

Generative and transformational forms of evaluation and accountability of educational practice

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Abstract

Forms of evaluation and accountability are intimately interrelated with educational research methods to clarify, understand and communicate values as explanatory principles and living standards of judgment in claims by a practitioner to know their practice. Drawing on Living Theory Research (Whitehead, 1989) I present a notion of generative and transformational forms of evaluation and accountability of values-based educational practice that contribute to developing educational knowledge.

Introduction

Target-driven cultures, high-stake testing and metrics to evaluate and rank learners, educators and institutions have been a concern over decades. These approaches inhibit learning dispositions such as: collaboration; exploration; creative thinking; holding uncertainty, risk taking and generosity of spirit, which are valued in business, academia, industry and society at large and are needed for humanity to flourish. The work of people such as Deci (1996) on intrinsic and extrinsic drives and Dweck (2000) on self-theories give insights into why that might be the case.

Many forms of representation in social science research provide evidence to vindicate or justify what has happened but do not necessarily help to improve educational practice. Eisner (1985) points out, ‘If we want to understand why we get what we get from our schools, we need to pay attention not simply to the score, but to the ways in which the game is played.’ (p.5-6)

I believe the purpose of evidence in educational research is to contribute to the understandings of educators that enable them to go beyond ‘the game’ and develop generative and transformational approaches to improving educational practice. The forms of evidence needed are those that will enable educational researchers to improve practice rather than simply justify it.

The living theory methodology (Whitehead, 2008) developed in this paper draws insights from a range of methods and includes an analysis of visual data of practice (Huxtable, 2009a). It includes a multi-media narrative to explicate the meanings of the energy-flowing values and understandings that constitute the explanatory principles and living standards of judgement of educational influences. Rigour is enhanced using the methods advocated by Winter (1989) and social validity is enhanced using the principles advocated by Habermas (1976).

In this paper I address the question of, ‘How do I generatively and transformationally evaluate my educational influences in learning?’ I begin by giving a brief summary of the context of the research. I then present an argument for values as a distinguishing

feature of educational research. I then describe how I research values before describing generative and transformational forms of evaluation and accountability. I conclude by summarising the key points and the contribution the work makes to educational research.

Context

I work as a senior educational psychologist for a small English local authority with responsibility for co-ordinating and developing inclusive gifted and talented educational theory, practice and provision. My work is concerned with creating and enhancing educational relationships, space and opportunities, which support children and young people developing and offering as gifts, talents and knowledge of the world, themselves and themselves in and of the world. This is consistent with Hymer's (2007) influential idea of a generative-transformational framework for gift creation and developing inclusive gifted and talented educational theory, practice and provision (Huxtable, 2008).

Whitehead coined the term 'living educational theory' (subsequently foreshortened to living theory) to describe, '... the explanations that individuals produce for their educational influences in learning' (Whitehead, 2008, p.14). What do I mean by educational influence? The influence of scribal, oral and embodied ways of knowing which enhances learning to live values that give meaning and purpose to life more fully and develop contributions to making this a better world for us all. I am adopting the phrase living theory praxis to identify what I mean by praxis as an expression of theory~practice that emerges through the process of living theory research. My living theory praxis necessarily includes not just my theory of education but also my living educational theory in recognition and full expression of phronesis as the core of my praxis as a professional educator. Phronesis is taken to mean 'practical wisdom' and implies a moral imperative; that is to do what is 'right'. What is 'right' is that which is consistent with my intrinsic values (Crompton, 2010, and Biesta, 2006a).

Like Oancea and Pring (2008) I believe that, 'Deliberations over the aims of education are essentially moral—concerning the qualities and virtues, the capabilities and understandings that, under the banner of 'education', are thought worth promoting.' What I believe is worth promoting, and is reflected in my theories of education and the beliefs underpinning my practice, is that each person, irrespective of age, is capable of:

- Being an expert in their own learning and enhancing their expertise;
- Developing and offering talents as life-enhancing gifts;
- Creating, offering and accepting knowledge of the world, of themselves, and of themselves in and of the world, a gift, to enhance their own well-being and well-becoming and that of others;
- Coming to know and evolve their own living educational theory.

In the role of a professional educator I give primacy to my educational responsibility, which is to enhance relationships, space and opportunity that support children and young persons to improve their ability to bring themselves into their own presence and live a loving life that is satisfying, productive and worthwhile for themselves and others.

Educational research

It is unfortunate that 'education' is a term often used without reference to what is 'educational' about education. Education comprises more than just instruction, training or schooling. I am not saying that good instruction, training and schooling are not important but that there is more to education as an educational experience. White (2006) raises the conundrum that faces all educators; how do we know whether what we are doing is what we should be doing, and, how do we know if we are doing it well? Don't we strive to enable all the children in our care to grow to be successful, fulfilled adults? And this White identifies as the challenge – what is it to be a successful, fulfilled adult? This is the question that educational research and generative and transformational forms of evaluation and accountability should help us to answer.

I research to improve my practice, understanding research to be, '... the systematic search for answers in the light of relevant evidence' (Oancea and Pring, 2008, p.33), taking 'systematic' to indicate a coherent rather than rigid approach to enquiry. Educational research, like education, is a values-based, living, creative process where exploration, questions, responses and forms of evaluation and accountability are dynamically interrelated. As Collingwood (1991) said:

'In order to find out his meaning you must also know what the question was (a question in his own mind, and presumed by him to be in yours) to which the thing he has said or written was meant as an answer.' (p.31)

To be able to understand the meanings and questions and the quality of their educational practice, you need to know the educator's values, beliefs, theories, intentions as well as their activities they are researching and form (often implicitly) their explanations. I therefore employ a living educational theory research methodology (Whitehead, 1989, 2008) to evolve my living theory praxis. The basis of living theory research is the clarification of values as they emerge in practice. Living theory researchers draw on the theories of education but it is their ontological, energy-flowing values that form their explanations and living standards of judgment (Laidlaw, 1996) of educational influence in learning.

I have outlined some of my beliefs that indicate some of my theories of education. My intentions can be gathered by understanding the purpose of my research, which is similar to Eisner's (1993):

'We do research to understand. We try to understand in order to make our schools better places for both the children and the adults who share their lives there.' (p.10)

Although I would go further and say I do research to try to understand in order to make this world, not just our schools, a better place to be for all.

Local and national government policies and strategies are part of the context, the possibilities and constraints of my practice. They set explicit success criteria, such as 'standards' described by high-stakes tests, which must be responded to. However, they should not be confused with, the living, values-based standards that distinguish education and educational research and associated forms of evaluation and

accountability. Amrein and Berliner (2002) identify collateral damage can result from such confusion:

‘Substantial evidence exists that high-stakes tests do create the negative, unintended consequences about which critics worry and that make high-stakes high school graduation exams objectionable. It is quite possible that the adverse consequences of high-stakes tests outweigh the benefits that advocates claim they have since even the intended benefits, for example increased academic achievement, of these tests are hard to corroborate.’ (p.3)

The 115th issue (Summer of 2011) of BERA (British Educational Research Association) *Research Intelligence*, demonstrates clearly the common confusion between education research and educational research. Most articles variously use the terms without distinction ignoring the debate that has been on-going in the association and elsewhere for years. I believe this to be one of the sources of the misunderstandings that abound. In clarifying the distinction I am making between education research and educational research I am not intending to imply that one form of research is more important than another. Rather I am setting the scene for the paper as a contribution to educational research and epistemology.

Pring (2000) having made a distinction between research in education concerned with the disciplines and what is educational says that he sees educational practice as concerned with values:

‘... what makes this and *educational* practice is the set of values which it embodies – the intrinsic worth of the activities themselves, the personal qualities which are enhanced, the appropriate way of proceeding (given the values that one has and given the nature of the activity).

... The *practice* of teaching embodies certain values – the importance of that which is to be learnt, the respect of the learner (how he or she thinks), the respect for evidence and the acknowledgement of contrary viewpoints.’ (p.135)

However, Pring appears to be talking about educational practice denoted by values that are reified, impersonal and do not communicate the emotional commitment that is inherent in what is educational about education. He hints at it earlier in the same paper:

‘Central to educational research, therefore, is the attempt to make sense of the activities, policies and institutions which, through the organization of learning, help to transform the capacities of people to live a fuller and more distinctively human life. Such research needs to attend to what is distinctive of *being a person* – and of being one in a more developed sense. It needs to recognize that the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of *learning* those distinctively human capacities and understandings are by no means simple – they need to be analysed carefully. And *a fortiori* ‘teaching’, through which that learning is brought about, will reflect that complexity.’ (p.17)

Pring’s reference to values gives no sense of the living reality of ‘being a person’ as a unique individual learning to live their own life flavoured with their own particular

trials, tribulations and pleasures as fully as possible, rather than a rather abstract 'distinctively human life'. I prefer Whiteheads's (2011) notion of energy-flowing values that are life-affirming and life-enhancing and give meaning and purpose to a person's life. He identifies values as not just an intellectual exercise but, also visceral and emotional, embodied and clarified in the process of researching and theorising educational practice. He distinguishes between education research and educational research with respect to the disciplines as Pring does, but he goes further to distinguish what is educational research by reference to the nature of values and the theory generated:

'I am suggesting that education research is research carried out from the perspectives of disciplines and fields of education such as the philosophy, sociology, history, psychology, management, economics, policy and leadership of education. In my view, educational research is distinguished as the creation and legitimation of valid forms of educational theory and knowledge that can explain the educational influences of individuals in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live and work.' (Whitehead, 1989, p.105)

I draw on the language and knowledge base of education research to improve instruction, training and schooling but need to be clear of how I use them in an educational context. For instance, when children first begin school they are proficient at acquiring a variety of highly complex skills, a vast range of concrete and conceptual information. Some have acquired more of some aspects than others but none-the-less young persons have an amazing facility to acquire skills and information and to learn. They also have considerable experience of creating knowledge of the world, them selves and them selves in and of the world. Even though their ability to articulate their knowledge is limited a sensitive educator can recognise the communication of a child's embodied knowledge. When a given curriculum is imposed without appreciation of the young person as an able and competent learner with their own, living curriculum informed by their curiosity, passions, interests and understanding of themselves and their world, many become passive, dependent and disinterested learners. However, I need to be careful when I talk about learning as it has so many meanings. I agree with Biesta (2006b) when he writes:

'What is learning? Learning theorists of both an individualistic and a sociocultural bent have developed a range of accounts of how learning – or more precisely, how the *process* of learning – takes place. Although they differ in their description and explanation of the process, for example, by focusing on processes in the brain or legitimate peripheral participation, many of such accounts assume that learning has to do with the acquisition of something "external," something that existed before the act of learning and that, as a result of learning, becomes the possession of the learner. This is what many people have in mind when they say that someone has learned something.' (p. 26)

I am distinguishing learning as a process of creation, communication and transformation, not simply of acquisition. I am concerned with learning that is educational. The learning I am identifying as educational is learning concerned with

what it is to live a life expressing life-affirming and life-enhancing values and contributing to the well-being and well-becoming of self, others and social formations. I have qualified 'values' as those that are life-affirming and life-enhancing and associated with living wisely as I realise that some people have values that give meaning and purpose to their lives that are only self-serving with no concern for other people or creating a world where all might have the opportunity to flourish.

As I research my practice to evolve my living theory praxis I am endeavouring to enhance the educational influence I have in my own learning. In making my work public I am also trying to enhance my educational influence in the learning of others and social formations.

Researching energy-flowing values

As values are at the core of education and educational research I need to be able to gather and offer evidence that will enable me to clarify, understand and communicate my values in a coherent, rigorous and valid manner. I do not believe images any more than words alone can suffice and telling is no substitute for eliciting a shared meaning in the living boundary between us. So here I invite you to experience something of my research and create meaning with me of researching energy-flowing values.

I am asking you to go beyond just using intellect to also engage empathetically, and be aware of your emotional and visceral responses as well when you watch this video clip. It was taken at a meeting in 2010 when I was given half an hour to talk about my thesis to people with a professional interest in gifted and talented education. I set up the camera thinking that the video would show me as my usual incomprehensible self but in the hope that I might get some clue as to how I might improve.

My stomach was churning as we broke for coffee before my 'slot'. I had tried to organise my thoughts to present my thesis but was far from happy or confident with what I had prepared. Over the break I remember deliberately changing the story I was telling myself from how rubbish I was going to be, to thinking of my audience as individuals I knew and respected and what they might be interested in exploring with me concerning my thesis. I thought of the values I had been clarifying and how I might live them in that space as fully as I could. The effect on me was odd. I felt unusually at ease as I let go of the content I had prepared to deliver and instead focussed on how to create an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian educational space in the living boundaries between us. I thought about the people as persons, and how in my terms I might extend each a loving recognition, open channels of respectful connectedness between us and express my educational responsibility for myself and towards each of them. I set up the video camera opposite where I was sitting and asked someone to switch it on when I began talking, leave it to run and to turn it off at the end. I am the only one you see in the video; I did not want to disrupt the space by asking for permissions to film anyone else or to take someone else's attention away from the conversation to video me.

When I had finished I thought I had made a complete hash of the opportunity I had so generously been offered. I was surprised when we broke for lunch and a few people independently, privately and unsolicited told me I had made sense and they empathised with what I was expressing. I looked at the video later with curiosity, which was unusual for me; I usually hate looking at video of myself. I was surprised

by what I saw. I ask you here to take time to at least a few minutes of this 10 minutes clip.



Communicating my thesis <http://tinyurl.com/3jr7jla>

As I watch it evokes in me the feelings of pleasure I felt at the time of being with creative, professional educators who were making an educational difference to children and young people's lives by developing and offering their talents and knowledge as educational gifts. It reminds me of the pleasure of feeling that my work had something of value to offer to educators I respect. I believe that in contrasting this to earlier videos I can see evaluative evidence that I am developing the talents I need to communicate more effectively the development of educational theory, practice and provision explained by energy-flowing values.

Run your cursor back and forth and look for the dynamic expression of my values. (It is a technique I learned from Whitehead and explain more fully in Huxtable, 2009a.) Do you see and feel I am living my values of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility, as I seek to engage and not just perform to those present? Do you see and feel me seeking to connect and appreciate the knowledge and the values each person wants to live more fully through their practice they brought into the space? I am asking you to feel yourself as part of the space to address the questions I pose to you here. What does the video communicate to you about my values? Do you have a sense of an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian educational space? Do you have a sense of the talents and knowledge that I have been working to develop and offer as gifts? Does my embodied communication add anything to your understanding of my living theory praxis?

Gadamer (2004) describes a particular form of conversation:

‘To conduct a conversation requires first of all that the partners to it do not talk at cross purposes. Hence its necessary structure is that of question and answer. The first condition of the art of conversation is to ensure that the other person is with us.... To conduct a conversation.... requires that one does not try to out-argue the other person, but that one really considers the weight of the other's opinion. Hence it is an art of testing. But the art of testing is the art of questioning. For we have seen that to question means to lay open, to place in the open. As against the solidity of opinions, questioning makes the object and all its possibilities fluid.’ (pp. 330-333)

As you watch and respond to the questions I have placed in the open I am asking you to experience the boundary between us as a living, creative, educational space. I am asking you not to try to out-argue me but to go beyond what I have said to make possibilities fluid. In developing an educational conversation with you and using multimedia narrative I am researching the meanings of energy-flowing values in living boundaries to evolve my living theory praxis. I am say ‘educational’

conversation to indicate that my intention is to enable you and me to progress our learning that helps us each to realise (both to recognise and achieve) our best intent as fully as possible.

While the threads of a conversation are pursued in a logical and linear fashion there is also an organic flow. The organic nature of the research proceeds as those engaged in the conversation draw into it creatively experiences, knowledge, feelings, imagined possibilities, beliefs and theories expressed in words, intonation, physicality and presence in the course of an educational conversation. This makes it impossible to understand the knowledge created simply from a transcript. If you doubt me think of the time when someone has said, 'yes' and you knew they were actually saying 'no'. Sometimes it is not until the speaker has heard themselves that they actually understand what they mean and recognise the knowledge created. A video of the conversation is not enough. It requires text to contextualise it with insights into the complex ecologies of those in the conversation and the other who is coming to it after the event and to point to the significance of what is being communicated.

What is attended to as evidence of learning and educational influence and recognised as important is shaped as much by the form of evaluation and accountability as by the research methods employed.

Generative and transformational forms of evaluation and accountability

The evaluative criteria and the basis by which I hold myself to account for my practice are implicitly understood to be concerned with values. Through living theory research (Whitehead, 1989) they are made explicit and I have tried to give you an example of evidence that contributes to improving praxis in the process of researching praxis. The forms of evaluation and accountability that are appropriate to this form of research are those that hold generative and transformational possibilities. By 'generative' I want to communicate a sense of research stories that carry energy that generates hopeful, productive and life-affirming and life-enhancing activity. By 'transformational' I want to communicate forms of storying which evolve new thinking and practice through the process of researching that carries hope for the flourishing of humanity.

Educational narratives and multimedia narratives offer evidence, descriptions and explanations created of learning and educational influence, which in their creation and offering contribute to the learning of the teller and audiences. If I am to offer authentic evaluative evidence it is important that I be aware of the underlying tensions I experience and be alert to unhelpful and subliminal strategies I develop. One, for instance, concerns 'stories of ruin' (MacLure, 1996) from which I could learn. At the same time I acknowledge the very real threat that can arise from making such evidence public where it is contra to the dominant theory and practices espoused by those in powerful positions. So, while I seek to develop generative and transformational forms of evaluation and accountability I am aware it would be most imprudent and naïve to believe that all evidence can be made public in all forums.

I am aware of the potential for bias as I am with quantitative research. The phrase 'lies, damn lies and statistics', is well known. What is evidenced with statistical data relates to the intention of those using it. An illustration of this is the school I know that received a congratulatory letter from the DCSF as one of the most improved

schools in the country and in the same year they received another telling them they were a 'challenge school'. The data hadn't changed, just the intention of those using it. That said, the forms of evidence, which enable us to generatively and transformationally evaluate our work and hold ourselves to account, need to evolve, as Eisner (1985) points out:

'For educational evaluation this means that the form of the qualities we use: the particular words we select, the sentences we construct, the cadence, tempo, tone, and tenor of our language is a primary means for conveying what our (hopefully) refined sensibilities have revealed to us. We have the task – ubiquitous in human experience – of creating an equivalent in the public world for the ideas and feelings we have construed in the private world.' (p.9)

What we do in the 'private world' is to extend others and ourselves a loving recognition and open a channel for connectedness trusting that each will respect the space and not violate it. In that living boundary understandings of each other and our selves evolve. For instance, we use holiday snaps and videos, as a device, a portal, to invite others to share in our experiences. The equivalent in the 'public world' of the educator and academic are the multimedia narratives that include explanations of our educational influences in learning. The multimedia narratives include expressions of energy-flowing values and 'a relationally dynamic awareness of space and boundaries as connective, responsive and co-creative' (Rayner, 2004).

Evaluation of educational practice I understand to be concerned with noticing learning; that is changes in the direction of values. Educational narratives offer evidence of changes created and experienced by the individual or group in relation to their ontological and social values, which form their explanatory principles and living standard of judgments. Processes and approaches to evaluating work to improve education therefore has to do with values as evaluative criteria and recognising and appreciating the creation and contribution of the embodied knowledge by each person as their life-affirming and life-enhancing gifts. I agree with Eisner (1985) when he says,

'Evaluation deals with appraising the value of some object, enterprise, or activity. Evaluation is ineluctably value-orientated. Without a conception of virtue, one cannot evaluate anything. One can measure, one can test, one cannot evaluate.' (p.5)

The form of evaluative evidence I collect and offer must therefore communicate the energy-flowing values I espouse and the improving quality of the educational relationships, space and opportunities and contribute to further improvement. Multimedia narratives provide a vehicle for such evidence and hold the potential for generating and transforming practice for a better future and in that sense are educational.

The purpose of generative and transformational evaluation it not to simply justify the past, it is to contribute to improving what is done in the present and future. To say that I can live today with tomorrow's knowledge is obviously absurd but that is what some notions of evaluation imply. The form of evaluation I am interested in developing takes on a different purpose than to justify, protect, or form a shield to withstand

criticism. It is to communicate with a view to improving what is happening with values fore-grounded as the evaluative criteria.

Other forms of evaluation on occasions might help to ‘prove’ what I have done but they don’t help me *improve* what I am doing. Biesta (2007) talks of something similar when he writes:

‘Research can only tell us what has worked in a particular situation, not what will work in any future situation. The role of the educational professional in this process is not to translate general rules into particular lines of action. It is rather to use research findings to make one’s problem solving more intelligent. This not only involves deliberation and judgment about the means and techniques of education; it involves at the very same time deliberation and judgment about the ends of education — and this in a strict and conjugate relation with deliberation and judgment about the means.’ (pp. 20-22)

In developing generative, transformational forms of evaluative I am seeking evidence of educational influence. There can be moments of epiphany but for the most part educational influences that contribute to transformational change takes time, effort and a creative, uncertain journey along foggy, often indistinct and multidimensional paths. It is often the small, easily forgotten events that can have unforeseen consequences such as illustrated by this email I received:

‘Many thanks for organising the meeting tonight. Who would have thought that first cup of coffee you got for me in Keynsham would have enabled those students to be there tonight - which I found to be a very exciting process. They seemed to grow as learners in front of my eyes.’ (personal email, 12th March 2008)

I am not sure a cup of coffee would be thought of as worthy of note, let alone be a focus for deliberation and judgment, but such times possibly hold more educational potential than many more apparently important events. Biesta (2006b) also makes a very important point about what is construed as the practice of educators:

‘... ‘education’ is a relational concept that, in most cases, refers to the interaction between an educator and a student, ‘learning’ denotes something that one can do alone and by oneself (see Biesta, 2004a). To use a phrase like ‘the adult learner’ or even ‘the learner’, therefore, already indicates a choice for a particular way to configure and conceptualise the field.’ (p.175)

The nature of the evidence of educational influence needs to be capable of communicating the quality of the educational relationship between real living people and the form of research to enable those qualities to be explored, which brings me back to conversations and coffee – or whatever refreshment is age appropriate.

It is interesting that many social scientists spend a lot of time trying to remove the influence of the ‘personal person’ as the source of unique variance from their study, yet in educational research it is pivotal. What distinguishes education from schooling, and educational research from education research, is the concern with improving the unique, ontological values related influence that individuals have in their own

learning and in the learning of others, and the contribution the ‘personal person’ makes to their own well-being and well-becoming and that of others.

Is there a useful distinction to be made between evaluation and accountability? I have addressed what I think is useful to me in terms of evaluation – an educational form of values-based evaluation, which holds the potential of being generative and transformational and contributes to improving the journey ahead rather than justifying where I have been. So what’s different with accountability?

To be able to hold myself accountable I have to be able to make and communicate valid, evidence related, judgements and explanations about whether I am doing what I say I am doing. The forms of evaluation I have considered in this paper enable me to hold myself accountable as I accept responsibility for what I do and create values-based explanations for why I do what I do. There are two clear points that are not overtly addressed by evaluation – accepting responsibility for my actions and giving satisfactory reasons, the theoretical underpinning, for what I do.

I hold myself accountable when contributing to my employer’s *raison d’être*:

‘We want all Children and Young People to do better in life than they ever thought they could. We will give children and young people the help that they need to do this’ (Bath and North East Somerset Children and Young People’s Plan 2005)

I can give an explanation for my practice coordinating and developing inclusive gifted and talented educational theory, practice and provision. I am also being accountable to myself to live my values as fully as I can by creating and offering as gifts accounts of my living theory research. So I create accounts of my living theory, as a generative and transformational form of accountability as I hold myself to account to both my employer and myself. I have become increasingly aware that ‘measures of impact’ of activity do not enable me to hold myself to account for improving my practice and at times such immobile procedures can actually distract from what is important.

What would convince me that I was doing what I believe is worthwhile? How can I hold myself to account to make a worthwhile contribution? To come to an answer is intimately inter-related with understanding what I am trying to do and why. As a psychologist I know that assessment and intervention exist in a dynamic relationship; the one informs the understanding of the other. We usually talk of assessment and intervention, learning and teaching, without reference to the intention, the values, the big ‘why are we doing this’. I have found that too often targets are achieved but have lost connection with real life. Where in the plans, targets or statistics is there any communication of what it is for a child to get to know the person they want to be? Where is the value placed on improving the educational quality of the space for a child to reflect on the knowledge they are creating of themselves and the world they want to live in? Where is the importance recognised of the opportunity for a child to create, value and offer their gifts, appreciate their talents as they develop them and receptively respond to those of others? Where is the valuing and the possibility for me to offer the knowledge I am creating through theorising my practice?

Perhaps the disconnection between reality and what is demanded on paper arises because the purpose of traditional forms of accountability is not to enable a person to

be held accountable to living their values but rather to simply say whether they completed a specified task as Biesta (2007) points:

‘The most important question for educational professionals is therefore not about the effectiveness of their actions but about the potential educational value of what they do, that is, about the educational desirability of the opportunities for learning that follow from their actions (and what should be prevented at all costs is the situation in which there is a performative contradiction between what they preach and what they practice). This is why the "what works" agenda of evidence-based practice is at least insufficient and probably misplaced in the case of education, because judgment in education is not simply about what is possible (a factual judgment) but about what is educationally desirable (a value judgment).’ (p.12)

I believe a more appropriate and useful approach is provided by the creation and offering of multimedia narratives and accounts of educational influence such as this one:



Pleasure and confidence in affirmation of knowledge creators

<http://tinyurl.com/44of77d>

This is a video of a group of AS Extended Project students who worked with Sally Cartwright, a member of the Living Values Improving Practice Cooperatively CPD group working with Prof. Jack Whitehead and myself. They are talking to a group of 14-19 strategy managers about their experience of working in a research group. Sally gives an account of her work in her Masters Assignment, ‘How Can I Enable The Gifts And Talents Of My Students To Be In The Driving Seat Of Their Learning?’ (Cartwright, 2008). I also give an account in an article in the Educational Journal of Living Theories (Huxtable, 2009b). Here I invite you to watch part of the video and ask whether you see as I do the pleasure and confidence flowing in the affirmation of valued knowledge created by self and other and in the camaraderie of creative learners in productive conversations. I see focussed attention and effort to creating knowledge and understanding, I see the zest that A.N. Whitehead (1962) refers to, the learning without fear or veneer that Belle Wallace identifies, the embodied life-

affirming energy that Jack Whitehead communicates. I see the young people extending themselves and others a loving recognition, opening channels of respectful connectedness and expressing an educational responsibility for themselves and towards others. In making their knowledge public in such a forum they are contributing to the learning of the social formation that influences beyond their own school. By allowing the video of their presentation to be made public on YouTube they offer an educational gift to others beyond their immediate locality.

The young people identify the contribution of Sally, Jack and myself to their learning, which we each provide values-based explanations for in accounts of our living theory research. Placing the accounts in a public space as gifts invites other people to offer their own accounts and engage with us in generative and transformational educational learning. As they accumulate each becomes part of the terrain of educational research to improve education. Accounts such as those are to be found on <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/mastermod.shtml>, for instance:

- Joy Mounter's account, 'Can children carry out action research about learning, creating their own learning theory?'
- Claire Formby's account, 'How can I improve my practice as an educator to offer learners a creative and challenging curriculum which enables everyone to identify and develop their own talents and which also makes space for the nurturing of relationships to enable individual growth in understanding and self esteem?'

Other examples from Canada can be found on <http://www.spanglefish.com/ActionResearchCanada/> for instance:

- Tawnya Schlosser's account, 'Involving Primary Students as Co-Researchers to Improve Their Reading Skills'.
- Elizabeth Campbell's account, 'Journey to the Otherway: How Can I Improve My Practice By Living My Values of Love and Joy'.

Habermas' (1976) four criteria of social validity - comprehensibility, truthfulness, rightness and authenticity are used to help strengthen the validity of the accounts and evaluations in the explanations of educational influences in learning. Winter's (1989) six principles of rigour for action research - reflective critique, dialectical critique, plural structure, multiple resource, risk and theory practice transformation, help to strengthen their rigour. Creating and offering accounts of living theory research offers a generative and transformational form of evaluation and accountability.

Summary and conclusion

The significance of the paper is in the contribution it makes to the development of educational research through its use of multi-media narratives to communicate the meanings of the ontological values as explanatory principles in explanations of educational influences in learning. I have been asking you to engage with this paper as a multimedia narrative and to do so with 'head, heart and body'. I have explained that I do not think that a simple intellectual engagement with text alone will enable us to create a shared understanding of the energy-flowing values inherent in education

and educational research. Making creative use of multimedia narratives enables me to more coherently clarify, understand and communicate meanings of energy-flowing values in living boundaries to evaluate what I do as I hold myself accountable and evolve my living theory praxis. Finally I have shown in this paper how the form of representation influences my practice and contributes to the development of generative and transformational forms of evaluation and accountability.

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