



Comments by Jack Whitehead

Author(s): Jack Whitehead

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Constructing the Meaning of Teacher Educator

- Knowledge base for teacher educators.* Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.
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- Woods, P. (1986). *Inside schools: Ethnography in educational research.* London, UK: Routledge & Kagan Paul.

Comments by Jack Whitehead

I have four of Karen's papers in front of me: (1) Learning about teaching/learning as a teacher educator: "I get a lot of help from my friends" (1992), (2) Constructing the meaning of teacher educator: Learning the roles, (3) Finding out more than I want to know: Teacher research and critical pedagogy in teacher education (1994), and (4) Examining the research process: A self-study using participatory/feminist methodology (1994).

In Learning about teaching/learning as a teacher educator: "I get a lot of help from my friends," you start with some quotations from your students and say that, "These struggling voices are those of beginning teachers. Entering the world of teaching is sometimes a 'painful' experience. Beginning teachers may become overwhelmed with all the various expectations" (p. 2). Then on the last page of your paper you say that, "These voices support my view of the classroom as a caring community, my need to make connections with my students, and my commitment to teaching/learning. They make 'the struggle' worth the pain. They strengthen my belief that I can make a difference and change will happen."

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In Constructing the meaning of teacher educator: Learning the roles, you begin with the negative statement from your graduate faculty appointment

subcommittee on your application for full membership. Your paper shows an increased attention to the politics of change. Whilst it contains illustrations from your own journals, there is a noticeable lack of dialogue that shows you making connection with your students.

In Finding out more than I want to know: Teacher research and critical pedagogy in teacher education, there is a clear commitment to, and propositional understanding of, a feminist perspective and to the legitimization of "other ways of knowing." In espousing a clear ideological position, I wonder if it has masked your initial central concern that, "These voices support my view of the classroom as a caring community, my need to make connections with my students, and my commitment to teaching/learning" (Guilfoyle, 1992).

I can identify a similar tendency in my own work which, from 1973-76, was focused on improving the quality of students' learning. Following the University's attempt in 1976 to terminate my employment, my research increasingly focused on the power relations that legitimized particular views of knowledge and truth. It was only in 1991, through the aesthetic power of my student Peggy Kok's writing, that I refocused on the processes of improving the quality of students' learning and on integrating my students' own voices within my accounts of my life as a teacher educator. What I am suggesting is that your enquiry could be helpful to the rest of our enquiries because of your social and feminist analysis, whilst our enquiries are helpful to you through their focus on students' voice and learning.



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Confronting Self

- Russell, T., & Munby, H. (Eds.) (1992). *Teachers and teaching: From classroom to reflection*. London, England: Falmer Press.
- Sanders, D., & McCutcheon, G. (1986). The development of practical theories of teaching. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 2 (1), 50-67.
- Schön, D. (1983). *The reflective practitioner*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
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- Stenhouse, L. (1975). *An introduction to curriculum research and development*. London, UK: Heinemann.
- von Glasersfeld, E. (1989). Cognition, construction of knowledge, and teaching. *Synthese*, 60 (1), 121-140.
- Zumwalt, K. (1982). Research on teaching: Policy implications for teacher education. In A. Lieberman & M. McLaughlin (Eds.), *Policy making in education* (81st yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Comments by Jack Whitehead

I have three of Mary Lynn's papers in front of me: (1) Making public the private voice of a teacher educator (1992), (2) Confronting self: Passion and promise in the act of teaching or My Oz-dacious Journey to Kansas! (1993), and (3) A teaching odyssey: Sailing to the straits of teaching through the gales of academia (1994).

When I first saw the paper Making public the private voice of a teacher educator, I remember my response was that in showing that you had mastered the pertinent literature you might have masked your interest in your experience and your students' voices.

I think you could easily point out how the existing power relations in academia, in particular those which sustain the language of academic journals, are part of the conservative forces which are perhaps serving to devalue work on and concern for teacher development by the institution. One point you might make is that there are a few articles in professional research journals by teacher educators that include a story in the teacher's own voice and that show the influence of the teacher educator on the teacher. You could then point out the importance of your own students' evaluations as a starting point in showing the nature of such educative relationships (rather than as a point about student resistance).

What strikes me, still, is how much of the traditional academic form of presentation you go through before your educative relationships with your students begin to appear. The methodology section and the frames for viewing beliefs seem vital to the paper but I would use them critically in the sense of pointing out that they can get in the way of taking seriously your later question, "How can my voice be heard?" (Hamilton, 1992). You then move back into a traditional form of academic discourse in your section on the clash of beliefs. Look how far you have travelled

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since 1992! Linnasa's voice (Hamilton, 1994) is on the page, with journal entries over a couple of months and her responses to them. Great stuff! Look at the pressures you have had to overcome in order to show your educative relationships in action, and how strongly your papers now do that.

I think part of this struggle can be seen in this paper. Your break with the traditional academic form is seen in your use of the metaphors from the Wizard of Oz to show your reader who you are and says that "writing this paper has helped me draw out my voice and state ideas that I have not previously cultivated." There is no evidence in this paper from any of your students about the quality of their educative relationships.

In *A teaching odyssey: Sailing to the straits of teaching through the gales of academia, you integrate your reading. You use the hero metaphor to relate yourself to your reader and then move dramatically into the evidence from your students and from your relationships with them. You then take up the issue of the absence of teachers' voices in teacher education research and offer the possibility that action research may provide an opportunity for your students to speak in their own voices in teacher education research.*

I wonder if the form which Peggy (Placier, 1994) has used might be useful for your students. It's a common-sense yet disciplined form of action reflection cycle which enables them to take up a concern, imagine what they could do about it, to act and gather data on the quality and effectiveness of their actions, to evaluate their actions and to modify their concerns, ideas and actions in the light of their evaluations. I wonder if you "should" integrate some of Karen's social analysis into an analysis of the power relations which are sustaining inappropriate forms of knowledge about teacher education. I wonder if we should all integrate some of Stefinee's insights into how we might strengthen our sense of community.

There was a point from my own work which I'd like to clarify. It isn't that I think we must all start from the experience of our own experience of "I" as a living contradiction. I think we can see what we are doing at different phases of an action/reflection cycle. Yet I do stress the importance of including "I"—in our claims to know our own educational development— as a living contradiction because it focuses on experiences I think we all have of working in contexts which at times negate our fundamental values.



Comments by Jack Whitehead

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“But I have to Have an A”

- reflective teaching. In J. Calderhead (Ed.), *Teachers' professional learning* (pp. 35-50). London, United Kingdom: Falmer.
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- Statham, A., Richardson, L., & Cook, J.A. (1991). *Gender and university teaching: A negotiated difference*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Summerville, R.M., Ridley, D.R., & Mavis, T.L. (1990). Grade inflation: The case of urban colleges and universities. *College Teaching*, 38 (1), 33-38.
- Weller, L.D. (1986). Attitude toward grade inflation: A random survey of American colleges of arts and science and colleges of education. *College and University*, 61, 118-127.

Comments by Jack Whitehead

I have two of Peggy's papers in front of me: (1) “But I have to have an A”: Probing the cultural meanings and ethical dilemmas of grades in teacher education. and (2) An action research approach to a contradiction in teaching: Reconciling grades with democratic education. (1994).

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I think you might remember how closely I identified with this paper because of the way in which you had retained your integrity in trying to live your values as fully as you could with your students. We talked about the inchoate nature of some of our work

as we struggled to understand our context. The transformation in An action research approach to a contradiction in teaching: Reconciling grades with democratic education is remarkable. Its methodology is clearly defined in terms of action reflection cycles. You have integrated your dialogues with your students and drawn on the writings of other academics within the action reflection cycles of presentation. I find your writing communicates directly and very powerfully as you move your reader through the living reality of the educative conversations with your students and as you clarify your commitment to value democratic relations in your classroom as its meaning emerges through your practice. I think we all have something to learn from the way in which you have presented the life of your classroom.

I'm worried about your next steps. My worry is focused on your commitment to explore a particular approach to assessment that might be pushing the social and institutional system further than it can accommodate at the present time. I know it might sound presumptuous but I'm going to suggest that you should refocus your enquiry to take into account Karen Guilfoyle's social analysis. You have a range of educational values that you could use to engage with your students. Democracy is one value. Truth, Beauty, Goodness, Social Justice might be others. I think we should all be aware of pushing an institution so far in one direction that it responds by eliminating us.

The example I have in mind is one of our local schools that insisted on trying to develop its curriculum and assessment procedures in a way that did not take into account the changed political realities in Britain after 14 years of right wing, conservative government. By failing to understand the nature of these political realities and the forces against what the school was trying, it took them on head first and through a system of inspections, local press, and television coverage had to beat a rapid retreat. I'm supervising some of the staff for their higher degrees and have seen at first hand the damage that they have suffered. Why not build on your success and move sideways into other values that constitute a good social order? Isn't there a danger that by trying to work at ways of eliminating a grading process you are trying to cross a "bridge too far" under the present political realities? I don't think that this is a defeatist analysis. I think it will enable you to broaden the base of your support within and outside your institution from which to move forward. In spearheading a movement it is important not to permit your supply lines to be cut!



Comments by Jack Whitehead

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- Pinnegar, S. (1991). From expert to novice to expert to novice again: Expert patterns in the thinking of novice teacher educators. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, IL.
- Pinnegar, S. (In press). (Re)-experiencing student teaching. In F. Korthagen & T. Russell (Eds.), *Teachers who teach teachers: Reflections on teacher education*. London, England: Falmer Press.
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- Richert, A.E. (1992). The content of student teachers' reflections within different structures for facilitating the reflective process. In T. Russell & H. Munby (Eds.) *Teachers and teaching: From classroom to reflection*. London, United Kingdom: Falmer.
- Russell, T. (1992). A teacher educator and his students reflect on teaching high-school physics. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.
- Tabachnick, B.R., Popkewitz, T.S., & Zeichner, K.M. (1979-80). Teacher education and the professional perspectives of student teachers. *Interchange*, 10(4), 12-29.
- van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Comments by Jack Whitehead

I have three of Stefinee's papers in front of me: (1) (Re)-experiencing student teaching, (2) Beginning again: Making sense and learning the terrain (1993), and (3) Negotiating balance with context, colleagues, students, families, and institutions: Responding to lived experience in the second year (1994).

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The value of trust shines through in (Re)-experiencing student teaching when you say,

(Re-)Experiencing Beginning

A constant theme throughout my reflections on my teaching in this alternative high school was the theme of trust. On Day 4 I comment, "So, it's getting (Jay's) trust as well as the students." I realized that in attempting this task, I had to trust my ideas gleaned from a university education, gain the trust of the teacher and the students to ensure that the ideas would work. In talking of the students on that day, I say:

My teacher questions:

How to get them to trust and risk getting involved?

My personal question:

Why should they want to give up their safe apathy and care about anything?

In Beginning again: Making sense and learning the terrain, you seem to me to make the break with traditional academic language and insist, as Tom Russell has, on recognizing the authority of your experience. You show courage in acknowledging your vulnerability as you insist on the importance of experience, feeling and emotion in the construction of valid meaning. You put this wonderfully when you say,

As I worked with the data and revisited my own beginning experiences, I felt a congruence. Yet I was uncertain about how to embody these understandings in language. It appears to me that being a beginner brings with it certain feelings and emotions. Two of these are a pervading sense of vulnerability and an uncertainty about what things mean and how to make sense of them. It seems to me that I was confident that I had knowledge but I was uncertain where it might apply or how to use it. These feelings and emotions may limit the beginners ability to use the expertise they have.

Your narrative shows an increasing authority with a powerful sense of purpose focused on community, integrating references where appropriate, describing your changing context, showing political engagement in leaving you with the statement,

I do not yet have powerful enough narrative frames in this experience to bring together the fragmented arenas of my experience and interweave it into a whole.

I think you have such a lot to share from your stories. Each of us might benefit from them in constructing our own lives in education. I think you speak directly from your experience, constructing meaning with feeling. I feel great warmth for others in your writing which I think should be moving outwards into helping to form our community of enquirers as part of your research. This might include conversations and correspondences as part of your narrative. From Peggy I think you might learn how to use a systematic form of action/reflection cycle in the construction of your narrative. From Mary Lynn you might learn how to integrate powerful myths and metaphors into your account. From Karen you might learn how to integrate a social analysis into your life-story in a way which might help you to understand better how to contribute to the formation and sustaining of a good social order. Through examining Pam Lomax's paper on standards, criteria, and the problematic of

action research in relation to your story, you might find that it helps to move your enquiry forward in a way that clarifies the importance of spiritual, aesthetic, moral, methodological, scientific, and logical values in giving a form to your own life and in contributing to a good social order through education. This might sound a bit unbalanced in the amount of learning I am suggesting from others. It is not intended that way, for I take your focus on trust and community to be the bedrocks of educational research.



Comments by Jack Whitehead

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It would have given him some indication that it was appreciated. He is very “on the ball.” So I can at least ask myself—this gives me the opportunity to think about the issue of reinforcement of answers.

D: Yeah. Some people—I had a person who drove it into my head in a teaching round, and I never really thought very much of it specifically. I think of reinforcement that, if someone throws something up, and it’s a good answer, then maybe it’s just worth sitting on for a second just before moving on—just so—perhaps it’s a little more legitimized as a valid sort of response. Suddenly it’s become part of the discussion. Time permitting, of course, there’s a lot of other factors.

T: What will also be interesting will be to see, first of all, can I get control of this? But then, will we see any differences in the students? We may or may not.

D: Yeah. The whole thing here is we’re trying to address a bigger problem, and I don’t know how to go about addressing that, and I don’t have much faith in these tiny, little things here as addressing the bigger problem. “What does it all mean?” type of stuff. I guess we’ll have to see, but I can’t think of—given time, you know, how else can we go about it?

I closed this conference about my teaching with the following comment:

Thank you. The usual feeling—as if I didn’t have enough things to get on top of—but I feel really, really good about what we’ve seen here. And I read through it [the transcript of the lesson] and whatever I was reading for, I didn’t notice that at all. And I mention that only to say, picking this up in the midst of 100 other things going on, one can just read it. I absolutely believe in the notion of having somebody to talk about it with, and that just reinforces it in spades. Thank you. More soon!

Comments by Jack Whitehead

I have four of Tom’s papers in front of me: (1) Teaching the authority of experience: Moving beyond systemics in pre-service teacher education (1994), (2) Returning from the field: Did recent relevant and successful teaching experience make a difference? (1994), (3) Teaching to better understand how a teacher learns to teach: Can the authority of personal experience be taught? (1994), and (4) Reconstructing educational theory from the authority of personal experience: How can I best help people learning to teach? (1994).

In paper (1) I think you make your case for claiming that the role of universities in teacher education must take into account an epistemology of practice. You also show how the authority of experience might feature in teacher education. You say, “At the same time, our work has taught us how difficult it is to explain a non-propositional epistemology in propositional terms, the latter being a systemic requirement of publication and thus of continued research funding.”

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I wonder if we should all take as one of our unifying themes a commitment to develop an episte-

Teaching High School Physics

mology of educational practice. By focusing on our practice and working on different ways of representing our educational narratives, I think we are well on the way to reconstructing educational knowledge and theory. With the new starting point in our educative experiences, Stefinee shows us how to embrace feeling and emotion in the construction of meaning and community. Karen's feminist analysis and use of critical social theory can help us to understand the nature of some of the constraints on our attempts to legitimize an epistemology of practice within the Academy. Mary Lynn's use of myth and metaphor helps us to use our creativity and imagination to think of ways of transcending these constraints. Peggy's expression of courage and use of a disciplined form of action reflection cycle might help us to document and represent a way of answering questions of the kind, "How do I live my values in my educational and professional practices?" I think Pam Lomax's work in her recent contribution to Educational Action Research helps to show how some of my work might contribute to our understanding of the values "we" could use to account for ourselves in living good and productive lives in education and as we contribute to the education of our students and to educational knowledge and theory.

In your papers I see the inclusion of evaluative judgments on your teaching from your students and the demonstration of your capacity to learn from your students as you work at improving the quality of their educative experiences. I also notice a tension I think we all experience because we are part of the "systemics" in our institutional structures, systemics that do not wholly support our educative purposes. I felt this acutely in your paper with Hugh Munby where the propositional form of the paper seemed to draw you back into the traditional epistemology. Peggy's paper and the latter part of Mary Lynn's paper seems to me to be firmly grounded in a trust/authority of their experience. Doesn't Peggy move us forward through her sustained dialogue, through time, with herself and her students?