## **Evaluation**

My claim to be improving my contribution to the educational management of Culverhay School rests upon the evidence of the integration of an action research approach to professional development in the school's policy and practices. It was

grounded in my view of the rationality of action research as an approach to improving the quality of education with teachers and pupils and the the support for the extension of democratic practices in the workplace. The latter was exemplified in the process of staff selection of their own Staff Development Tutor.

I want to emphasise that the evidence I have presented for my claim to be contributing to improvements in educational management of a school, was provided in the writings of a teacher. These were not my words, they were his. In seeing my contribution to educational management as a form of educative relationship I think my claims to educational knowledge of such relationships rest upon the acknowledgement by others of the value they have found in my activities, research and writings.

### **Modified Plans**

On 26th June 1990 the local authority agreed to fund a curriculum innovation on technical and vocational education in the school. The teaching and learning styles favoured by this innovation are similar to the form of action cycle described above. My plans are to support the development of a school-based action research group to help the teachers to answer questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?', in relation to this innovation. I will be helping to gather evidence and to evaluate the practitioners' research reports in an attempt to see if it is possible to produce reports in which both the pupils and the teachers are speaking on their own behalf. I would like to extend this idea of 'speaking on your own behalf', into 'educational' research in general, by asking a number of questions of my professional and academic colleagues.

In submitting my ideas for your criticism I am conscious of the vulnerability which comes from an openness to change because one recognises failure and error. I want you to recognise an original contribution to educational research. I may not receive such recognition because you may rightly refuse this acknowledgement. I trust that your acknowledgements or refusals will rest upon the power of your rational criticism in support of the power of truth and that you will present your criticisms openly and in a public arena.

In presenting my ideas in the above form I am conscious that it may contain an implicit criticism of your own ideas. I am thinking of those of you who claim to belong to an educational research community and who, whilst believing that your research is 'educational', do not show what your research means for your own or others' educational practice. I am addressing the following points and questions to all those who believe that their research is 'educational research'.

### **FURTHER QUESTIONS**

I am assuming that we share the conviction that it was right to abandon the disciplines approach to education research (dominant in the 1960s and 1970s)

because it was both mistaken (Hirst 1983) and, by virtue of the ideological power of its proponents, because it was exercising a damaging influence on the views of teachers and academics. The power of many of your criticisms helped to create a climate in which alternative views began to emerge. My worry is that you have replaced the ideological hegemony of the disciplines approach with the hegemony of your own critical/interpretative and thus propositional forms which are clearly identified through their organising concepts as a philosophy of education (Carr 1989 and Carr and Kemmis 1986, Rudduck 1989), a sociology of education (Whitty 1986) a history of education (Hamilton 1989, 1990) and a psychology of education (Calderhead 1988). I recognise these texts as having value for my educational discourse but they contain no synthesis which enables education to be viewed in a way which is holistic and dynamic. If you believe your research to be 'educational' in whose sense is it 'educational'? Can you substantiate a claim to be 'educational researchers' without an examination of your own or another's educational development? I am hoping that you will respond to my questions in a way which can help to establish a personal and social basis for educational action research and help to create a living educational theory which may indeed have 'profound implications for the future of humanity'. In asking such questions I am wondering if you experience contradictions in your workplace. Watkins (1987) in his research on the contested workplace has argued that

*"during work experience the contradictions of work are exposed and thus may serve to undermine the existing social relations of work by revealing both the oppositional forms and the stark 'reality' of the workplace".*

As well as conducting research on students I wonder whether such researchers have a responsibility to conduct research on themselves in their own workplace as they show what it means for their educational development to live more fully their values in their practice.

My questions concerning the potential of action research and educational theory for social evolution have emerged from my recognition of the power relations which protected my job in the University and in the legal protection given to me as an academic by the Education Reform Act of 1988. This act protects my right to question freely and to test received wisdom. It also protects the freedom of academics to put forward new ideas and controversial and unpopular opinions, without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at their institutions.

In offering a case study of an individual's educational development and questioning its relationship to social evolution I am opening myself once again to criticism. I am thinking of the charges of arrogance, of making ridiculous and unsubstantiated claims, of trying to claim a potential for action research which it does not have, or of being incomprehensible from the Deakin point of view! I may indeed be mistaken. Yet of all the criteria I have mentioned in this paper for judging its validity I wish to return to Habermas' criteria of authenticity where he says that it is only through watching a person through time, in action, will we be able to judge that person's authenticity. I

must leave you to judge freely and wisely in the hope that you will feel moved to go public on your judgements on my research. I hope that you will do this within a dialogue which shows how you are trying to live more fully your educational values in your workplace as you support the power of truth against the truth of power. In this way, as I have argued, will you not be making your own contribution to the evolution of our society through education?

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In the Summer of 1990, after some difficulties about whether the item could be considered by the Board of Studies for Education I managed to submit the letter I had received from the Secretary and Registrar in June 1987 for consideration by the Board. As a result a Senate Working Party was established to look into a claim that there was prima facie evidence that my academic freedom had been constrained. For the fourth time I am asking you to identify with an important learning experience in the workplace. The recognition by some colleagues that the reason that my academic freedom had not been breached was because of my persistence in the face of pressure and that a less determined individual might well have been discouraged and therefore constrained does at least have the merit of an acknowledgement that I been subjected to pressure!