

Explicating a New Epistemology for Educational Knowledge with Educational Responsibility

Discussant's Response

Each presenter focuses on living theory educational methodologies whereby practitioner-researchers ask, 'How do I improve what I am doing and what is the educational influence in my own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations?' The presenters demonstrate that as practitioner researchers they have created their own living educational theories by embodying their educational values in their practice. These values have become living standards of judgement whereby practitioner-researchers can judge the validity of their claims to knowledge. This distinguishes these explanations from those of education researchers whose contribution to knowledge is in disciplines of education other than a discipline of educational enquiry.

Narratives are presented that integrate action reflection cycles, some of which include video-data.

The explication of a new epistemology responds to Schön's (1995) call to develop 'a new epistemology for educational knowledge from action research into teachers' professional practice'. It also responds to Snow (2001) who, in her Presidential address to AERA, called for the systematising and publicising of the knowledge-base of practitioners. It also follows recent discussions in *Research Intelligence*, issues 102,103,104 and105 where it has been suggested that an epistemological transformation in what counts as educational knowledge is under way in the living theories being produced by practitioner-researchers.

Each presenter expresses educational responsibility as they show how they hold themselves to account in their research as they try to live their values as fully as they can.

Each presenter recognises the importance of addressing the socio-cultural influences of postcolonialism.

Each presenter demonstrates their belief that educational relationships involve the expression of life-affirming energy with values.

In explicating a new epistemology, the research of each presenter is defined by:

1. A new unit of appraisal, which is the individual's explanation as to what their educational influence is in learning.
2. Living standards of judgement which are clarified and explained as they emerge in the practice of educational enquiries and research using principles of rigour and personal and social validity.
3. A living logic of inclusionality, which integrates aspects of dialectical and propositional theories recognising the rationality of both.

Specific response to each presenter

Jean McNiff

McNiff's account 'Learning for action in action' explains how she holds herself accountable for her professional learning as she seeks to influence the development of new institutional epistemologies that are grounded in a commitment to personal accountability in professional practice.

McNiff's account focuses very much on her work in Ireland and the educational journey of 5 teachers and herself as their supervisor. The 5 teachers have successfully completed their masters and doctoral studies with McNiff as their supervisor. McNiff believes that the 5 doctorates, using a self-study action research methodology, provide a strong evidence base for the legitimisation of a new epistemology for educational knowledge. The focus of the doctorates was on reciprocal learning and the pursuit of social justice. They demonstrate how the teachers fought for social justice for the rights of vulnerable children. McNiff also argues that the justice that she achieved was her contribution to legitimising teachers as educational theorists as she encouraged them to think critically in their role as teachers and in encouraging them to find ways to achieve epistemological democracy for themselves and the children they were working with.

Throughout McNiff explains and clarifies her educational influence in her own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations.

McNiff states that the most important aspect of her paper is the understanding that relationship can provide the grounds for the creation of knowledge. She explains that through her practice, she encouraged teachers to explore ideas about how they were co-creating knowledge in relation with one another and how they were transforming their own understandings of what they were doing.

McNiff postulates the questions, 'Does her intent and its transformation as an empirical evidence base, justify her actions? Does she show that she is thinking as critically about her motives as the teachers she is encouraging to do the same?'

McNiff's wish is that she, in her practice, is contributing to the development of a new epistemology of educational knowledge. Do you feel that there is evidence that this is the case?

Jane Renowden

Renowden links accountability with professional identity as she has moved from content-based classroom teaching to knowledge-creating higher education pedagogies. She, like McNiff, encourages student teachers and herself to interrogate the normative epistemologies and cultural assumptions of their social contexts and their own thinking.

Renowden's account is clear and well organised using a self-study action research cycle. She expresses her concern that she is not living out her values in her practice; that her practice must be educational and that it must be accountable.

She highlights that her greatest development has been in her need for personal accountability in that she feels that she has a responsibility to explain what she does and articulate its significance. She challenges the 'external' standards of judgement laid down by the government, institutions, and such bodies as Ofsted that are used to judge the individual as she seeks to determine her own standards of judgement based on her values of equality, justice, integrity and freedom. She determines that she will develop her own theories of accountability and practice, as she is recognising the worth of her own accounts of practice.

Whilst she recognises the value and the need for personal accountability she sees herself as a living contradiction in that, with her students, she focuses on 'external' standards driven assessments, yet wants her students to develop their own standards of judgement of practice. Renowden explains that she feels able to address this through engaging in a self-study action enquiry whereby she will improve her practice, give an account of her actions, put herself at the centre of her enquiry, generate her own living theories of practice and take actions based on the theories she generates in order to influence the learning of others. Renowden claims that she will generate evidence from the data, set her own standards of judgement and seek validation of her claims to knowledge from colleagues and students. Renowden is claiming that she is developing an epistemology of accountability. And the question I put to you is, do you feel that this claim is valid and can stand up to scrutiny?

Marie Huxtable

Huxtable claims that her paper contributes to an educational knowledge-base of practice, theory and systemic influence, in the development of a new inclusional educational epistemology.

Huxtable presents a self-study of her practice as a senior educational psychologist with the responsibility for improving the quality of educational support for the development and creation of gifts and talents in education. Like Renowden, Huxtable refers to forms of accountability imposed on us by government regulations that, whilst they may be appropriate regarding monitoring, are inappropriate in terms of improving practice. Huxtable offers a way forward which she has found fruitful, and which involves, in her words, 'multi-media narratives that explicate energy flowing values and understandings that constitute explanatory principles of educational influences' and she demonstrates this form of exploration as she focuses on her work with the Masters Group which she was instrumental in establishing.

Huxtable's concern is that CPD training is training teachers rather than encouraging teachers to extend their thinking and theorise their own

knowledge and practice. She feels that the Masters Group tutored by Jack Whitehead was an imagined possibility whereby teachers would be introduced to living theory research through which they could research their educational influences in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations. Huxtable clarifies that in her own learning journey, she has come to recognise expressions of her ontological values as working with loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility.

Huxtable throughout gives examples and explanations of her educational influence in contributing to improving inclusive gifted and talented educational theory, practice and provision and she offers these for the validation of her peers. The visual narratives, she explains, contribute to the evaluation of her work which she feels is more productive than presenting the usual checklists. As Huxtable concludes, and I put this to you now, do you feel that she has communicated her relationally dynamic ontological values of loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility as explanatory principles and living standards of judgement of her practice? And do you feel that she has offered a form of evaluation of educational practice which enables her to account for her work to herself and others in a way that informs her evolving practice?

Jack Whitehead

In his introduction, Whitehead clarifies his intentions in his paper: first, to explain why he focuses on educational influences in learning with educational responsibility as a key idea in the generation of living educational theories; second, to present, using digital technology in a multi-media narrative, the meanings of the practical principles that can constitute explanations of educational influence; and finally, to outline the units of appraisal, the living standards of judgement and the living logics that help to constitute living educational theories with educational responsibility. I believe that his paper clearly explains his intention and wonder if you believe this to be the case also.

In explaining educational influences in learning with educational responsibility, Whitehead acknowledges the creative responses of the other in their own learning and what counts for him as an educational influence. He also recognises the educational influence one has with another in their own learning. He acknowledges that all individuals are unique with their own set of values and have been influenced by their historical and sociocultural contexts.

Whitehead hammers home his argument that practical principles that explain educational influences in learning cannot be replaced by the principles of 'more fundamental, theoretical justification'. Whitehead uses digital technology to show and explain his understanding of the practical principles that can explain educational influences in learning. Convincingly, I believe, he demonstrates how digital technology communicates the energy-flowing educational values of education with expressions of a loving dynamic energy and that this can be comprehended as an explanatory principle in our

explanation of educational influence in our own learning and in the learning of others.

Whitehead clarifies, as I have defined previously, the units of appraisal which are the individual's explanation of their educational influence in learning, standards of judgement which are living in the sense of being energy-flowing values that contribute to the practical principles we can use to explain our educational influences, and the idea of a living logic in the sense of ways of thinking that are appropriate for comprehending the real as rational and can be understood with the help of visual narratives in the generation of living educational theories.

Whitehead concludes that he believes that educational researchers are contributing to enhancing flows of energy and values that carry hope for the future of humanity and that such contributions to education constitute a worthwhile form of life.

In my conclusion, there are three research questions to be addressed in this symposium and I put these to you now:

1. Can the explanations produced by the individuals to explain their educational influences in learning be used as appropriate units of appraisal in the generation of educational theory?
2. What are the logics of the explanations that individuals produce for their educational influences in their own learning, and are these valid?
3. Are the living standards of judgement, as presented here today, appropriate for evaluating the validity of explanations of educational influences in learning?